

## **'HINDUTVA MEANS EMANCIPATION'**

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Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) is an organization where succession of the top post, Sarsanghchalak, takes place by nomination by the outgoing Chief. Recently K Sudarshan, outgoing one, nominated Mohan Bhagwat as the new Chief (March 2009). On taking over Bhagwat pronounced that Hindutva concept is emancipatory in nature.

The last time the word Hindutva created the confusion was in the case of corrupt electoral practices by Manohar Joshi, who said that if Shiv Sena-BJP comes to power they will turn Maharashtra into first Hindu state in the country. He had used the word Hindutva for his politics. The matter went up to the court, and due to the confusions around the word Hindutva, court ruled that Hindutva is a way of life! This came in handy for RSS combine to wriggle out and to assertively use the word in their political campaigns. Now one hears that Hindutva is an emancipatory concept!

What is emancipation? In Indian context emancipation stands for the process which leads to equality of dalits and women. It also stands for the dignified status of Adivasis and workers. Many of these processes started during the freedom movement as an accompaniment of the struggle against British rule. While people were witnessing these processes steered by the likes of Bhagat Singh, Ambedkar and Gandhi, the country also saw the politics by Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. This latter trio based their concept of politics around religious nationalism. For Muslim League it was Islamic State, Pakistan and for Hindu Mahasabha, RSS it was Hindu nation.

Muslim League derived its ideology from the name of Islam and Hindu Mahasabha and RSS developed the term Hindutva as the guiding ideology for Hindu nation. There is a lot of parallel between the pattern of ideology of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha–RSS. They all kept aloof from the freedom movement and the associated processes of social transformation of caste and gender.

Freedom movement was not only for freedom from the British rule—it also symbolized the values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the values which are emancipatory for those oppressed by feudal rule of Rajas and Nawabs, and the associated clergy (Mullahs, Pastors and Brahmins). Talking of Hindutva in particular, the term was coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his book 'Who is a Hindu?' in 1923. Hinduism is not a prophet based religion. Originally word Hindu began as a geographical category, for all those living on east of river Indus. Later all the religious traditions from caste and gender hierarchy based Brahmanism to egalitarian streams like Nath, Tantra, Siddha and Bhakti all came to be covered under the umbrella of Hinduism. Brahmanism is the dominant tendency within this spectrum, and currently all things Brahminic are identified as Hinduism. Dr Ambedkar pointed out that Hinduism is in reality Brahminic theology.

Savarkar defined Hindu as one who regards this land from Sindhu to Seas as Fatherland and Holy-land, in this definition all are included barring Muslims and Christians. Savarkar further went on to coin and define the word Hindutva. Hindutva, for him is total Hindu-ness, a combination of Aryan race, Culture and values. In essence it came to mean a politics based on Brahminic

values of birth based inequality of caste and gender, it gives the status of slaves to dalits and women.

RSS picked up the concept of Hindutva from there. Hindu Mahasabha and RSS both stood for status quo in caste and gender relations. RSS politics did exhibit these values in practical form, over a period of time. Contrary to emancipation, RSS ideology wants not only status quo ante of feudal times, further it wants to push back whatever little process of transformation of Dalits and women has taken place over a period of time.

Beginning with gender, RSS is an exclusively male organization. Its women wing is subordinate to it, it is Rashtra Sevika Samiti. Here, Swayamsevak for men, Sevika for women. The word swayam, self, is missing in women's organization. According to all male dominated patriarchal organizations, Taliban, Fascists, Christian fundamentalists or RSS, women's self is in the pocket of men. Women are subordinate, are property of men. So they are to be dictated, controlled. So one of RSS trained swayamsevak, Pramod Mutalik forms Shriram Sene and beats up women. They dictate that women should be doing or wearing, this, that and the other.

As for dalits are concerned Dr Ambedkar goes on to assert that dalits need to learn, organize and struggle for their rights, for equality. RSS has come up with Samajik Samrasta Manch, to co-opt the dalits at subordinate position within the present social structure where dalits remain subjugated in the social system, RSS also has the ideology of integral humanism. This essential part of Hindutva politics argues that as the human body has different organs doing their different functions, similarly society has different groups doing their job. A change in their roles will create disequilibrium, which will be detrimental to the smooth functioning of society.

One does concede that the language of RSS is very subtle and clever, but its actions regularly show what it means. RSS is the Father of all other organizations working for Hindu nation. The politics it has unleashed through BJP, VHP, and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram etc. does regularly show the real intent of RSS. Few samplers—BJP Vice-president Rajmata Scindia endorsing Sati tradition, VHP-leadership endorsing the killings of dalits in the aftermath of Gohana on the issue of cow-slaughter. RSS repeatedly emphasizes the ancient glory of the times when Manusmriti was the rule.

One is happy to know that the new RSS chief knows the word emancipation. So far so good, as he can't go beyond parroting this word, as the meaning of the word is totally against the agenda of RSS. RSS agenda is opposed to emancipation and stands for suppressing the low caste, and women in perpetual subjugation. □□□