

Born to rule — On Rahul Gandhi's elevation

But only sound political vision will help Rahul Gandhi in the *face-off*((**noun**) – **contest, conflict, direct confrontation** प्रतिद्वन्द्व टकराव , विरोध) with Narendra Modi

From the time he entered politics, and won Amethi in 2004, Rahul Gandhi knew the leadership of the Congress was his *for the asking*((**phrasal verb**) – **used to consider that something is easy to have it for somebody.**). The only question was when his mother, Sonia Gandhi, would be ready to *step down*((**phrasal verb**) – **resign, withdraw, give up one's job** हट जाना). The *inevitable*((**noun**) – **unavoidable, sure to happen, unpreventable** जो टल न सके, ज़रूरी)

succession(**accession, elevation, descent** पीढ़ी) from mother to son is related to the very nature of the Congress. Unfortunately for the party, no one but a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family can hold its potentially *fractious*((**adjective**) – **difficult, uncontrollable, unmanageable** झगड़ालु) elements together. So, in the absence of some totally unexpected twist, the December election process announced will see Mr. Gandhi as Congress president. This will *formalize*((**verb**) – **ratify, endorse, confirm** निश्चित रूप देना) his *de facto*((**adjective**) – **existing, actual/real, effective** वास्तविक) position as the leader of India's largest opposition party, which is struggling to *stitch*((**verb**) – **make, join/combine, mend**) together a national-level alternative to the *resurgent*((**adjective**) – **rising again; increasing or reviving after a period of little activity/dullness** फिर उठ खड़ा होने वाला) BJP, under the Amit Shah-Narendra Modi combine. The timing of the elevation((**noun**) – **upgrading, advancement, move/step up**) is significant. In the period immediately after the *devastating*((**adjective**) – **shocking, traumatic, distressing** हानिकारक दिल दहलानेवाला.) defeat in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the Congress did not want to push Mr. Gandhi to the top: that would have meant exposing him to *unflattering*((**adjective**) – **unfavourable, unattractive, critical** निंदात्मक दंग से पेश करने वाला) comparisons with Mr. Modi, when the BJP was in its most dominant phase. Despite Ms. Gandhi's ill-health, Mr. Gandhi seemed in no hurry to take up the leadership. That he is taking on the responsibility just before the Assembly election in Gujarat, a State the

Congress has not won since 1985, is a signal to the *electorate*((**noun**) – **all the people who entitled to vote in an election** निर्वाचक-मंडल) that Mr. Gandhi is ready for the long *haul*((**noun**) – **distance**).

The real challenge for Mr. Gandhi is not winning the Congress leadership, but positioning himself as a rock in the way of the *Modi juggernaut*((**noun**) – **powerful/overwhelming force** प्रलयकारी बल). When his mother chose not to *stake claim*((**phrase**) – **assert, declare, proclaim** दावे के साथ कहना) for the prime ministership in 2004, and instead invited Manmohan Singh to head the UPA government, he might have assumed that only youth and inexperience stood in his way. But in the years since then, Mr. Gandhi *betrayed*((**verb**) – **reveal, disclose, divulge** भण्डा फोड़ना) a sense of *entitlement*((**noun**) – **privilege, right, licence/grant** अधिकार) without showing a willingness to be part of the government. At no time was this more evident than when he wanted *tear up*((**phrasal verb**) – **demolish, pull down, disassemble** □□□□ □□□□) an ordinance *promulgated* ((**verb**) – **publicize, communicate, propagate** एलान करना) by his own government to *negate*((**verb**) – **invalidate, nullify; reverse, annul** नकारना.) a Supreme Court verdict on disqualification of legislators on their conviction by a trial court. What he projected as a stand in keeping with public opinion came across as an arrogant act by a *dynast*((**noun**) – **ancestry, descent, bloodline (a member of a powerful family** शासक) against a Prime Minister *beholden*((**adjective**) – **indebted, obligated, duty-bound** आभारी) to him for staying in power. More recently, Mr. Gandhi has shown greater political maturity. He has spoken up against the failings of the Modi government and refused to be *cowed down*((**verb**) – **intimidate, dishearten, subdue** निरुत्साह) by trolls on social media. Dynasty might have taken him to the top of the party, but if he is to lead a country of India's size, he will have to *articulate*((**verb**) – **express, communicate, make public/announce** व्यक्त) a political vision people buy into. Nothing will be gained by waiting for Mr. Modi to *mess up*((**phrasal verb**) – **mismanage, mishandle, misdirect** बिगाड़ना). Mr. Gandhi will need to show he is prime ministerial material, not just a *reflexive*((**adjective**) – **instinctive, unthinking, unintentional** अनजाने में किया गया) critic of Mr. Modi and the BJP's brand of politics.