

Kartavya Path: Another leap towards neo-colonialism!

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Let it be clear at the outset that when the road from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate was named Rajpath, it was not a literal translation of the King's Way. In the same sense, Janpath was not the translated name for its old name, the Queen's Way. In the Rajpath nomenclature, the symbolism of independent and sovereign India's democratic statehood was fulfilled. From 26 January 1950 onwards, a colorful display of India's military might and cultural diversity continued to be showcased on the Rajpath. In this sense, the symbolism associated with Rajpath became progressively stronger in the public mind. If any individual or group continues to believe that Rajpath is a translation of the name of the colonial era, King's Way, and as a result of this, indicates the colonial mind-set, one must realize that for the vast public of India, Rajpath means the path of independent and sovereign India's democratic statehood. Therefore, the statement of the Prime Minister that he has liberated the nation from the colonial mindset by renaming the Rajpath as Kartavya Path is mere a rhetoric.

While unveiling the statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, which was installed under the Grand Canopy situated east of India Gate, the Prime Minister claimed to have given him his rightful place in history. Even this claim could be called hollow. The politics of symbols and icons has been going on all over the world for a long time. The Congress, in India, has also done that, and regional satraps have been doing it at the regional level in different ways. However, this politics has intensified in the neo-liberal era. The only thing that's new with the RSS/BJP in this regard is that it uses the politics of symbols and icons of anti-colonial struggle without having participated in the freedom struggle. It brings someone down, lifts someone up while doing this brand of politics. To cover the hollowness of this exercise, it has to go beyond history and logic, and resort to political power. Neither history is made nor is history written by making loud claims with the support of power and rumbling of symbols/icons.

The RSS/BJP finds everything wrong in the historiography of ancient and medieval India and freedom struggle. The correct way is that its scholars should attempt rewriting the 'right history' but only after following the rigorous discipline of historiography. Historiography is perhaps the most difficult academic pursuit in the modern world. Like every subject, historiography is determined by rigorous examination of accepted methods and criteria. Without learning, understanding and following them, one cannot become a historian or a scholar of any other subject. Ignoring this difficult though necessary path, the RSS/BJP try to slander the left scholars who write history, and tamper with the already prescribed text-books. As if, in India and in the world only *sanghis* and communists exist; and other than the communists, scholars of no other streams have done any work in historiography or in any other subject. Obviously, this becomes a futile debate on the part of the RSS/BJP, which blocks the path of knowledge.

Left scholars in India and in the world have contributed a lot to historiography and other subjects. This is the result of their sincerity, intellect and hard work. A scholar of any other stream cannot move forward without having gone through their work and learned from them. Exactly in the same way, a scholar of the Marxist stream cannot progress by neglecting the work of scholars of other streams.

But people of stagnant mentality become accustomed to instigating arguments and quarrels instead of pursuing the basics of academic learning. Due to this they do not develop as modern human beings, their intellectual credibility is doubtful and their social personality suffers. The same holds true for the RSS/BJP. One cannot claim to be modern simply by indiscriminate adoption of digital devices invented by the western world. For that one has to adopt the philosophy of the natural sciences which nurtures a scientific and progressive outlook. It is not without reason that people with a stagnant mindset try to make themselves look modern by equipping them with various digital tools.

The question of colonial mind-set and liberation from it has been a very problematic and serious question. Not only for the countries which have been colonized, but also for the colonialists. There is a plethora of literature and debates available on colonialism, post-colonialism and neo-colonialism. Many important leaders of the world including India have also given serious thought to this subject. In the field of politics, a true statesman will not make superficial speeches on the serious question of colonial mind-set and liberation from this mind-set. For the last three decades the threat of neo-colonialism has resurfaced for the countries which got freedom from the grip of colonialism. India is also facing that threat. But, unfortunately, the ruling-class here, instead of performing its duty towards ensuring the country's independence and sovereignty, is handing the country over to the neo-colonial clutches. While doing so, the ruling-class reduces the freedom fighters and the national flag into merely objects of political use.

The present government has been doing the same thing, first with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and now with Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The government is neither concerned with the role played by Patel for national integration and communal harmony, nor with the socialist and secular ideas of Netaji. It wants to keep new or corporate-India (Nigam-Bharat) as a communal state, which it calls 'Hindu-Rashtra'. Netaji's daughter Prof. Anita Bose Pfaff, in her letter addressed to the Prime Minister, states, "... he upheld in no uncertain manner communal harmony, Indian unity as well as the emancipation of women and the downtrodden people."

The Prime Minister, while unveiling the statue of Netaji, bypasses the fact that it is a stop gap arrangement. VD Savarkar's statue is yet to be installed with Netaji at the same place even if a statue of Bhagat Singh too needs to be installed alongside. People will remember that in August 2019, the leaders of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) had secretly established the trinity of Savarkar-Netaji-Bhagat Singh in the main campus of Delhi University. In an article written at this time I had said that this course was not going to cease with this incident.

In fact, it is a two-pronged psychological warfare going on: diverting the attention of the masses, especially the younger generation, from the neo-colonial clutches; and the inclusion of those who fought against colonialism in the arena of neo-colonialism. This combined exercise of the ruling-class and the media is advertised as patriotism, day and night, by uninterrupted propaganda. People are drawn in by this way of preaching and applaud it. A few generations have been born from the womb of a-politicization that went under three decades of corporate politics. They do not seem to mind the phenomenon of corporate politics selling off national assets, destroying constitutional institutions, renaming cities, roads, buildings on communal lines, and the celebrations of all this.

In conclusion, it can be said that the new beautified Kartavya Path of new India will inspire the people to imagine that their duty, like the ruling-class, is to be devoted not to the sacrifices of their anti-colonial, patriotic forefathers but to the service of neo-colonialism!

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