

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

2nd October 1869 – 30th January 1948

**A Prominent Leader of India's Independence Movement and Great Champion of the
Cause of the Poor and Communal Harmony**

My Acquaintance with Gandhi

Lavanam

Democracy and Party Politics

M. N. Roy

The RSS/BJP Message to Muslims in India Today

Seema Mustafa

Saffronising the institutions

Kuldip Nayar

Minorities integral part of India

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Founder Editor:

M.N.Roy

Advisors:

Dr. R.M. Pal

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

Editor:

Mahi Pal Singh

Editorial Board:

Ramesh Awasthi, Dr. Deepavali Sen,

Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Qurban Ali,

N.D. Pancholi (Ex-officio Member)

Publisher and Printer:

N.D. Pancholi

Send articles and reports to:

Mahi Pal Singh at G-3/617, Shalimar Garden Extension I, Rose Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad-201005. (U.P.) Ph. 09312206414

or E-mail them to:

theradicalhumanist@gmail.com or
mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com

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N.D. Pancholi, G-3/617, Shalimar Garden Extn. I
Rose Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad-201005 (U.P.)
Ph. 0120-2648691, (M) 9811099532
E-mail : ndpancholi44@gmail.com

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Editorial:

Should Hindutva Sponsored Talibanisation of the Country be allowed?

Mahi Pal Singh

For the last few years unruly elements of the Hindutva groups have been treating the law of the country with contempt. Sometimes it were the hoodlums of the Ram Sene who attacked young boys and girls sitting and talking in some garden or girls in jeans sitting in a restaurant having a cup of tea or coffee with a male friend. Then the goons of the Bajrang Dal started catching and beating up girls and boys who exchanged greetings or flowers on the day which is known as Lovers' Day. Sometimes these groups and many others tear posters of a film, vandalize theatres and do not allow theatres to screen that film even after having been cleared by the Film Censor Board merely because these elements do not like some dialogues of that film. Now BJP ruled governments have imposed a ban on the sale of meat in many areas for a few days, or extended the period and area of ban than used to be done in the past. These elements want that people should speak, eat, wear clothes, see films, meet people – do everything according to the rules prescribed by them or face insult, be beaten up or even be killed if they flout their diktats. These destructive and divisive forces have become emboldened with the Narendra Modi government taking over the reins of power at the Centre in the country. They know that no action will be taken against them, particularly if the state government is also with them. We used to hear such things happening in Afghanistan when the Taliban were controlling the country and later in Waziristan and some other parts of Pakistan. They too were intolerant of everything which did not happen according to their whims and destroyed everything they did not like –

libraries, ancient and historical statues, and human beings.

Many notable dissenters like academic, activist MM Kalburgi in Karnataka last month, and earlier Pune-based rationalist Narendra Achyut Dabholkar and activist-rationalist Govind Pansare have been brutally and cowardly murdered after threats by these elements and nobody has been arrested and prosecuted for these crimes. These dastardly murders have been followed by death threats to Mysore-based rationalist KS Bhagawan. And now it is a well-known social and human rights activist and journalist Dr. John Dayal who, as per an article 'What the online attacks on my father say about India: activist John Dayal's daughter takes stock,' written by his daughter, Karuna John, and published in 'Scroll.in', has been threatened on social media with tweets like, "#ShameOnJohnDayal such bc should be hanged till death. Bkl 1:05 AM - 13 Sep 2015." The question is: How long will this 'talibanisation' of our tolerant society and professedly secular country be allowed at the hands of some anti-social elements who are out to destroy our composite culture? Or is it only the beginning of the backward march into the medieval and black ages? Those, who are bent upon turning this secular country into a '*Hindu Rashtra*' and throwing away people belonging to the minority communities out of this country, obviously at the behest of their political masters like the RSS and the BJP to benefit them politically by polarizing the society on communal basis and garner the support of the majority of Hindu votes, mend their ways and learn to

respect the Constitution and the law of this land? They are doing this, when only yesterday, the 14th of September 2015, our closest neighbor, Nepal's parliament has rejected the move to turn the Himalayan state again into a '*Hindu Rashtra*', which it was till a few years ago, and chosen to continue to be a secular country.

The bigger question which faces us all who wish to see this country and all its people to prosper and live in peace is: Should we allow a handful of anti-social, uncultured and uncivilized people to tell us how this country will be run and to let fascist tendencies overtake whatever democratic freedoms we possess? Will the thinking people allow these brainless brutes – 'brainless' because they are cutting the branches of the same tree on which they are sitting and 'brutes' because they are

indulging in violence and killing people who have done no harm to anybody - to dominate the society and rule over us, the all powerful and sovereign '**We, the People**'? Shall we permit the legacy of the land of Buddha and Kabir be destroyed by these self-proclaimed '*thekedars*', or conscience keepers, of the Hindus and the Hindustan, or 'Bharat' as the country's Constitution describes this country?

(Note: It has been reported that on 16th September 2015 an activist of '*Sanathan Sansthan*', another fringe group of the Hindutva brigade, that had publically justified the killing of activist Pansare, has been arrested for his murder though a spokesperson of the organization tried to defend the accused as 'innocent' in a TV discussion, but shamelessly justifying the murder still.)

If Hindu Raj does become
a fact, it will, no doubt be the
greatest calamity for this country.
It is a menace to liberty, equality
and fraternity. It is incompatible
with democracy. It must be
stopped at any cost.

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar



IN REMEMBRANCE: 13.09.2015

1ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF REVERED SH. B D SHARMA, RADICAL HUMANIST AND FORMER PRESIDENT I.R.I.



Late Sh. B.D. Sharma

Associates, followers, admirers, friends and well wishers, of Sh. Badri Dass Sharma Advocate Supreme Court of India, a Committed Radical Humanist, a staunch follower of a great visionary and freedom fighter Sh. M N Roy and Former President I.R.I. congregated today in the premises of Supreme Court to pay their tribute to Sh. Sharma on his 1st Death Anniversary. Sh. B D Sharma had breathed his last on 13.09.2014 at the age of 89 at Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

Many of those who spoke on the occasion had a long, close and emotional association with Sh. B D Sharma.

Recalling his long association with Sharma, Sh. N Vyas, Advocate & Ex. Treasure I.R.I. stated that Sh. B D Sharma was a multi-faceted personality which is quite rare. Intoxicated with humanism in thought as well as in action, Sh. Sharma was best example of simple living. He had freed his mind of dogmatic theological debris and kept his mind full of fresh healing water of direct perception. He believed in his inner voice for the answers to every dilemma of life. Sh. Sharma exhibited and demonstrated the practice of peace in real life all through and held the art of uniting all of us together.

Sh. S C Varma, Advocate and trustee IRI told the gathering that Sh. B D Sharma was an inspirational personality not only to large number of lawyers but also to the social activists as well as radicals. He was a man of the common people and followed dictates of his conscience. Sh. B D Sharma belonged to that rare breed for whom legal profession

was a mission not a mundane profession, always ready to share his knowledge, assist and guide his juniors like a teacher.

While recalling his long association with B D Sharma, Advocate Vikramjit Sikand said that Sh. B D Sharma always stood and struggled for the weaker and needy people so that such people could breathe and live with dignity. He dreamt of a society based on equity and justice.

Sh. Jetendra Singh Advocate stated that sh. B D Sharma was a humble person, always ready to render free legal assistance to the lower strata of the society.

Prominent among those who participated and also spoke included Sh. Mannu Mridul, Sh. Surya Kant Vyas, Ms. D.S. Bharti, Ms. Shamsravish Rein and Ms. Pushpa Kishore (all Advocates S.C.I.)

Sh. Ghansham Singh Advocate. Recited as under:

*“Pichhle dino ki mukkammal kitab the ve
Panna palat kar dekh lo inkalab the ve
Mali ne jis tehni ko salike se sanjo ke
rakkha tha
Vahi gulab the ve, vahi gulab the ve,
vahi gulab the ve”*

In the end Let us learn and practice what Sh. B D Sharma used to demonstrate through his activities in daily living which will be our best homage to Sh. B D Sharma.

Our tribute and salute to Sh. B D Sharma.

Report by **Ved P Arya**, Advocate and Life Member IRI.

My Acquaintance with Gandhi

Lavanam

(This article was written by late Lavanam, one of the most confirmed atheists and also an admirer of Gandhi simultaneously, really a rare combination. We admire him for his sincerity and the real reform works he has undertaken along with his wife. He married the daughter of an untouchable poet. His name reflects the fact that he was born at the time of salt satyagraha by Gandhi. His father was also an atheist and reformer. He named his children without reflecting any religion. His other son is named Samaram, as he was born during World War II. His daughter is named Vidya.



Lavanam wrote this article as a preface to the work PATH OF GANDHI written by late K. Radha Krishna Murty, a veteran humanist in Andhra Pradesh. Lavanam died on 13 Aug, 2015 in Vijayawada. This article is being published at this time as a tribute to him and to recall his wide experience and deep commitment to humanist values. - Jawaharlal Jasthi)

Foreward to the English Version

I consider it a privilege that an opportunity is given to me to write a foreword to the book on Gandhi written by late K. Radha Krishna Murty three decades back. I know him intimately. He was a kind hearted gentleman. He grew up in the background of independence movement of India. He was influenced by socialist ideals and became a part of the society that accepted Gandhi as the Mahatma. Later on he was impressed by the philosophy of M.N. Roy and stayed with it to the end. He belongs to the cadre that believes in and encourages difference of opinion as a means of enlightenment. He was a democrat who was willing to take best of other ideas and improve himself. He was born and brought up in the Gandhian era and studied his philosophy deeply. He appreciated his ideas in some aspects and also disapproved some other ideas which are manifest in this book. He paid complements to Gandhi as the man who could influence the world with his principles of truth and non-violence. He disagreed with the traditional values of Gandhi. To a large extent this work is a comprehensive analysis of Gandhi's principles and practices. In the 1970s Mr. Radha Krishna Murty looked to Gandhi as

many of the progressive democrats looked to him, albeit with some reservations. The Soviet Union was still intact at that time and globalization did not lead the national markets into international market empires. In the present circumstances, we may have to look at Gandhi from different perspective. As an atheist I differ completely from his traditional way of thinking and his complete dependence on God. Even then, I consider Gandhi a revolutionist.

During 1945-46, my father "GoRa" (Goparaju Ramachandra Rao, the untired crusader of atheism) engaged Gandhi in a serious discussion on atheism. At that time Gandhi invited all the members of our family to his Ashram in Sevagram. I had an opportunity to stay with him continuously for three months and observe him closely. Later, I participated in the Sarvodaya (Improvement of All) movement of Vinoba Bhave, a close follower of Gandhi. I took the opportunity to analytically study how his followers admire Gandhi. Perhaps, if Mr. Radha Krishna Murty were alive today he would agree with me to a large extent as both of us are basically atheists.

When I made frequent tours around the world, I had to speak about Gandhi and his philosophy at many places. When I spoke in the Harvard University in 1994, one of the participants raised many critical questions. I was happy I could satisfy his curiosity to a large extent. "If you please tell me the book which contains what you said, I would like to get it," he said. I told him it would be possible only when I write the book and I have not yet written it. "Then why don't you write it now?" he asked. "If anybody is willing to stay with me for some time and help me in studying the works of Gandhi afresh, I would certainly like to write the book," I said. The next day the person met me and offered to spend the required time with me. He was Prof. Mark Lindley. At that time he was Assistant Chaplain in the Humanist Chaplaincy of Harvard University. He was a member of the American Humanist Association and toured extensively in Europe and Asia. He also worked as Professor of Music in the universities of Hong Kong, England, Italy and America. With this background, when he offered to come and spend time with me, I was immensely happy. For three years after that he spent four months each year with me in India. Together, we studied nearly a hundred compilations of Gandhi's works published by the government of India. We together wrote the book "Gandhi As We Know Him" in English. It was popular in Europe and America as well as in India. With this background I would like to share some of my thoughts on how to analyze and understand Gandhi.

Until he went to South Africa, Gandhi was a timid person. Everybody considered him a person of no consequence. He passed only matriculation and joined Intermediate in the college. He was poor at mathematics and was literally afraid of the teacher to such an extent that he discontinued his studies. Later he went to England. At that time there was a system to get Barrister Degree just by attending regularly and

hearing the lectures on law without any need to write examinations. Gandhi became a Barrister that way.

Since his childhood he had high regard and respect for Truth. When he started practicing law in India, he found there is an element of untruth involved in every litigation and stopped his practice as a lawyer. In 1893 he went to South Africa as a legal advisor to the businesses of Seth Abdullah. He purchased a ticket and boarded the first class compartment of the train in Durban to go to Johannesburg. It was a rule at that time that when there are white passengers in the first class compartment, others are not allowed, even if they have the ticket. He refused to vacate and he was thrown out on the platform at the next station. He felt hurt deeply and realized the need for everybody to uphold his honor and self-respect. Then and there he decided to make a coordinated effort to help all the Indians living there. He also decided that the movement would be based on Truth and non-violence. It was a movement that the world has never seen before.

At that time three types of individualities were manifest in Gandhi – one is traditionalism, the other is action for future and the third is a revolutionary. By the side of these three individual characters of Gandhi, it was necessary to look at him from a different angle to understand him. There were clearly two different outlooks inherent in him – as an individual and as a social creature. The matters on which we differ belong to Gandhi as an individual. His activities using Truth and non-violence as weapons belong to Gandhi as a social creature. Because he tried to introduce his individual beliefs into his social activities, he became a controversial person. But if anybody questioned his introduction of his personal beliefs into his social activities, he would not hesitate to change.

Gandhi had many discussions with GoRa on atheism when they stayed together in the Ashram. In the course of those discussions, he asserted that when you say “God is Truth” or “Truth is God”, you have to agree that there is no Truth without God. It was pointed out to him that there are people who do not believe in God but believe in Truth. “How do you reconcile with them?” he was asked. He thought for a while and said, “Truth is different from faith in God. Faith in God is individual while Truth is a social factor.” He also agreed that atheism also could be a way of searching for Truth. When he conceded this in 1945, there was clear change manifest in his outlook. The details were given in the book written by GoRa “An Atheist With Gandhi”. This book was published in 1951 by Navjivan Trust who was the publisher of all the works of Gandhi. The original was in English. Later they published Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati versions also. This book has a great value in Gandhian literature. Since he believed that Truth is higher than God, God is a personal faith and Truth is a social necessity, the revolutionary aspect in him got strengthened gradually. If we look at Gandhi with this background, we would realize that Gandhi had no blind faiths and he would not agree to anything that did not stand to reason. He has himself stated that. In my book I selected some of his statements and quotations from his writings to show his initial opinions on certain matters and how he changed his opinions over time and to what extent he changed. On many issues he changed his ideas radically over time.

Gandhi was a man always ready to change. He was not dogmatic. That made him the Mahatma.

There is another thing. From the beginning Gandhi considered every problem faced by him as a problem faced by every individual. It was a rule of railways in South Africa at that time

that when there are white passengers in the first class compartment, non-whites shall get down even if they have a ticket for it. Gandhi considered it an affront for every person who was non-white. He started his struggle to uphold the self-respect of every non-white along with his own.

Similarly, while fighting for independence from colonial rule, he wished freedom for every country under colonial rule. That is why he could influence Martin Luther King in America. Similarly Nelson Mandela in Africa and some leaders in other countries (Ireland) also were influenced. Primarily Gandhi converted non-violence, which was basically a mere theory till then, into a weapon to bring revolutionary changes. Violence in retaliation of violence is easy. But violence against non-violence is not that easy. Somewhere in the heart of the aggressor, his conscience would trouble him that he is hitting a non-violent peaceful person. What all Gandhi has achieved is only to make people over the world think on those lines.

Gandhi was against exploitation, against inequalities. He considered both as violence. He knows that common man cannot afford to show interest in practicing non-violence. To provoke them, he said that “non-violence is greater than violence. But violence is better than timidity.” This shows the importance given by him for a revolt against exploitation and inequality. A woman asked him how to save herself if somebody tries to violate her. He simply said, “God has given you teeth and nails.” That is, he advised her to save herself by biting the invader and scratch him with all her power. He did not consider it as violence. The inevitable violence is the first step to non-violence, he said.

Once lakhs of monkeys descended in groups on fields with crops in Orissa and damaged it. One of the farmers asked Gandhi how could he protect his crops if not violently. Monkeys were

considered sacred and he did not think of using violence against them. But Gandhi told him he has a right to save his crops. If you cannot drive away the monkeys, you kill them, he said. He identified three stages in the practice of non-violence – universal acceptance, passive resistance and constructive policy. If we follow these steps, equality and Truth will necessarily get established in our society, he said. While in South Africa he had to gather all the Indians, irrespective of their religion, language and region. To that extent, it was a secular effort. Similarly, he felt the need to get participation of every Indian in the fight for freedom – from Tatas and Birlas to the utmost poor, from Maharajas to the common man, including people of all the religions. That was why he could not insist on making communal unity and eradication of untouchability an integral part of the freedom movement, however important they are. He did not forget them. He said that immediately after getting independence, it will be necessary to try for social and economic independence.

Hindus are about 80% of the population in India. It was necessary to attract them to his line of thinking. Before him Tilak succeeded in making Hindus follow his leadership. Gandhi decided to follow the same technique. Tilak politicalized the religious celebrations on the occasion of Ganesh worship. He impressed Maharashtrians by describing Shivaji as a fearless freedom fighter. Tilak was himself from Maharashtra and he knew the situation there. Before coming to India Gandhi had to think of gathering all the Indians in South Africa irrespective of caste and community. After coming to India he had to lead the entire country and majority of them are Hindus. He used the name of Lord Rama by saying that he wants to establish 'Ramarajya'. He lost no time to explain that he was not referring to the rule of Ayodhya or to the son of Dasaratha. He said he was referring to an ideal ruler. He had to put before the society the issues

involving secular ideas in a traditional language. Old language attracted the people, but they failed to understand the new interpretation given by Gandhi to the old terminology.

Neither Marx nor M.N. Roy had the need to lead people's movements in their lifetimes. They were free to explain and propagate their theories as and how they felt it. If you need to convene and coordinate people on those views, it would be necessary to compromise with their beliefs to some extent. Lenin made such changes in the philosophy of Marx. In order to consolidate the Soviet Union Stalin had to make more modifications. Even Mao adopted the theory of Marx. But he had to work with farmers and agricultural laborers. He too had to make some concessions to coordinate them. When he had to convert his personal views to practical popular movements, Gandhi also made so many adjustments while appealing to the people. But once it was clear that independence would come only with partition, he refused to compromise and stuck to his original opinions against partition. This aspect would have been clearer if only he lived longer.

I think those people who lived close to Gandhi in his Ashram also did not understand his foresight and failed to uphold his views after his death. In the Harijan issue dated 20 April, 1947 he wrote clearly that he "would not stop mentioning the names of Ram and Rahim in the same breath even if you kill me. Those two names stand for one God in my opinion. I will die happily while repeating those names." In January, 1948 it was clear that he may have to die any moment. When he was shot dead on 30th January, 1948 he must have recalled those names only while dying. In the Harijan issue dated 15 Feb, 1948, his personal assistant Pyarelal wrote that Gandhi said only 'Ram, Ram' while dying. When Gandhi was hit by the first bullet, what he said could be clear "Ram".

Before he said the next word “Rahim” he was hit by the second bullet and his shock could have weakened his voice further and what he said could not be audible clearly. Most of the people around him at that time were Hindus. The utterance of ‘Rahim’ could be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted as ‘Ram’. But in view of categorical statements of Gandhi on this issue, if we fail or refuse to see the possibility of him keeping his faith, we would be doing grave injustice to Gandhi. After his death, Hinduism has become more important than Gandhi.

We preferred to ignore his ideals and confined him to ‘Ram’ only leaving ‘Rahim’. To confirm our interpretation, it was inscribed on his tomb at Rajghat “Hey Ram!” How Gandhi would have reacted to it? When what he said actually could not be heard clearly, we should have given credit to what he said earlier instead of putting our words into his mouth. Of only “Ram Rahim” was inscribed on the tomb, Muslim visitors to the Ghat would have been more impressed and their respect for Gandhi would have been increased. It would have helped unity between

the two religions as well. Gandhi succeeded to divert Muslims in Noakhali and Calcutta from violence. It could have been possible only because they considered Ram and Rahim as representing the same God and they understood it. The inevitable conclusion is that the so-called followers of Gandhi did not do justice to his secular outlook after his demise. That is why we should try to understand Gandhi from what he himself said about himself instead of depending on what his followers say. Gandhi was more secular, rational and tolerant.

In his book, Mr. Radha Krishna Murty, having narrated the points on which he differs, also explained in detail where he concurs with Gandhi. That was his magnanimity. That is why his book on Gandhi is more precious. It is necessary to get it translated into other languages. Because I am surviving him, I took liberty to incorporate in the foreword the changes in society after his death and my own ideas on detailed study of Gandhian literature. I hope readers would take it in proper spirit.

Lavanam, Atheist Center, Vijayawada.

October, 2014

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the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

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Mahi Pal Singh

KILLING a Muslim for rumour of beef eating!
**The RSS/BJP Message to Muslims
in India Today**

Seema Mustafa

NEW DELHI: It was a systematic communal campaign in Dadri, that precedes acts of violence always. First a calf was reported missing, and a campaign unleashed that basically spread rumours linking the calf to eating beef. When the tension reached prescribed levels, a temple in Dadri announced that a particular family—Muslims of course—was eating, after keeping, beef in their home. And barely before the echo of the announcement had subsided, a mob attacked the house of Mohammad Akhlaq, in the village in Dadri, pulled him out and beat him to death with bricks. His 22 year old son was also attacked, and is presently battling for his life in a hospital. The mob attacked their grandmother, and tried to molest the women in the house. The family is completely traumatised, terrified and currently praying for the young son's life.

In terms of numbers, always very important for a statistic obsessed government, only one man has died so far. But in terms of impact, the incident has rung alarm bells across the country being reported in the global media at some length. And as the Muzaffarnagar violence at the time of the last Lok Sabha elections had shown, corroborated by subsequent communal incidents, the new strategy of those seeking to divide India on communal lines is to minimise deaths, but to exaggerate impact. Be it in the form of large scale displacement of the minorities, or widespread fear.

In the Dadri attack the intention was not displacement, but to generate fear, to terrify. Hence the singling out of the one family, and the brutal attack where Akhlaq was killed without mercy. Do not eat beef is the ostensible message.

The real message is: you are second class citizens, so you will do what you are told in India.

So what are Muslims being told in India? But before that the stereotype which is fed by an ignorant, complicit media; goes largely unchallenged by the so called regional parties as they neither have the cadres nor the organisation to do little more than listen; and that is slowly being injected as a poisonous venom into society at every available opportunity, borrowing also from the US led campaign against Muslims across the world.

1. Muslims in India are a monolith and hence dangerous;
2. At best they are of two types: the APJ Abdul Kalam variety or the Dawood Ibrahim kind. And the second are in the majority, hence have to be hunted out before they hurt others;
3. They are influenced greatly by the extremist politics of the terror groups in Pakistan and West Asia;
4. They are growing rapidly and pose a challenge to the stability of India;
5. They work against the cultural ethos of India, as they eat beef, take away our daughters, are aggressive in following their religion, and hence a threat to Hinduism;

In this discourse there is no room for the reality. That Muslims are not a monolith, and are as culturally different as all other Indians; that they are largely liberal, even if they are religious as are non-Muslims in India; that they have shunned extremist politics to a point where they vote

always for the secular option and not for the kinds of Owaisi, or the Jamaat e Islami in elections; that they have done nothing, repeat nothing, to be branded anti-national; that they too do not eat beef, and are secular and Indian as the last Indian.

And hence through the systematic, crafted, manipulated communal incidents come the many messages. Muslims are being told very deliberately, and through violence:

1. Do not marry outside your religion. The entire 'love jihad' campaign launched in Uttar Pradesh in particular by the RSS affiliates was directed at invoking terror through deliberate attacks on Hindu-Muslim couples, and on the families of the Muslim young people so involved, making it clear that this will not be tolerated;

2. Do not eat meat or beef. The central government itself passed an order against the export of beef. The Maharashtra government has gone many steps further. This should have been a message to all Indians, but through the campaign and now Akhlaq's murder it has been demonstrated that the defaulters are Muslims. Hence Muslims must follow the food code or suffer the consequences, as posts on the social media by self-acknowledged Hindutva acolytes profess in language that is abusive and vitriolic.

3. Do not live in cosmopolitan colonies, move into ghettos. Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Delhi have managed to make this a rule with most of Gujarat covered, and other cities and states following. Muslims do not easily get rented accommodation in these cities, and are also not allowed to buy property easily by the residents associations.

4. Do not become too successful economically. The communal violence has been increasingly targeting Muslim businessmen, with shops being specifically targeted. In fact the Congress government in Maharashtra also fed into this by

unleashing a wave of terror against Muslim professionals, many of whom were arrested on suspicion of having "terror links." While some were released after months and years, there are many languishing in jail for crimes that local lawyers have described as concocted.

5. And speak only when you are asked to, actually not at all. This is the message coming out of a major attack on Muslim writers, academics, intelligentsia on the social media where trolls describing themselves as bhakts of PM Narendra Modi, Hindutva acolytes and carrying profile pictures of angry gods literally abuse and threaten any one writing under a Muslim name, questioning their patriotism, their religion and their identity. In fact Muslims are repeatedly reminded when they share in democratic debate, that they should remember how other countries —Pakistan for instance— treats its minorities, and should thus follow a path of caution.

The campaign is virulent and relentless. And political parties in states going to the polls in particular are now feeling this pressure and reacting to it in some cases. In UP, Mulayam Singh and the Samajwadi party became bystanders during, before and after the Muzaffarnagar violence, doing little to counter the campaign of divisiveness unleashed by the BJP and the affiliates at the time. In Bihar, Janata Dal(U) leaders have taken cognisance of what MP Pavan Varma described to this writer, as a virulent communal campaign by the RSS and the BJP to consolidate the majority vote, and are trying to combat it. As Varma said, "RSS cadres have fanned into the districts and are working systematically to create a divide." He was optimistic, however, they would not succeed in Bihar as they had in UP, maintaining that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is alive to this and keeping a close watch.

(Courtesy: **The Citizen**)

Saffronising the institutions

Kuldip Nayar

Understandably, there is a sense of horror over the Bhartiya Janata Party government's decision to 'modernise' the Jawaharlal Nehru Museum at Tin Murti in New Delhi. The BJP spokesman has explained that the present museum tells only the Nehru side of national struggle for independence, not the entire story.

Ironically, the persons to put forward the demand are those who did not contribute even a bit to the national movement. Their role, if any, helped the British rulers.

What the BJP has in mind is to saffronise the institution. The party made a similar attempt when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was at the helm of affairs. But he firmly resisted every move to reinterpret the history. He recognised the role Nehru had played to win freedom and gave full credit to him. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is of a different kettle of fish. He openly seeks guidance from the Rashtriya Syamsewak Sangh (RSS), which runs down the national struggle because it was never part of it.

Re-doing Nehru museum under the Modi rule means the induction of outdated ideas into history. Nehru moulded the nation after independence and gave it a scientific temperament. Nehru's biggest contribution was the concept of secularism. At the time of partition when Pakistan chose to be an Islamic state, he kept India secular. Probably, this is what the BJP does not like and wants to change the very character of the museum. Why does not BJP have a separate museum where it can present the history in the way it wants to do?

Not long ago, I was at Pune and found to my dismay that the Agha Khan Palace, where the British rulers would detain the icons of our

freedom struggle, like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, has been converted into an environment park. I have no grudge against parks. But the places, consecrated by the nation's blood, should have been preserved in their original shape so that the coming generations would see them as they were. Decoration, however honest in intent, extinguishes the original spirit.

In contrast, the Jalianwala Bagh at Amritsar has been preserved as it was. It retains the air of martyrdom and still maintains the centrality of the well. When one sees it, one can imagine how the people must have jumped into it to escape the relentless firing by the British-led soldiers. Why they were punished was because of the 'humiliation' of one British woman who heard the hissing sound while passing through a bazaar. Protesters at the Jalianwala Bagh were only parading against the British rule. Theirs was a struggle for independence. Sadly, after killing hundreds of people, the remark made by one British soldier was that they wished they had more ammunition.

Indeed, places like the Jalianwala Bagh are the real temples. They remind us of the pain and pangs of our national struggle and of those who sacrificed all in the fight against the British. The places are in no way less important than the scriptures which we revere and cherish.

Unfortunately, the places of worship—temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras—are becoming more in number and vulgar in decoration. Followers mistakenly have come to believe that the use of marble or gold makes the place more endearing to worshipers.

Unfortunately, the buildings which did not

contribute even a bit to the freedom struggle have come to occupy positions of importance. Still worse are the efforts to substitute the ethos of pluralism with the ideology of parochialism. It is unthinkable how any party or person can demand a memorial for Nathuram Godse, who killed Mahatma Gandhi. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), an outfit to spread the Hindutva feelings should understand and appreciate the emotion which was misguiding the Muslims, at that time. Even if it is assumed that the Muslims knowingly marshaled behind the demand for Pakistan, how are the Indian Muslims to blame for what happened 70 years ago?

When we are not blaming the generation, which was supporting the British, why should we pick on the Muslims whose forefathers helped create Pakistan? An average Hindu has not forgiven the Muslims for the vivisection of India. At the time of tension with Pakistan, many Hindus still suspect the Muslims.

Even otherwise, the Hindus maintain distance from the Muslims. Social contacts between the two communities are more or less absent. And both live in the world of their own. It was different in my generation. We visited one another's house and ate together without feeling that we were doing anything extraordinary. Today things have changed. A Muslim woman professor told me that one day a few Hindu

girls stood up in the classroom and asked her why she was in India when she should have gone to Pakistan. None in the classroom objected to the girls' remarks. I cannot blame the educational system, but I do blame the teachers who had created such an atmosphere where the girls could ask such questions. True, the partition on the basis of religion has told upon India's ethos of secularism and lessened the importance of Muslims in the affairs of India. But this feeling goes against the letter and spirit of our constitution. We are not a Hindu *rashtra* but a secular, democratic republic as the preamble of our constitution says.

The BJP does not seem to realize that it does not have any Muslim icon in its ranks. I hope that things would change for the better. But how can they when the party wants to establish a Hindu *rashtra* and keeps the Muslim community at distance? Sadly, the party is trying to change the very ethos of our country. Even in the midst of our national struggle, we were conscious that the Pakistan sought to be constituted would be an Islamic state. Still, we declared that India, after the British left, would be a secular state and we adhered to that undertaking.

(**Kuldip Nayar** is a veteran syndicated columnist catering to around 80 newspapers and journals in 14 languages in India & abroad. kuldipnayar09@gmail.com)

Who is a revolutionary?

What is a revolution? And who is a revolutionary? A revolutionary is one who has got the idea that the world can be remade, made better than it is today; that is was not created by a supernatural power, and therefore could be remade by human efforts. A revolutionary further starts with the knowledge that the world has been remade time and again, and that the process of remaking the world takes place of necessity. Those Indians who have felt the necessity of remaking our country, and are convinced that the people of India have the power to do so, are revolutionaries. One cannot be a revolutionary, without possessing scientific knowledge. One must have the conviction that not only human beings can remake the world, can make and unmake gods, but ever since the birth of the race have been doing that. Human nature is to set up gods, topple them down, and set up new ones. - **M.N. Roy**

Statement:

Institutional Autonomy

Don't distort Nehru Museum's essential mission and autonomy, say prominent intellectuals

The role and reputation of Teen Murti are being endangered by irresponsible statements from some in government, say Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Girish Karnad, Romila Thapar and Ananya Vajpeyi.

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library bears the name of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), a political leader, intellectual, lawyer, thinker and author who became India's first Prime Minister. Beyond that, and the observance of his anniversaries, the NMML (or Teen Murti, as it is

popularly known) is unconnected with the perpetuation of his name or legacy – a task given over to bodies that are mandated to do so, like the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

Museum

The Nehru Museum, located in the former prime minister's residence on the precincts is, quite naturally, about the years he spent living in that house, which was also the period immediately following India's independence from British rule, and the first phase of the nation's life as a new republic. Nehru lived and worked from Teen Murti for close to two decades, so that his residence is full of memorabilia connected with his person, with the office of the Prime Minister, and with the history of post-colonial India until the mid-1960s.

The Nehru Museum like all museums deserves and requires periodic conservation, renovation and modernisation. According to news reports, an eminent conservation architect has been appointed to attend to this museum and a sum of Rs 10 crore set aside for this task. We welcome

such a step, long needed, to spruce up and enhance the visual, architectural and aesthetic

value of the museum buildings, campus, grounds as well as the adjacent planetarium.

However, we note with concern that there are reportedly plans afoot to transform the Nehru Museum into a "Museum of Governance", and to repurpose it to broadcast the activities of the current government.

While the government has every resource at its disposal should it want to build a Museum of Governance and use such an institution to display its own achievements, the Nehru Museum was never meant to be anything other than a museum dedicated to India's first prime Minister, his life and his times.

All around the world, houses of significant political leaders and politician-intellectuals have been converted into museums and memorials open to the public, and these act as excellent spaces in which to educate a wider citizenry about the modern history and political life of whichever country they might be located in. The Nehru Museum has exactly such a mandate and function. It must be allowed to fulfill its purpose even as decades pass and elected governments come and go.

Other museums with other goals can always be built specifically in order to showcase "governance", "space research", "smart cities", the Mars Mission or whatever other idea that the Ministry of Culture has evolved during its deliberations and which it deems worthy of a separate museum for display, memorialisation and public pedagogy.

Imposing these varied concepts on what was and remains Jawaharlal Nehru's prime ministerial residence from India's Independence until his death is, from the perspective of both history and aesthetics, anachronistic, inappropriate and unjustified.

Library

The Nehru Library has been and continues to be the country's premier research library for modern history and the social sciences. It houses the papers of a range of writers, political leaders and significant scholars belonging to the founding generations. It also has an

eclectic collection of institutional papers. Its holdings are non-partisan and reflect the broad swath of political ideologies and schools of thought that have existed and flourished in nationalist-era and independent India. The Library, unlike the Museum, is in no way

limited to Nehru's papers, Nehru's writings or scholarship that might be described as "Nehruvian".

Why are ministers, spokespersons and special appointees of the current administration making statements to the press suggesting that the Nehru Library is focused on Nehru alone? This is patently false. Students, researchers and scholars working on a spectrum of topics in the history of modern India, from anti-colonial movements to communism to the world wars to Hindu nationalism to state and regional politics to Gandhian studies to non-alignment, all need to consult the books, papers, microfilms, newspapers, archival materials and journals that are housed in the Nehru Library. This has been the case from the very inception of the library.

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library are set up in Nehru's memory and in his name, yes, but not just to remember him. To insist that these institutions are limited to one man's role or

legacy is to misunderstand both their foundational mandate as well as misrepresent their actual functioning at any point in living memory.

Institutional autonomy and public culture

We and our colleagues and students and so many others have visited and used both the museum and the library, and can vouch for their consistently ecumenical character, transcending differences of Left and Right. These are autonomous institutions and public resources, open to all Indian citizens (as well as to academic researchers from other countries who work on India), and not the property or fief of any political party, government in power, ideological cabal, or department of this or that ministry.

Further, libraries and museums such as the ones on the Teen Murti campus are not limited to being collections of papers relating to politics and politicians alone. The NMML was also intended to study the working of many aspects of modern India, most of all the intellectual traditions and thought processes that went into Indian nationalism, as well as the vigorous debates on the kind of society that we wanted to build as an independent nation. So it goes far beyond just "governance", which happens to be a buzzword of very recent vintage in government and policy circles.

Let there be bigger, better libraries, newer, more technologically advanced museums, and let the government work hard and give generously to ensure that forgotten, under-represented and neglected areas of our modern history be included, critically analysed and widely disseminated in our national institutions of research and pedagogy. The academic community, parents, teachers and scholars are sure to welcome such steps, if they are taken now or in the future.

But Teen Murti's essential task, standing and autonomy must not be impaired or distorted. We fear that the NMML's role and reputation are endangered by the sorts of irresponsible statements emanating from some sections of the government. A public debate involving historians,

conservationists, educationists, cultural decision-makers and other stakeholders must be had before any changes are authorised to one of our most valued institutions of higher learning.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Girish Karnad, Romila Thapar and Ananya Vajpeyi



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Minorities integral part of India

Rajindar Sachar

A nauseating attack by BJP, R.S.S. loyalists has been set in motion about the speech by Vice President Mr. Hamid Ansari (at the function of golden jubilee celebrations of the All India Majlis-e-Mushawarat). I was myself present there. The speech only posed various issues and important policy matters both internally for Muslims themselves and the obligations by the State, which are discussed every day in press and public meeting all over the country.

The communal critics have in this matter shown their bankruptcy of knowledge of Indian constitution which gives primacy to the protection of Rights of Minorities, and also of States obligations under law. The 9 judge Bench of Supreme Court highlighted profound policy statements as follows:-

“The purpose of law in plural societies is not the progressive assimilation of the minorities in the majoritarian milieu. This would not solve the problem; but would vainly seek to dissolve it..... The purpose of the law must be not to extinguish the groups which make the society but to devise political, social and legal means of preventing them from falling apart and so destroying the plural society of which they are members.”

Thus inclusive development in India and for that matter in any country alone is the path to prosperity. It is an undeniable truth and needs to be irrevocably accepted by all in India, namely that minorities, Muslims and Christians are not outsiders. They are an integral part of India. Let me quote what Swami Vivekanand, one of the greatest spiritual personalities of India, has to say of the intimate connection between the spirit of Islam and Hinduism thus, “He also told Hindus not to talk of the superiority of one

religion over another. Even toleration of other faiths was not right; it smacked of blasphemy. For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems Hinduism and Islam – Vedanta brain and Islam body - is the only hope..... the future perfect India.” There thus can be no real progress in India which does not include minorities, Muslims, Christians as equal stakeholders.

In this connection it heartening to find confirmation of these principles of equal development of majority and Minority as laid down by U. N. Human Right Council, Forum on Minority issued on December 14th, 15th, 2010 as follows:

“The Council emphasizes: “Consequently, the right of minorities to participate effectively in economic life must be fully taken into account by governments seeking to promote equality at every level. From implementing non - discrimination in employment and enforcing protection laws in the private sector to developing national economic development and international development assistance schemes.”

“Governments can consider both targeted and inclusive approaches to addressing the economic and social exclusion of minorities. Targeted approaches aim at programme or project outcomes specifically at minorities, whereas inclusive approaches integrate minorities in a wider focus population for programme or project outcomes. If existing policies are not benefiting minorities equally or gaps in inequality are growing, targeted approaches should be considered. Decisions on policy choices should be made with the full and effective participation of all minority groups, should be transparent, and where

possible, should be supported by disaggregated data demonstrating existing inequalities.”

“Governments should gather and regularly publicize disaggregated data to measure and monitor the effective participation of minorities in economic life. Improved data collection should be made a priority for the areas of employment and labour rights, poverty rates, access to social security, access to credit and other financial services, education and training, and property and land tenure rights.”

In the report of working group on Minorities formed by U.N. Sub Commission on Protection of Minorities, it was the unanimous view that the assimilative approach was not one promoted by the United Nations, and that formal recognition of minorities is the first crucial step towards their effective participation in society. This means not only participation in governance, but also involvement in the economy. Also accepted was the need for multi-lingual education and respect for cultural identity of minorities and the need to ensure fair representation of minorities within the law enforcement system and the workplace (emphasis supplied). The basic task is to reconcile the pluralism which then exists in that State, and the need to respect the identity of the various groups, with the overall concerns of non-discrimination, equality, national security, territorial integrity, and political independence.

The above declaration is a forthright rebuke to all those mischievous quarters who propagate that government actions at highlighting the condition of minorities is in any way divisive.

Thus the same vision was emphasized by our founding fathers/mothers of Indian Constitution. In the Fundamental Rights Chapter in Part III of our Constitution specifically provides vide

Articles 25 to 30 the various rights and privileges for the minorities such as:

- i) Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
- ii) Freedom to manage religious affairs.
- iii) Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.
- iv) Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.
- v) Protection of interests of minorities.
- vi) Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

This was so done because it is universally established that the faith and the confidence of the Minorities in the impartial and even functioning of the State is the acid test of being civilized State. This is accepted wisdom, and was expressed succinctly by Lord Acton as follows:

“A state which is incompetent to satisfy different races condemns itself; a state which labours to neutralize, to absorb or to expel them is destitute of the chief basis of self-government” - we need only substitute minorities for races in the above quotation to apply the test in India.

It is possible that Modi with RSS breathing down his neck may be powerless to take action against R.S.S. imposed BJP General Secretary Kailash Vijayawargiya. But he should in all propriety and decorum publicly condemn and disassociate himself from this communal low level and false allegation by General Secretary of the Party whose government he heads. This again is *Raj Dharma*, of which he was so strongly reminded by the then Prime Minister Vajpayee in the year 2002.

(Justice Rajindar Sachar was Chief Justice, High Court of Delhi and President, PUCL, India. **rsachar1@vsnl.net; sachar23@bol.net.in)**

Dear BJP, I am Hindu and I Reject Hindutva
**Don't teach me about my religion, how I should dress,
how I should worship or what I should eat.**

Suchitra Krishnamoorthi

I am like most other urban Indians. Apolitical. Or non political. A novice. An outsider. But a well wisher. Because I love my India.

And like most other urban Indians, other than election time, when we dutifully go and cast our votes silently, politics has no impact on our lives. Yes we gasp over scams and purported stories, but just as quickly dust the sand off our feet and move on. Politics never enters our homes - certainly not our bedrooms and kitchens. Yes we cursed much when Shiv Sena changed our beloved Bombay's name to Mumbai when they came to power in 1995, but quickly saw the rationale behind the move. Desi euphoria and jingoism bloomed. With the luxury of life digested with a silver spoon, it was easy to see the virtue behind a Shivaji statue.

Even when vehicles were set ablaze in Marathi Manoos prejudice and Biharis asked to return to their home state, we ignored them with the hope that sense would soon prevail. It didn't. Sadly. Hindutva ideology had started to seep in. To even the most neutral amongst us, it was unacceptable.

Never mind the disappointment. Manmohan Singh is a brilliant economist and will herald a new India we were told. After all as India's finance minister in the 90's, he had introduced to us the concept of India shining. But his failure as prime minister that he was ushered into in 2004 was soon apparent - what was the power Sonia Gandhi wielded over him? OMG and why? What on earth for? Why did he look like a deer trapped under the headlights?

Sycophancy was the giant ogre in this Congress government - everybody was getting swallowed and the whole country was dying. An Italian accent became the most despised sound in the Indian psyche - even senior leaders like Digvijaya Singh had fallen into the Gandhi scion brainwash. Rahul Gandhi? Really? But Pappu can't dance saala. Oh and not to forget that Vadera boy. What did Priyanka see in him ya? Looks like a total goonda and how did his whole family die so mysteriously ya? OMG? What? *Forbes* has listed Sonia Gandhi as the third richest woman in the world? Baapre! And she still wears those cheap cotton sarees? What an actress ya. Better than Shabana Azmi!

Uff India and its Bollywood fixation. Anyway to cut a long story short, when it was time to re-elect a new government in 2014, I, like most other urban Indians reeling under the corruption of dynastic politics and a failed Congress government, was filled with hope. Hope for a new India. Hope for change. Hope that things will finally get better.

Arvind Kejriwal and his Gandhi delusion (remember how he went on a fast every time and for anything and tried to project that he is a Mahatma Gandhi reincarnate while trying to hide the fact that he is CIA (Ford Foundation) funded? Of course, his common man phonyism gave away his own opportunistic game way too soon and he fell by the wayside. Phew! He was India's first anti-corruption hope dashed. Who could we turn to?

Narendra Modi-led BJP seemed like the only hope in April-May 2014. Were we

wrong to expect? India was desperate. We needed a leader. Badly. We needed progress. We needed a semblance of honesty. We desperately needed hope again. It came in the form of Narendra Modi. Brilliantly packaged. Karmachari. Brahmachari. Sanskaari.

So well was the Gujarat model marketed that Modi became the one man capable of delivering us – India – into the future. A future built on the foundation of tradition. Indian tradition. As anti-Italian as one could get.

The fact that the only other prior perception the public had of BJP as a party was its Karnataka ministers – CC Patil and Laxman Savadi watching porn in Assembly in 2012, or the ban on women wearing jeans in the state and being beaten for consuming alcohol, but all that was soon obliterated by Modi's own five-star charisma and his PR machinery. If anybody deserves an Oscar for PR, it is indeed Sri Narendra Modi's team.

So, swayed by a desperate hope as we were, longing, pleading and begging for a better India as we were, I, like every other urban Indian, even went out on a limb urging my friends and family to vote for Narendra Modi. Stated on social media that Narendra Modi's greatest ally was Rahul Gandhi. And I wasn't wrong.

The BJP government won because we Indians had become so sooooo Gandhi family intolerant - any alternative seemed like manna from heaven in comparison.

Had the Congress propped some other leader of calibre other than the *gora chitta* Rahul Gandhi or his Maa, the votes would have been divided. But Rahul sealed it. BJP owes him a lot for their victory.

But what have they done with their victory?

It's been disappointing to say the least. Not just disappointing. Annoying. Frightening. Unacceptable. Totally. Totally, totally unacceptable. Despicable really.

I remember whilst urging my friends to vote for Narendra Modi, a Muslim friend had joked that if BJP comes to power he will have to get on a boat to Karachi. So real loomed the spectre of the Godhra riots in everyone's head, and so real the feeling of Muslim persecution. Was he wrong?

At that point I had reprimanded my Muslim friend that his fear arose from the fact that his allegiance was with the Islamic state in the first place; so he shouldn't use the minority card to gain undeserved rights and privileges. If Karachi is emotionally a boat-ride away, surely it's where he belonged?" You don't understand SK," he sighed. In retrospect I think he might have been right.

Reservation and minority status for the Muslims in my view was nothing but vote bank politics. The Congress party's policy of divide and rule. But hey... I admit, I don't really understand everything. Like I said I'm a novice. But hey. I'm also an artist enough to understand that even a novice is entitled to her worldview and I'm common enough to understand that I express what a large number of people feel but are unable to elucidate. So, here goes.

It's been barely over a year of the BJP government and just how disappointed are we? God OMG - more than disappointed, I believe. We are shocked and hoping it's still all a mistake. Did we ever imagine we are voting for a despotic fascist regime? What exactly is going on? WTF!

Beef Ban – Dear BJP! Can you please

explain what wrong did the chicken or the goat do that they deserve to be killed and not the cow? Yes, yes, Congress imposed it before you, but how come they didn't bombard it on us as much as you? Why am I suddenly feeling embarrassed about being a Hindu?

Meat Ban – Yes, you want revenge and one-upmanship on your Congress counterparts and distract us from the fact that you are failing completely in governance. Farmer suicides, rape, children dying by falling into potholes, Gajendra Chauhan ... need I say more! **Meat ban looks like a cheap shot at making us forget about the governance failure on all counts.**

Did you say sedition charges were to be slapped against those who dare to speak up!!! I mean really? I dare you, seriously.

And what was that drivel about eliminating western culture and reclaiming Indian culture?

What exactly do you mean by that dear education minister (HRD), Smriti Irani, you who is not even sure of what education degree you have acquired yourself or in what language? For someone, who doesn't herself know if she is a BA by correspondence or a B Com by imagination, is not likely to know the difference between Hinduism and Hindutva, does she now?

Hinduism is a philosophy. The doctrine of which allows me the choice of acceptance or rejection. Ram or Ganpati or even atheism.

Upanishads or Gita or *tantra* or mantra. Hindutva, on the other hand, is militant imposition of wrongly interpreted tenets of Hinduism. Hindutva is a political tool - nothing to do with the religion itself.

I'm not showing off or being patronising, I promise you. My grandfather and my ancestors were temple priests - my father still recites the Vedas verbatim. My sister recites them without having ever studied them - it is so in my bloodline. That's how Hindu my lineage is.

So do not teach me about my own religion, dear BJP. Don't tell me how I should think. Who I should worship. How I should dress or what I should eat.

I am a Hindu - by definition purer and a higher form than you can ever be - and I reject your Hindutva. Just as Islam must reject the Taliban or ISIS.

To be a Hindu is to be tolerant. It's why we have survived as a race in spite of invasion, conversion and unimaginable attempted destruction. If you do not understand that tolerance or exercise that compassion so intrinsic to our religion, you do not deserve to call yourself Hindu. Or a leader of a democratic nation.

So dear BJP. I reject your Hindutva. I reject your fascism. I reject your despotism.

Dare me if you will. For I speak for all of India. Mind it!

“The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything, that is done in a public way, by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing.” **Justice K K Mathew**, former Judge, Supreme Court of India, (1975)

The Truth about The Gita

By Late V R Narla*



V.R. Narla

(On 30th August 2015 Prof. M.M. Kalburgi, a renowned rationalist scholar and former Vice-Chancellor of Hampi University, Karnataka was shot dead at his residence. Co-Convenor of the Bajrang Dal's Bantwal cell, Bhuvith Shetty, welcomed the assassination of M.M. Kalburgi. Earlier a leading rationalist and anti-superstition activist Dr. Narendra Dabholkar was murdered in Pune on 20th August 2013 and another left leader and outspoken critic of Hindutva, Govind Pansare was murdered in Kolhapur on 20th February 2015. All these had the courage to speak the unsavoury truth based on their research without fear of consequences. All of them are suspected to have been killed by right wing religious extremists. With the BJP government at the Centre providing tacit support, right wing Hindutva elements are emboldened and are increasingly coming out openly against persons who are merely critical of Hinduism.

Human rights activists have strongly condemned the killing of Kalburgi and earlier those of Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare. As a mark of respect to these scholars and rational thinkers, and our commitment to rationalist thinking and also upholding the cause of freedom of speech and expression as granted by the Indian Constitution, we are publishing some chapters from the book 'The Truth about the Gita' written by late V.R. Narla, also a great scholar and rationalist, beginning with the September issue of The Radical Humanist. – Editor)

A Doubtful War

“The word Mahabharatha”, wrote Edward Washburn Hopkins, “is used by Panini, but only as an adjective which might be applied to anything great, connected with the Bharathas, a hero or town, as well as a war or poem”. There can be no doubt that the Mahabharatha is a great poem regarding the Bharathas. As we have it today, it is “about eight times the size of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together”². But can it also be taken to mean a great war that was fought on the plain of Kurukshetra between the Bharathas, that is, between the Kurus and Pandus? There are very many reasons to hold that no such war was fought and they can be said down serially:

(1) While the Kurus are well known to the Vedic literature, the Pandus are not. As was

pointed out by Hopkins, who made a special study of the *Mahabharatha* they do not find a place even in the *Brahmanas* and *Sudras*. This was specially emphasized by Max Muller. He said:

The names of the Kurus and Bharathas are common in Vedic literature but the names of the Pandavas have never been met with. It has been observed that even in Panini's grammar the name Pandu or Pandava does not occur, while the Kurus and Bharatas are frequently mentioned particularly in rules treating of the formation of patronymics and similar words.

This means that even during the lifetime of Panini, that is, during the middle of the fifth

century, B.C.,’ the Pandavas were unknown.

(2) When the *Rig veda* takes notice of a local and tribal war fought between Sudas, the king of the Bharatas, and a confederacy of ten kings on the banks of Parushani (the modern Ravi)⁶, surely a war on a national scale, indeed, on an international scale as the *Mahabharata* would have us believe, could not have been left unrecorded in the whole corpus of the Vedic literature. To quote Max Muller again:

The war between the Kurus and Pandavas, which forms the principal subject of the Mahabharata, is unknown to the Veda’.

(3) Kurukshetra is frequently mentioned in the Vedic literature as a holy place but never as a battlefield’.

(4) Vyasa and Vaisampayana figure in the ‘Taittiriya’ ‘Aranyaka’ but not as the first two authors of the *Mahabharata*’.

(5) In the *Kathaka Samhita* there is a specific reference to a Kuru king named Dhritarashtra, but that reference is not in the context of the Kurukshetra War; it pertains to a ritual dispute between Dhritarashtra and his priest.¹⁰

(6) Parikshit is praised in the Atharva Veda as the ruler of a prosperous kingdom; Janamejaya is lauded in the *Sathapatha Brahman* as a performer of sacrifices and a lavish giver of gifts to priests. But neither is specifically mentioned as a descendent of Arjuna”.

(7) In the *Mahabharata* Arjuna is the natural son of Indra but in the ‘Satapatha Brahmana’, he is Indra himself 2.

(8) An *akshauhini* (an army corps) consists of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 65,610 horses and 1,09,350 foot-soldiers”. It is said that as many as eighteen *akshauhinis*

were assembled on the plain of Kurukshetra, eleven by the Kurus and seven by the Pandus. The assembly of such a mammoth force is not easy even today, and impossible in the ancient times. Moreover, no single battlefield can hold such a gigantic force”

(9) The total number of horses in the Kurukshetra War works out to be 11,80,980. And yet, strangely we do not hear of any major cavalry engagement. Now, the number of foot-soldiers is of the order of almost two millions. In spite of it, the role of infantry in the war is nebulous. But references to single combats are plenty. It is, therefore, quite reasonable to presume that the war, if it was fought, comprised mostly single combats, as it was the general practice among all primitive peoples.

(10) On a very liberal estimate the total number of participants in the war could not have been more than four millions. (In arriving at this figure two men for each chariot and two for each elephant are allowed.) And yet, the total number of the dead exceeded 1660 millions¹⁶. So we have to presume that each combatant died more than four hundred times !

(11) In the age in which the Kurukshetra War is said to have been fought, the weaponry was crude, and no great war can be fought with crude weaponry. In this context, it should be noted that even the Harappans with a higher civilization used as their weaponry only stones and slings, clumsy axes and arrowheads made of copper, bronze and stone.

(12) Iron weapons, which are essential for a major war, could not have played any significant part in the Kurukshetra War. Iron came into general use in India only after the sixth century B.C., and it was definitely unknown before the eleventh century B.C. “.

(13) Magadha was held to be non-Aryan and hence an impure region till a fairly late date.

So, too, was all land that lies to the south of the Vindhyas. Because of this, neither Magadha nor any of the South Indian kingdoms could have, as it is claimed, taken part in the Kurukshetra War.

(14) When communications were primitive, transport of large armies from distant places in India and abroad would have posed insurmountable obstacles.

(15) It is simply absurd to say, as it is done in the Mahabharata, that Bhagadatta, the king of Pragjyothisha (Assam) played an important role in the Kurukshetra war.^{1e} He does not figure in the Vedic literature, either the earlier one or the later. Even Panini of the fifth century B.C., shows no knowledge of him.

(16) A more absurd thing is to say that the Yavanas the Sakas and the Pahlavas fought on the side of the Kurus. None of these peoples had any active role in Indian history before, say, the fifth century B.C.

Many more points can be adduced to doubt the historicity of the Kurukshetra War. But I will make just one more. The army assembled for the war, it is stated consisted of eighteen *akshauhnis*; the duration of the war was eighteen days; of the active combatants, the survivors after the war on the side of the Pandavas were six, that is, one-third of eighteen, and three on the side of the Kurus, that is one-sixth of eighteen; Yudhishtara ruled for thirty-six years, that is twice eighteen; Krishna died thirty-six years after the Kurukshetra War, that is, again, twice eighteen; the epic which records the war has eighteen cantos and even the chapters of the Gita are eighteen. This cannot be something fortuitous. Some superstitious fellow, who was a believer in numerology and had a hand in the redaction of the *Mahabharata*, must have contrived this silly nonsense.

In view of these and other considerations, not a few men of eminence questioned the historicity of the Kurukshetra War.

I will refer only to some of them. R.G. Bhandarkar, one of the earliest historians of modern India, much respected for his sound scholarship and sober judgment, had no doubt in his mind that not only the *Mahabharata* but also the *Ramayana* and the *Puranas* (mythologies) were not historical works.¹⁹ Time and again he bemoaned why modern education was not instilling into us the modern spirit, the spirit that questions everything and puts everything to the test of reason before accepting it as truth.

Another historian and a junior contemporary of Bhandarkar, R.C. Dutt, went a step further; he stated that “the incidents of the war in the *Mahabharata* were undoubtedly mythical.” He also thought that “the five Pandava brothers and their common wife were myths.”²⁰ Dutt may not have been a specialist in history as Bhandarkar was. But he had the distinction of translating the Rig Veda into Bengali, defying the hue and cry raised against him by the orthodox folk as to how a Sudra dare go anywhere near the Vedas. And his abridged translations of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* into English are still rated high. So, Dutt should have spoken with knowledge and conviction when he dismissed the Kurukshetra War and the Pandavas and their joint wife as fictitious.

Much earlier than either Dutt or Bhandarkar, Rammohan Roy had drawn pointed attention to one of the opening verses of the *Mahabharata*. In that verse Vyasa calls his epic “a work of imagination.” After having acquainted himself thoroughly with the scriptures of all the major religions of the world, and having initiated a new branch of study which has since come to be known as “Comparative Religion”, Roy placed

no value on the Gita. In his voluminous writings on religion he ignored it almost totally.

Unlike Roy, Gandhi valued the Gita greatly. “Gita”, he said “has been a Mother to me ever since I became first acquainted with it in 1889.⁷² Even so, he had serious doubts about the historicity of the *Mahabharata*. He thought that the battle which formed, so to say, the backdrop to the Gita was none other than the battle that goes on all the time in every individual between the forces of good and evil.

Years earlier to Gandhi, Vivekananda took exactly the same stand. He said:

There is enough ground of doubt as regards the historicity of Arjuna and others, and it is this: Shatapatha Brahmana is a very ancient book. In

it are mentioned somewhere or other all the names of those who were the performers of the Ashva-medha Yajna but in those places there is not only no mention, but no hint even, of the names of Arjuna and others, though it speaks of Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, who was grandson of Arjuna.

Yet in the *Mahabharata* and other books it is stated that Yudhisthira, Arjuna and others celebrated the Ashvamedha sacrifice.”²³

Despite all this, Vivekananda thought, like Gandhi, that the mythical nature of the *Mahabharata*, does not take away the value of the epic as a whole, or its most important section, the Gita. It is a stand that cannot be accepted without demur. Surely, if Arjuna was mythical, his alter ego, Krishna, cannot be historical personage. And if both were mythical, how could one discourse to the other? And if some nameless author or authors fabricated the Gita and interpolated with into the *Mahabharata*, how can it be called the “Song Celestial or the Divine Lay”?

Traditionalists - they are always with us in their serried ranks, and their ranks consist not only of the illiterate but also of the highly learned-, including many scientists and philosophers - well, our traditionalists may dismiss Dutt and Bhandarkar as historians of yester year; they may maintain that while Roy and Vivekananda and Gandhi might have made history, each in his own way, they were no historians. But can they deny the standing or stature of that multi-faceted genius, D.D. Kosambi, as a historian? A mathematician of international repute, he applied scientific methods to the study of Indian coins. He brought to bear the Marxist approach on Indian history. Though our professional historians did their best, first to ignore him, and then to ridicule him, towards the closing stages of his life, and more so, after his death at the age of 58, he came to be recognized as a trend-setter. Apart from his keen perceptions, his capacity to combine many disciplines, and his power to understand the workings of historical forces in shaping the life and thought of a people, he was a man of intellectual integrity. He stated his convictions clearly, sincerely, boldly. Before I finish, I will have occasion to quote from his writings quite often. For the time being, let us hear what he said about our epics:

From our material it is still impossible to say where the great theme-battles of the two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were fought, let alone when — if indeed they represent any historical events at all.‘

Returning to the subject some years later he had no more lingering doubts and referred to the Kurukshetra War as “this fictitious great war.”⁵

Now we may turn our attention to a couple of living historians, D.C. Sirkar and H.D. Sankalia. To be sure, the former is primarily a specialist

in epigraphy and the latter in archaeology. But neither subject can be mastered without a firm grounding in history. Both of them are fully convinced that in case the Kurukshetra War really took place, it was no more than a family or tribal feud. Some of the points which I made in the opening part of this chapter are based on their writings; those who are interested can refer to their contributions to the co-operative study entitled *Mahabharata: Myth and Reality*, edited by S.P. Gupta and K.S. Ramachandran.'

Personally, this study has left me a sad man. For it is clearly indicative of the crushing weight of tradition - *silly tradition, dead tradition* — on the Hindu mind. Out of its forty-one contributors, not even half a dozen show any capacity to think boldly, rationally, originally. And one or two of them have such a fuddled mind as to argue in all seriousness that what millions and millions of people believed for thousands of years as true cannot be fictitious. By the same token, we have to accept the widely prevalent belief over the ages that the eclipses of the sun and the moon are caused by those two impish demons; Rahu and Ketu.

Are our minds so conditioned by our puerile

Puranas that we can be fooled by any fantastic nonsense? Is there something basically wrong with our national psyche? I am pretty sure that most of the contributors to *Mahabharata: Myth and Reality* fast during an eclipse and take a bath at its end, feeling joyous that by their piety they saved the sun or the moon from mortal danger. It is significant that the sub-title of their co-operative study is not "Myth or Reality" but "Myth and Reality". It is a clear proof that they were born as believers, grew up as believers and one day will die as believers. They are incapable of doubting, of questioning and of putting anything to the acid test of reason. In their view, to doubt any old belief is to be an infidel, to question it is to be guilty of sacrilege, to seek to put it to the test of reason is to condemn oneself to a long term in hell. It is mostly these folk that are in charge of our universities, our national laboratories, our technological institutions, and to our shame, even of our government at every level. I know that these are strong words, perhaps harsh words, but they are, I submit, not uncalled for in view of the credulity, bordering on imbecility, which is so much in evidence in every sphere of our national life today.

What Mahatma Gandhi Said to Those Who Wanted Beef Banned in India

In India no law can be made to ban cow-slaughter.

I do not doubt that Hindus are forbidden the slaughter of cows.

I have been long pledged to serve the cow but how can my religion also be the religion of the rest of the Indians?

It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus.

I have been long pledged to serve the cow but how can my religion also be the religion of the rest of the Indians?

It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus.

(Excerpt from Gandhi's prayer discourse of July 25, 1947, from the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Volume 88, as published online by the Gandhi Heritage Portal.)

THE ROAD BEHIND AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar

(Since the BJP led government has taken over at the centre, the forces of Hindutva have started raising their communal agenda. On more than one occasion, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS supremo, has said that Hindustan (and not 'Bharat' as the Constitution calls us) means the land of the Hindus and all those living in it are Hindus. A few days after asking why all Hindustanis (Indians) should not be referred to as "Hindus," the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghchalak again on 17th August 2014, minced no words in stating that "Hindutva is the identity of India and it has the capacity to swallow other identities." "We just need to restore those capacities," he added. More than one minister in various BJP governments in the States has said that the Modi government will lead the nation towards the formation of the 'Hindu Rashtra'. The forces of intolerance have become more aggressive and the secular fabric of our multi-cultural society has come under serious threat. Hence the debate on the secular character of our country, as mandated by our Constitution, has again begun afresh. It has become all the more important for us to understand what secularism really means and how we can protect it.

Late Justice R.A. Jahagirdar, a leading Radical Humanist like Justice V.M. Tarkunde, both of whom valued secularism as an essential ingredient of a truly democratic society, gave three important lectures on Secularism. As part of the ongoing debate, we are publishing all the three lectures. The first one 'Secularism Revisited' has already been published in the February 2015 to May 2015 issues of The Radical Humanist. The following is the second one, being the inaugural address given at the International Convention on Secularism held on 14th January, 2005 at Hyderabad, India. – Editor)

Before I proceed to deal with the subject of my talk today, I think it necessary to make a reference to a contemporary event which has a relevance to the topic of my talk. The contemporary event I am referring to is the arrest of Jayendra Saraswati styled as the Shankaracharya of Kamkoti Peetham. Adya Shankaracharya established four monasteries (*mutts*) at four places in India; Badrinath,

Dwaraka, Puri and Shringeri. The priests heading these Mutts have been traditionally dubbed as Shankaracharyas. Kamkoti Mutt is not the one established by Adya Shankaracharya. However, the Hindus, at least in the South, have been revering the head of this mutt as a Shankaracharya. Mutts are monasteries and not temples, though a temple may be attached to a monastery. Heads of these mutts are concerned with religious affairs only and are not expected to dabble in political affairs.

2. The last incumbent of the office of Shankaracharya of Kanchi was Chandrashekar Saraswati who had the reputation of being a very learned person. Though many politicians came to him to pay their respects, he never took interest in politics; he never made any comments on political affairs. He lived up to the age of 100 years. Though during his lifetime, the Ayodhya problem had arisen, Chandrashekar Saraswati never gave advice – gratuitous or otherwise- on its solutions.

3. Not so the present incumbent. He had hobnobbed with politicians and has meddled in

Ayodhya affairs. Let us leave aside this activity of his. Recently he has been arrested by Tamil Nadu police in connection with the murder of an inmate of the mutt. Being a lawyer I am proceeding on the assumption that he is presumed to be innocent until it is proved to the contrary. This does not mean that he cannot be proceeded against if there are grounds for doing so.

4. The BJP has, not unexpectedly, tried to exploit this incident by raising a cry that this is an attack on Hinduism. In the case of its own leaders against whom criminal cases are pending and who were included in the Central Cabinet, former Prime Minister Vajpayee had insisted that one could not proceed on the assumption that they were guilty and that law will take its own course. Why not allow law to take its own course in the case of Jayendra Saraswati? The Pope can commit no error - Shankaracharya cannot commit any wrong!

5. Incomprehensibly the Prime Minister has advised the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to take care to see that the feelings of the followers of Jayendra Saraswati are not hurt or that the daily worship in the mutt is not affected. This is a most uncalled for concern for a person against whom secular process has been set in motion. One would have thought that the Prime Minister would have advised to see that the law would be allowed to take its course, however high the person concerned is.

6. The advice of our Prime Minister is in sharp contrast to the wise counsel President John Kennedy gave to the American citizens who were agitated by the opinion given by the US Supreme Court in *Engel vs Vitale* (370 US 421 : 1962). In view of the wall of separation between the State and the Church by the First Amendment in the US Constitution, the US Supreme Court, through Justice Hugo Black, held that even optional prayers in aided schools were impermissible. There was a furious

reaction on the part of a section of Americans that the judges who gave this opinion should resign; if they do not, they should be impeached. President Kennedy called upon the Americans to accept the decision which was a “welcome reminder to every American family that we can pray a good deal more at home and to attend our Churches with a good deal more of fidelity and we can make the true meaning of prayer more important in the lives of all our citizens”.

(*The First Freedom* by Net Hentoff: Delacarte Press, New York p.156).

7. It is interesting to note that Justice Hugo Black was a devout Christian and was a Sunday school teacher but yet he upheld the doctrine of separation of the Church and the State enshrined in the US Constitution. Despite the alleged dissatisfaction of the Americans with this provision as interpreted by the US Supreme Court, there has not been any demand, let alone a move, to amend the Constitution to put God in the Constitution. The American Constitution is fully secular, though the American society may not be.

8. Forgive me for returning to the South Indian scene. Ramaswamy Naicker - called Periyar by his followers - started in the 1920s what is regarded as the atheist movement. It was Dravid Kazagam. It was also called self-respect movement aimed at anti-Brahmanism and anti-Aryanism. A significant number of people broke away from Dravid Kazagam (for reasons not examined here) to form Dravid Munnetra Kazagam under the leadership of C. Annadurai, a charismatic leader who continued to swear by rationalism and atheism. Unfortunately he passed away early.

9. His successors and followers have completely forgotten the legacy of Periyar and “Anna”. The main branch of DMK’s division came to be led by M. G. Ramchandran, a popular

film star, who was succeeded by J. Jayalalithaa who is the present Chief Minister. Both these leaders said good bye to both atheism and rationalism. MGR worshipped at the temples and went to pray at Mukambika temple in Mangalore District and presented a silver sword to the goddess. Jayalalithaa has repeated this act of devotion of her mentor. In addition she has been worshipping at different temples, has donated an elephant to Guruvayur temple at Kerala and has, as acts of piety, been feeding the Brahmins.

10. Her rival, M. Karunandhi, heading the DMK has not shown any signs of rationalism or atheism in his private or public life or in his writings.

11. I have taken the trouble of preferring my today's talk with this short account of what once promised to be a great secular, rationalist and atheist movement in the south. The south has gone sacred; not secular.

12. What is the cause of the decline and fall of this movement? I venture to suggest one explanation. Unquestionably and even unabashedly the foundation – *raison d'être* - of this movement was anti-Brahmanism. Its aim was to destroy - not unjustifiably - the dominance of Brahmins in public life and more particularly in politics. That aim has been achieved - not entirely by this movement. The movement which never had a nucleus of sound rationalist philosophy found itself aimless once the substratum of Brahmin dominance was destroyed. This is unlike the organization of atheism founded by Gora. This had always a sound philosophical, positive base and did not have, at least as its main plank, anti-Brahmanism or anti-Aryanism.

13. **The subject of the convention is: "What is secularism - Contemporary world situation".**

14. I will deal with the first part briefly; I will deal with the secular scenario in India in details. As we are all aware the word secularism was coined by George Holyoake (1817-1906) while publishing a statement of secular doctrine in an issue of "Reasoner" in 1851. Oxford English Dictionary rightly credits George Holyoake with the parentage of this word. **The OED states that secularism is the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well being of mankind in the present life to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in god or in a future state (emphasis added).** Holyoake did not merely coin the phrase; he gave the name to the definitely professed system of doctrine of which the following principles were enunciated by Holyoake.

1. Science as the true guide of man.
2. Morality as secular, not religious in origin.
3. reason the only authority.
4. freedom of thought and speech
5. owing to the "uncertainty of survival" we should direct our efforts to this life only.

15. A necessary corollary that follows from the principles enunciated by Holyoake and from the doctrine of secularism in general is that **the affairs of this world should not be governed or guided by religious doctrines or considerations of other worldliness. When an individual orders his life on these lines, he is a secularist, when the society as a whole or an overwhelming member of the society follows these principles, we would call it a secular society (emphasis added).** However, secularism cannot be imposed upon individuals or members of a society by law.

16. But law can be made that the affairs of a state shall not be regulated by God or any propositions following from the concept of the existence of God. **Laws should not derive their legitimacy from the teachings of**

religion. No religion should be allowed to occupy any space which belongs to secular life. From this it follows that the State shall not directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, bring religion into public life in the governance of the country. No citizen shall enjoy a benefit or suffer a handicap on account of his religious beliefs or on account of lack of such beliefs (*emphasis added*). The Constitution of the United States of America incorporated these principles. Even before the First Amendment, the US Constitution provided that

No religious test or qualification was required to hold any public office.

Any person entering upon a public office can take an oath by swearing in the name of God or if he so desires by solemn affirmation.

Students of atheism in England will easily recall the case of Charles Bradlaugh who, when elected to the House of Commons, was not allowed to take seat in the House without taking the oath and was not allowed to take the oath because he was an atheist.

17. The US Constitution came into force in 1789 but within two years thereafter came the First Amendment which provided as follows.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.-

In 1801 Thomas Jefferson opined that the purpose of this amendment was to build “a wall of separation between the Church and State”. In 1879 the US Supreme Court accepted Jefferson’s statement as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the First Amendment. [Reynolds vs US: 98 US 145(1879)]. Religion shall not enter the portals of public institutions or aided private institutions. The US State is thus a Secular State; a Secular

State was born without its name because the word secular itself was not then born.

But the American society, by no stretch of imagination can be called secular. Witness: the public utterances of the people in power; the plethora of cults; religious fundamentalism; and evangelical organizations.

18. By a gradual process of secularization after the Revolution of 1789, France evolved into a secular state. By the law of separation of Church and State passed on 11th December 1905, the French Republic has become fully secular so much so that no religious symbols are allowed to be displayed in public places. It is apprehended that the Muslim population, though small, is proving a challenge to French secularism.

19. Republic of Turkey is the third State which can be said to be totally secular. Coming into absolute power after the Second World War, Kemal Pasha abolished the Caliphate in March 1924 and took several steps to abolish religion from public life. Some of the steps taken by him to establish secularism included the abolition of religious schools, replacement of Shariat Law by Swiss Civil Code, Italian Penal Code and German Commercial Code and banning of Polygamy. Though Secular State in Turkey has survived for over 80 years, in recent years in keeping with the trends abroad, Islamic fundamentalism is raising its head. The present Prime Minister is of doubtful loyalty to secular ideals. Only the national need of becoming a member of European Union has kept Turkey’s secularism alive.

20. Despite the politicians’ proclamation of India being a secular state and despite some judgments of the Supreme Court of India, it must be stated that India is not a secular state properly understood. There is, no doubt, religious freedom but there

is no freedom from religion (*emphasis added*). There is prohibition of taxes being levied for specifically meeting the expenses of promotion of a religion or for maintaining any religion (Article 27 of the Constitution of India) but this does not prevent the State from utilizing the money from the general exchequer for religious purposes. An educational institution wholly maintained out of state funds cannot impart religious instructions (Article 28). In India only the Government and Municipal institutions are wholly maintained out of public funds. Every private educational institution receives grant from the State, often to the extent of 80% of its expenses. Such private institutions are free to impart religious instruction the nature of which remains vague. Such institutions can hold religious worship such as *Satya Narayan Pooja* which is becoming popular or organize religious discourses or group singing (bhajans).

21. These and other provisions of the Indian Constitution persuaded Prof. Donald E Smith of Princeton University to suggest a working definition of Indian Secularism as follows:

The Secular State is a State which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion.

(*India as a Secular State: 1963 Princeton University Press, Princeton p.4*).

With great respect to the learned Professor, this is not a definition; it is a description of the Republic of India as per his understanding.

22. Some persons have suggested that “Indian Secularism” is based upon the concept of *Sarva Dharma Samabhava - Equal Regard for All Religions*. I formulate three objections to this hypothesis.

23. Originally the Preamble of the Indian Constitution did not contain the word secular to describe the Sovereign Republic of India. This word was introduced in the Preamble by the Constitution (Forty-Second Amendment) Act 1976 which came into force on 3rd January 1977. The word, however, was not defined just as another word ‘Socialist’ which was also inserted by the same Act, was not defined. The Constitution (Forty-Fourth Amendment) Bill as passed by the Lok Sabha defined Secularism to mean *Sarva Dharma Samabhav*. However during the debate in the Rajya Sabha, this definition was deleted. It can, therefore, be safely asserted that constitutionally secularism is not equated with *Sarva Dharma Samabhav*.

24. Secondly, **equal respect for all religions is destructive of the basic concept of secularism. Regard for any religion is inconsistent with the principles of secularism which says that life must be guided by reason** (*emphasis added*). A life guided by reason must take into account the material and non-material needs of human personality. The values and norms for a life in this world run counter to the explicit values and norms of religion. It is true that a secularist need accept the right of another individual to have his own belief system but this is not the same thing as respecting that belief system. To hold otherwise is to make secularism a dead letter.

25. Thirdly, the concept of *Sarva Dharma Samabhav* is a vague concept full of contradictions. Acceptance of this concept will prevent the State from bringing about religious reforms where needed. Sometimes it has been stated that *Sarva Dharma Samabhav* is based upon the essential unity of all religions. I am a good student of the scriptures of all major religions and I have not been able to find any single thread that runs through all religions. Christianity asserts the divinity of Jesus, the virginity of Mother

Merry and the resurrection of Christ. Quran denies all these basic beliefs of Christianity. Though recognizing the legitimacy of the earlier religions, Quran supersedes the teachings of all previous prophets and asserts that Muhammad is the seal of prophethood and after him there will be no other prophet and naturally there will be no other religion after Islam, which, it is asserted, is the religion of all mankind, unlike other religions which were for particular nations only.

26. Hinduism is the great Indian circus-multiplicity of Gods, monkey god, elephant god, caste system, preaching (not practice) of total indifference to this world, 'karma' doctrine and so on and so forth.

27. What is common among these major religions? I have also yet to come across in the scriptures and history of any religion a call for tolerance of another view and love of the followers of other religions. "*Vasudheva Kutumbakam*" (the whole world is one family) was the Vedic utterance long before any other religion was known.

28. Mohammed in Mecca was struggling to find support for his religion without provoking the animosity of those who believed in polytheism. Hence in Mecca he once conceded that those who differed from him could have their own religion. However, the Medinese revelations are clear on the uniqueness and finality of his teachings.

29. How can one have equal respect for these belief systems which are mutually destructive of each other? How can one say that there is unity among these religions which, in theory and practice, have tended to be intolerant of each other? Secularism of this variety trying to base itself on *Sarva Dharma Samabhav* and essentially unity of all religions cannot provide a proper or clear guidance either to the individual

or to the State. A secular state should exhibit indifference to religions and indeed should keep a vigilant distance from the politics of communalism and religions. Christianity has throughout its history persecuted the Jews and condemned Islam and its founder.

30. The Supreme Court of India has asserted that secularism is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution. What does the Court understand by Secularism? It is difficult to find the essence of the Court's view in its numerous judgments. I venture to suggest the following as the condensed view of the Supreme Court.

These provisions (of the Constitution) prohibit the establishment of a theocratic State and prevent the State either identifying itself or favouring any religion or religious sects or denominations. *The State is enjoined to accord equal treatment to all religions, religious sects and denominations (emphasis mine).*

(*Per Sawant J. in S.R.Bommai vs Union of India, AIR 1954 SC 1918*)

31. The emphasized portion shows the unconscious incorporation of the concept of Sarva Dharma Samabhav, without being aware of the concept's internal contradictions and imperfection. In practice the politicians and public officials pay homage to this concept by participating equally in the religious functions of all communities. In Mumbai, there is a 'dargah' (the Tomb of a Muslim saint) where on the anniversary of the saint the Inspector of the local police station pays respect to the dargah as a part of his official duty. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra participates officially in the worship of Vithoba in the temple at Pandharpur. The Government of India subsidises to the extent of Rs.12000/- per haj pilgrim. The expenses on this account are provided for in the Central Budget – nearly Rs.130 crores. Such practices

are helping the shrinkage of secular spaces and should be abandoned at least gradually, though they cannot be legally prevented.

32. One view is that it is as well that in India there is no wall of separation between the Church and the State. This has enabled legislation for religious reform, for preventing and controlling the mismanagement of funds of the places of worship. In Tamil Nadu law has been enacted for the appointment of the non-Brahmins as priests in the temples and for even regulating 'poojas' - modes of worship.

33. The exhortation of late Dr. Rasheeduddin Khan (of Hamdard University) that the State should exhibit a capacity to show respectful indifference to religions becomes difficult to follow. However it becomes necessary to keep vigilance to see that the state will not continue to get entangled more and more in religions and religious affairs.

34. What is the way ahead for secularists? Let me begin by pointing out that Secularism operates at three levels. State as Secular; Society as Secular; and individual as Secular. The US provides a classic example of a secular State, though the US citizens and the society are not secular. Probably this is so in France also, though in France the invasive presence of religion is not felt. It needs to be noted that the census figures in France do not disclose the religious composition of citizenry. The United Kingdom is not secular for the reason that Anglican Church is the official church. The monarch of England must join in communion with the Church of England. A Catholic or anyone who marries a Catholic cannot be the monarch of England.

35. The foremost task before the Secularists in India today is to prevent the rise and spread of religious fundamentalism-whether of Saffron type or of Islamic type. The saffron type is

sufficiently known. One should not turn a blind eye to the attitude of Muslims who act as if they are not only different but also separate from the other communities in India. The dangerous role of All India Muslims Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) which is acting as a parallel legislature and which at one time threatened to establish a parallel judicial system has to be carefully watched. The board consists of self-appointed members having neither statutory nor social or community's sanction.

Several legal questions such as the triple *talaq* on which this Board is making pronouncements lie legitimacy within the jurisdictions of the country's judiciary under Section 9 of the Code of Civil Procedure. It is the Courts of the land alone that can authoritatively decide all such questions. Secularists in this country have failed to notice that the Muslims do not approach the Courts but get the questions decided internally. In effect there is a boycott of the Courts by the Muslims. In pre-Independent India such questions affecting the civil rights of all Indians were decided by Indian Courts and on occasions by the Privy Council.

36. The stand taken by AIMPLB on the question of triple *talaq* is scandalous. It is worse than Henry VIII rule.

37. The triple *talaq* validates the divorce by a Muslim husband uttering *talaq* three times in a single sitting – even in the absence of his wife. It is universally recognized that triple *talaq* is not permitted by the Quran; indeed it is prohibited by necessary implication. Yet AIMPLB says that in India it is accepted and cannot be outlawed.

38. The question of *Talaq* (or divorce) is dealt with in Sura 65 of the Quran. (All references are to the edition of A. Yusuf Ali; Pub: Aman Corpn., St. Brentwood, Maryland USA). Yusuf Ali recalls the Prophet as saying that "of all things permitted by law, divorce is the most hateful in

the sight of God". The very first verse of this Sura stipulates that divorce should be given in the prescribed periods. The same verse mentions that perchance God will bring about thereafter a new situation. Divorce thus given is revocable. See also Sura 4 verse 35.

If ye fear a breach
Between the twain
Appoint (two) arbiters
One from his family
And the other from hers;
If they wish for peace,
God will cause
Their reconciliation.

In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, it is mandatory for the parties to go before the Board of Conciliation before divorce can become final.

39. It is inconceivable that the Prophet who insisted upon the consent of a woman for her marriage would sanction a mode of divorce which is inconsistent with the Prophet's view of the hateful nature of divorce. The controversy has arisen because of the different views of different schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Here is a field where uniformity should be brought boldly by the legislature. I endorse the following view of Mr. Abdul Hafiz Gandhi.

Really a total ban on triple divorce is the need and demand of the time in order to live up to the expectations of the Prophet who said, "His people will never choose a wrong path."

(See his article entitled "Controversy on Triple Divorce" in Indian Journal of Secularism Vol.8. No 3).

Mr. Gandhi suggests that the state should bring about legislation in this regard, albeit by taking into confidence the Muslim Community. Who represents the Muslim Community? Not AIMPLB! Now you have a Shia Muslim Personal Law Board. You are also having a

Muslim Women's Muslim Personal Law Board. This is an opportunity the Government must seize and partly at least discharge its duty under Article 44 of the Constitution.

40. Returning to the question of what the secularists in India should do, I suggest that we should endeavour to build a secularist temper in the country. A general attack on religions is counter-productive. The foundations of religions can be shaken by exposing the particular practices and superstitions most of which are related to religions.

41. Despite the Supreme Court legitimizing the study of moral principles through religious instructions and the study of astrology, we must endeavour to show that secular ethics is universal and demonstrate the absurdities of astrology.

42. These things need not and should not be done in evangelical way. Rationalism can be taught through the study of the writings of say Gopal Ganesh Agarkar in Maharashtra. Agarkar is a venerable figure whose teachings will find acceptance not merely in Maharashtra. Group studies of Jyotiba Phule and Ambedkar will be useful. Study of astronomy should be encouraged and it is my belief that even a little knowledge of astronomy will dispel the belief in astrology. Publication and distribution of small pamphlets at reasonable prices especially among the school and college going people should help in building the secular and scientific temper among the younger generation. These are only some of the paths we have to follow. A secular state will not necessarily bring about a secular society. It is the secular individuals who will create a secular society.

(The inaugural address given at the International Convention on Secularism held on 14th January, 2005 at Hyderabad, India.)

From the Writings of M.N. Roy:

Democracy and Party Politics*

M.N. Roy

(M.N. Roy, a great visionary as he was, had visualised even before the country attained Independence the shape of things to come so far as the functioning of parliamentary democracy was going to take place in the country after Independence. He visualised how there was going to be mad scramble for power by politicians winning elections using money and muscle power, and how they were going to neglect the people who would vote for them; how the party leaders were going to be dictatorial in their approach and how elected representatives of the people were going to be more responsible and accountable to their respective political parties and not to their electors; how delegation of the sovereignty, which rightfully belongs to them, by the people to their parliamentarians was going to make them completely powerless and helpless, being denuded of their democratic freedoms and rights, before the so-called 'servants of the people' who were going to become their rulers and how democracy, 'the government of the people and by the people', was going to become 'the government for the people' run by modern Maharajas and their family members for their own benefits. Roy not only visualised the problem but also suggested the remedy of bringing in 'power to the people' or direct democracy, as defined by some political scientists, empowering the people at the grassroots: exercise of the people's sovereignty by themselves through 'People's Committees', putting up their own candidates for election and not voting for the candidates put up by various political parties.

In 'Politics, Power and Parties' Roy has given a realistic view of our politics and parties today. During the last 68 years of our independence, morality and idealism has completely disappeared from our politics, parties and our political leaders. Given the condition of our politics today, and for the betterment of our political life and democracy in our country Roy's views are insightful and worth considering. Therefore, in order to present a complete view of Roy's thoughts on all these issues facing our country, we have started the publication of his lectures/articles compiled in the book for the benefit of our readers. – Editor)

The theoretical contention that political parties destroy the principle of popular sovereignty is being corroborated in West Europe where people are burdened with heavy military expenditure out of all proportions supposedly for the defence of democracy. That means, Democracy is being killed for the defence of Democracy. All parties are playing this game, however large their number, however, small the party. The party system has all along been unstable in the continental countries, where proportional representation encouraged the rise of small parties which could wield disproportionate influence in the parliaments, leading the party

system itself ad absurdum as an indispensable factor of Democracy which they themselves render increasingly unstable.

On the pretext of giving a chance to minorities, proportional representation incorporates the worst of the party system. All personal relation between the voters and their representative disappears; the electorate votes not for individual candidates, but for parties and members of parliament cannot be responsible to particular groups of voters. Given such impersonal relation between the electorate and the parties in parliament, the responsibility or representativeness of a government becomes

a mere formality, if not a deliberate fraud. That is how the party system corrupts democracy.

It worked better in Great Britain, where the party system could not altogether destroy the individualist basis of democracy. But although even now members of parliament are elected individually by territorially grouped voters, and therefore could be at least theoretically held responsible to their constituents, in Britain also the party system has lost its stability; both parties are divided, their programmes are being watered down, their differences are being obliterated. Consequently, Westminster is no longer the political cricket field; government party and the opposition in the present parliament frequently accuse each other of not playing the game according to the rules.

The Labour Party majority was reduced to such a very narrow margin after the second post-war elections, that it could not remain in office for any length of time if it strictly observed parliamentary conventions. Experienced commentators forecast a new election within two months. According to the traditional parliamentary convention, that should have been the case. Because, no government in such an insecure parliamentary position could have a long-term plan of legislation. To rely on such a narrow parliamentary majority, would mean abolition of democracy inside the party. Party members would not be entitled to have independent judgment and act accordingly, even in extreme cases; and every single member must obey the party whip under all circumstances. Otherwise there would be no guarantee against the eventuality of a few members of the government party walking over in the opposition lobby or abstaining from voting on any particular issue. In the given unstable parliamentary position, elected representatives of the people must obey the party even if their constituents expressly desired them to act otherwise.

It is evident how the party usurps the sovereignty of the people, even in Britain with its long and deep-rooted democratic tradition.

What is of greater importance is that with half a dozen or a few more votes in the parliament, a government cannot claim to represent even a bare majority of the electorate, either legally or morally. Moreover, there remains the question whether a slightly larger majority in the Parliament would make a government more representative, whether a majority of 55 or 60 p.c. is entitled to ride roughshod over the corresponding minority. That is one of the fundamental fallacies of formal democracy.

However, in bygone days, when political leaders could play political cricket like gentlemen, a parliamentary position such as was created by the 1950 election would not be allowed to continue. Both the parties would agree to go to the country as soon as possible for a clearer verdict of the electorate.

But the time-honoured procedure was not adopted and the Labour Party continued in office with the tacit approval of the opposition. The truce resulted from the reluctance of both the parties to risk a new election, because neither was sure of the result. So, between the two, the sovereign people was robbed of the traditional right to elect a new parliament which might give the country a stable and independent government – independent of the emergency of opportunist parliamentary manoeuvres.

By making an impression that the projected iron and steel nationalism might not be pressed before obtaining a clearer verdict of the electorate, the government seemed to secure the opposition promise to support its foreign policy. The Conservatives as well as the Liberals could give the promise with a clear conscience, because the Labour Government's foreign policy hardly promoted the case of international Socialism.

But towards the end of the year, the government could no longer temporise with the projected iron and steel nationalisation Bill. The parliamentary truce could not last indefinitely. The powerful left wing of the Labour Party pressed for it with the argument that a general election soon thereafter, fought with an out and out socialist programme, would give the party a larger majority. The crucial legislation was passed with the severest cracking of the party whip, and the precarious truce ended. Since then, the “Mother of Parliaments” has been presenting a scene which exposes the party system in its true colour—an unscrupulous scramble for power.

Given the palpable uncertainty of the majority-minority relation in the country, the opposition challenge for a trial of strength is not without force. The government should take it up, if it wanted to prove that it had the support of a clear majority in the country, if not in the parliament. But it preferred to remain in office—on the strength of the party whip. Preference of the non-democratic procedure could be legitimately interpreted as the admission of the fear of losing the election, if it was held in the near future. The corollary to the tacit admission was that the party in power had lost, for the time being at any rate, the necessary constitutional mandate. Nevertheless, it did not allow the electorate to choose a more representative government.

If it was sure of its position in the country, the Labour Party would not prefer a procedure which was democratically doubtful and morally not above reproach. In order to remain in office until it would be in a position to conduct an election campaign more successfully, the party most rigidly suppressed democracy in its ranks.

No government can be called truly representative unless it commands a voluntary support of a parliamentary majority. It is a well

known fact that, if members of the Parliamentary Labour Party were allowed to vote according to their better judgment, the Government would have been defeated on several important issues not chosen by the opposition. A government controlled by a party, which remains in office at the cost of democracy in its own ranks, cannot be a really democratic government.

The opposition tactics of wearing out the government majority by forcing all-night sessions of the parliament is questionable. Having in the past given tacit support to the government on major issues of foreign policy, now the opposition wants to turn it out by a snap vote on some minor issue. It rests with the government to end this parody of parliamentarism by taking up the challenge of the opposition in the country. But it is still uncertain about the mood of the electorate, whereas the opposition feels sure of winning the election if it was held before the government could do something to allay popular discontent, and choose a convenient issue on which a majority of the electorate could be swayed by an appeal to emotion. When in the scramble for power the strength of the contending parties is more or less evenly balanced, the electorate is not given the chance to see what the real issues are and pronounce its judgment intelligently and dispassionately. That is how the party system debauches and destroys democracy.

The purpose of parties is to capture power and retain it. The formalities of parliamentarism afford them opportunities to do so without the intelligent support of a requisite majority of the electorate, if it cannot be done democratically. The necessity of rigging elections is inherent in the party system under formal parliamentarism. When a party or a coalition of parties, not sure of the support of the electorate, cannot avoid an election, they can amend the electoral law while still in power, so as to prejudice the

chances of the opposition. Democracy has been so debased in France, at the very moment when she is stampeded to rearm for the defence of democracy.

According to the constitutional stipulation about the duration of the present parliament, France must have a general election this year. In the present parliament, the communist members constitute the largest group. Therefore, they had to be included in the coalition government which was formed after the election of the present parliament. But eventually they left the government with the hope of creating a political chaos which would enable them to capture monopoly power. Having failed in that adventure, they have been marking time. The system of proportional representation would make it possible for them to capture a still larger number of seats in the next parliament at the cost of the Socialists. Meanwhile, the de Gaullist party appeared on the scene, threatening to snatch many parliamentary seats from the Popular Republican Party, the second largest group in the present parliament. The present coalition of centre parties had no chance of remaining in power in a new parliament, unless the electoral law was so changed as to deprive the Communists and de Gaullists of the advantage of proportional representation, introduced by the Constitution of the Fourth Republic. It is estimated that, if the electoral law was not amended, Communists and de Gaullists together might capture sixty per cent of the seats in the new parliament. That would be the end of parliamentary democracy in France.

But even when confronted with this threat to the very existence of parliamentary democracy, the parties supporting the coalition government could not agree about the necessary amendment of the electoral law. The squabble about the division of the loaves and fishes of office prevented the coalition government from tackling

major issues firmly, and the political situation went from bad to worse. Finally, there was an agreement, and the electoral law has been so amended as to guarantee to the parties now in office a majority in the next parliament. They have taken advantage of their present position to rig the next election. The anti-democratic practice is justified with the plausible argument that the dictatorial parties must be kept out of office by all means. But the real purpose is to enable the opposing parties to retain power. What difference does it make if they also cannot do so without destroying democracy? The new electoral law is devised so as to enable the parties in office to remain there, whatever may be the will of the electorate. If under the old law, election results did not correctly reflect the will of the people, the position will be no better under the new law. Both are instruments of party-politics —of the scramble for power. Neither guarantees a free election, the voice of the sovereign people being falsified by party manipulations.

The insecurity and uncertainties of Europe have not yet reached the United States of America. But there also, the party system does not reflect the intelligent will of the people. The Republican Party lost the last election; nevertheless, it very largely dictates the policies of the present Democratic administration. The latter thus is acting contrary to its popular mandate; it is doing so in order to escape defeat in the next election. It is obviously an unprincipled practice. In America, the two-party system is a make-believe which serves no other purpose than nepotism. There, democracy has degenerated into the monopolist rule of a bi-partisan ruling clique.

In India, the party system is in its infancy. For the present, there is one-party rule, which makes no secret of the desire to perpetuate itself. Even if the facade of parliamentarism is maintained, one-party rule is a negation of democracy.

Whatever may be written in the Constitution, and despite the democratic professions of men in power, the ruling party is frankly totalitarian. It claims to represent the nation, and the nation is one and indivisible. Nor does the Constitution, formulated by a parliament (Constituent Assembly was a misnomer) packed with members of the ruling party, offer any guarantee against its absolutism. The fundamental law of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India proclaimed with all solemnity, granted certain "Fundamental Rights" of citizenship. One should think that the foundation of a structure could not be changed without pulling it down. But a party in power knows no logic. Some of the "Fundamental Rights" are going to be amended for further restricting liberty. Because, as it is, they allow the possibility of some challenge to the absoluteness of one-party rule. Amendments are also contemplated to curtail the independence of the judiciary.

The Constitution was framed by an assembly not Competent to do so; it was not elected for the purpose. The country will have a parliament elected by universal suffrage. The proposed amendments to the Constitution might have waited until then. There is no danger of the totalitarian State to collapse in such a short time. Why this unwarranted hurry? Simply because, whatever may be the opinion in the country, having full control of the super-annuated parliament, the party in power can have any measures passed. It is the extreme case of a party usurping the sovereignty of the people.

At the same time, democracy inside the ruling party will also be destroyed. There never has been much of it. But the latest Ukase of the

Congress High Command beats all records. It emphasises that members of the parliament are responsible to the party to the incredible extent that they are not entitled to speak freely even in the parliament. Any criticism of the party will be allowed only in closed party meetings. The accused claims to be judge! As the parliament is composed at present, the people outside can make any attempt to influence legislation or control the executive only through the instrumentality of members belonging to the ruling party. Of late, some of these have tended to voice the growing dissatisfaction of the people. As elected representatives of the people, to do so is their undeniable right and bounded duty. They have now been forbidden to perform their democratic function for the sake of "the tradition and dignity of the Congress". The unrestrained voice of the people might disturb the fake harmony of totalitarian national unity. Therefore, it must be suppressed. And that outrage on democracy is committed for maintaining party discipline. The contradiction between democracy and the party system cannot be more crassly demonstrated.

Everywhere political parties are formed not with the aim of practicing democracy, but of capturing power. They are guided by the dictum that the end justifies the means, and the means often amount to the corruption and destruction of democracy, as contemporary and past experience in so many countries shows (emphasis added).

**Article published in The Radical Humanist, 22nd April, 1951 and compiled in 'Politics, Power and Parties'.*

"Where a society has chosen to accept democracy as its credal faith, it is elementary that the citizens ought to know what their government is doing." **Justice P N Bhagwati**, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, (1981)

Human Rights Section:

CFD Call to Arrest and Prosecute Attackers of Bisara Village, Dadri for Murder on the Pretext of Beef-Eating

30th Sept. 2015

It is shocking that a helpless Muslim family in village Bisara in Dadri, NOIDA was brutally attacked and mercilessly beaten by miscreants in which Akhlaq was killed while others injured- one being critical. It is reported that an announcement was made around 9.30 PM on 28th Sept. 2015 by some people from the village temple that Muslims were consuming beef. Surprisingly hundreds of people gathered in few minutes and soon attacked the family of Akhlaq who was killed. Even women were attacked and attempt was made to molest one of the victims. The police reached late. The villagers also tried to prevent the police from lodging an FIR. The villagers fought with the police when it tried to arrest some of the accused. It is also reported that rumours of calf killing had been going on the village for the last about 12 days which was enough for the police to wake up itself and take steps for preventing any mischief and provide protection to the only two Muslim families in the village. But it appears that police remained indifferent or deliberately did not care while the miscreants went on building up flare up resulting into the horrible incident. The events leading to the incident show that there was well thought out planning to communalize the situation.

This incident and other incidents in recent past elsewhere in the country show that some Hindu communal groups are intentionally spreading rumours like cow-killings, religious

conversions of Hindus to other faiths like Islam or Christianity and demanding law on conversions, love-jihad, so called Islamic terrorism, killing any person naming him as Pakistani, murdering rationalists like Dabholkar, Pansare, Kulbargi, and spreading hate campaign against Muslims and Christians. Not only that, such groups are openly declaring awards for those Hindu youth who participate in damaging churches, mosques and who bring the head of secularists like Swamy Agnivesh. These groups are openly issuing threats to all those who differ with them. They feel encouraged to indulge in such anti-social and unconstitutional activities because the present governments at the Centre and in concerned states are sympathetic to them and are reluctant to take any action to restrain them.

Therefore it is incumbent on all the forces who believe in the principles of communal harmony, fraternity and secularism to come together and confront this menace. The governments at the Centre as well as in the States where these religious fanatics are roaming around defying law of the land must take immediate actions against such unruly elements.

Akhlaq and his family lived for centuries in the village reposing faith in the Hindus who dominates the village which has, as per reports, only two Muslim families. The dominant community of the village betrayed that faith and

acted cowardly in attacking and killing Akhlaq and the hapless family. Whether there was beef or not is immaterial. The attackers had no business to take the law into their own hands.

Citizens For Democracy call upon the UP police to immediately arrest all the persons who attacked the victim family and prosecute them for intentional murder as it appears to be a part of well thought out strategy.

CFD also call upon all the communities to keep peace and patience-for to act otherwise will be playing into the hands of these communal elements who have become desperate for inciting communal conflagration in the country to reap political dividends.

N.D. Pancholi, General Secretary, Citizens For Democracy

Gandhi on Communal Harmony

Gandhi regards Islam as a religion of peace in the same sense as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. No doubt, there are differences in degree. He says in this regard that he knew the passages that can be quoted from the Holy book Quran to the contrary. But it is possible to quote from the Vedas to the contrary. "My reading of the Quran has convinced me that the basis of Islam is not violence but is unadulterated Peace. It regards forbearance as superior to vengeance. The very word "Islam" means peace, which is nonviolence. My experience of India tells me that the Hindus and the Muslims know how to live at peace among themselves. I decline to believe that the people have said goodbye to their senses, so as to make it impossible to live at peace with each other, as they have done for generations. The enmity cannot last forever."

Reader's Comments

Reprints from "POLITICS, POWER AND PARTIES" are timely. It will again remind us that Roy always fought for values. He never stuck to any kind of fixation or finality.

Ajit Bhattacharyya



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What must we stand for – Religion or Morality?



**There is plenty of milk to be
poured over stone statues**



**But there is no milk for
infants dying of hunger**

**There is no god, there
is no god at all. He who
invented god is a fool.
He who propagates god
is a scoundrel. He who
worships god is a
barbarian.**

Periyar E. V. Ramasamy



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