

Communalism has overtaken the Constitution!

--Prem Singh

Most spheres of Indian politics have been tainted by communalism. Looking at the current political scene of the country, it seems that just as there is a consensus on neoliberalism among the political and intellectual elite of India, similarly a consensus has been made on communal politics or political communalism. Political parties, which are called secular, resort to communalism in competition to communal BJP, so it is rightly said that they cannot defeat BJP on the pitch of communalism. However, while saying this, no concern is expressed about the fact that the entire politics of the country is becoming communal due to the use of communalism by the very parties claiming to be secular. The second point in this case is that secular leaders and scholars are referring to Hindu religion as different from Hindutva of RSS/BJP. As if politics in the name of Hindu religion is not a communal practice!

Communalism has a simple definition from the perspective of the Constitution. The use of religion to grab political power is called communalism. The political use of religion done in the name of Hindutva or in the name of soft Hindutva or in the name of Hindu religion or to get votes of minorities, comes under the category of communal politics. The politics by minority leaders in the name of their religions also falls under the category of communal politics. The politics of parties/leaders such as Shiromani Akali Dal, Indian Union Muslim League, Shiv Sena, All India Majlis e Ittehadul Muslimeen etc. could be straightaway seen as communal politics. Saying that the minority communalism is less dangerous than the majoritarian communalism does not negate the truth of the spread of communal politics.

In Mandal vs. Kamandal debate, casteist politics was considered as an answer of the communal politics. It should be understood by now that the politics of casteism is ultimately related to religion itself. That is, the caste politics is also a form of the communal politics. Describing the elephant as Ganesh, Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh, waving Parashurama's 'Farsa' and Krishna's 'Sudarshan Chakra' during the political campaign are direct examples of this fact. When Rahul Gandhi demonstrates his 'Janeu' to reveal his caste/clan, or Priyanka Gandhi puts sandalwood on her forehead to gain political mileage, then, on the chessboard of communal politics, the forward-backward distinction becomes meaningless. It is the obvious result of the consensus on communal politics that there is an easy acceptance of backward caste Prime Minister and Dalit President as the heroes of 'Hindu-Rashtra'. In view of this very fact, would it be safe to state that communalism has overtaken the Constitution!

It needs to be noted that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), founded and nurtured by the progressive and secular intellectuals of India, is trying to make communal politics deeper and stronger than the RSS/BJP. Some of AAP's innovations can be seen along with other popular strategies it has employed on the path of communal politics. For example, holding of 'Havan' with chants after election victory and in party offices; The party's participation in religious discourses; Delhi government's decision to organize 'Sunder Kand' programs in localities; Facilities of pilgrimage to senior citizens at government expenses; Organizing religious programs like Ramlila even in the Assembly; Making a replica of the grand Ram Temple to be built in Ayodhya a part of various programs/campaigns of the government so on and so forth are illustration of this practice.

All the parties, including the BJP, involved in the game of power, claim one or the other ideology as right to be adhered to. AAP is a party which has openly declared its denial of ideology in politics. Other parties have gradually abandoned the ideology of the Constitution under the influence of neoliberalism. Since AAP has been born directly from the womb of neoliberalism, it has a non-confirming attitude towards the ideology of the Constitution from the very beginning. The anti-constitutional stand of AAP was initially criticized by scholars like Prabhat Patnaik and SP Shukla. But that trend did not go further. The AAP supremo has been kept above from criticism by the secular and progressive scholars, especially the communists. He can mingle with radical elements in Punjab, while skilfully managing majoritarian communalism. He can hold the country's largest minority in his fist. He can make and break ties with RSS/BJP and with any other party whenever he wishes so.

The rapid erosion of the Congress continues, thanks to the stubborn family leadership. AAP is following a well-planned strategy to replace Congress in near future. If this happens the central politics of the country will become right wing versus right wing; And the neoliberal policies will get uninterrupted momentum. This phenomenon will be strengthened by the right-wing rising the world over. In this way a 'New India' will eventually be made out of a mixture of corporate India and Hindu-Rashtra. Those who scoff at RSS/BJP day and night are not ready to accept the fact that neoliberalism and communal fascism grow on each other's germs.

The spread of communal politics has many obvious effects on our national life: one, communal politics rides on the chariot of democracy. It is understandable that the face of Indian democracy has been badly disfigured by the weapon of communalism. Two, constitutional bodies like the Election Commission, the Supreme Court, the Executive, etc. cannot really take effective steps against communal politics. That is, to expect the resolution of issues from the constitutional institutions after a consensus on communal politics is to deceive oneself. Three, the various forms of hate campaigns – mob lynching, hate speeches, Sulli Deals-Bulli Bai apps, Hindu TRAD etc. – are primarily the result of unabated communal politics in the country. Four, under the influence of communal politics, leaders have become the incarnations and protectors of God and demigods/goddesses together. Five, religion in its best form has always been an inexhaustible source of philosophy, art, compassion and social gaiety. Communal politics is destroying that form of religion in a brazen manner.

(The author is a former Delhi University teacher and a former Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla)