

NOTE

## Tricolour for Muslims and Saffron for Hindus

Shamsul Islam writes :

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its all important front Rashtriya Sayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) is once again on to its old pastime of whipping up frenzy against Muslims. They planned to unfurl, Tricolour, the Indian National Flag in Srinagar on January 26, 2011. The Omar Abdullah dispensation, however, didn't allow them to do so, apprehending a communal backlash. But BJP and its RSS mentors who were so zealous about hoisting Tricolour in Srinagar have least respect for Tricolour as some documentary evidences available in the RSS archives corroborate.

*Organiser*, the RSS English organ in its third issue (July 17, 1947) disturbed by the Constituent Assembly's decision to select the Tricolour as the National Flag, carried an editorial titled 'National Flag', demanding that the saffron flag be chosen instead.

The same demand continued to be raised in editorials on the eve of Independence of India (July 31 editorial titled 'Hindusthan' and August 14 editorial titled 'Whither') simultaneously rejecting the whole concept of a composite nation. The August 14 issue also carried 'Mystery behind the Bhagwa Dhawaj' (saffron flag) which while demanding hoisting of saffron flag at the ramparts of Red Fort in Delhi, openly denigrated the choice of the Tricolour as the National Flag in the following words: "THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME TO POWER BY THE KICK OF FATE MAY GIVE IN OUR HANDS THE TRICOLOUR BUT IT NEVER BE RESPECTED AND OWNED BY HINDUS. THE WORD THREE IS IN ITSELF AN EVIL, AND A FLAG HAVING THREE COLOURS WILL CERTAINLY PRODUCE A VERY BAD PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT AND IS INJURIOUS TO A COUNTRY."

Golwalkar, second chief of the RSS and the most prominent ideologue of the organisation till date, while addressing a gathering in Nagpur on July 14, 1946, stated that it was the saffron flag which in totality represented their great culture. It was the embodiment of God: "We firmly believe that in the end the whole nation will bow before this saffron flag".

Even after independence when the Tricolour became the National Flag, it was the RSS which refused to accept it as the National Flag. Golwalkar, while discussing the issue of the National Flag in an essay entitled 'Drifting and Drifting' in the book 'Bunch of Thoughts', an RSS publication and collection of writings of Golwalkar (treated as Bible for the RSS cadres), has the following to say: "Our leaders have set up a new flag for our country. Why did they do so? It is just a case of drifting and imitating. Ours is an ancient and great nation with a glorious past. Then, had we no flag of our own? Had we no national emblem at all these thousands of years? Undoubtedly we had. Then why this utter void, this utter vacuum in our minds?"

Importantly, nowhere in the functioning of the RSS is the Tricolour or National Flag used even today. The RSS headquarters at Reshambaugh, Nagpur does not fly it nor do the RSS shakhas display it in daily parades. It seems the National Flag is meant only to whip up frenzy against Muslims. In 1991 (*Eka Yatra*) it was Murli Manohar Joshi, another favourite in the RSS hierarchy, who went to unfurl the Tricolour at Lal Chowk of Srinagar, Kashmir. Uma Bharti carried a Tricolour because it was an Idgah which was being targeted by Hindutva forces. On the other hand, it is important to note that the Hindutva cadres who went to demolish Babri mosque in 1992 did not carry the Tricolour. They carried only saffron flags which were subsequently hoisted there. The RSS is faced with a peculiar dilemma. For Hindus it has saffron flag and for Muslims Tricolour. This selective use of the national

symbols is bound to boomerang and further expose the Hindutva camp's real designs. But one thing is sure that 'Muslim Bashing' remains the favourite pastime of the saffron club. □□□