

## Swayamsevak's Story

**Ram Puniyani**

Many reviews have already come out of this book—Advani Biography—, spanning the life of Lal Krishna Advani, known for thrusting the RSS-BJP politics on the body politic of democratic India. Starting from his role in initiating campaign around Ram temple issue, rath yatra, Babri demolition, BJP's becoming a significant power in the electoral arena, NDA rule and the Gujarat carnage, he has played a major role in implementing the RSS agenda of abolishing the democracy and gradually imposing Hindu nation. That's why the comments of Mohan Bhagawat, RSS General Secretary, at the time of release of the book, that Advani has written the book like a swayamsevak are most apt in describing the book and in understanding the agenda of the man who has been a major player in the policy rooms of RSS-BJP.

Undoubtedly there are some serious mistakes like the narration of the hanging of Bhagat Singh, but how can one expect a Hindu nationalist to know the life events of an atheist, communist, dead against the politics promoted in the name of religion, which Advani practises. Then there is a deliberate presentation that he, despite being Home minister, was not the part of decision making process of Jaswant Singh accompanying the terrorists to Kandahar. This is a deliberate lie, but with a purpose. The idea is to present himself as someone who is 'hard' against terrorism, and not responsible for the mistakes of NDA regime. At the same time he takes the credit for all the supposedly good actions during NDA regime. Then there is a deliberate silence at places, that of details of death of his political mentor, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, or expulsion of hardliner Balraj Madhok from Presidency of Bhartiya Jan Sangh, the previous avatar of BJP. All this should be expected as being primarily a swayamsevak, who has taken oath to work for the Hindu nation, meaning thereby to usurp the democracy, he will narrate what suits his political goals and leave out the uncomfortable incidents from his log book of history.

What comes out from this massive volume is the mind set, the politics which RSS has been pursuing and its actualisation in the political arena from the decade of 1980s. What comes out is the very sophisticated presentation of the ideology of RSS, its view of history, nationalism, culture and politics.

One also wonders about the very title, *My Country : My Life. By My Country*, apparently he refers to India, as it came to be after it attained independence. During that time, the whole country, the Indian nation was striving to fight against the British colonialists, barring of course the Muslim League-RSS-Hindu Mahasabha. How can the followers of RSS, or religious nationalism of any variety for that matter, not excluding Islamic fanatics call this democratic secular nation as their country as their notion of nationalism is far removed from what most of the people of this country accepted.

As a matter of fact when this Nation was coming into being, they were conspicuous by their absence from the process of nation formation. When as a young recruit of RSS he was digesting the indoctrination of RSS ideology, the youth of his age were breaking the British laws to ensure that motherland gets freedom. When he was imbibing the 'cultural nationalism' of RSS, Ambedkar was

condemning the Brahminic theology of Hinduism, the very base of RSS cultural nationalism.

His crocodile tears at the death of Gandhi are displayed a wee bit shamelessly. While talking of Gandhi murder as a sad event, the rath yatri forgets to mention that the murder was done by none other than his fellow swaymasevak, Nathuram Godse, who was also holding concepts of nationalism about which the author talks so gloriously in the book. His fascination for Deendayal Upadhyay reveals the deeper ideology of Hindu Rashtra. Upadhyay is credited with the ideology of *Ekatma Manvad*, Integral humanism, the indirect defence, of the Varna system in current times.

The fortunes of RSS changed for better with Jay Prakash Narayan letting RSS combine become part of the movement led by him. Now it comes out that this movement was to be the turning point in Indian politics, by giving legitimacy to the murderers of the father of the nation and by opening the way of Hindu nationalism, which came to assert itself over a period of time. While describing the break-down of Janata Party, he puts the blame on others, while the real issue was that socialists like Fernandes and Rajnarayan were very forthright in saying that Jana Sangh faction should dissociate from RSS if it wants to continue being part of Janata Party. The Jana Sangh faction of Janata Party, (Vajpayee, Advani, Varma) decided to break the Janata Party rather than sever the connection with RSS, and that's how the party broke. Interestingly at that time and till quite late George Fernandes was the most vocal critic of RSS-BJP and its fascist ideology. In this book Fernandes finds a very cozy mention, as the political opportunism of Fernandes and political expediency of BJP brought them together and is keeping them together as NDA, so much for the 'honesty' of the narrative.

The shift away from Gandhian Socialism, the ideology of BJP as enunciated at the time of its formation finds no ideological treatment in this tome. Why they picked it up in the first place and what made them abandon this ploy? One is raising these questions knowing full well that one does not expect RSS volunteers to answer them, as the goals justify the means for this brand of politics. The taking up of Ram Temple issue is elaborated in great detail and with this the communal historiography, Muslim kings destroyed Hindu temples. What also becomes apparent here is that Advani was never shaken or disturbed by the real life deprivations of dalits, poor or the workers. What comes clearly is that the major problem for Advani has been the issues related to identity, in contrast to issues of bread, butter, shelter and rights. It is this identity polices which made Advani what he is.

With Ram Temple issue, the national identity is made to veer around lord almighty. And while asserting that, this Hindutva warrior does state that he does not want a theological state. But what else can he say. While the whole nation was talking of India, multi religious, diverse and multicultural, RSS was talking of a political system based on monolithic, Brahminised Hinduism called Hindutva. So Advani's effort to project Lord Ram as the symbol of Indian nationalism is ludicrous but it did help his political agenda to no end. It did lead to demolition of a centuries old mosque and the carnage targeted against minorities. Babri dispute is also presented through the prism of Hindu fanatical ideology, never questioning how British introduced the divisive communal historiography

through their gazettes and through the history books. The sources he cites for Ramjanam Bhumi temple being there, the courtier account etc. should be laughing matter for serious historians. But that's what suits his politics.

Life has many contradictions and surprises. This man wants to build a Ram temple at the site, where Babri masjid stood. He says that the Kar Seva on 6th December 1992 will be done with bricks and shovels. His colleagues, the part of Ram Temple movement assert that they will destroy the mosque and the debris will be thrown in river Saryu. Then his followers do precisely what is told to them and what is desired by the Advani clan. If that is what they have been saying then how come they should endeavour stop them while kar sevaks are demolishing the mosque, is beyond one's comprehension. The claim that the RSS combine leadership on the stage tried to stop the demolition, is probably amongst the biggest and most convenient political lies of the history of current times. His colleagues are celebrating, hugging each other, distributing sweets and this gentleman wants people to believe that it was the dark day of his life! Probably he is too shrewd and astute in his political calculations for posterity.

As a build up to the demolition he propagates that the masjid is a sore on the eyes of nationalism. Probably he knows indoctrinated history only as much as is needed as an ideal RSS swaymsevak. Who will tell him that the mosques and temples were destroyed and built more as a political calculation by the kings rather than for religious considerations alone. He will not like to know that the biggest temple in Ayodhya, Hanuman Garhi was built on the land donated by Nawab of Awadh or that the same Aurangzeb who destroyed many a temple also gave huge donations to many Hindu shrines.

The build up to Babri demolition was preceded by implementation of Mandal Commission, something which his party could not handle. If they support it they lose their core upper caste Hindu constituency, if they oppose it they weaken them-selves on electoral wicket, so they seek the help of Lord Ram at this juncture. Post-Babri violence is totally bypassed, violence following the Rath yatra is underplayed and attributed to everything else except their real cause the Yatra. Yatra is all milk and honey, pseudo secular trouble makers are doing the violence and projecting it as Blood yatra.

The whole view of things is 'genuinely saffron', in this account. If one wants to know the trajectory of RSS combine on political chess board, here is the book. The nuclear arms race triggered by the Pokhran blasts and then Advani's threat to Pakistan—now Indians have a bomb was a calculated move to assert hindu nationalism. And then in reply to India's five explosions Pakistan does six. But all this is not the part of Advani story, where the nuclear explosion is a national honour and his colleagues celebrate it by planning to spread the 'holy' Pokhran sand all over the country so that their ideological cancer is supplemented by physical cancer! Any way mercifully the latter was not done and nation needs to thank these 'nuclear nationalists' for their kindness in sparing people the spread of radioactive nuclear material!

How to defend a fellow swayma- sevak who has presided over a mass carnage can be nicely learnt from the chapter on Gujarat. Advani bypasses all other versions and reports to defend Modi's actions. If Godhra train was burnt (implication, by Muslims) why one should at all consider the Banerjee report

whose opinion is contrary to that of his fellow swaymasevak. If Gujarat Forensic lab gives the report that fire could not have been put from outside, how can one takes that into consideration. And there were so many other acts of violence, so it is meaningless to single out Modi for this one. The reports by various human rights groups have no meaning. All is well in Gujarat, the Supreme Court is transferring cases out of Gujarat as the possibility of getting justice there does not exist, so what? Gujarat is prospering and Modi as a true RSS worker is ushering in Hindu Rashtra there, relegating minorities to the second class citizen status, what can be a bigger joy for this 'nationalism', as his nation is coming to fruition by and by. He doggedly defends Modi, and anoints this mass murderer of Gujarat as his successor.

There is enough material in the book to understand the politics and planning of RSS. The trivial things apart, Advani shows the glimpse of things planned by RSS. Gujarat is the way and BJP will gradually bring in such a state of affairs as outlined by their most revered Guruji, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, who ordained that Minorities submit to the wish of majority (RSS) else they will have to live as second class citizens. And one does get this frightening picture after going through this book.

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