

A Tale of Two Reports

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In the wake of the punishments being meted out to the culprits of Mumbai blasts of 1993, the logical demand of punishing the guilty of 92-93 Mumbai carnage came up from different sections of society. Many a delegation met the political leadership demanding implementation of Shrikrishna Commission report. This report impeccably pointed out the role of different leaders, from Shiv Sena-BJP and even some from Congress in the Mumbai riots. Their crimes of commission and omission are there for all to see in this report. The present government, Congress-NCP, had come to power on the promise that they will implement the report. Despite long years of being in power they cleverly sat pretty, giving some flimsy answers about the actions which they seem to have taken. One sampler will do—for the crime which calls for few years of imprisonment, they transferred someone from one to the other department, bravo! Now with the revival of the pressure from the victims and concerned citizens, again some whitewash is being peddled out with the promise to take action.

At the same time, those involved in the riots threatened against the implementation of this report. Some political formations had earlier rejected the report as being anti-Hindu, and challenging that if the report is implemented, it will be the political death of those who will do so. An argument is being rehashed as to why should the wounds of the riots be reopened, unmindful of the fact that wounds of the victims may heal only and only if the culprits are given the punishment. A subtle threat has been given that its implementation will bring in more violence. It's clear that those who are the victims try to call for justice and those who are the patrons of criminals or criminals themselves peddle these arguments to avoid their own punishment and to protect their political interests.

The second report which is under attack is the one related to the socio-economic condition of the Muslim minority community. This report, like the previous report on the same issue, Gopal Singh Commission, pointed out the abysmal condition of the Muslims, their low levels of incomes, social deprivation, economic destitution, their being sidetracked from the jobs, welfare schemes and other ladders for progress. As the present UPA government is trying to take this seriously, is accepting the idea of forming of Equal Opportunities Commission in principle, some political elements have termed this affirmative action of the government being like throwing 'an Atom bomb at Hindu community'. It is warning that it will take to the streets to oppose this 'appeasement of Muslims'.

There are lots of parallels in the attitude to both the reports. As such these two reports genuinely reflect the twin aspects of the problem of the minorities, the socio-economic aspects and the physical security. Both have a strong impact on each other and also on the existence of the community as a whole. One infers from Sachar Committee report that as a community, Muslims are the only ones whose economic and social situation has slumped down in last sixty years. And Shrikrishna Report delineates the anatomy of a riot, the expression of depth to which communalism has sunk in the society. It demonstrates as to how one type of political leadership, the one like BJP-Shiv Sena instigates and launches the

attack, getting its legitimization in advance from the propaganda that the minorities are a threat, are attacking, so people have to retaliate to protect themselves.

The other type of leadership sits back and allows these elements do their communal polarization, and also does accommodate some elements from these parties for the sake of power. Congress which claims to be secular easily slips when principled actions are to be taken. During the Mumbai pogrom Congress Chief Minister Sudhakar Rao Naik was sitting pretty paralyzed by inaction and silently supporting the attack allegedly led by Shiv Sena. When a delegation of industrialists led by Tata called upon him to stop the mayhem, he told them to meet Thackeray to request him whatever they want. The same party later admitted into its fold the likes of Narayan Rane and Sanjay Nirupam, who were loyal sainiks of Thackeray. The third player in the game, the state machinery, the police and bureaucracy and partly judiciary is infected by the institutional biases against the minorities and aids and abets the anti-minority carnage in different ways, that's how one sees so many of police officers blundering and participating in the violence and getting a pat from their political masters.

Sachar Committee shows that condition of Muslims is worsening. No democracy worth its pluralism and equality can ignore a chunk of its society and ignore the affirmative action for weaker sections of society. Here it seems so far the democratic values have been put on hold as far as weaker sections are concerned. Here one type of leadership, the right-wing is dead opposed to any affirmative action, equating it to nuclear attack on the Hindus. The other leadership, which so far slept over the issue, is hopefully trying to wake up to it. The third major player the bureaucracy is by now too communalized to be bothered to let the affirmative action take place. The tragedy is that on one hand there is no effective affirmative action for minorities and on the other even the token talk on this issue is presented as a threat to Hindu community.

Can people let this denigration of minorities go on? One recalls that earlier caste system had totally marginalized the low castes. Today in the communal scenario another chunk of population is being relegated to secondary position. Sprawling ghettos like Mumbra, Bhandi Bazar on one hand, their absence in the social sphere on the other, totally violates the spirit of national community.

Golwalkar, the second supremo of RSS, the most important ideologue of RSS-BJP and affiliated organizations which are leading the anti-minority tirade, wrote "...non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture...they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights." One may add to that they will also be subjected to differential legal system! Is India heading towards this terrifying vision of the patron saint of RSS-BJP? □□□