

Pandemic: Implications of RSS statement

-Prem Singh

The Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) tasted the allure of partial power during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led government. It has now experienced seven years of complete power under the leadership of Narendra Modi. The RSS has been nurtured in the right armpit of the Congress. Hence, it had gained some experience of sharing power since the Independence. RSS had enough time to learn as to how to imbibe the Constitution, to treat constitutional institutions with due deference, and to run the administration with responsibility and accountability.

The RSS does politics through the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Most BJP leaders are RSS volunteers. By the time of Vajpayee, it seemed that the political leadership of the RSS, despite its Hindutva prejudices, was moving towards moulding itself in the mould of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy. As a political party, the BJP has always been ahead of the parties which adhered to secularism, progressiveness and social justice in the matter of internal democracy in the party. This gave hope that one day the RSS and its political leadership will gain the same good-bad faith in the Constitution and parliamentary democracy as other political parties of the country had gained.

In this way, it will try to fulfil its duty of good, responsible and accountable governance with integrity and honesty with an inclusive perspective while staying in power or in opposition. But Narendra Modi-Bhagwat-Shah's RSS/BJP leadership has proved that hope false. Rather, it has forgotten all the lessons which it had learned till Vajpayee-period. Although they employ lofty words when speaking of honouring the Constitution, this leadership of the RSS/BJP is actually engaged in the exercise of grabbing power and running the government by exploiting the sentiments attached with nation and religion posing itself as the sole contractor of both. When criticized or opposed on its activities, policies, decisions, etc., this leadership creates confusion by invoking the nation or religion, whenever the opportunity arises, instead of giving proper answers or solutions. In a democracy, it even does not understand the need to have a healthy dialogue with the public, the opposition and the press.

The latest example is the statement made by RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabel on the catastrophic situation created by the second wave of the corona pandemic. The statement cautions people against “destructive” “anti-India forces” which can create atmosphere of “negativity”, “mistrust” and

“conspiracies” thus “destabilising India” in the guise of disaster. The RSS, an expert in propagating conspiracy theories, may be asked whether people who are getting beaten to death due to lack of bed, medicines, oxygen, ventilators, ambulances, complaining to the government of their distressed relatives are doing conspiracy to destabilize the nation? Are the individuals/organizations helping the people in distress, destabilizing India? Those, political opposition or civil society, who are exposing the government's negligence and misconduct are the elements destabilizing India? What some courts of the country have remarked on the failure of governments and institutions under them while conducting hearings on the matter of pandemic are seeking to destabilize the nation? Has the media outside India reporting the pandemic suddenly become interested in destabilizing India?

The RSS wants to hide the grim conditions which have beset the nation that is why it is continuing to fabricate a narrative of lies. It is necessary for it, because it is currently at the top among the forces destabilizing India. Some recent cases can be seen in this context, which are directly related to the RSS/BJP: Selling public sector undertakings and assets to run the most expensive government ever; Spending billions of rupees on prime minister's foreign tours and campaigning; Purchase of special aircrafts worth about Rs. 5000 crores from the US to facilitate the travel of the President, Vice President and Prime Minister; Constructing new parliament and Central Vista at a cost of 20 thousand crores; Imposing labour laws and agriculture laws, making the pandemic an opportunity; Taking off the education from the axis of knowledge and putting it on the axis of marketism and obscurantism; Making the destiny of the minorities to live in an environment of constant fear in total violation of the directives of Indian Constitution and the United Nations. This list can be quite long including details of huge amounts spent on erecting costly luxurious RSS/BJP offices all over India. For the last one year, China has destabilized India on the border. Dattatreya did not say anything about the incident as it would have been a national insult.

I would like to tell the RSS once again that the modern India as an independent, sovereign and self-reliant nation started on the path of destabilization only when the task of policy-making of the country was taken off the axis of the Constitution in 1991 and was mounted on the axis of the global capitalist institutions. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had expressed happiness at that time saying that the Congress has now taken up the work of RSS/BJP. This is a direct result of the same spindle change that people who are in the grip of the pandemic are running post to pillar for their lives without bed, medicine,

oxygen, ventilators, vaccines, ambulances; The relatives are not able to perform the last rites of the dead respectfully; And above this, they have to face the reins of government lies fabricated by the RSS/BJP!

Death by pandemic is not new. People have died and are still dying all over the world. It is not necessary that people dying like weeds should be mourned or condoled upon death. The one who is suffering and dying is not coming to see, and the suffering of the family is not going to ease. But why should this question not be asked that those who made the noise of "nothing happened in 70 years" have made the condition in 7 years that the people infected by the pandemic are dying on the pavements. Family members, including a large number of women, are beseeching in front of some one or the other like beggars. The business is good for black marketers and corrupt.

The implication of this statement of the RSS is clear. It states that the priority of the government is not to deal with the disaster, but to deal with the critics. It is adamant on its standpoint that the whole country and the world should believe that the RSS/BJP including the prime minister is in fact the nation. The statement further suggests that one should always think positively towards it. Criticizing it even in the worst phase of pandemic is a conspiracy. Needless to say, that not only does the RSS has an anti-democracy mindset, it also reveals the truth that the source of human compassion is pushed into oblivion in fundamentalist ideologies/organizations.

(The writer teaches Hindi at Delhi University)

Dr. Prem Singh
Dept. of Hindi, University of Delhi
Delhi - 110007 (INDIA)
Mob.: +918826275067

Former Fellow
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, India

Former Visiting Professor
Center of Oriental Studies
Vilnius University, Lithuania

Former Visiting Professor
Center of Eastern Languages and Cultures
Dept. of Indology
Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria