

janata

Vol. 72 No. 15
April 30, 2017

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Another Futile Attempt

Kuldip Nayar

It was then Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda who brought the question of Hindi to the fore. This time, it is Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju who has done so. Many people in Tamil Nadu then immolated themselves alive to register their protest. Thank god it has not come to that stage yet. Nanda had advised the central government departments to write notes on the files in Hindi to express their opinion.

The latest is that DMK leader M.K. Stalin has accused the Centre of trying to relegate people who don't speak Hindi to second-class citizens and of pushing the nation into becoming "Hindia". The controversy had been generated after President Pranab Mukherjee accepted the recommendation of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language that all dignitaries, including the President and ministers, especially those who can read and speak Hindi, may be requested to give their speech or statement in Hindi only.

The President has accepted several other recommendations, including making announcements on board aircraft in Hindi followed by

English. However, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu said the allegation that Hindi was being imposed is "completely false" and the government has "no intention" of imposing any language, particularly Hindi, on anyone.

The sharp reaction by leaders, particularly Stalin, indicates that at least Tamil Nadu is not yet ready to switch over. The issue is several decades old and yet it has not found any satisfactory solution. The non-Hindi speaking states repeat Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's assurance that the switch over to Hindi from English will take place only when the non-Hindi speaking people say that they are ready for it. His categorical statement disappointed Hindi fanatics but the nation on the whole heaved a sigh of relief that India had retrieved from the brink.

The anti-Hindi movement gained momentum in the then Madras state where college students demonstrated against the switch over in 1965. Soon after, a full-scale riot broke out in Madurai sparking off a minor altercation between

agitating students and Congress party members. The riots spread all over the state and continued unabated for a couple of months.

They were marked by acts of violence, arson, looting, police firing and lathi charges. The then ruling Congress in the state had to call in paramilitary forces to quell the agitation. But their involvement resulted in deaths of nearly 70-odd people including some policemen. To normalize the situation, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri reiterated Nehru's assurance that English would continue to be used as the official language as long as the non-Hindi speaking states wanted. The riots subsided after Shastri's promise, as did the student agitation.

But then the agitation had led to major political changes in the state. The DMK captured power in the 1967 assembly elections and thereafter the Congress never came to power in Tamil Nadu. The Official Languages Act was eventually amended in 1967 by the Congress headed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to guarantee the indefinite use of Hindi and English as official languages. This effectively ensured the current "virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism" of the Indian Republic. There were also two similar but smaller agitations in 1968 and 1986 which had varying degrees of success.

In fact, within the very first fortnight of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime, the central government offices had received a circular that Hindi should be used on social media. This was an attempt to enter through backdoor. The non-Hindi speaking states spotted the fugitive move and protested against

it. New Delhi readily withdrew its step and declared that the circular was meant only for the Hindi-speaking states.

The latest statement by Home Minister Rijju has only rekindled the fears of non-Hindi speaking people. And they are afraid of what may happen tomorrow. I am convinced that Modi's government is guided, if not goaded, by the Hindi chauvinists. The BJP has several liberal leaders who realise that the pace of switch over to Hindi would have to be slow, keeping in mind unity and diversity. Apparently, they do not have much say.

The India of today is very different from what it was 50 years ago, with each linguistic group asserting its identity. The turmoil during the States' Reorganisation process should be a warning. The idea of India can be jeopardized. The entire fabric can get torn if the sensitivities of the people are not allayed. What is the hurry? A few more decades' wait is too small a price to pay for preserving the nation's cohesion.

India has gone through large linguistic riots in the late 1950s and early 1960s following the Home Ministry instructions to different departments to make preparations for a switchover from English to Hindi as laid down in the Constitution. I wish this bilingualism should continue without anyone tinkering with it. But then Modi's men seem to be hastening the process without considering the sentiments of non-Hindi speaking people. The government wants to restrict the use of English to certain fields.

Yet, they realise that their haste can tell upon the country's unity. The

non-Hindi speaking states, particularly Tamil Nadu, have accepted the Constitutional provision that Hindi is the Indian Union's language. But they want time to learn it and come up to the standards of people living in the Hindi belt like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan.

No doubt, Modi feels at home with Hindi and his sweep in elections is primarily because of the campaign he led in Hindi, somewhat Sanskritised for northern Indians. But he should remember Nehru's promise made in 1963 that both Hindi and English would continue to be the link languages for administration throughout the country. Nehru did not fix any deadline for the exclusive use of Hindi.

Heritage is linked with languages and therefore leaders all over the country will have to devise ways and means whereby regional languages get succor. Without a long-term plan to reinvigorate them, some regional languages would fall by the wayside as the days go by. How many regional languages will survive 50 years hence is anybody's guess.

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Who Will Have Sympathy for the Rights of Jashodaben?

Sandeep Pandey

The Bhartiya Janata Party's initiative against the triple talaq is laudable. The Muslim clergy's position that it is an interference in internal matters of Muslim personal law is akin to a family accused of domestic violence claiming that it is their internal matter. Just as a woman cannot be allowed to suffer inside a home, Muslim women cannot be left at the mercy of their whimsical husbands. The truth is that whether Hindus or Muslims, the patriarchal society has not been kind to born and unborn girls. India's sex ratio at 940 is very dismal compared to 997 of our neighbour Bangladesh indicating that female foeticide remains a massive problem. Child trafficking, forcing children into sex work and begging are widespread in India. These illegal activities take place in broad daylight. One wonders why triple talaq is being given priority over more serious problems like foeticide and child trafficking? Are people maintaining silence over these issues not as guilty as those responsible for committing these crimes?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has every right to be sympathetic to the Muslim women and raise the issue of injustice to them. Some Muslim women are quite happy that for the first time a party and a PM is taking up their issue in such unequivocal terms. But just as the PM has a right to take up issues of Muslim women one has the right to raise the matter of Jashodaben who has to lead the life of a single woman for almost five decades now without even going through the process of formal divorce. In cannot be argued

for reasons analogous to abovementioned that it is a personal matter. Moreover, in the United States, the personal life of a person doesn't matter until he/she chooses to run for a public office. The citizens there want their Presidents to have sound family relationships. Any blemish, even from the past, can cost their candidacy.

Narendra Modi's justification that he renounced family life for public service sounds specious. He may have left for sanyaas to Himalayas soon after his marriage but the truth is he came back and worked at his uncle's business. What is now being projected as a sacrifice for public life can be construed as abandoning his family obligations from Jashodaben's point of view. Narendra Modi has demonstrated that he is as prone to human weaknesses as ordinary folk by wearing for an expensive coat with his name inscribed and indulging in selfie taking with important international leaders during his visits abroad in the initial two years of his premiership. Obviously, the sacrifice of family life has not transcended him beyond worldly cravings. Moreover, Jashodaben has indicated that she still has emotions for Narendra Modi and would meet him at the right time. Between the two if anyone has made a sacrifice it is Jashodaben because she did not have control over the decision of separation. It was forced upon her. Narendra Modi can argue that the decision of marriage was forced upon him even when he was a child. But that is how most marriages still take place in India. Parents have a

key role in deciding the match. The couple is expected to live up to the expectation of their parents and the society. Is it not Indian values?

Jashodaben filed application under Right to Information Act to know her rights, entitlements and copy of the order issued for her security, as the PM's wife, but was denied all information. Interestingly, she kept writing her name as Jashodaben Narendrabhai Modi and officials continued to address her as Jashodaben Chimanlal Modi, based on her father's name. When she wanted to apply for a passport to go abroad on the invitation of some relatives, it was denied to her on the pretext that she failed to provide her marriage certificate or an affidavit from her husband. Was it not her husband's responsibility when the matter was in public domain that she got the information that she sought as well as her passport? She was denied her rights even as an ordinary citizen. Who will stand up for the rights of Jashodaben? When a Doordarshan official tried to do so by broadcasting her comments he was transferred from Ahmedabad to Port Blair. Rather than be sympathetic to Jashodaben the government chose to be vindictive to an official who tried to help her. After all, she was not demanding big things. The government should do a course correction and still provide her what she wants.

Jashodaben has been compared with wife of Gautam Buddha,

(Continued on Page 7)

Sweeping of Country by Hindutva

Ravi Kiran Jain

Describing the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya as “Crimes which shake the secular fabrics of the Constitution of India”, the Supreme Court on April 19, 2017 put the senior BJP leaders L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Union Minister Uma Bharti on a joint trial with ‘*kar sevaks*’ in the 1992 case under various charges, including criminal conspiracy to pull down the disputed structure. The Court also ordered restoration of charges against Rajasthan governor Kalyan Singh (who was Chief Minister at the time of demolition) and eight others in connection with the case but exempted Kalyan Singh from prosecution on account of Constitutional immunity he enjoys as Governor. After this order of Supreme Court, Uma Bharti and Kalyan Singh should have stepped down. On the contrary Uma Bharti raised the political pitch saying she never had any regrets about her role in bringing down the “disputed” Ayodha structure on December 6 1992. She said she had always been proud of her participation in the Ram Temple movement. “*Na maine kabhi khed vyakt kiya hai, na maine kabhi mafi mangi hai*” (neither have I expressed any regret, nor have I ever apologized),” she said.

The *Indian Express* dated April 20, 2017 in its editorial observed “Finally, the wheels of justice are turning in the Babri Masjid demolition case. The possibility of due process leading to justice and closure in one of the most seminal cases in India’s political history

seems within reach now, 25 years after the 16th century mosque at Ayodhya was demolished by *Sangh Parivar* activists in the wake of the Rath Yatra of the-then BJP Chief L.K. Advani, shaming a nation and setting powerful new political dynamics in motion. The Supreme Court’s order on Wednesday sets back on track the judicial process and lays down conditions to ensure that the trial is not delayed or compromised further.”

In 1984 elections in which Rajiv Gandhi had a clean sweep, BJP could secure only two seats in Lok Sabha. The *Sangh Parivar* started a campaign for the construction of a magnificent Ram Janam Bhoomi Temple at the site and by 1985 built up a sizeable support in the Hindu community. In January 1986, locks were removed from the mosque and Ram bhakts were permitted to offer prayers to Ram Lalla. It is said that the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi ordered the Chief Minister Veer Bahadur Singh to do so, who got the District Administration to ensure this. The two major political parties BJP and the Congress started a race on pandering to communal Hindu sentiments. In 1988, Hindutva organizations led by the RSS organized a mass campaign for building a grand temple exactly where the Mosque stood. They claimed that the Mosque stood at the precise site where Ram was born.

Union Home Minister Buta Singh signed an agreement with the VHP on 17th August 1989, that bricks for constructing the temple would be

allowed to be brought from all over UP without hindrance and collected at the plot No. 586 near the mosque. This agreement was in violation of an order of the Allahabad High Court given on 14th August that no construction activity could be taken at that spot.

Later, the VHP announced that ‘*kar sewa*’ would be performed to lay the foundation stone. This was also a violation of the judgment given two days earlier, prohibiting any such activity. This repeated defiance, of the orders of the court did not weigh with the Prime Minister who inaugurated the campaign of Congress party the next day from twin city of Faizabad, and announced that the objective of the party was to establish **Ram Rajya**. Soon thereafter the BJP President Advani, at Palampur, after the National Executive Meeting, announced that the inclusion of the construction of the temple in its Election Manifesto “would fetch votes “for it. It would thus appear that the two major political parties were in a race on this issue between 1984 and 1989.

Looking back at the developments around 1989, we are reminded how *Mandalisation* was made an effective issue by the casteist forces in answer to BJP’s *Kamandalisation*. Very soon, casteist forces came to acquire political legitimacy by projecting themselves as political forces opposed to communalism, and in order to appear so, they masked themselves as “secularists”, though the truth was that they had discovered

“caste politics” as a potent instrument to win success at elections without even doing anything while in power for solving the basic problems of the masses. There emerged a consensus among various political parties to maintain their vote banks by dividing the people on caste and communal lines. Non-performance by a party in power became irrelevant because of its potential to work out a favourable caste arithmetic and win elections. Communalism on the one hand and casteism on the other thus acquired a firm sway over the Indian polity. If anything, it were the three C’s—centralisation, corruption and criminalisation—coupled with the caste and communal divide, engineered by opportunistic political forces as the shortest route to quick success, which made all the relevant issues, concerning the public, irrelevant. While corruption and criminalisation sapped the soul out of the ideal of people-oriented democratic governance, centralization of political authority led to an unaccountable bureaucratization of governance.

In this backdrop the movement to construct a Ram temple at the sight of the Mosque also gathered momentum in 1989 and continued till 1992. The Supreme Court in *M. Ismail Farooqui vs UOI*, (AIR 1995 SC 605) noticed: “A new dimension was added to the campaign for the construction of the temple with the formation of the Government in Uttar Pradesh in June 1991 by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which declared its commitment to the construction of the temple... The focus of the temple construction movement from October 1991 was to start construction of the temple by way of ‘kar-sewa’ on the land acquired by the Government in Uttar Pradesh while leaving the disputed

structure intact... There was a call for resumption of kar sewa from 6th December 1992 and the announcement made by the organizers was for a symbolic kar-sewa without violation of the court orders including those made in the proceedings pending in this court. In spite of initial reports from Ayodhya on 6th December, 1992 indicating an air of normalcy, around mid-day a crowd addressed by leaders of BJP, VHP, etc., climbed the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid (RJB-BM) structure and started damaging the domes. Within a short time, the entire structure was demolished and razed to the ground. Indeed it was an act of “National Shame” what was demolished was not merely an ancient structure; but the faith of minority in the sense of justice and fair play of majority. It shook their faith in the rule of law and constitutional processes. A five hundred year old structure which was defenceless and whose safety was a sacred trust in the hands of government was demolished.”

In a speech from the Red Fort in Delhi on 15th August 1992 which was broadcast, the Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao had already said that “The Babri Masjid structure will be protected and the Ram temple built”. This assurance would lead people to draw a conclusion that the Ram Temple was not to be built on the site of the Babri Masjid because that structure was to be protected. The destruction of the Babri masjid had deeply wounded the religious feelings of the Muslim community throughout India and the least that could be done to sooth those injured feelings was to assure the community that the Babri Masjid was to be rebuilt. The Prime Minister gave that assurance on December 7, 1992, and referred to it again on

February 7, 1993 in the BBC ‘Phone-in programme’. He said “I thought it was necessary, it was my duty to rebuilt the Mosque.”

“The judgments delivered by the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court on September 30 on the Babri Masjid cases not only flagrantly violate the law and the evidence but a binding unanimous judgment of the Supreme Court on the Babri Masjid case itself [*M. Ismail Faruqui and Others vs Union of India and Others (1994)6 Sc 360*]. It sanctified the conversion of a historic mosque, which stood for 500 years into a temple.” Said A.G. Noorani in his article “Muslims Wronged” in October 22, 2010 issue of *Frontline*. Noorani further says in the same article, “On the Babri Masjid, for 60 years from 1950 to 2010, Muslims have been woefully wronged by every single court ruling, including that of the Supreme Court after the demolition of the mosque on December 6, 1992”.

An eminent jurist and Senior Advocate of Supreme Court T.R. Andhyarujina in his article (*The Hindu*, October 5, 2010) said “The absence of any condemnation of the vandalism of the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 is a conspicuous aspect of the Ayodhya verdict of the Allahabad High Court.” T.R. Andhyarujina further says in the same article: “The Ayodhya judgments of the Allahabad High Court make no note of the vandalism of December 6, 1992. On the other hand, they take the demolition as a *fait accompli*, as if the disputed 2.77 acre site was vacant land. After holding that the area beneath the central dome of the erstwhile Masjid must be allotted to Hindus because of their faith that Lord Ram’s place of birth was there,

and the areas covered by the Ram Chabutara and Sita Rasoi should be allotted to the Nirmohi Akhara, the court has said that the remaining area of the disputed site should be divided, two-thirds to the two Hindu plaintiffs and one third to the Muslim plaintiff by metes and bounds. These judgments, therefore legalize and legitimize the 1992 demolition, as the decree of the court proceeds on the basis that there is no Masjid on the disputed site today. It is an elementary rule of justice in courts that when a party to a litigation takes the law into its own hands and alters the existing state of affairs to its advantage, (as the demolition in 1992 did in favour of the Hindu plaintiffs), the court would first order the restitution of the pre-existing state of affairs.”

H.M. Seervai, one of the most distinguished constitutional lawyer in an article “Babri Masjid” published in *Economic Times* on 9th and 10th April, 1993, said: “The destruction of the Babri Masjid put an end to all previous controversies raised by Hindu organizations about their alleged rights to erect a temple on the place where Babri Masjid stood. This is because no Court will give any assistance to those who unilaterally by criminal acts destroyed the subject matter of this dispute and violated the constitution and the law.”

The Allahabad High Court verdict came on 30th September, 2010 during UPA-II regime. After Allahabad High Court judgment a grave and serious danger to Indian democracy appeared on the horizon. This verdict gave a legal shape to the political agenda of the Sangh Parivar “*Mandir wahin Banaenge*” and has legitimized the Masjid demolition on 6th December,

1992 paving them a way to claim to construct a “Grand Temple” at the sight of the demolished Masjid and gave a boost to the BJP to contest 2014 elections based on this issue. Although against the Allahabad High Court judgments many appeals were filed in the Supreme Court (which are still pending), and the question as to whether they could construct a temple at the site of the Mosque had yet to be finally decided by the Supreme Court, the *Sangh Parivar* continued with their campaign for 2014 elections that they would construct a Grand Temple. This judgment gave strength to the BJP and the power behind it - the RSS and the *Sangh Parivar* consisting of such organization as the *Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad*, the VHP and the *Bajrang Dal*. They gave to Indian politics a heady mixture of aggressive Hindu communalism and an equally aggressive Hindu nationalism. In that process they promoted enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims. The movement fostered by these forces contains all the essential characteristics of fascism.

After about three and a half months of 6th December, 1992 demolition, 13th J.P. Memorial Lecture was delivered by Shri V.M. Tarkunde on 23rd March 1993 on Communalism and Human Rights. Shri Tarkunde said in that lecture : “ I am of the view that the communalist nationalism which is being propagated by the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar* represents a far greater danger to Indian Democracy than the personal authoritarian rule which Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Gandhi-Nehru family were likely to impose on the country. A personal authoritarian rule is a lesser danger because it is largely external to the

people. Most of the people do not approve it, although they are usually too afraid to stick out their necks and openly oppose it...Communalism, however, particularly when it is the communalism of the majority and can therefore take the form of ardent nationalism as well, can find a positive response in the minds of the people who are still prone to religious blind faith and among whom the humanist values of democracy, i.e, values of liberty, equality and fraternity are yet to be fully developed. Communalism in such cases is an internal enemy in the human mind and it is far more difficult to eradicate it than an external enemy like an autocratic ruler.” Shri Tarkunde cautioned about the possibility of the BJP coming into power in the next elections (after demolition of the Mosque in December 1992). In this context he said in his memorial speech “as the Congress(I) is now much weaker than before and the opposite parties are unable to unite to form an anti-communal secular platform, the BJP expects to come to power in the next election. If this happens, the secular democracy in India is liable to be replaced by a potentially fascist theocratic state.” However, it did not so happen in the next election. But in 1999 BJP-led coalition, NDA, formed the government with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister, with a strong opposition in Parliament. What Shri Tarkunde was apprehending in 1993 to happen, has happened in 2014 by the victory of Narendra Modi with a huge margin in Lok Sabha and a weak and divided opposition.

Now after three years of the victory of Narendra Modi in the Centre, Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu icon has been elected as the leader

of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Party and installed as Chief Minister. The BJP has secured a majority of 325 members in the Legislative Assembly having the strength of 403. Yogi has the reputation of

being a hardcore Hindu leader. His becoming the Chief Minister shows that Hindutva is sweeping the country. It also shows that secularism has not taken roots in our country.

These developments make the state of human rights in the country appalling. The concerned citizens have to seriously think as to how they have to meet the situation.

(Continued from Page 3)

Yashodhara, wife of Tulsidas, Ratnavali, and Savitri, Sita and Shakuntla, women from Hindu mythology, who suffered for the sake of their husbands. We are not living in mythological times. Religion and mythology cannot be quoted to justify harsh decisions. Just as triple talaq cannot be justified in the name of Islam, similarly Narendra Modi's decision of separation from Jashodaben doesn't hold any ground.

begin charity from home. He needs to acknowledge his mistake and start living with Jashodaben. In fact, he should also bring his mother to live with him. A happy family life, even at this late stage, can do no harm to his public life. If anything it may have some sobering effect over him. For example, maybe his wife can give a better advice for what now looks like an intractable problem in Kashmir.

Varanasi have also demanded this and there have been voices from several other quarters that Narendra Modi should reconsider his relationship with Jashodaben. Otherwise all his public sympathy for Muslim women will not be considered genuine. The nation expects its PM to be honest with himself and live the ideals that he is talking about. Who'll believe that a man so hardened against his own wife, for no fault of hers, has any sympathy for other victimised women?

The nation expects its PM to

Some women on women's day in

Dear friends,

We are celebrating the renowned freedom fighter, socialist leader and parliamentarian late Madhu Limaye's 95th birthday on 1st May, 2017 as 'Unity of Progressive Forces' at the Speaker Hall, Constitution Club, Rafi Marg, Delhi, from 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

Prominent political leaders like Sharad Yadav (JDU), Digvijaya Singh (INC), Sitaram Yechuri (CPM), D P Tripathi(NCP), Atul Kumar Anjaan (CPI), Kamal Moraraka (SJP), Raghu Thakur (LSP), Kunwar Danish Ali (JDS), Prem Singh (Socialist Party) will also be gracing the occasion.

Organising Committee: KC Tyagi, Santosh Bhartiya, Prof. Rajkumar Jain, Prof. Anand Kumar, Rama Shankar Singh, Ravinder Manchanda, Ravi Nayar, Vijay Pratap, Anurag Chaturvedi, Jaishankar Gupta, Arvind Mohan, Dr Sunilam, Qurban Ali.

Eminent historian Prof. Irfan Habib has kindly agreed to inaugurate this programme.

We would be happy if you could join us.

Samajwadi Sahitya Nyas,
Narendra Niketan, IP Estate, ITO,
New Delhi

Fascism in a Mask is Knocking at Our Door

Following the defeat and death of Hitler and Mussolini and the knowledge of inhuman massacre of millions in the concentration camps of Hitler, Fascism and Nazism became dirty words all over the world. Now, they come with a respectable looking /sounding mask. In our country the mask is called Hindutva or 'cultural nationalism' which conceal the Sangh's fascist ideology and agenda.

Their iconic ideologue M.S. Golwarkar is as revered after his death as he was revered when alive. He continues to be their guiding spirit .

While addressing a group of top level leaders of the RSS in 1940, he said ,” RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land .I would like to bring it to your notice that this decree of ‘one flag, one leader and one ideology ‘ was also the battle cry of Fascist and Nazi parties in Europe in the first half of 20 century. What they did to democracy is well known .

The Sangh has not repudiated Golwarkar and continues to pursue the goal set by him.

—Prabhakar Sinha

From Destruction of Wombs to Liberators of Muslim Women

Irfan Engineer

Heightened media coverage on the issue of triple talaq along with the statement of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chief Minister of UP Yogi Adityanath is causing harm to the struggle for gender justice within the Muslim community. Media coverage is making a public spectacle of victims of triple talaq and encouraging voyeurism for TRPs. Media manages to get a “maulvi” of dubious repute for giving sound entertaining sound bites that make buffoon of the community. Gender justice within the Muslim community will be achieved primarily by the struggle of Muslim women, of course with the support of democratic institutions. Politicization of the issue to score brownie political points will harm the cause of Muslim women. What Muslim women need is solidarity and support from the feminist movement in particular and liberal democratic forces in general.

Pronouncing the word ‘*talaq*’ (I divorce thee) thrice in one sitting and instantly snapping matrimonial ties unilaterally by the husband is once again in news as the Supreme Court is going to hear Shayara Bano’s petition on the issue and the PM has chosen to speak on the issue. This form of divorce is called *Talaq-e-bidat* (bad in theology but valid divorce) and popularly it is called as triple talaq. The ulema (learned religious leaders of the community) have validated triple talaq pronounced orally, even if in a fit of rage, in a state of inebriation, or conveyed on phone, through sms, or through post. The wife so divorced is instantly evicted from her matrimonial home or if not

in the house at the time of divorce, she is prevented from accessing her matrimonial home and children. The practice is abominable and indefensible. Yet the All India Muslim Personal Law Board has claimed in their affidavit that triple talaq is part of shari’a law which is divine and it is their Constitutional right to practice their religion. Elsewhere, we have elaborately argued that triple talaq in one sitting is unconstitutional as well as contrary to the Quranic method of divorce.

Protectors of Muslim Women

The PM chose to speak on the issue of triple talaq at the BJP’s National Executive meeting in Bhubaneswar on 16th April 2017. He said, “Our Muslim sisters should also get justice. Injustice should not be done with them... [I]f there are social evils, the society should be woken up and efforts made to provide justice to the victims.” (TIMESOFINDIA.COM, 2017)

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on 17th April 2017 that those maintaining silence on the “burning issue” of triple talaq were as “guilty” as those practising it. Yogi compared the triple talaq to the disrobing of ‘Draupadi’ in the Mahabharata. He also called for a uniform civil code in the country (PTI, 2017).

Both, the PM and the CM of UP, are trying to project themselves as protectors of Muslim women from the evil and inhuman Muslim Personal Law. However both have a lot to answer for, given their past. Under the watch of Modi, when he was the

CM of Gujarat, in 2002, during the riots, Muslim women’s bodies were the site on which sexual assaults were mounted and they were subjected to worst inhuman atrocities. Neither of them then had any feeling of remorse nor an urge to fight the injustice. Modi, then the CM of Gujarat had to be reminded of his *raj dharm* by the then PM—Atal Behari Vajpayee of their party. Gujarat Government refused to organize any relief work for the 150,000 survivors of the violence huddled in inhuman conditions in various relief camps. The UP CM in one of the videos on youtube (FIRSTPOST., 2014) (India Today.in, 2014) (ABP News, 2014) says that if one Hindu woman was married to a Muslim and converted, 100 Muslim women would be married to Hindu men and converted into Hindu fold!

In 2002 during communal riots in Gujarat, the Hindu supremacists who mounted sexual assaults and heinous crimes on Muslim women’s bodies did so to pollute or destroy the wombs of Muslim women that gave birth to children of Muslim community (International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat, 2003, pp. 40-41). Now they are posing as liberators of Muslim women from the oppression of their men. Modi then had sort of provided justification of the riots by terming it as a reaction to burning of Sabarmati Express in Godhara. Thereafter he never expressed his remorse that under his watch the scale of violence had reached its peak. Those who were accused of rapes and involvement in riots had little to fear the judicial process and were being acquitted until the Supreme Court stepped in

and set up SIT to prosecute the accused. Bilkis Bano's rape case trial was transferred to sessions court in Mumbai which resulted in conviction of some of the accused.

Behind the facade of getting justice for the Muslim women in general and victims of triple talaq in particular, the BJP has political motives. When the PM and the CM of UP were not on the posts they are presently holding, they stigmatized the Muslim community in harsher words using cruder language. In the year 2002, after the riots Narendra Modi took out Gujarat *gaurav yatra* (pride journey). In the *yatra* he would address public meeting during and accuse that relief camps for riot survivors to be breeding camps where the survivors were breeding like rabbits. In the next Gujarat State Assembly elections, the target of the Modi's speeches was "Mian Musharraf (the then President of Pakistan) mentality"! The subtle message was that Muslims were loyal to Pakistan and needed to be taught a lesson.

Posing as protectors of Muslim women, Modi and Yogi are achieving the same objective with more sophisticated means — stigmatizing the Muslim community as one having unjust traditions and women in the Muslim community are being disrobed. General Secretary of Hindu Mahasabha - Pooja Shakun Pandey - went a step ahead and asked all victims of triple talaq to convert to Hinduism and she would organize their marriage and do their *kanyadaan* (ritual of father gifting his daughter to the bridegroom) (Jaiswal, 2017). The Hindu supremacists then want to convert Muslim women and gift (marry) them off to Hindu men to improve their demographic figures

and reduce those of Muslim community. Rescue Muslim women only to gift them off and be property of Hindu men. Hindu supremacists opposed the Hindu Code Bill in 1950s so painstakingly drafted by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to ensure gender justice to Hindu women. Hindu supremacists organized militant protests and denounced Dr. Ambedkar as an untouchable drafting laws for Hindus.

The Hindu supremacists do not problematize dowry, child marriage, female foeticide etc. Given caste hierarchies, Hindu supremacists defend the parental control over their daughters in matrimonial matters. They have never raised any voice against honour killings when daughters dare to chose their own life partners. "Anti-Romeo" squads and "love jihad" campaigns are precisely to ensure that Hindu women do not choose their life partners and do not have freedom to wear the clothes they like. Ministers in the present Government have advised women to wear appropriate (traditional) dresses to be secure from sexual assaults instead of ensuring safe space for women and inclusion in every field. BJP MP—Sakshi Maharaj and RSS *Sarsanghchalak*—Mohan Bhagwat called upon Hindu women to produce 4 children reducing the women to child producing machines for their husbands and their community.

Hindu supremacists are not very different from the religious and political leaders of Muslim community with regard to their attitude towards worth and role of women in family and community — chattels or property of the males within the family and under their complete control; slave labourers for the family confined to home for

unpaid domestic work, rearing children for men; labouring outside home if men need their incomes; confine them to religious spaces so that they are indoctrinated to serve the men in the family and accept being reduced to chattels and slaves. Triple talaq is one such weapon in hands of Muslim men to keep control over "deviant" wives. Khap Panchayats, domestic violence and misogynist culture are weapons of Hindu men. Strategies and instruments of control may differ slightly but nevertheless their objective is to control and reduce women to chattels and slave labourers and objects of sexual pleasure for men. Hindu supremacist talk of "liberating" Muslim women, but only to enslave them to new masters — Hindu men. The feminist movement and awareness and resistance of women — both — Hindu and Muslim have changed the situation slightly and progressively.

Stigmatization of Muslim community

Media has been presented with an opportunity to increase their TRPs whenever issues that stigmatize Muslim community are handy. TV channels a few years ago ran extensive coverage of a fatwa which declared that Imrana who was raped by her father-in-law is now forbidden to her husband. It seemed that was the only problem faced by the nation — otherwise everything was hunky dory. One TV channel made a public spectacle of Gudiya's problems and coverage went on for hours. Gudiya, a Muslim, married another man after her soldier husband's whereabouts were not known for some years and presumed dead in war with Pakistan. However, her former husband returned after he was released from Pakistan jail. "*Gudiya kiski?*" went the title of the programme. All relatives, maulvis, the second husband

and former soldier husband and few others were assembled in the studio and public spectacle was made of her life encouraging voyeurism.

Almost all TV channels have similarly conducted talk shows on triple talaq—they got some victims to depose their tragedies, one or two maulvis to entertain their viewers with their ridiculous and provocative views supporting triple talaq and a few gentlemen around. The Islamic scholars who did not support triple talaq were obviously not favoured by invitation. The stage was then set for a match between the victims and the maulvis with some generous support from ‘nationalist’ anchors. The lung match between Muslim women and maulvis would be good spectacle attracting eyeballs of male voyeurs into a problem of Muslims and beam them various advertisements persuading them to buy various corporate products.

The louder and angrier the fight between the victims and maulvis, more would be the entertainment and fun for the voyeurs. The BJP spokespersons would be there on the panel to represent the PM and Yogi as heroes of the nation liberating Muslim women. Perhaps that is why the media loves the PM and Yogi as they keep giving them such opportunities targeting left and liberal “anti-nationals”, cow slaughterers, terrorists, Kashmir separatist and Paki agents, religious converters. Democracy and humanist values be damned so long as the voyeuristic media had their TRPs, they would support whatever politics! Is this the responsible fourth pillar of the state?

If stigmatizing the Muslim community is one objective of Modi and Yogi, subtly establishing the superiority of Hindu community, the

other political objective is to divide the Muslim community along gender lines. They have also tried to win over a section of Shias and Sufis. The political objective as spelled out by Subramanian Swamy once is to divide the Muslim community and unite the Hindus to achieve the objective of Hindu Rashtra — antithesis of democracy.

Muslim Personal Law Board

Cornered by the media barrage and becoming a laughing stock for defending triple talaq and claiming it to inseparable part of divine Shari’a law, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board has come up with a new subterfuge. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on 16th April issued a code of conduct and warned that those who give talaq (divorce) without ‘Sharia’ reasons will face social boycott (Shaurya, 2017). The ruse of social boycott is more for media consumption than a sincere campaign to curb the menace of triple talaq. Had the Board been sincere, it would not have filed atrocious affidavit in Supreme Court completely against the spirit of Quran which gives dignity and rights to women. Board’s affidavit reduces women to a status of chattel and a slave, unintelligent being.

This ploy of social boycott has occurred to them after 70 years of resisting any change in the Muslim Personal Law and ignoring the plight of victims of triple talaq. The Board has clout and power enough to silence the women suffering oppression and scaring them with curse of Allah. However, they do not have clout or sincerity to enforce social boycott against powerful men. Declaring, announcing and enforcing social boycott is also an offence in Maharashtra. Social boycott of the

husband who has pronounced triple talaq is not going to give any relief to the woman thrown out of her matrimonial home. If a man has divorced has pronounced the dreaded words in a fit of anger or under inebriation and repents the morning after, will be doubly punished by social boycott if enforced or enforceable without offering any relief to either.

Way ahead

The only remedy in the circumstances seems to be to educate the women and men that any number of pronouncement of the word talaq can be considered as single pronouncement followed by arbitration and efforts for reconciliation. This is the procedure prescribed by the Holy Qur’an.

Either the Board agrees to codify Muslim Personal Law within the framework of Quran and the spirit of gender equality mandated by Quran and drawing the best from all Islamic Schools of jurisprudence. The codified law should be presented to the Parliament for being legislated.

Until the codification, Indian courts have a constitutional duty to ensure justice and equality to Muslim women and read down the provisions of various Islamic schools of jurisprudence like Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi, Maliki, Ahle-Hadith and Shia schools of Jurisprudence that are against the constitutional mandate.

Political parties will do great disservice to the country and the Muslim community by politicization of the issue either in the name of national integration or demography or on any other ground. Peace and justice are more noble goals than winning an election or benefiting from communal polarization.

Notebook

The victory of the BJP in the Delhi Municipal Corporation elections is as stunning as it was in UP. It would be better to conclude that the victory spree will continue for quite some time till a Bihar emerges. To say that two years is a long time in politics will be an act of deceiving oneself. In UP, after the defeat, there were many Congressmen who blamed the rout on its alliance with the Samajwadi Party. The same happened with the latter. There are no alliances to be blamed on, in Delhi. But even if there were, to blame an alliance for the defeat, as done post-UP elections, is an act of laziness. It should be realized and accepted that there is a Hindutva wave and that Modi has emerged as a person who can deliver, not merely the RSS dream, but also what he calls development. Every act of his is interpreted by most citizens as an act done in good faith and also interpreted as explained by him. Citizens are unwilling to doubt his bona fides. These two things have to be accepted and a counter strategy should be built on these for success.

A deep introspection is needed by all those political forces who do not want this victory spree to continue. The Congress, which came third in the Delhi elections, has to decide whether it should go back to its roots or continue with the reform agenda which it unleashed in the early 1990s and, though under duress, was accepted as an article of faith. It should realize that if it wants to survive in Indian politics there is no gain in this agenda. Modi has accepted the agenda in toto and is delivering it successfully and with much more vigour than the Congress under UPA could do. That the agenda is likely to soon come unstuck, like globalization, is something that has to be realized by it and going back to Nehru, or better Gandhiji, as its survival strategy is the option it should

adopt. It would do well to remember that towards his last days, Nehru confessed that he erred, and added that he should have accepted Gandhiji's path. Will the Congress be able to do it? To survive, it has to.

The left too, has a lot to introspect. It should review its past policies and boldly declare, if it wishes to remain relevant, that its' opposition of the '42 movement was wrong, it was betrayal of the country. And recognize that state capitalism can hardly undo the mischief of capitalism. On ends and means too, it will have to revise its thinking so also its assessment of Gandhiji. Many left intellectuals have already done the last. Left parties need to follow suit.

Socialists also have to introspect deeply. They should accept that there were some among them who converted a strategy to defeat the Congress into an article of principle and spoiled their fair name. After accepting wholeheartedly the mantra that means should be as pure as ends, Socialists abandoned it for power and lost their character. Socialists have to work hard to regain what it has lost and coming under one roof may help them.

And, the AAP, which lost decisively, will have to realize that politics requires some identifiable ideology. It's not enough to be anti-crony capitalism. To do justice to the poor, to the common man, a political force has to be anti-capitalist and the cadres have to be trained that way. Its banishing a group of people who were part of the anti-corruption movement and were also prominent in the party has boomeranged. The seeds of its decline were sown the day it split. Splits do not benefit a political party as the history of socialist movement shows.

To stymie the victory spree, the first step that the parties opposed to

the BJP will have to work on, is to ensure all of them come together. Efforts are on in this direction and one hopes that the Delhi results will catalyze the process. But coming together is only a strategy; it cannot deliver all that is needed. It is only an arithmetic solution. In politics, it does not work as it does in maths. The parties together need to create a vision of an inclusive India, of a polity based on some universal secular values and ethics, where ends are as important as the means; and they need to be committed to achieving it wholeheartedly.

Modi, who has emerged as a doer par excellence and the RSS which has succeeded in converting a large number of people to its idea of India have to be countered by those who are with the idea of India that has been laid down in the Constitution by positing it against the other idea of India. This idea was popularized during the freedom struggle by the father of the nation. The fight in the future has to be fought to save our Constitution, especially the idea of India that we hold dear. And the anti-BJP forces have to realize also that the freedom movement promised power to the people in the fields and factories, but those who came to power post-freedom, abandoned it. Giving power to common persons has to be the new dream and that needs to be pursued.

There is a challenge which Modi is facing. It is in Kashmir. From what is appearing in the press it doesn't seem that he has any credible solution for the Kashmir people. His problem may not be as much as the stone pelters as his own mentors. His intuition maybe telling him that he should start a dialogue, but his mentors may not allow him to do so and that can become his Waterloo.

Breaking the Mould in French Politics

D. K. Giri

The first round of the French Presidential elections took place on 23rd April. Since no candidate got the majority, the French citizens will vote in the 2nd and the final round on 7th May. According to the French system, if no candidate gets the majority in the first round, the first two getting the maximum votes go to the second round for a run-off poll. After the 23rd April results, the top two candidates Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le pen go to the second round.

There were 11 candidates in the electoral fray, but only five were in the race. For the first time in the modern French history, the incumbent-socialist president Francois Hollande did not run for the second term. In addition to Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le pen there were Francois Fillon from the Republicans, Jean-Luc Melenchon, an ex-Socialist party member supported by the Communist Party of France and a section of the Socialist party, and Benoit Hamon, of the Socialist party, the official candidate of the party. Both the Republican candidate and Socialist party candidate were elected by the primaries of the parties, again something new in recent history of the political parties. Francois Fillon defeated the former president of France, Nicola Sarkozy, and Alain Juppe, the Prime Minister of France under Jacque Chirac. Benoit Hamon won the party nomination by defeating former Prime Minister Manuel Valls. Both Fillon and Hamon had a good start as they got their nomination through well-fought

campaigns, but were knocked off by their own doings; Fillon got mired in scandals of nepotism and corruption as he paid his wife from public money for the work she did not do, and Benoit was representing a deeply divided party which was supporting him officially, but many in the party were supporting the far left Melenchon.

Emmanuel Macron was the winner on 23rd April with highest number of votes as predicted in the opinion polls. He is most likely to win the presidency. Macron's campaign and the win in the first round have certainly broken the mould in the French politics. For the first time in French political history, the traditional left and the right, the Socialists and the Republicans have lost in the first round. Referring to the defeat suffered by both left and the right, the international observers called the vote on 23rd, "a stunning rebuke of France's mainstream political forces". Others like Le Temps of Switzerland said, "the results signaled that the French Republic was broken, and the voters wanted deep changes". The other unprecedented thing to have happened is that Macron does not even have a political party. He launched a movement a year back called En Marche (On the Move) and broke the stranglehold of the established political parties. He presented a new vision for France and the French are falling for it. The second round, according to many perceptive observers, will witness a clash of two strong visions of France, "one inclusive and open to the world and

its concerns, and the other cut off behind the French borders and its old myths". The stakes are high, and the final choice of the French people will change their country, but also the politics of Europe and the world.

Marine Le Pen's (the runner-up on 23rd April) vision for France and her world view are known as her far right party National Front has been around. But, Emmanuel Macron is a brand new phenomenon in the French politics. Although he had a brief stint as a Minister of Economy in the government of the incumbent president Francois Hollande, he resigned, created the En Marche movement with fresh ideas that resonate with the people, and announced his candidature for the post of the highest office of the President. Before this, he never contested any election, and is only 39 years old. Let us look at his ideas, what they mean for France, the European Union and the rest of the world. Also his campaign method ought to be studied by all those seeking to pursue new politics. A brief profile of Macron and the review of his ideas are therefore in order.

Macron a former investment banker did not fight any election before. He was brought to politics by Francois Hollande as his financial advisor and then made a Minister of Economy in his cabinet. As the Minister, he wanted to bring certain basic financial reforms, which were known as Macron law. The reforms were stalled by the deep divisions in the socialist party. He was frustrated.

He realized that he could bring fundamental changes only as the president. So he decided to run for it. He launched the movement in a small meeting of a few dozens of people in a provincial town of France without any fanfare. He resigned from the government and built the movement. As the movement picked up, he announced his candidature. In the French political history, this is said to be the fastest rise of a politician.

As per the testimonies of his study-mates and colleagues, Macron was a precocious child, had unusual demeanors and a quick learner; “everyone that came across him knew at the time that he was somebody extra-ordinary and that he was different”. He is said to be ambitious and determined. He would like to do things differently. His personal life, his marriage is not normal by usual standards; his wife is 24 years senior to him and he has seven step-grand children. When, as a student, he was asked about his ambition, what he wanted to become, he said he wanted to be the president of France. His movement is new, neither left nor right. Macron realized that he needed to draw people to the centre, both from the left and the right. In order to do so, one needs a strong personality. One needs some charisma to launch a movement. He cultivated for himself that charisma and personality needed to unite the people divided between the two antagonistic blocks - left and right. But to keep the people united, one needs a political programme. Such political programmes are written by the experts and consultants. But in his case, Macron used the Movement to generate ideas from the people who have their concerns

and complaints. The Movement contacted many people with just two questions: what works and what does not work for France.

Macron realized that his manifesto was to be balanced, neither left nor right. He said, “I want it to be a programme that brings France into the 21st century”. His programmes have something for everyone - help for farmers, for industry, for employers, for workers, for entrepreneurs and so on. He cuts taxes, but supports those on low income. He commits 50 billion euro for public investment on job training, renewable energy, infrastructure and modernization. He would like to unite France’s complex pension system made up of 35 different public schemes. He is suggesting cutting 120,000 public sector jobs in order to bring down the budget deficit. Significantly, he is asking the companies to renegotiate a 35-hour a week work schedule. More important, he is for European Union. He wants to deepen the integration between the Euro zone countries; he opposes immigration quotas, calls for strengthening the external borders and a unified immigration policy. This is good news if he wins. France has been the main architect of the European Union. With the exit of Britain from EU and persisting financial instability in the member states, namely Spain and Greece, European Union seems to be doddering. Although Germany has been the financial engine of the EU vehicle, France provided the political direction to move. With France recoiling on itself owing to her own problems — terrorism, Muslim integration, slow growth, rise of far right, the weakening of the left, etc. European Union is stalled. Macron’s main plank is ‘unlocking France’ and providing opportunity for all to grow,

if this happens to any degree, the EU could also be unlocked and released to grow politically by repairing its economic integration. In fact, Brexit should give a new opportunity for a political Europe. Why that is so, is the scope for another write up on the subject. But just to throw the perspective, Britain has been a reluctant partner in the European Union, and worse, it kept the Anglo-American Axis alive by stunting the growth of EU as an independent political actor in the international scene. France under Macron should see it and revive the political integration of Europe like common security policy etc.

To conclude, Macron broke new ground in politics. In Europe, where the party system is fully developed, he has been able to go past it. The French novelist Victor Hugo had talked about the power of ideas in public life. He said” no army however strong can defeat the power of an idea whose time has come”. Macron came up with a new idea and defeated the two established parties who had run out of ideas. This is a lesson for the politicians and aspiring political leaders in developing democracies including India who focus on electoral arithmetic of caste and communities, not on ideas and new organizing principles. Politics without ideas is blind. Let everyone see what politics offers and let the politicians see for themselves where they are going.

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Forget what a Hindu rashtra will mean for minorities. What will it mean for Hindus?

Saba Naqvi

The secular model currently offers no counter-narrative to challenge Hindutva that claims to unite people above caste and region. Constitutionally and legally, we cannot be a Hindu rashtra but Uttar Pradesh 2017 is the point where I believe that in spirit we became one. I did not think so in (the general elections of) 2014, which I saw as an extraordinary mandate where a party (the Bharatiya Janata Party) won a simple majority with the lowest ever percentage of votes — 31%.

In 2017, after a magnificent victory (in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections), India's ruling party has chosen a religious leader or monk (Adityanath) to lead the nation's largest state. A few days after being chosen, he said there is nothing wrong in India being a Hindu rashtra.

So we must ask, what is a Hindu rashtra? We really do not have much experience of it in the world. Till 2008, Nepal was the only Hindu kingdom in the world and I remember my friends in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh being quite distressed when it ceased to be so.

In the words of Savarkar

Here I would like to quote from the most intellectually engaging ideologue of the Hindu Right, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. His speeches as president of the Hindu

Mahasabha are published as *Hindu Rashtra Darshan*. In his 1937 presidential address, he began with what he called a Homage to the Independent Hindu Kingdom of Nepal and sent greetings to the king in holding out as a Hindu power. After more praise of Nepal, he proceeds to define Hindutva, explain what is a Hindu, and why people whose motherland and holy-lands are not the same cannot be part of the Hindu nation.

He describes the Mahasabha as a Hindu Rashtra Sabha and says the Hindus are a nation by themselves. He then asks, "How the Hindus who differ so much amongst themselves in every detail of life could at all be called a nation as such?" He replies: "To such questions, my reply is that no people on the earth are so homogenous as to present perfect uniformity in language, culture, race and religion. A people is marked out a nation by themselves not so much by the absence of any heterogeneous differences amongst themselves as by the fact of their differing from other peoples more markedly than they differ amongst themselves."

Fellow Maharashtrian Dr Ambedkar looked at the same paradigm from an entirely different angle when he said that "Hindu society is a collection of castes. A caste has no feeling it is affiliated to another caste except when there is a Hindu-Muslim riot."

From what I can make out, reading the ideologues of the past and deciphering the actions of politicians of the ruling party, the first task of this Hindu rashtra is to create a particular identity by stressing the differences with others, who would be minorities. To create this imagined unity of Hindu society, they need symbols and motifs and today the cow is, I believe, the primary motif of the Hindu rashtra.

Surya namaskar, yoga, qabrstan (graveyard), cows, meat, slaughter houses, these are all code words. A sort of cultural fascism that is sought to be imposed since legally, the Hindu rashtra cannot exist.

There are some agitational templates of the Hindu rashtra, such as those who sing or do not sing Vande Mataram (never mind that it is AR Rahman, who converted to Islam in his life time, who has given India the most evocative modern rendition of Vande Mataram).

Conversion is another issue, on which Christians are attacked more than Muslims but in more remote parts of India, away from the spotlight. (As an aside, let me say that it's always easy to annoy the Right wing by pointing out that Dr Ambedkar, the father of our Constitution, wilfully converted to Buddhism.)

Upholding two-nation theory?

So, can such a nation be created

in spirit? Before we answer this, let us remember one thing very clearly: if we keep stating overtly and covertly that we are a Hindu rashtra, then our moral position on Kashmir is lost. We are then giving a great victory to Jinnah's two-nation theory that holds Hindus and Muslims to be separate nations. (Recently, a BJP MP tweeted that the solution to Kashmir lies in depopulating the Valley).

But then the two-nation theory could not be made to work in Pakistan where religion was meant to be the unifying glue. But let's see whom they have been able to accommodate in this imaginary Land of the Pure homeland of Muslims. First, they could not stomach the rule

of Bengali Muslims, hence East and West were divided. Then, within the Home of Muslims, Punjabis dominated and competed with Sindhis. Within Karachi, the Mohajirs (those who immigrated post-Partition from India to the newly formed Pakistan) and run a reign of terror even as they claim discrimination. Shias, Ahmadiyas are all routinely targeted. Recently, we saw Mashal Khan, a young student, lynched in Pakistan because he was an Ahmadiya.

Around the same time, a few days here or there, Pehlu Khan, a cattle trader, was lynched in Alwar because he was transporting a milch cow.

Many of us do worry about

what the Hindu rashtra has in store for minorities, but equally, I would ask, what does it subscribe for Hindus? The problem is that at an ideological level, it's all very mean-spirited. Is there some grand humanist vision behind this Hindu rashtra? A moral centre? If so, I am willing to be a participant in it. I have one qualification. I do yoga every morning and that includes 24 surya namaskars. I suspect many of the BJP faithful who line up behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi on World Yoga Day (as if yoga were invented by the BJP) cannot match my facility with yogic postures. Adityanath, I am certain, can beat me to it.

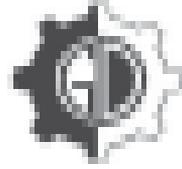
Dr. Suresh Khairnar, who was elected All India President of the RashtraSeva Dal unopposed recently, said at the meeting to elect him that the threat of fascism is looming large on the horizon of India. Moral policing, cow-vigilantism and imposed patriotism by forcing Muslims to chant "VandeMataram" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" are expressions of this and added that this reminds us of pre-fascist era in Italy and Germany. The shocking incident in West Bengal in which young children were used in an armed procession on Ramnaomi is an indication of the days to come.

Continuing, Dr. Khairnar said that the RSS has been built on the model of Benito Mussolin's Fascist party of Italy and Hitler's Nazi Party of Germany and is now implementing the fascist agenda after coming to power at the centre and in several states. The minorities, dalits, tribals and workers are being targeted, making their life miserable. He appealed to the RSD volunteers to make India "Sanghmukt" (free from RSS). He also appealed to all revolutionary and progressive forces to rally against the fascist forces by joining the movement initiated by the RashtraSeva Dal.

Postal Registration No. MCW/275/2015-2017.

License to Post without prepayment WPP License No. MR/Tech/WPP-210/West/2017

Published on Sunday, April 30, 2017 & Posted on Wednesday May 3, 2017 at Mumbai Patrika Channel, Mumbai GPO-1



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