

## POWER PLAY

# Why Mukul Roy is 'enjoying' his downfall in Trinamool Congress

The senior leader has nowhere to go but the BJP. What is the hindrance then?

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Mar 05, 2015 · 09:15 am



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The futures of the Trinamool Congress and its senior leader Mukul Roy appear intertwined for a while despite their wishes. The party, battered by the ignominy of the Saradha chit fund scam, is desperately seeking ways to distance itself from the scandal and jettison Roy. Tarnished by the same taint, Roy too is searching for a way forward politically but has nowhere to go at present.

Roy was unceremoniously removed from all important party positions on February 28, about two months after he was summoned by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with the Saradha scam. He had been the Trinamool's all-India general secretary since its inception in 1997 and was its undisputed second-in-command after party chief Mamata Banerjee.

If Roy was anguished by the demotion, he did not show it. In interviews he declared that he is "enjoying himself now" and that "his blood pressure is under perfect control". There was none of the bitterness that could be expected from a party veteran told to walk the plank.

This exhibition of calm has disconcerted a section of the Trinamool Congress. *According to The Times of India*, these leaders feel “a defiant Mukul within the party could be deadly for it before the [Kolkata] civic polls” in April this year. These leaders, the paper said, “have got feedback that the former national secretary is in constant touch with disgruntled elements in the party”.

Others too have propounded this theory earlier, claiming that Roy has not jumped ship yet because he has been threatened by the Bharatiya Janata Party to “break” up the Trinamool Congress from within.

But if Roy’s loyalists are to be believed, he is eager to join the BJP despite his denials. The saffron party, for its part, too wants to take him in since he can help it grow further in a state where it has just about found a toehold. A canny leader, Roy knows every detail of how the Trinamool manages its funds, can motivate the grassroots cadres and perhaps even lead them.

What is holding up this embrace, once again, is the Saradha scam. The BJP wants Roy to first get a “clean chit” from the CBI so that his taint does not rub off on the party. Meanwhile, Roy is making no secret of his admiration for Narendra Modi and the BJP.

Here is an edited interview he gave to *Scroll.in*:

**Why did the Trinamool Congress drop you from the prominent post? Is it because the CBI questioned you in connection with the Saradha scam, and the party does not want its name tainted?**

I cannot say that. The time has not come to say all this.

**How do you rate the performance of the BJP?**

The BJP is doing very well at the Centre.

**The BJP is making inroads into West Bengal with great success...**

Yes, it is true that the BJP’s votes in West Bengal are increasing.

**What is the reason behind this?**

It signals the end of the Left parties’ influence in the state. The Trinamool Congress is holding onto its support, while the Left votes are going to the BJP.

**Won’t you consider that a failure of the Trinamool Congress as well?**

The coming months will make it clear whether Mamata Banerjee’s government has been able to fulfil people’s expectations.

**There are allegations that you are in touch with the BJP leadership in Delhi...**

As a political person, it is important to be in touch with the leaders of all parties, whether it is the Left, the BJP or the Congress.

**What kind of a leader is Mamata Banerjee? Is she the authoritative leader that she is made**

## **out to be?**

Mamata Banerjee has been in politics for three decades now. As a political person I am not going to judge her. People will judge her.

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