

Congress, BJP and Communalism

The adjective 'Merchants of Death', was a bold characterisation of Modi/BJP politics in Gujarat. And quite expectedly it incited various reactions, the major one stating that Congress is no clean body as its hands are also full of blood of Sikhs in the 1984 and most of the riots took place during Congress regime. No one can dispute this. A situation, where these parties are being put in the same category has been created due to the weak policies of Congress and projection of the image of BJP as the democratic alternative. Are these parties in the same league or is there a shade of difference which is worth recognising?

Congress began as a secular party with the inclusion of people of all religions, and their continued association with this party during freedom movement. At the same time many communalists formed the part of its leadership—Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr Moonje. Even the founder of RSS, K B Hedgewar was associated with it till 1934. At medium and grassroots level many Hindu communalists in particular were and are part of this party. It is this which made Nehru to warn that Congress should be cautious of those members who sound secular but are really communal. At the level of policies Congress took quite a principled secular path till the demise of Pundit Nehru, after which the slip showed regularly. The problem became apparent with Indira Gandhi's election speeches during Jammu by-election, Rajiv Gandhi's 'when a big tree falls': Shah Bano, shilaynyas, and Narsimha Rao's afternoon siesta when the Babri was being razed to the ground. Many riots took place during its regime when the ruling Government either acted as the silent witness or colluded with the rioters.

Communal riots apparently take place due to three major factors, one the instigator and conductor, which according the inquiry commissions, (Jagmohan Reddy, Justice Madon, Vithayathil, Shrikrishna and Venugopal) mostly has been some organisation which is a offshoot/associate of RSS. The second factor is the political leadership. Most of the times Congress, when in power, has been lacking the political will to control it effectively. The third factor is the police and bureaucracy, which has been regularly communalised and has been providing the umbrella to the rioters or been the active participant in the execution of the pogroms. It is not enough just to say that so and so part is responsible just because it has been in power. As far as political agenda is concerned, communalism is not the programme of Congress. Its basic programme remains Secularism, but its execution of those values has been lacking in will power.

BJP is the political child of RSS, which has the agenda of Hindu nation. Irrespective of its temporary mask of Gandhian Socialism, it does lapse into the 'Hate minorities' mind set at the drop of the hat. It has the patriarch RSS and associates; VHP, Bajrang Dal, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram etc, who have been communalising the mind set, which is the base of communal violence. This RSS combine has been actively initiating situations which bring in violence. It has led many a carnage and has been polarising the communities along religious lines. The scholars of communal violence have made the pertinent observation that in the aftermath of most of the communal violence RSS combine becomes stronger

in the areas where the violence has taken place. For RSS combine communalism, in overt and covert language, is its political vehicle.

The formations like Left are secular as they proclaim in their discourses but they have ignored the proactive measures to pursue this and so the prevalence of communal social thinking in states ruled by left. The anti-Sikh violence was a sort of one-go phenomenon, which had more to do with the ethno-regional factors. The last category is that of BJP, aggressive, intimidating opponent of democracy and secularism, whatever its expression. It is communal to the core, looking for pretexts to carry on with sectarian politics. Its biggest 'achievement' not that it is the main vehicle of communalism but that some of the political workers compare it with other democratic electoral formations. It is using the electoral space to do away with democratic values, the way Hitler did. It is the Indian face of fascism.

To compare BJP with other electoral formations will be undermining the threat of the agenda of RSS, which seeks to abolish democratic space and build a society in the image of 'glorious Hindu past', a neo-brahminical construct for upholding the hegemony of elite males.

One can very well say that while communalism, the threat to democracy is becoming stronger by the day, there is a vast difference between Congress and BJP. Congress communalism is pragmatic while BJP communalism is programmatic. While no party can be excused for its crimes, no democratic formation should be compared to BJP, as it is the carrier of RSS political agenda, the agenda of abolishing the values of Indian constitution and imposing a fascist state. BJP is in a different class by itself due to its goal, which has nothing to do with democracy i.e. concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity. Tragically enough, today in electoral arena Indian voters do not have a choice between good, better and the best. All parties indulge in communalism, only the degree of communal passion varies. □

[Contributed]