

Remembering the Two Madhus

- Raghu Thakur

Madhu Limaye's birthday falls on May 1. Were he still alive, he would have completed 84 years of his life. And, if Madhu Dandavate had not passed away on November 11, last year, he would have been past 82. Several leaders from Maharashtra were the top leaders of the Indian socialist movement. The Congress Socialist Party, in fact, took birth in Maharashtra. However, most workers of the post-1950 generations were more familiar with the two Madhus; they also were better known outside the State than within.

I came in contact with the two Madhus when around 1973, they visited my native town Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, to address a training camp of the Samajwadi Yuvajan Sabha. Madhu Dandavate inaugurated the camp, while Madhu Limaye gave the valedictory address. We made arrangements for their stay at the V.C. Jain dharma shala. I got an opportunity to observe the common qualities of both of them, at close hand, on that occasion. They were like two rivers which met with as also crossed one another, but, in the end, flowed together in the big ocean. Having become active in the Congress Socialist Party days, they later joined separate political parties, owing to their natures and associations, but came together in the same party. There were several similarities in their qualities, but they differed in expression and style of working. Therefore, they were together in the Socialist Party in 1948-55, but, thereafter joined PSP or the SSP. They came together again in the Socialist Party in 1971, but

separated in 1979 in the Janatha Party and the Lok Dal. Then, they were mentally together at the time of the formation of the Janata Dal. I am giving below their common qualities.

1. Austerity: Both symbolised austerity. A common worker could approach them with ease, without the awe associated with big leaders and discuss simple issues with them, while a scholar could discover the intellectual in them. When Madhu Dandavate visited the camp, he used to wash his clothes himself. He carried with him a small bag. The same was the case with Madhu Limaye, and a small brief-case contained his entire household.

2. Firmness of Belief: The two Madhus were unparalleled in their firmness of belief. They never left the socialist way of life. The powerful Congress Party under Jawahar Lal Nehru or the strong current in favour of Indira Gandhi in 1971 failed to deflect them from their beliefs. Both Nehru and Indira Gandhi themselves realised this. After Smt. Gandhi secured a big popular mandate in the 1971 general elections, some one asked her that since she wanted to follow socialist policies, why not get Madhu Limaye on board? She told the questioner that no kind of temptation could purchase him.

3. An Ideal socialist way of living: The two Madhus lived an ideal life, and in their personal and public living, there was no difference. In this sense, they were dedicated Gandhians and in their private as well as public lives, the words matched the deeds. Both lived like Kabir who reported to his God that he had not soiled the apparel given him. They had been born spotless and both maintained that purity till the end.

4. Commitment to Study: Both used to spend sufficient time to study, and even in the midst of other engagements, they kept themselves abreast of current developments. They maintained, as if by habit, regularity in reading and writing. Dandavate was a teacher by profession and Limaye a teacher without formal training. Madhu Limaye was a moving library so that anyone could get from him the details of some development or person along with the necessary dates. Dandavate was a recounter of developments in a humorous style so that whatever he said sank easily into the listener's mind. Generally, Limaye used to speak frankly of some big person or philosophy which the listener could easily grasp. He was by nature an analyst and a philosopher. Dandavate's style was humorous, and he could tell the bitterest things with sugar coating. On the other hand, Limaye used to administer a bitter medicine by warning that it is bitter, but he could always persuade the patient to take it.

5. An ascetic-like life: Both lived like Rishis of yore who considered it good in this renounceable world. After he suffered from heart ailment, Limaye's friends urged him to get an air-conditioner stalled in his residence. Although we insisted very hard and advanced all sorts of arguments, he did not agree. He lived a whole life without a motor car. He would travel in a three-wheel auto-rickshaw or even on a two-seater. He was after the objective, and did not care for such conveniences. The same was the thinking and the style of Dandavate, as well. He would use any vehicle, be it scoter or whatever.

Madhu Limaye was a kind of Hath Yogi in certain matters of principle. He held that a candidate who had

lost a Lok Sabha election had no right to be put up for the Rajya Sabha as a candidate. Lohia used to call such practice as entry by the backdoor. After Madhu Limaye had lost the Lok Sabha election in 1980, several persons proposed that he accept to go to the Rajya Sabha. Even Choudhry Charan Singh personally pressed him. However, Limaye did not relent. When Dandavate lost the general election in 1991, he also got several requests for him to go to Rajya Sabha. But he never had any desire for it.

6. Commitment to Equality: Both had a deep feeling for equality and their way of living was based on it. Preaching of socialism is easy, but it is hard to practice it. The two Madhus however lived that life and welcomed everybody with equal respect whether a small person, a big capitalist, a poor man, and persons of every caste or creed.

7. Equality of men and women: They did not only believe in this principle, but also practiced it. The two couples were ideal couples in the social and political life of the country who were completely devoted to one another. There was not even a shade of the thinking of the obsolete feudal mentality. They were not only husband and wife but were comrades-in-arms and close friends. Pramilaji was a partner of her husband in political as well as electoral fields. However, Champaji was only a political companion, but not an electoral one, although she always worked as a volunteer at election time. Madhuji shared Champaji's work in the kitchen and she shared his political work. The two Madhus had deep respect for the independent personalities of their wives. Pramilaji was not considered by Dandavate as his follower, but an in-

dependent person. The same was the case with Limaye and Champaji. Both lived a life based on moral values. Both spoke in the language of action. Those who met them were impressed by their conduct and life-style as the two Madhus never indulged in pontificating..

8. Above any thought of wealth: Although they got ample and tempting opportunities for amassing wealth, they never attempted it. The socialist principle that you take from the society according to your needs, and contribute to it according to your capacity, has been their inspiring principle. Dandavate was a polite rebel, and Limaye an angry rebel. This was due to their different styles of working which probably arose from their different places of political work, and the specific needs of respective areas. Limaye represented a constituency in Bihar and Dandavate in Maharashtra. It was necessary to identify with the rising consciousness of the up-coming backward castes in Bihar. However, the stable and continuing political tradition of politics in Maharashtra expressed the political temperament of the middle classes in the state. Dandavate had therefore to stick to the same political party. He struck to the same building and tried to repair it till the last, lest it fall down. Limaye had to go through different experiences for the achievement of his political mission and was obliged to make experiments. Whenever he realised that the structure in which he was living was not adequate for his ideas, he would start reconstruction. Dandavate could remain a revolutionary even in a dilapidated house, while Limaye had to construct a new building to serve his revolutionary dreams. These are the different expressions of the same temperament. Dandavate' a faith in the political party and

Limaye's in its thought were two faces of the same coin.

9. Dandavate could control and absorb his anger, but Limaye sprouted his. Yet, both hid a flow of compassion below their anger. Limaye could reproach a worker harshly, and yet offer him coffee, and prepared it himself. Even when angry at heart with some one, Dandavate could enquire after well-being etc.,. He could swallow anger and show compassion, as Limaye would express his anger and then show compassion.

10. Parliamentary Work: Both contributed greatly to it. Limaye was master of its rules of procedure and employed his knowledge in the debate to achieve his goal. His is a sole example of raising an issue continuously in session after session and thereby compel the Government to act. These days, walking out of the House has become so frequent that people have begun to ridicule it. Sometimes, boycott of Parliament becomes a tool to get something adopted or to defend something in a clever manner. A parliamentarian's duty is to participate in a debate, leading to voting. However, these days, the Ruling Party and the Opposition collude in staging the boycott drama. Thereby, the Ruling Party gets its motion adopted, while the Opposition's show of opposing the Government's acquits it of its duty. Several motions which could be rejected were got adopted by this collusion between the ruling and the opposition groups. The Patent Amendment act was passed likewise. Limaye believed in offering staunch opposition to the Government in Parliament. He could accept suspension from the House, but not resort to boycott and give up the battle in the mid-stream. Dandavate's speeches in Parliament were a flow of the facts and arguments. Even when he rose to

interrupt, the opponents would hear his arguments with silence as if mesmerised. Whenever Limaye stood up to say something, the ruling establishment would tremble with apprehensive as to which dignity would be floored. When Dandavate rose to speak, the House would belike a class where a good teacher was giving lessons to students. Limaye's was a thunder of the tiger and Dandavate spoke like a sadhu.

The lives of the two Madhus are exemplary and idealistic. At a time when the socialist movement requires a new life, it would be necessary to look at them in harmony, and mix Dandavate's harmony and Limaye's lemon to administer a proper dose of medicine to restore the health of the ailing socialist movement. Their separate qualities, too, are such that they can teach something or the other to the new generation of young socialists.

(Translated from Hindi by Surendra Mohan)