

# DYEING INDIA SAFFRON

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Whipping Ram, the religious icon, into a poster boy of political manipulation and instrumental exigency, repeatedly, is not the only sacrilege and vicious violation that Hindutva has committed against Hinduism. The list of its desecrations is miles long, its heap of humiliations on Hinduism pyramidal. It disrespects and falsifies history as its manic mission. That it continually keeps insulting India -its culture and heritage—betrays its congenitally seditious addiction and invidious distinction.

Its basic illiteracy in matters, literary, cultural and historical is, oddly, its asset. Its autism foments and facilitates its street politics. A stark exhibition of its obscene howling was in evidence on a TV channel last night. Murali Manohar Joshi, the RSS man, the defunct Physics teacher of Allahabad University (where once the illustrious physicist Meghnad Saha had taught), could not answer any question put to him by Rajendra Yadav, the eminent Hindi writer and editor. Joshi went on repeating himself, kept talking non-stop, deflecting questions in a sophistry that would have been spurned even by a school boy. He would not let Yadav speak. The TV channel in question, Aj Tak, seemed helpless in stopping the torrent of trivia cascading from Joshi's mouth. It did not stop him nor ask him to abide by the rules and stop monopolizing the air time. Thus Joshi's ignorant blabber "won", of course, to the delight of the saffros and discomfiture of others.

This abysmal TV show was the mini version of the maxi original stomping the streets in various cities which were clogged and vandalized by the Ram brigades pressed in service by the Hindu fascists.

Imagining a fictional Saraswati civilization, demolishing Babri mosque as celebratory consummation of Advani's Bloody Yatras that cost thousands of innocent Muslim lives, and now inventing Ram Setu - the roster of inhuman inanities keeps swelling. This mobsterism frees the BJP and its cohorts from engaging with the issues of bread and butter that concern and impact millions upon millions. This also brings uncountable hoards of money to its till, ostensibly in the cause of dharma, but realistically, rewarding the jet set kind of posh life style to the Hindutva hegemons, warlords and chieftains.

Ramayana is India's first epic poetry, Kavya, a work of imagination detailing an ideal hero, patterned after an abstract model in literary (Sanskrit) aesthetics to whose adorable approximation one ought to aspire. It is not history. And because it is poetically inspired it takes liberties—poetic licence- in exaggerating the virtues and flaws of its cast of characters in a simplistic binary. Which parent in the world would name his progeny at birth—Ravana (literally meaning one who makes people weep), Kumbha-karna (one with pot-like ears), Shurpanakha (one with winnow-like nails), Vibheeshana (singularly terrible), Meghanad (one with thunder-like roar), etc.? The Lanka in Ramayana, according to the eminent historian H D Sankalia, was in Madhya Pradesh (The Ramayana in Historical Perspective, pp.108-9).

Because Rama is an ideal, not a historical personage, he is, therefore, an idol of popular worship. He therefore can be invested with all the attributes of divinity.

M M Joshi was caught on the wrong foot by Rajendra Yadav when the former referred to Gandhi's Ram Rajya. Since when had Gandhi become a Hindutva referent, asked Yadav. Joshi fumbled. He had no answer. I wish Yadav had asked him how much did RSS and its league of pseudo Hindus emulated Rama.

Is this something new? Not at all. The submarine sedimentation over time, which spanned several millennia, is being christened as Ram Setu. □□