

janata

Vol. 73 No. 37

October 7, 2018

**Babasaheb Ambedkar and
Neoliberal Economic Reforms:**

Part II

Anand Teltumbde

**Mahatma Gandhi: The Great
Communicator**

Nikhil Chakravartty

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

**Bhagat Singh and Savarkar:
Two Petitions that Tell Us
the Difference Between
Hind and Hindutva**

**RSS Supremo's Public
Relations Exercise**
Ram Puniyani

Editor : **G. G. Parikh**

Associate Editor : **Neeraj Jain**

Managing Editor : **Guddi**

Editorial Board :

**B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Nandu Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey**

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com

Website: www.janataweekly.org

Narendra Modi's Paradoxical Claim on the Legacy of Gandhi

Ramachandra Guha

India has established a committee to commemorate next year's 150th anniversary of the birth of the "father of the nation", Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the members include politicians across party lines as well as some foreign representatives, among them the Nobel laureates Desmond Tutu and Al Gore. Hailing Gandhi as "India's greatest gift to humankind", whose "name finds resonance across the continents", the committee plans a year-long programme of celebration, commencing on his birthday, October 2, and ending on the same day in 2019.

Mr Modi's bid to appropriate Gandhi is paradoxical. The prime minister spent most of his formative years in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a hardline Hindu organisation which reviled Gandhi for allegedly being too soft on Muslims. The antagonism between the RSS and Gandhi was at its most intense in the months after August 15, 1947, when the subcontinent was freed from British rule but also divided into the separate nations of India and Pakistan. Gandhi went on peace

marches and fasts to protect the rights of the millions of Muslims who had stayed in India. He insisted that "India does not belong to Hindus alone". He told his compatriots that even if Pakistan persecuted its Hindu and Sikh minorities, India "would be betraying the Hindu religion if we did evil because others had done it". His "basic creed" remained what it had always been—"that India is the home of Muslims no less than of Hindus".

The RSS, on the other hand, believed that, with the creation of Pakistan, there was no place any more for Muslims in India. Their hatred of Gandhi emanated from the organisation's head, a polemical preacher named M.S. Golwalkar. In December 1947, as Gandhi continued to campaign for inter-faith harmony, Golwalkar made a speech in which he declared that "no power on Earth could keep" Muslims in India. "They would have to quit the country." Golwalkar went on to say of Gandhi: "We have the means whereby such men can be immediately silenced, but it is our tradition not to be inimical to Hindus. If we are compelled, we will

have to resort to that course too.” Six weeks later, Gandhi was murdered by a Hindu fanatic who had once been a member of the RSS. Though this person may have been acting as a freelancer, the speeches made by Golwalkar showed very clearly that the organisation detested Gandhi.

Many RSS members were not sorry to see Gandhi being “immediately silenced”. The RSS was banned after Gandhi’s death. The ban was lifted a year and a half later, and in subsequent decades the organisation grew steadily in strength and influence. Its political arm, the Bharatiya Janata party, came to rule large parts of India. While the RSS muted its criticism of Gandhi, its hatred of Muslims remained intense. In his own writings, Golwalkar characterised Muslims and Christians as enemies

of the nation.

When Mr Modi became prime minister of India in 2014, he had been in public life for close to 40 years. Joining the RSS as a young man, he was weaned on Golwalkar’s ideas (and prejudices) and even wrote an adulatory biography of him. There is no evidence that he ever dissented from the RSS’s views of Gandhi, or of Muslims. However, since becoming PM, Mr Modi has invoked Gandhi’s name often. He dedicated his flagship programme to rid India of open defecation to Gandhi. And he has made it a point to visit Gandhi’s ashram in the company of foreign leaders. He has gone there with Chinese President Xi Jinping, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, and, most recently, with the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

This latest celebration of Gandhi is just the most recent attempt by Mr Modi to link his name with a man whom his own mentor cordially disliked. Might it be that he recognises that Gandhi is the most widely admired Indian outside India? And that he wishes to accrue credit for himself by association? That may be so, but it is hard to see this exploitation of Gandhi’s legacy as anything other than rank opportunism. In the four years that Mr Modi has been in power, Muslims have been attacked by Hindu lynch mobs and verbally abused by serving cabinet ministers. India has moved further in the direction of being a Hindu majoritarian state than at any previous time in its history. How can Mr Modi promote Gandhi abroad while at the same time denying what he stood for at home?

A Practical Program to Give a New Lease of Life to Land Reforms

Bharat Dogra

At last some voices are rising to strongly assert the need for better implementation of land reforms. On October 2, Gandhi Jayanti day, nearly 25,000 landless workers and adivasi peasants gathered at Mela Maidan, Gwalior to raise a strong voice in favour of land reforms. This assembly was part of the larger efforts of Ekta Parishad and other Gandhian organisations for a breakthrough in long-neglected land reforms.

While the importance of land reforms for bringing equality and reducing poverty in rural areas is widely recognised, nevertheless, land reforms and in particular land

redistribution have been badly neglected in India in recent times. At some stage, this phase of neglect has to end and a new beginning has to be made for land reforms as this is too important an area to be ignored for long. Here a practical program is proposed to give a new lease of life to land reforms. We propose that first of all, at least those initiatives that had been taken some years ago but could not be taken to a satisfactory conclusion must be fully implemented. After this initial phase, we can then plan for wider land reforms.

First of all, much more can be done to ensure better and more

effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act. As this legislation once held up so much hope for adivasis and other forest-dweller communities, it is important that all the processes related to it be first completed so that these communities are better placed in terms of land and livelihood rights. Because of inadequate and even faulty implementation of this Act, in many places, forest-dwelling communities are perhaps placed even worse placed than recognised tribal communities in terms of their claims having been rejected or ignored.

Another area where earlier

efforts need to be taken to their logical conclusion relates to the distribution of homestead lands. This work should have completed long ago, but still lakhs of people in rural areas lack a proper housing place with legal rights. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation by powerful and big landowners who often claim that the landless are living on their land and hence should provide them free or cheap labor.

Land records must be jointly in the name of husband and wife. Women farmers who work so hard but whose contribution is often ignored should get proper recognition. In the case of single women, while some efforts have been made to help them retain their land rights, more needs to be done for this.

All these efforts can be taken forward together if there is a clear land reforms policy and a national task-force on land reforms can ensure much needed continuity in land reforms. These steps are also needed for ensuring that we do not stop merely with the completion of pending works but have a much broader and well-thought out vision of land reforms ahead of us.

These are also broadly the demands being raised by the ongoing mobilisation of Ekta Parishad and other Gandhian organisations for better implementation of land reforms, which need to be supported at a wider level.

Email: bharatdogra1956@gmail.com

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

Babasaheb Ambedkar and Neoliberal Economic Reforms: Part II

Anand Teltumbde

Ambedkar and Globalisation

At the outset, to speak about Ambedkar in relation to globalisation, which represents a paradigmatic transformation of global capitalism into its extremist version, is fundamentally speculative. But there are enough fools who rush in where angels fear to tread. Since they cannot rationally justify their support to globalisation, they have been awkwardly invoking Ambedkar, speculating that if he had lived, he would have supported globalisation. In any case, there being so little knowledge about economic policies, the gullible listeners tend to believe these tricksters, who pretend intellectual prowess and already enjoy some social reputation. It is futile to engage with them at such a speculative level. However, if we understand what globalisation is, we can objectively assess where Ambedkar would stand vis-à-vis globalisation.

Globalisation is an extremist version of resurgent liberalism in retaliation to its century long marginalisation by communist challenge and Keynesianism. It is basically premised on extreme individualism, competition as the prime mover of progress, and free market as its prototype. Pitching every individual in competition with the rest of the world, it follows the social Darwinist justification for inequality, exploitation, and social injustice. While it is thus biased in favour of the rich and powerful in

relation to the poor masses, in its ruthless logic it favours the winner and discards the losers. Therefore, in its proclivities it is absolutely unsustainable. Translated into an economic policy package, it is familiarly known as privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation, without any concern for the weak and poor. This strategy of global capital has been enabled by the late 20th century information and communication technologies and emboldened by the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet regime. It manifests itself in the form of accumulation by dispossession, unmindful of the consequences for the survival of the human race itself. People are being denuded of their meagre possessions all over the world. While the State is actively facilitating this process of accumulation of global capital, it is withdrawing from its role as the provider of social goods such as education, healthcare, etc. to the people.

If this is the character of globalisation, would Ambedkar, whose vision was to see human destiny in the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, support it? Actually, if there is anything that can be conceived as being ideologically opposite to Ambedkar, it is globalisation.

Globalisation and Dalits

Perhaps Dalits, who are fed on an indentarian diet, would not be impressed by the picture of

Part I of this article appeared in the previous issue.

devastation globalisation has created the world over. For instance, there is no dispute that inequalities have risen at an unprecedented rate in every country in almost direct proportion to the degree of free-market policies that country has followed. Loss of jobs, democratic spaces, habitat, environment and social security for vast masses of people are rampantly observed everywhere. But identity obsessed Dalits would not relate with it. They will still argue that they are a different people faced with the unique problem of caste and the heaps of contra-evidence do not mean anything to them. Although it is most unfortunate that Dalits should be so sectarian in their attitude, this argument impels one to focus on the specifics of the problems faced by Dalits.

With the heuristic that the adverse impact of globalisation is felt by people in inverse proportion to their placement in social hierarchy, it would not be difficult to see that Dalits are the most affected people by it. But only saying this much may not appeal to Dalits, they may probably consider it to be too superficial. We will therefore need to consider the impact of globalisation on Dalits within a more comprehensive framework, what I would call a project of their emancipation. This project can be conceived in terms of four empowerments: 1. individual empowerment; 2. Socio-economic empowerment; 3. Socio-political empowerment; and 4. Socio-cultural empowerment. If these four empowerments are accomplished, one can reasonably say that the emancipation of Dalits is achieved. We identify salient proxy variables to map each of these four empowerments: education and health for individual empowerment; land

reforms and jobs for socio-economic empowerment; democratisation for socio-political empowerment; and modernity for socio-cultural empowerment. Let us now assess the impact of globalisation on each of these proxy variables in a systematic and somewhat scientific manner.

The greatest impact on people comes through the withdrawal of the State from its obligation towards people and privatisation of what was public. Education, marked as the greatest enabler, is getting increasingly beyond the reach of Dalits. One sees rampant commercialisation of the sector, with multilayered quality of educational institutions catering to different segments of the education market. It quite corresponds with the caste hierarchies that existed in olden times. Health services were already one of the most privatised sectors in the country; now they have almost disappeared from the public domain.

As regards land reforms, the entire discourse has vanished and is being replaced by corporate land grab in the garb of development. It is leading to significant land loss and increasing landlessness of Dalits in villages. Jobs are fast disappearing. The public sector jobs which were accessible to Dalits have been fast decreasing since 1997, effectively marking the end of reservation there. As regards democracy, it has only remained in the symbolic façade of elections. Outside elections, there is no space for people to express their opinion or dissent. The slightest indication of dissent invites a naxal or Maoist tag, which is being stuck on Dalit youth with impunity to destroy their life.

Modernity, which means transcending decadent traditions and customs, whatever their

source may be, and adopting the scientific outlook. Understanding the impact of globalisation on this proxy variable may not be easy, because of the dominant discourse that associates globalisation with cultural universalisation. That has not been true however. The true processes can be characterised by hybridisation, glocalisation and the likes, which means that globalisation assimilates what is valued by the local elites with the dominant global cultural resources. As such, all the old traditions and customs of Hindus, including castes, which were apologetically spoken about until 1980s, have resurged with a vengeance. The neoliberal generation now speaks about them with pride. If caste atrocities are taken as the indicator of casteism (and I would take it as the best indicator), one will have to infer that casteism is on a definite rise during the period of globalisation.

Tus, we can see that globalisation has comprehensively damaged what can be called the emancipation project of Dalits. There will certainly be a few Dalit individuals who have immensely benefited from it. Globalisation is structurally oriented to benefit stray elements, creating an impression that individuals can achieve anything if they possess the wherewithal to compete. The campaigners of Dalit capitalism, such as the Dalit capitalists or the Dalit Chamber of Commerce, do not have even an elementary understanding of the disastrous impact of globalisation on the Dalits, leave apart the principle that adopting enemy ideology is simply suicidal.

Conclusion

Babasaheb Ambedkar occupies

an important space in Dalit psyche. He represents their ideal, ideology and aspirations. Nothing that is not compatible with him can be considered by Dalits. But this assessment is mediated by the vested interests in various garbs. They have iconised him among the masses in reactionary ways. The masses then tend to assess anything with reference to their false understanding of this icon; if it is not attuned to this icon, it is summarily rejected and vice versa, even in the face of contrary experience of the masses. Globalisation is one such phenomenon. It is being implemented in India for nearly three decades now, and the majority of Dalits have actually suffered its ill effects. But still they do not have an abhorrence for it, simply because they believe that it is something supported by the image of Ambedkar that is in their minds. Dalits need to understand the real Ambedkar, they need to extricate the real radical Ambedkar as their guide and beacon. The radical Ambedkar is surely the socialist Ambedkar, who was in relentless search of truth, of the way which will lead the world to sustainability and humans to their utopia marked by him with the three ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Even if the Dalits internalise only this, they would have extricated him from the reactionary marsh created by vested interests.

Globalisation is a euphemistic term for the imperialist strategy of global capital. In essence it is capitalism, but is actually an extremist version of it, which disregards its own sustainability in pursuit of unbridled profits. Capitalism had set in place limits for exploitation of surplus value from labour, insofar

as the latter needed to be provided with wherewithal for reproduction and also the purchasing power to buy his finished products. Globalisation, intoxicated with technology, has completely undermined labour and has been out to discard it or dispossess it of whatever little it had. It basically desires extermination of

the majority of people, the rejects of the market, who it believes parasitically consume the planet's resources. There is no intellect required to assess that such a creed or a system would be an anathema to Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Email: tanandraj@gmail.com

Mahatma Gandhi: The Great Communicator

Nikhil Chakravartty

As a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th Birth Anniversary, we reproduce below the Gandhi Peace Foundation Lecture 1995 delivered by Nikhil Chakravartty, the renowned editor of Mainstream Weekly, in New Delhi on January 30, 1995.

I am deeply touched by having been asked to deliver this year's Gandhi Peace Foundation Lecture. Nobody is more conscious than I am about my inadequacy in speaking on this sacred occasion, the day of the martyrdom of the greatest son of my country. Perhaps my only qualification to talk about him is that I belong to the generation that was witness to the historic transition from subjection to freedom of our great motherland, and as a young reporter I cherish the memory of the exciting moments in the presence of Gandhi.

I am no scholar of the study of Gandhiji's great life, rather I spent my activist youth as an impudent critic of the elders in our national movement for independence. Having spent over half-a-century as a journalist, I have chosen as the subject of this presentation: 'Mahatma Gandhi—the Great Communicator'. This is a very subjective endeavour—a string

of cursory thoughts—based largely on my personal reflections on our struggle for freedom and how it acquired its unique characteristic from the way Gandhiji built and guided it.

Our freedom struggle needs to be assessed in a historical perspective. Its dominant characteristic that marks it out from other great revolutions in history was its tremendous sweep. No other revolution in history set in motion so many millions of people. This is no idle boast but the plain statement of a historical reality which is often missed by our academics and politicians alike.

In late eighteenth century France, the objective conditions of mass discontent and disenchantment with the ancient regime no doubt prevailed, but the actual revolutionary action involved a small number of a few thousand, mostly in Paris; once the fuse was lighted, the revolution flared up in different parts of France without any coherent leadership. It was largely a spontaneous upsurge, even the leadership at the core could not hold its own and it changed hands fast so that even those who led it at the beginning were soon either left by the wayside or liquidated,

giving rise to the classic phrase that the revolution had devoured its own children.

The Russian Revolution had a more organised leadership than those who had led the French Revolution, but it was a small band of determined militant revolutionaries under a leader who had an uncanny sense of the configuration of forces ranged in a decadent imperial system. So, when the Czarist system itself cracked up with the fiasco of defeat in the First World War, Lenin gave the call for capture of power which the Bolsheviks swiftly carried out. In terms of moving millions into revolutionary action, the Bolshevik Revolution was mostly the handiwork of small groups of determined revolutionaries who, everywhere, first captured the key points of power and then sought to redesign the social structure in the interest of the common people as they thought fit. In a sense it was a sort of managerial revolution led by a party which concentrated on the means of capturing power, and power alone.

The Chinese Revolution was also similar to the Russian Revolution in its broad historical sweep. In this case also, it was a small group of a few thousand led by a remarkable leader, Mao Zedong, and steered in the Long March which was a sort of armed padayatra—a decade-old campaign to rouse the peasantry in some pockets of the vast sprawling domain of China, where the administrative system had broken down and had been replaced by an ineffective regime under the Kuomintang. It was a very effective use of the guerrilla war approach which enabled Mao to spread his network under conditions wherein the Japanese had occupied most of the mainland. Unlike the Russian

Revolution, which relied more on the working class, the Chinese Revolution targeted mainly the peasantry. Here too, the number of people actively engaged in mass action was small—the same reliance on a determined band. The form of action was essentially armed guerrilla forays which harassed the enemy and finally overpowered it. In this way, the authority of the State was subverted until the citadel of power was finally captured by the guerrilla bands of yesterday that had come together to form the victorious People's Liberation Army.

Compare these three great landmarks in modern history with what happened in our country in the first half of the twentieth century. Stage by stage, the premier nationalist organisation, committed to the struggle for independence, gradually brought in larger and larger sections of the people into the vortex of struggle for power. The only weapon for winning power was to organise larger and larger sections of India's unarmed humanity and involve them in mass action. By the time independence actually came, the Congress commanded much larger sections of the people than any organisation had so far done in history.

The main feature of the Indian struggle for freedom has been that it depended almost wholly on activating the masses by injecting into them the urge for independence by emphasising the strength of the Indian people vis-a-vis the colonial rulers, and thereby set them free from the fear of the ruler. The concept of non-violence, as it was practised, emphasised on the strength of the Indian people in relation to the ruler who had to depend on the gun for establishing his authority. In this sway, the Arms Act, through which

the Indian people were denied the right to defend themselves, was turned into a symbol of strength, with the people depending on their conscious non-violent strength to ward off the foreign ruler. This meant constant effort on the part of the leaders of the independence movement to raise the consciousness of the vast masses of common people—not just a small section of determined revolutionaries as had been the case with the other great revolutions.

This aspect of the Indian Revolution marks it out as distinct from the other revolutions in modern times. Nowhere was the question of the gun permitted to be of supreme or decisive importance in the mainstream of our national struggle for independence. This does not mean that the sacrifice of those revolutionaries who unwaveringly gave their lives by taking up arms against the foreign ruler was of no consequence. From Aurobindo Ghosh and Savarkar to Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad to Subhas Chandra Bose, all of them made the finest contributions to the struggle for freedom. But the successive waves of mass upheavals that decisively brought down the British rule in India did not depend on the wielding of arms by a small minority of dedicated revolutionaries, but essentially on the raising of the level of consciousness of the broad masses of the people.

This was precisely the unique contribution of Gandhiji. When historians and publicists talk of Gandhi having taken politics from being the monopoly of the intelligentsia to the wider world of the common humanity, it was not just a question of broadening the base of the movement for freedom. This was not merely a question of

quantitative increase in the number of participants in the movement. It was the emergence of a qualitatively different type of movement, with its essentially distinct hallmark.

How was this achieved, what was the weapon by which the mass consciousness was raised? How was the message of the freedom struggle conveyed to the common people? Herein comes Gandhi's role as a great communicator. For, he depended solely on communicating the message of freedom to the masses and thereby sought to lift their consciousness. That message was not just a mere exhortation for rousing the emotional urge of a nation to be free—however important might have been that task for welding the sense of unity among the people. This had been done in a limited area during the Bengal anti-partition movement of 1905—which had assumed the character of a mass movement in a particular region and had been successful in forcing the British rulers to abandon their plan to vivisect one of the militant pockets of the national movement.

Gandhiji's movement, on the other hand, was much more comprehensive: it tried to activate all the diverse sectors of the national spectrum. From the affluent classes to the impoverished, from the intelligentsia to the unlettered—nobody was left out. It was not confined to only the people at the grassroots, as is being done nowadays a multitude of activist groups. No doubt these efforts are bringing some relief to the people at the bottom. By their endeavour these activist groups have certainly been educating and activating the uncared-for sections of society to stand on their own legs. What distinguished Gandhi's movement for independence was that it was not

only much more comprehensive, it also sought to open the eyes of the millions left in darkness about the limited capacity of the foreign ruler and make them aware about the great possibility for the country's advancement once the foreign ruler was forced to quit through the demonstration of strength by the people.

Gandhiji ran the pilot project of his new technique in South Africa against the hated rule of apartheid. There too he did not advocate the taking up of arms, but sought to instil in the common people a realisation of their own strength in blocking and muzzling the White ruler's oppressive rule. From that apprenticeship abroad, when he came back to India in 1915, he found a country where political activity was afflicted with stagnation and political forces, mostly confined to the intelligentsia, were in disarray. The tour he undertook—*Bharat Darshan*—enabled him to understand the urges of the common people. Following that, one of his first acts was the Champaran satyagraha, a form of struggle about which both the Indian politicians and the British rulers were completely unfamiliar. Drawing upon his South African experience, he made a special effort at cultivating the minority Muslim community, which led to his interest and subsequent compact with the Khilafat agitation. The Rowlatt satyagraha and the Khilafat movement were his subsequent excursions before he launched his first major national campaign in the form of the non-cooperation movement of 1920. For the first time in the annals of the national movement, a countrywide campaign involving the common masses was initiated.

It is not the purpose of this

presentation to trace the history of the freedom struggle—what is relevant for the purpose is Gandhiji's role as a communicator. He left out no means, no technique, to rouse the consciousness of the people—instil in them the imperative of their active participation in the movement. For this, he took up a wide range of activities pertaining to all sections of the people—from education to village welfare, from the spinning wheel to cattle protection. His effort at total identification with the village poor made him design even his personal attire and way of living. Since he looked upon public activity as having an element of moral purpose, he regarded the entire crusade for independence as an experiment with truth. For him the freedom of the country was part of the struggle for truth—an approach which perhaps the unlettered villager, steeped in the tradition of customs, found easy to grasp.

This is an aspect of Gandhiji's movement which was not easy for the Western educated liberal intelligentsia of the city to understand. It is in this context that there took place the intense debate over the question of linking ends with means. From the Marxists to the radicalists of all hues, the linking of ends and means could not possibly be a part of the domain of politics, where the supremacy of the objective of power was of paramount consideration, and hence there could be no organised link between ends and means. In the early 1930s, when Aldous Huxley reopened the question in his book, *Ends and Means*, the Indian Marxist response was 'Ends are Means'. This is where Gandhiji's insistence on politics and morality being inseparable demarcated him from the Western

educated liberals and helped him to a large measure to be attuned to the philosophical base of very large sections of the corpus of India's socio-cultural heritage. This also denoted that for him politics—the struggle for independence—could not be separated from the totality of human conditions. In his scheme of things, the struggle for independence was but a part of the wider struggle for the regeneration of the entire society.

As a communicator, Gandhiji, like most of our great leaders, used the medium of the press apart from the spoken word. In the midst of all his multitude of activities, *Indian Opinion*, *Young India* and *Harijan* came out regularly—a one-man endeavour—conveying his message to his countrymen. The importance that was attached to the written word by Gandhiji and other national leaders reflected their urge to spread their message to as wide a section of the people as possible. The means to convey that message were often primitive, but no medium available at that time was left out. From handwritten posters and graffiti to traditional interpersonal means, such as the travelling bards—the bauls of Bengal, for instance—to the educated student going out on literacy-cum-swadeshi missions and the composing of patriotic songs and setting up of choirs in villages, mohallas and bustis to the immortal 'magic lantern'—there was no video then—nothing was left out. It was a gigantic operation, sustained through the ups and downs of the freedom struggle.

How true to his convictions Gandhiji was in his actual functioning as a journalist can be gathered from many of his writings. Here is a passage from *Young India* (July 2, 1925) about how he strove to serve

as a true communicator:

To be true to my faith, therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and my vocabulary. It is training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds.

As a communicator, Gandhiji was aware of the need to take into account the level of awareness of his target reader or listener. This can be seen in the very naming of each of the great upsurges. None of these were just spontaneous upsurges, but each one was preceded by meticulous preparations. By the correct standards of a communicator, Gandhiji chose the form of struggle, the target and even the language of every campaign in keeping with the level of consciousness of the common people. In the first round it was Non-Cooperation (1920). Ten years later, it was more assertive—Civil Disobedience (1930–32). And a decade later, having taken into account both the internal and the external circumstances, it was Quit India (1942). With every stage, the tempo was raised higher, mass involvement was more intense and widespread than before, until the finale was reached with the battle cry of Do-or-Die. Here was the remarkable manifestation of the acute sensitivity of a great communicator.

It may be worthwhile to refer briefly to a couple of specific instances of how Gandhiji operated as a communicator. Before he undertook the Dandi March for

the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, there was careful consultation within the leadership; it was not just the product of the brainwave of one individual leader. Recent research on the subject by a very perceptive scholar in social communication at Ahmedabad has brought out significant details about it. ('What Moves the Masses? Salt Satyagraha as Case-Study' by Suchitra, *Mainstream*, January 28, 1995.) After the pledge to achieve complete independence, taken on the banks of the Ravi at Lahore on December 31, 1929, first came the Independence Day declaration of January 26, 1930 which catalogued the injustices of the British Raj. Next came Gandhiji's letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, in which eleven demands were raised, including the abolition of the salt tax. Meanwhile, the leaders discussed the form of civil disobedience to be launched. Pandit Nehru and Subhas Bose suggested the setting up of a parallel government while Sardar Patel proposed a march to Delhi or alternatively a countrywide breaking of land laws. Gandhiji envisaged a long drawn-out movement in which the masses would have to be drawn in. He felt the British Government would pounce upon the setting up of a parallel government or a march to Delhi. Gandhiji felt his target audience was the Indian society that needed to be unified and he was conscious of the need to cultivate public opinion abroad. So, the defiance of the salt law was taken up as the initial item of civil disobedience. Resentment at the salt law had a long history. As early as 1844, there were disturbances protesting against this impost which touched even the poorest of the poor. The Congress, at its inaugural session in 1885, had referred to it. During the 1905 swadeshi movement

in Bengal, the call was given for the boycott of Manchester cloth and salt imported from Liverpool. At the same time, focusing on this iniquitous tax, Gandhiji expected to mobilise international support, at least to expose the exploitation of the Indian people under the British Raj. In his own hand he wrote out for the press: "I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might."

Then came the form of the struggle. A march from Ahmedabad to the seashore at Dandi passing through villages would provide sufficient space for non-stop propaganda for weeks against the Raj and mobilise villagers along the route, and its publicisation would bestir other volunteers in other parts of the country and thereby propagate the vision of Purna Swaraj. The march was undertaken by 80 persons including Gandhiji himself. The other 79 were chosen to represent all the provinces in India, and they were drawn from all communities—Muslims, Christians and Hindus, both upper caste and the depressed. Abbas Tyabji and Sarojini Naidu were chosen as leaders in the event of his own arrest—symbolically representing the Muslims and the womanhood of the country. And he sent his letter to the Viceroy notifying his decision to break the salt law, through an Englishman, Reginald Reynolds, who later recalled:

I realise that Gandhi's use of me was symbolic—it was to show that this was not a matter of Indians versus British but of principles.

The whole nation was electrified by this new form of mass action—totally peaceful and non-violent, even in the face of police brutality when the satyagrahis tried to enter the salt factory at Dharasana.

In this campaign—the first truly nationwide mass campaign

against the Raj—Gandhi often used religious idioms as the best means of arousing the rural masses familiar with religious lore. Incidentally, Gandhiji drew the correct lesson from the poor response to the repeat performance of the Dandi March exactly two years later, in 1932—after the failure of the Gandhi–Irwin pact. From this the lesson was drawn that the repetition of a specific form of campaign does not fetch the same results. This is a lesson which many of our political parties and mass organisation activists need to keep in mind today.

Ten years after the Civil Disobedience movement, I had a personal experience of Gandhiji's remarkable style of communication at the Ramgarh Congress session in 1940. The Congress nagar had come up in a rural setting with bamboo and local shrubs. During his early morning walk, Gandhiji noticed a red flag fluttering at a corner of the enclosure reserved for the leaders' camp. It appeared that the fraternal delegation from Burma's Dobama party was put up there and they had hoisted their party flag. Panditji was sent for and he tried to explain to Gandhiji that this red flag, being the party flag of the Burmese delegation, should not be taken as a defiant rival to the Congress tricolour. But Gandhiji was adamant, and so Panditji quietly managed to shift the Burmese delegation to the nearby Dak Bungalow outside the Congress nagar. Some of us thought that the matter betrayed an attitude of intolerance on the part of Gandhiji.

In the afternoon of the same day, the Subjects Committee was scheduled to meet. In those days, the Congress was a unique national platform, including within its fold different ideological and political formations, from the Congress

Socialist Party and the banned Communist Party (that was then functioning as National Front group after the name of its legal journal) to the so-called Nationalist Congressmen representing by and large the point of view of Hindu orthodoxy. There were arrest warrants against the Communist leaders, including the notification of a handsome police reward for their capture. The Communists had sent one of their leaders, Bharadwaj, to participate in the Congress session. With an arrest warrant against him and the police and their informers hovering all over the place, it was difficult for him to come out of his undisclosed shelter in the Congress nagar and place the National Front point of view before the Subjects Committee. The Communists approached Panditji for advice on how Bharadwaj could come to the Subjects Committee session. Panditji promptly went to Gandhiji for advice. Remembering the morning incident, we were almost sure that Gandhiji would be far from helpful. A few minutes later, Panditji came out of Gandhiji's camp and told us that Bharadwaj would go to the Subjects Committee pandal with Gandhiji himself in his car. We were literally taken aback when we found the car carrying Gandhiji going right up to the back of the platform, and out came Bharadwaj trailing behind Gandhiji, and then sitting on the dais and greeting the leaders from Maulana Azad, Rajen Babu, Sardar Patel and Panditji to JP and all the others. Sardar Patel moved the official resolution, followed by JP who placed the CSP point of view. Then Bharadwaj placed the National Front point of view. Discussions went on, and in the end, replying to the debate, Sardar Patel tore the CSP and the National Front

amendments to pieces and carried the day. Meanwhile, unnoticed by many, Bharadwaj slipped out, helped by Panditji and Dr Lohia.

This indeed was an amazing experience. How could one reconcile Gandhiji's morning allergy to the red flag and the very same afternoon sheltering a 'wanted' Communist leader and allowing him to come before the party forum and place his point of view? I have thought over this incident many times since. By his conduct, Gandhiji was transmitting two messages. First, by insisting on the removal of the red flag, Gandhiji wanted to convey the message to all, that within the national platform which the Congress represented in the struggle against the foreign power, there could be but one leadership and one flag—no question of any ambiguity. At the same time, he wanted to convey the clear message to the British Raj that in its confrontation with the Congress, no party would be on its side, that all were behind the Congress. Subsequently, it was the breach of this commitment in 1942, when the Communists went against the Quit India upheaval, that led to their being thrown out of the Congress.

The protracted negotiations over the transfer of power and the Muslim League's insistence on Pakistan finally led to the Mountbatten Award of June 3, 1947, by which the country was partitioned. As was well known at that time, Gandhiji was opposed to partition. The difference between him and the leaders of the Congress flowed from of his premonition about the future. As a great communicator, Gandhiji could not only transmit but perceive as well about what was in store. This is borne out by a very penetrating passage in Tendulkar's biography,

Mahatma. Two days before the Mountbatten Award, that is, on June 1, 1947, Gandhiji had woken up in the morning earlier than usual and spent the time before the prayer musing:

Today I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the political situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. They wonder, if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true, loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be, regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or not. I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark.

Then after a pause, he pondered:

I shall, perhaps, not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperiled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for independence. Therefore, there is no other help.

Here was a seer who could communicate his premonition. For those of us who were fortunate in watching him in person, those last days of his life—with his mind heavy with the unleashing of Hindu-Muslim clashes even after the foreign power had left—were perhaps the most momentous. On the one hand, there was the realisation

of his goal—the independence of the country—while at the same time, the menace of communal hatred was vitiating that newly-won freedom. The hour of fulfilment was tinged with a horrendous tragedy. For him therefore, the achievement of independence did not allow a moment of rest: the struggle had to go on. Since he could not avert the partitioning of the country, he had to meet the challenge of its sombre aftermath—how to put out the hell-fire of communal animosity. And so he set out on this, his final crusade—how to transform the millions of common humanity that he had served to mould all his life and make each one of them his brother's keeper. In the midst of blood and fire, he strove—Noakhali, Beliaghata, Bihar and Delhi—until he fell a martyr to the cause which is yet to be redeemed by his heirs and successors. Till the last drop of life ebbed out of that frail body, the great communicator never ceased for a moment to transmit his message—the message which remains a sacred injunction even to this day forty-seven years later.

Today, this country needs a Gandhi to bring about the regeneration of our democracy. With morality being banished from politics and public life getting corroded all around, this country today needs the Mahatma, the Great Communicator, more than at any time in the past. Seventy years ago, Mahatma Gandhi had said:

Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.

This commandment alone can enthrone social justice in this great land of ours.

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

An 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. Translated from Hindi.

Rajendra Babu tells me that he has received some 50,000 postcards, between 25,000 and 30,000 letters and many thousands of telegrams demanding a ban on cow-slaughter. I spoke to you about this before. Why this flood of telegrams and letters? They have had no effect. I have another telegram which says that a friend has started a fast for this cause.

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. We have been shouting from the house-tops that there will be no coercion in the matter of religion. We have been reciting verses from the Koran at the prayer. But if anyone were to force me to recite these verses I would not like it.

How can I force anyone not to slaughter cows unless he is himself so disposed? It is not as if there were only Hindus in the Indian Union. There are Muslims, Parsis, Christians and other religious groups here. The assumption of the Hindus that India now has become the land of the Hindus is erroneous. India belongs to all who live here.

If we stop cow slaughter by law here and the very reverse happens

in Pakistan, what will be the result? Supposing they say Hindus would not be allowed to visit temples because it was against Shariat to worship idols? I see God even in a stone but how do I harm others by this belief? If therefore I am stopped from visiting temples I would still visit them. I shall therefore suggest that these telegrams and letters should cease. It is not proper to waste money on them.

Besides some prosperous Hindus themselves encourage cow-slaughter. True, they do not do it with their own hands. But who sends all the cows to Australia and other countries where they are slaughtered and whence shoes manufactured from cow hide are sent back to India? I know an orthodox Vaishnava Hindu. He used to feed his children on beef soup. On my asking him why he did that he said there was no sin in consuming beef as medicine.

We really do not stop to think what true religion is and merely go about shouting that cow-slaughter should be banned by law. In villages Hindus make bullocks carry huge burdens which almost crush the animals. Is it not cow-slaughter, albeit slowly carried out? I shall therefore suggest that the matter should not be pressed in the Constituent Assembly. . . .

I have been asked, "Since in view of the atrocities being perpetuated by Muslims it is difficult to decide which of the Muslims are to be trusted, what should be our attitude towards the Muslims in the Indian Union? What should the non-Muslims in Pakistan do?"

I have already answered this question. I again repeat that all the religions of India today are being put to the test. It has to be seen how the various religious groups such as the Sikhs, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians conduct themselves and how they carry on the affairs of India. Pakistan may be said to belong to Muslims but the Indian Union belongs to all.

If you shake off cowardice and become brave you will not have to consider how you are to behave towards the Muslims. But today there is cowardice in us. For this I have already accepted the blame. I am still wondering how my 30 years' teaching has been so ineffective. Why did I assume, to begin with, that non-violence could be a weapon of cowards? Even now if we can really become brave and love the Muslims, the Muslims will have to stop and think what they could gain by practising treachery against us. They will return love for love. Can we keep the crores of Muslims in the Indian Union as slaves? He who makes slaves of others himself becomes a slave. If we answer sword with sword, the lathi with lathi and kick with kick, we cannot expect that things will be different in Pakistan. We shall then lose our freedom as easily as we have gained it.

Spectre of Fascism

Contribution Rs. 20/-

Published by

Janata Trust & Lokayat

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W), Mumbai 400 007

Bhagat Singh and Savarkar: Two Petitions that Tell Us the Difference Between Hind and Hindutva

On March 23, 1931, Shaheed Bhagat Singh and his two comrades-in-arms, Shaheed Rajguru and Shaheed Sukhdev were hanged in Lahore by the British colonial government. At the time of his martyrdom, Bhagat Singh was barely 23 years old. Despite the fact that he had his whole life ahead of him, he refused to seek clemency from the British as some well-wishers and family members wanted him to do. In his last petition and testament, he demanded that the British be true to the charge they laid against him of waging war against the colonial state and that he be executed by firing squad and not by hanging. The document also lays out his vision for an India whose working people are free from exploitation by either British or Indian “parasites”.

At a time when the Bharatiya Janata Party national executive has decided to make nationalism its rallying cry, and Savarkar its national hero, it is useful to compare the patriotic attitude and vision of Bhagat Singh with the petitions by the Sangh parivar’s icon, V.D. Savarkar, seeking early release. The burden of his petitions: let me go and I will give up the fight for independence and be loyal to the colonial government.

Reproduced below are Shaheed Bhagat Singh’s last petition and the petition V.D. Savarkar filed in 1913.

Shaheed Bhagat Singh’s Last Petition, Lahore Jail, 1931

To: The Punjab Governor

Sir, With due respect we beg

to bring to your kind notice the following: That we were sentenced to death on 7th October 1930 by a British Court, L.C.C Tribunal, constituted under the Sp. Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance, promulgated by the H.E. The Viceroy, the Head of the British Government of India, and that the main charge against us was that of having waged war against H.M. King George, the King of England.

The above-mentioned finding of the Court pre-supposed two things:

Firstly, that there exists a state of war between the British Nation and the Indian Nation and, secondly, that we had actually participated in that war and were therefore war prisoners.

The second pre-supposition seems to be a little bit flattering, but nevertheless it is too tempting to resist the desire of acquiescing in it.

As regards the first, we are constrained to go into some detail. Apparently there seems to be no such war as the phrase indicates.

Nevertheless, please allow us to accept the validity of the pre-supposition taking it at its face value. But in order to be correctly understood we must explain it further.

Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and the natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites.

They may be purely British capitalist or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even on purely Indian bureaucratic

apparatus. All these things make no difference.

No matter, if your government tries and succeeds in winning over the leaders of the upper strata of the Indian society through petty concessions and compromises and thereby cause a temporary demoralisation in the main body of the forces.

No matter, if once again the vanguard of the Indian movement, the Revolutionary Party, finds itself deserted in the thick of the war.

No matter if the leaders to whom personally we are much indebted for the sympathy and feelings they expressed for us, but nevertheless we cannot overlook the fact that they did become so callous as to ignore and not to make a mention in the peace negotiation of even the homeless, friendless and penniless of female workers who are alleged to be belonging to the vanguard and whom the leaders consider to be enemies of their utopian non-violent cult which has already become a thing of the past; the heroines who had ungrudgingly sacrificed or offered for sacrifice their husbands, brothers, and all that were nearest and dearest to them, including themselves, whom your government has declared to be outlaws.

No matter, if your agents stoop so low as to fabricate baseless calumnies against their spotless characters to damage their and their party’s reputation.

The war shall continue.

It may assume different shapes at different times. It may become now open, now hidden, now purely agitational, now fierce life and death

struggle.

The choice of the course, whether bloody or comparatively peaceful, which it should adopt rests with you. Choose whichever you like. But that war shall be incessantly waged without taking into consideration the petty (illegible) and the meaningless ethical ideologies.

It shall be waged ever with new vigour, greater audacity and unflinching determination till the Socialist Republic is established and the present social order is completely replaced by a new social order, based on social prosperity and thus every sort of exploitation is put an end to and the humanity is ushered into the era of genuine and permanent peace.

In the very near future the final battle shall be fought and final settlement arrived at.

The days of capitalist and imperialist exploitation are numbered. The war neither began with us nor is it going to end with our lives. It is the inevitable consequence of the historic events and the existing environments.

Our humble sacrifices shall be only a link in the chain that has very accurately been beautified by the unparalleled sacrifice of [Jatin] Das and most tragic but noblest sacrifice of Comrade Bhagawati Charan and the glorious death of our dear warrior [Chandrashekhar] Azad.

As to the question of our fates, please allow us to say that when you have decided to put us to death, you will certainly do it.

You have got the power in your hands and the power is the greatest justification in this world.

We know that the maxim "Might is right" serves as your guiding motto. The whole of our trial was just a proof of that.

We wanted to point out that according to the verdict of your court we had waged war and were

therefore war prisoners. And we claim to be treated as such, i.e., we claim to be shot dead instead of to be hanged.

It rests with you to prove that you really meant what your court has said.

We request and hope that you will very kindly order the military department to send its detachment to perform our execution.

Yours,
Bhagat Singh

**V.D. Savarkar's Petition,
Cellular Jail, Andamans, 1913**

To: The Home Member of the Government of India

I beg to submit the following points for your kind consideration:

(1) When I came here in 1911 June, I was along with the rest of the convicts of my party taken to the office of the Chief Commissioner. There I was classed as "D" meaning dangerous prisoner; the rest of the convicts were not classed as "D". Then I had to pass full 6 months in solitary confinement. The other convicts had not. During that time I was put on the coir pounding though my hands were bleeding. Then I was put on the oil-mill—the hardest labour in the jail. Although my conduct during all the time was exceptionally good still at the end of these six months I was not sent out of the jail; though the other convicts who came with me were. From that time to this day I have tried to keep my behaviour as good as possible.

(2) When I petitioned for promotion I was told I was a special class prisoner and so could not be promoted. When any of us asked for better food or any special treatment we were told "You are only ordinary convicts and must eat what the rest do". Thus Sir, Your Honour would see that only for special

disadvantages we are classed as special prisoners.

(3) When the majority of the casemen were sent outside I requested for my release. But, although I had been cased (caned?) hardly twice or thrice and some of those who were released, for a dozen and more times, still I was not released with them because I was their casemen. But when after all, the order for my release was given and when just then some of the political prisoners outside were brought into the troubles I was locked in with them because I was their casemen.

(4) If I was in Indian jails I would have by this time earned much remission, could have sent more letters home, got visits. If I was a transportee pure and simple I would have by this time been released, from this jail and would have been looking forward for ticket-leave, etc. But as it is, I have neither the advantages of the Indian jail nor of this convict colony regulation; though had to undergo the disadvantages of both.

(5) Therefore will your honour be pleased to put an end to this anomalous situation in which I have been placed, by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the Independent nations of the world; but only for the concessions and favour that are shown even to the most depraved of convicts and habitual criminals? This present plan of shutting me up in this jail permanently makes me quite hopeless of any possibility of sustaining life and hope. For those who are term convicts the thing is different, but Sir, I have 50 years staring me in the face! How can I pull

up moral energy enough to pass them in close confinement when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their life are denied to me? Either please to send me to Indian jail for there I would earn (a) remission; (b) would have a visit from my people come every four months for those who had unfortunately been in jail know what a blessing it is to have a sight of one's nearest and dearest every now and then! (c) and above all a moral—though not a legal—right of being entitled to release in 14 years; (d) also more letters and other little advantages. Or if I cannot be sent to India I should be released and sent outside with a hope, like any other convicts, to visits after 5 years, getting my ticket leave and calling over my family here. If this is granted then only one grievance remains and that is that I should be held responsible only for my own faults and not of others. It is a pity that I have to ask for this—it is such a fundamental right of every human being! For as there are on the one hand, some 20 political prisoners—young, active and restless, and on the other the regulations of a convict colony, by the very nature of them reducing the liberties of thought and expression to lowest minimum possible; it is but inevitable that every now and then some one of them will be found to have contravened a regulation or two and if all be held responsible for that, as now it is actually done—very little chance of being left outside remains for me.

In the end may I remind your honour to be so good as to go through the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911, and to sanction it for being forwarded to the Indian Government?

The latest development of the Indian politics and the conciliating

policy of the government have thrown open the constitutional line once more.

Now no man having the good of India and Humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths which in the excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906–1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress.

Therefore if the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress.

As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's loyal subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we be released the people will instinctively raise a shout of joy and

gratitude to the government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge.

Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise.

The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?

Hoping your Honour will kindly take into notion these points.

V.D. Savarkar

Courtesy: The Wire

RSS Supremo's Public Relations Exercise

Ram Puniyani

Do organisations say what they intend to do? Not necessarily. This came out clearly from the three long lectures by RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat. The event was supposed to be a dialogue, but the maximum dialogue one could see was his answering a few questions at the end of the lectures. That he answered a few questions was strongly underlined, as probably this must have been a novel thing for this organisation.

What did Bhagwat say which was new? He did say that Hindutva includes Muslims, RSS respects the Constitution, RSS is not opposed to reservations, RSS is not dictatorial and that there is place for opinions of others apart from that of Shri Bhagwat, RSS respects the diversity of this Hindu nation, etc. It became

clear the gentleman was replying to the criticism of his organisation by its critics, and there are plenty of them. What appeared novel was the change in the language of the RSS, from that of its major ideologue Guru Golwalkar to Mr. Bhagwat, the current chief. While Golwalkar had bluntly appreciated the Nazi methods of exterminating the minorities, Bhagwat appeared to be accepting the existence of religious minorities. While the Guru had declared that Muslims, Christians and Communists were an internal threat to the Hindu nation, Bhagwat went on to say that today they don't fully agree with Guruji, and so his book, *Bunch of Thoughts*, has been republished with sentences that threaten minorities and assert

Hindu nationalism in a blunt way omitted.

So has the RSS changed? As should be the case with most organisations, the RSS should also be judged by its actions, or by the outcome of activities and programs of the organisations which come into being due to RSS ideology. That is what will tell us the true character, the real agenda of the RSS, and will help us assess why a pleasant face is being presented now?

The core activity of the RSS is structured around shakhas (branches). In these shakhas, young boys are given physical training, one component of which is wielding lathis (batons). This is what is the most visible part of its activities. Running parallel to this is ideological training, that takes place in the bauddhik (intellectual) sessions. This is where the real agenda of the RSS manifests itself. It is from these shakha bauddhiks, which are backed by long training camps leading to a three-year training program, that the Swamyamsevaks / Pracharaks emerge, who are ready to take on the mantle of RSS programs in an independent way.

These bauddhiks indoctrinate the young boys into believing that India has been a Hindu nation from times immemorial. Roughly speaking, the RSS training module, as gleaned from various sources, follows the following lines: 'We' in ancient times had a great society, all castes were equal, women had a honorable place in the society; the society was attacked by foreigners, the Muslims, leading to inequality among castes and degeneration of the status of women; the Muslim kings destroyed our temples and imposed Islam by force; the Muslim kings were very cruel, prominent examples being Mohammad Ghazni (who destroyed the Somnath

temple) and Mohammad Ghori (who betrayed Prithivraj Chouhan); Hindu kings like Maharana Pratap and Shivaji saved the Hindu society; during the freedom movement, while Savarkar put forward the concept of Hindu nationalism, the likes of Gandhi-Nehru and their followers regarded people of foreign religions also as belonging to this land; Gandhi appeased the Muslims due to which Muslims got emboldened and demanded Pakistan; it is due to the faulty policies of Nehru that Kashmir, an integral part of India, has become a problem; and so on and so forth.

After this training, the pracharaks / swayamsevaks start work with different segments of society, or go into organisations directly floated by the RSS, such as the Bhartiya Jansangh, ABVP, BJP, VHP, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and Seva Bharati, to name a few. Technically, these are all independent organisations, but they are run and controlled by the trained pracharaks of the RSS. So the RSS does not have to act as a remote control, as its ideology runs in the DNA of these organisations. The RSS module of indoctrination has created hatred in society, it has spread hatred against Muslims and partly against Christians as well as against those upholding secular values. One manifestation of this hatred was the murder of Gandhi by Godse, who was a trained pracharak of the RSS. Sardar Patel must have been the first one to articulate this and see beyond the murder of Gandhi. He could see that the core reason behind Gandhi's murder was spread of hatred in society by the RSS.

While it is true that the volunteers of the RSS also do relief work, we must not forget that these same volunteers have been so much indoctrinated with hate against

minorities that they also take up arms to indulge in violence. The violence prevalent in our society today is the outcome of issues raked up by the RSS to generate emotions in the service of Hindu nationalism. Communal violence went up across the country in the wake of the Ram Temple issue. If the country belongs to all, all religions are respected, why commit the crime of demolishing a five-hundred-year-old mosque? Why spread a communal view of history to polarise society? Why has the cow become a political issue, when Swami Vivekanand himself has stated that beef was eaten during Vedic times, and Gandhi posited that state should not take up the banning of cow slaughter or banning of beef?

One can only conclude that the RSS, having gained in confidence during last four years, is now trying to spread its net by mouthing liberal language. This velvet glow is the contribution of Mr Bhagwat to cover up the deepening divide created in society due to the all round work of the numerous progeny of the RSS, which while sounding independent are totally loyal to the training they have got while attending the shakha bauddhiks. We need to recall that when the Jan Sangh component of the Janata Party was asked to sever its links with RSS, it preferred to break the party and re-emerge as the BJP. We need to remember that the late Prime Minister Vajpayee, while addressing NRI Indians at a meeting in Staten Island, USA, reaffirmed his primary loyalty to the RSS. Clearly, the claim by Mohan Bhagwat that the RSS respects the Indian Constitution is a sham as according to the Indian Constitution, we are a secular democratic country, which is directly opposite to the soul of the RSS agenda, its espousal of the concept of Hindu nation.

Email : ram.puniyani@gmail.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi