

THE RISE OF OBSCURANTISM

The imperialist rape of third world countries, past and present, is a matter of record, as a constituent of capitalist enterprise. If capitalism is the "end of history" it is also the end of humanity. Global warming, ecological upheavals, deforestation, melting ice caps, rising ocean levels, several species of flora and fauna getting extinct these flesh out the paradigm of predation purveyed as globalization or development and ideologically embedded in war and violence. It necessitates and justifies the rape of countries and their resources by sworn racists and seasoned outlaws. But that is for another day.

In India the regional monster that is gaining ascendancy and wrecking the nation has not emerged in full panoply today. It has incubated over a long period. Linguistic states contributed to it fairly remarkably. In one of his writings the eminent scholar, Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji, once the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, had considered this question in some depth. His painful conclusion was that with regional bid for paramountcy becoming rampant, India will eventually break up into several states. State autonomy will breed secessionism. The hold of the centre will erode for a variety of reasons over a period of time. Formal secession may be far off, but in effect, it will prevail. Thackerays and Modis incarnate that prophesy.

On the eve of independence Gandhi had suggested the dissolution of Congress and for very good reasons. What he had feared came to pass. Congress became politically corrupt and ideologically moribund. He was not heeded. Nor could the decline and irrelevance of Congress be warded off. Its behaviour in respect of Gujarat and Maharashtra amply illustrates Gandhi's apprehensions. Congress lost its moral and ideological backbone as a national party and thence its unstoppable downward fall.

That Congressites were among the killers and rapists is symptomatic of Gujarat's descent into a pervasive culture of crime.

The Patan girl student, a Primary Teacher Trainee, raped by her six teachers for several months, was not the only victim. All over the state numerous rape cases have ceaselessly occurred, been covered up, and bureaucratically silenced or politically suppressed. That is how the rape as a societal norm developed all over the state. George Fernandes had already wondered aloud in Lok Sabha once: what is so remarkable in a few rapes? That explains why he is so close and necessary to BJP.

Ten thousand UPians and Biharis have been forced out of Maharashtra in a few days, many among them Muslims. This would be chalked out as victory for regional assertion, Maratha pride.

Tragically enough anyone protesting, or reluctant to rape-or kill or seeking justice for the victims, is an avowed enemy of Gujarat today, presumably an agent of ISI. The girls may have "invited" the sexual encounter and relished it, just as Muslims had in 2002 "invited" the violence and rape; of their women folk. Damage control under Modi's direction is on, not punishment for the culprits. Anyone out protesting is being monitored, harried, cowed down into silence and

hiding. Patan is the ancient capital where Modi last celebrated the Independence Day. Patan is represented by a female minister Anandi Patel who knew all scandals and kept silencing the victims instead of rescuing them or helping them get justice.

The flourishing brothels in various cities there, involving even hotels and married women, reflect the atmosphere of permissiveness that has overwhelmed the state under BJP. Big temples in Rajkot and Ahmedabad have been exposed as sanctuaries of priestly womanizers. And, very quickly such scandals have been covered up, written out of the news. This is how Gujarat of Modi is showcasing its *Asmita*.

He has been repeatedly rewarded by his "5 crore Gujaratis" with the chieftainship of Gujarat, a state which he turned into a massive den of crime and corruption, its stench its only distinction nationally and internationally. He, as don, has sowed the seeds; he, as warlord, has planted the poison. The harvest is fulsome and promises more of the same in times ahead. □□□ *[contributed]*