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In the previous issues of SACH we have published several poems of poets from subcontinent but we have largely confined ourselves to Hindi, Urdu and Bangla. Apart from these languages there are various powerful languages in the subcontinent which have a very rich tradition of literary expression. For example the southern part of India has four such languages namely Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. This time we are presenting translation of a Telugu poem by Sikamani. Telugu is one of the four major languages of South India. It has long history of literary tradition. Great poets like Sri Sri belong to the Telugu literary history. Sikamani is one of the powerful voices who advocate the cause of Dalits in South India. Dalits, the most depressed sections of the society in the subcontinent, particularly in India and Nepal have been subjected to worst kind of humiliation and deprivation over centuries. The pain and agony felt by these sections of the society is unparalleled in the history of mankind. Sikamani himself being a Dalit has seen and felt all these as first hand experience. His poem "Bappa" is a testimony to that.

Bappa*

Except a hamlet, village less?..
except a caste, nameless?..
except hard labour, pleasure less?..
story of my Bappa, will you listen!

Bappa is not an ordinary one—
like a tall papaya tree,
like a river that never looks back,
like a slender casuarina tree
that challenges the sky,
a very tall lady she was !
Tucking the sari,
as she headed for fields, with sickle on her shoulder,
like a six feet black cobra
standing on her tail end
was my Bappa!

What a lovely blackness!
blackness of clusters of rose apples,
blackness of a slice of tilled black cotton soil field,
blackness of black lotus blooming in abundance
in the irrigation channel!

Like the just harvested, spread
red chilly in the threshing yard
was the Vermillion mark on her dark forehead!

Apparently black in complexion only,
but my Bappa's tenderness was
white as the flowers of water melon,
soft as silk cotton,
soothing as chilled gruel!

First my Bappa was born,
then toil has taken birth?
incarnation of a primitive tool was my Bappa!

At day break
crows on soap nut tree in the yard
looking at Bappa only
reckoned the hour!
Sweeping the front yard all the time

if she raised her broom held hand,
along with clouds,
all shimmering stars in the milky way
respectfully made way—
Diana at dawn turned pale
for her inability to remain spotless like the yard!

If she went to the pond to fetch water , enough,
water four steps below
lapped like young fish
kissing toes of my Bappa!

If monsoon breaks, enough,
half moist strips of clouds
secretly scurried about
in the eyes of my Bappa
that were never moist in pleasure or pain!

During transplantation season
if she planted with her finger tips

a single paddy sapling, enough,
it extended like Palamur banyan tree—
yet, my Bappa remained
like gleanings of corn!

Even the sun may have setting hours,
for my Bappa
with her back bone bent as a bow
respite was unknown!

Like caste discrimination suddenly visible
in the KalyanaM of village deity,
or in the mid day meal ritual of school children,
from the worn out silver anklets of my Bappa
lac appeared nervously!

For my Bappa—
who knew only lifting loads through out life
quintal bags in the rice mills
posed no problem!

I regret why my Bappa
who could shred coir in coconut shop
keeping the fruit on her thigh
was not born at KaramcheDu¹

I wonder why my Bappa ?
who kept guard along the river bund ,
with a lantern in hand
and some chilly powder in her chengu**,
whenever there were clashes with the village,
was not born at Tsunduru²

Unlike other times,
my Bappa's presence is
all the more needed now!!

* *Bappa : In some coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh father's elder sister is affectionately called Bappa by children in some communities.{Babu(=father)+Appa(=elder sister)}*

** *chengu: Free end of a sari used to tie or keep some material, as in rural areas.*

1. *KaramcheDu \ Places where dalits were attacked and killed.*

2. *Tsunduru /*

(Translated from Telugu by Dr T.S.Chandra Mouli & B.B.Sarojoni,

1857 In Our History

P. C. Joshi

...Continued from previous issue

WHAT was the aim of the insurgents, what sort of a political and social order did they seek to establish in India? A sound characterisation of the 1857 struggle depends upon the correct answer to the above problem. For it will help to decide whether it was reactionary or progressive.

It is amazing that there is virtual agreement on this question between not only British and some eminent Indian historians but also some foremost Indian political leaders.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has stated his opinion thus: Essentially it was a feudal outburst, headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by the widespread anti-British sentiment... Not by fighting for a lost cause, the feudal order, would freedom come.

Dr Majumdar's conclusion is: The miseries and bloodshed of 1857-58 were not the birthpangs of a freedom movement in India, but the dying groans of an obsolete aristocracy and centrifugal feudalism of the medieval age.

Dr Sen, the official historian, improves upon and carries forward the Prime Minister's characterisation:

The English Government had imperceptibly effected a social revolution. They had removed some of the disabilities of women, they had tried to establish the equality of men in the eye of the law, they had attempted to improve the lot of the peasant and the serf. The Mutiny leaders would have set the clock back, they would have done away with the new reforms, with the new order, and gone back to the good old days when a commoner could not expect equal justice with the noble, when the tenants were at the mercy of the talukdars, and when theft was punished with mutilation. In short they wanted a counter-revolution.

One can understand British statesmen and historians advancing the thesis of the Old Man vs. the New, of their own role being progressive and the insurgent cause reactionary, in sheer self-defence. But when Indian leaders and historians repeat the same old British thesis the least one can say is that they are mistaking the form for the substance. It is true that the 1857 uprising was led

by Indian feudals (but not them alone!) and they were not the makers of events, nor sole masters of India's destiny. There were other social forces of the common people in action during this struggle and they had brought new factors and ideas into play. It is a pity Dr. Majumdar and Sen and Pandit Nehru have given no thought nor weight to them. If we study them carefully and seriously, the conclusion is inescapable that during the 1857 national uprising, the popular forces were active enough, healthy in their aspirations and clear-headed enough in their ideas to prevent a reactionary feudal restoration in India.

One of the great positive achievements of the 1857 uprising acclaimed with justified pride by the Indian national movement has been the noble attempt to forge, and sustained efforts to maintain, against British machinations, Hindu-Muslim unity for the successful conduct of the struggle.

Playing upon Hindu-Muslim differences had become so much a part of the flesh and blood of the British representatives in India that Lord Canning spontaneously began thinking, when the first signs of the storm burst during May 1857, whether the Hindus or Muslims were behind it? Kaye states the problem and the significance of the new situation facing the British rulers: But, before the end of the month of April, it must have been apparent to Lord Canning, that nothing was to be hoped from that antagonism of Asiatic races which had even been regarded as the main element of our strength and safety. Mohammedans and Hindus were plainly united against us.

The British officials, however, did not give up but persisted in the policy of stirring Hindu-Muslim dissensions. "I shall watch for the differences of feelings between the two communities," wrote Sir Henry Lawrence from Lucknow to Lord Canning in May 1857. The communal antipathy, however, failed to develop; Aitchison ruefully admits:

In this instance, we could not play off the Mohammedans against the Hindu.

The insurgent leaders were fully aware of this disruptive British tactic. Allamah Fazle Haq, himself a Muslim revivalist, wrote: They (the British) tried their utmost to break the revolutionary forces by their tricks and deceptive devices, make ineffective the power of the Mujahids and uproot them, and scatter and disrupt them.... No stone was left unturned by them in this respect.

The insurgent leaders consciously laid great stress on Hindu-Muslim unity for the success of the struggle. Bahadur Shah, the sepoy leaders, the learned Ulema and Shastris issued proclamations and fatwas stressing that Hindu-Muslim unity was the call of the hour and the duty of all. In all areas liberated from British rule the first thing the insurgent leaders did was to ban cow-slaughter and enforce it. In the highest political and military organ of insurgent leadership Hindus and Muslims were represented in equal numbers. When Bahadur Shah found that he could not manage the affairs of state, he wrote to the Hindu Rajas of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Alwar that if they would combine for the purpose (of annihilating the British) he would willingly resign the Imperial power into their hands.

An insurgent Sikh regiment in Delhi served under a Muslim commander. Such instances can be multiplied....

There is another very important aspect of this problem. Hindu-Muslim unity was one of the important keys in deciding the fate of the issue. The British side knew it and tried their hardest and best to disrupt it. The Indian side also knew it and did their utmost to realise and maintain it. But this by itself would be a static statement of the problem. The better Hindu-Muslim unity was forged in the insurgent camp, the longer the struggle could last; the longer the struggle lasted, the more chances the popular forces got to come to the fore and the more the ideological-political influence of feudal forces became weakened; the more the feudal forces weakened the less chances were left of a feudal restoration. Such is the dialectics of all popular and national struggles. During the last phase of the struggle in 1857-58, the feudal forces stood thoroughly exposed and weakened. The popular forces were not yet powerful, conscious and organised enough to overwhelm them and carry on the struggle to victory. What actually took place was British victory and not feudal restoration. When the modern national movement began in the next generation, the glorious heritage of Hindu-Muslim unity was taken over from the 1857 struggle and the next two generations gave a more and more democratic programme to the conception of Hindu-Muslim united front against British domination.

The British side also learnt its lesson from this historic phenomenon. Forrest in his *Introduction to State Papers, 1857-58*, states:

Among the many lessons the Indian Mutiny conveys to the historian, none is of greater

importance than the warning that it is possible to have a revolution in which Brahmins and Sudras, Hindus and Mohammedans could be united against us, and that it is not safe to suppose that the peace and stability of our dominions, in any great measure, depends on the continent being inhabited by different religious systems.... The mutiny reminds us that our dominions rest on a thin crust ever likely to be rent by titanic forces of social changes and religious revolutions.

Inside the disintegrating feudal order that was India of those days, new currents of democratic thought and practice were arising; they were not yet powerful enough to break the old feudal ideological bonds and overwhelm British authority; they were menacing enough to make the real Indian feudals seek a new lease of life as a gift from the British after beseeching due forgiveness for having joined the insurgent cause.

The destruction of the ancient land system in India and the law on the alienation of land stirred the whole countryside into action against the government whose policies had made the old rural classes, from the zamindars to the peasants, lose their lands to the new section of merchants, moneylenders and the Company's own officials, and which had played havoc with their life. The large-scale peasant participation in the 1857 uprising gave it a solid mass basis and the character of a popular revolt. The Indian peasants fulfilled their patriotic duty during 1857.

Peasants joined as volunteers with the insurgent forces and, though without military training, fought so heroically and well as to draw tributes from the British themselves... At the battle of Miaganj, between Lucknow and Kanpur, the British had to face an Indian insurgent forces of 8000, of whom not more than a thousand were sepoys. At Sultanpur, another battle was fought by the insurgents with 25,000 soldiers, 1,100 cavalry and 25 guns and of these only five thousand were rebel sepoys! After the fall of Delhi, the British concentrated upon Lucknow. As the British massed all their strength against Lucknow so from the villagers of Oudh came armed, peasant volunteers for the last ditch defence of their capital city. In the words of Charles Ball, The whole country was swarming with armed vagabonds hastening to Lucknow to meet their common doom and die in the last grand struggle with the Firangis.

After the fall of Bareilly and Lucknow, the insurgents fought on and adopted guerilla tactics. Its pattern is contained in Khan Bahadur Khan's General Order:

Do not attempt to meet the regular columns of the infidels because they are superior to you in discipline, bandobast and have big guns but watch their movements, guard all the ghats on the rivers, intercept their communications, stop their supplies, cut their dak and posts and keep constantly hanging about their camps, give them (the Firangis) no rest!

Commenting on the above, Russell wrote in his Diary:

This general order bears marks of sagacity and points out the most formidable war we would encounter.

The heavy responsibility for carrying into practice the above line of action and aiding the scattered insurgent forces to prolong the anti-British war of resistance fell on the mass of the peasantry. All contemporary British chronicles of the story of this war in Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand, Oudh and Bihar contain numerous stories of how the Indian peasantry loyally and devotedly carried out the behests of the insurgent high command. Let us take only one example:

Even when the cause of the mutincers seemed to be failing, they testified no good will, but withheld the information we wanted and often misled us.

In a national uprising that has failed, the role and contribution of any class can best be estimated by the amount of sacrifice it makes. Measured in these terms, the peasantry is at the top of the roll of honour of the 1857 uprising. Holmes states:

The number of armed men, who succumbed in Oudh, was about 150,000, of whom at least 35,000 were sepoys.

The rural population as a whole rose against the new land system imposed over their heads by the British rulers. Secondly, that the pattern of struggle was to eliminate the new landlords created under the British regime, destroy their records, hound them out of villages and seize their lands and attack all the symbols of British authority especially the kutchery (law-court), the tehsil (revenue office) and the thana (the police outpost). Thirdly, the base of the struggle was the mass of the peasantry and the rural poor while the leadership was in the hands of the landlords dispossessed under the British laws. Fourthly, this pattern of struggle fitted into the general pattern of the 1857 national uprising, the class struggle in the countryside was directed not against the landlords as a whole but only against a section of them, those who had been newly created by the British under their laws and acted as their loyal political supporters, that is, it was subordinated to

the broad need of national unity against the foreign usurper.

Talmiz Khaldun's thesis that during this uprising "The Indian peasantry was fighting desperately to free itself of foreign as well as feudal bondage" and that "the mutiny ended as a peasant war against indigenous landlordism and foreign imperialism" is thus an exaggeration. There is no evidence whatsoever that the Indian peasantry during this struggle decisively burst through the feudal bonds either politically or economically to transform a broad-based national uprising into a peasant war. On the other hand all the evidence that is known is to the contrary....

The Indian peasants made a compromise with the traditional landlords in the interests of the common struggle but the landlords became terrified by this alliance when they saw it in the living form of a revolutionary popular struggle. Gubbins, who had wide personal experience of Oudh and other Eastern districts, states:

Much allowance should, no doubt, be made in considering the conduct of the Indian gentry at this crisis, on account of their want of power to resist the armed and organised enemy which had suddenly risen against us. The enemy always treated with the utmost severity those among their countrymen who were esteemed to be friends of the British cause. Neither their lives nor their property were safe. Fear, therefore, no doubt entered largely into the natives which induced many to desert us.

Narrow class interest and fear of the "armed and organised" masses, whom the British rightly called "the enemy," ultimately led the Indian feudal gentry to desert the revolutionary struggle and seek terms with the foreign rulers. The situation led to feudal treachery and suppression of the national uprising, and not to the strengthening of feudalism in the minds and the later movement of the Indian peasantry and the people.

Dr R.C. Majumdar himself quotes the Supreme Government "Narrative of Events" issued on September 12, 1857:

In consequence of the general nature of the rebellion and the impossibility of identifying the majority of the rebels, the Magistrate recommended the wholesale burning and destruction of all villages proved to have sent men to take active part in the rebellion.

This is how the British understood the peasant contribution to the 1857 uprising. Could there be a restoration for the feudal order in India on the shoulders of such a peasantry?

To be continued...

A Thread of Faith

Sarita Chouhan

...Continued from previous issue

NON-VIOLENCE

A Righteous person never finds a solution in violence. He is just and can distinguish both right and wrong. He will never lead others by hate and vengeance, but by law and love. A person who follows the path of violence cannot please God.

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” (Bible, Matthew 5: 44,45)

“O God of Fire, only the pure and non-violent prayer embraced by you, reaches the Gods and is fruitful.” (The Rig Veda, 1.1.4)

“The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and His Soul hates the lover of violence.” (Bible, Psalm, 11:5)

A truly religious person refrain saying something bad to another person that he wouldn't want someone else says to him. He will respect others beliefs and will not attack other persons beliefs. He will not feel happy in other person's suffering instead they help others in suffering. He will not even think of hurting anyone.

There has been untold suffering and cruelty in humanity in the name of religion and God. People with abhorrence and revenge- they surely distance themselves from God because God is with righteous and just.

According to Quran, “Allah Loveth not mischief” (Quran, 2:205)

Bible says,

“Put away the sword” (Matthew 26:51-52)

“Let there be no compulsion in religion. The right direction is distinctly clear from error.” (Quran, 2:256)

“Why, Oye men, waste the human birth through jealousy and strife.” (Sri Guru Granth Saheb, p.1176)

The word patience is given great importance in Quran.

“Spacious is Allah's earth

Those who patiently persevere

Will truly receive

A reward without measure.” (Quran, 39:10)

“Patience and fortitude is the supreme ascetism: Nirvana is above all,” say the Buddhas. He is no recluse who harms others, nor is he who causes grief an ascetic.” (Dhammapada, 184)

All the religions have preached love and not hatred. Our biggest enemy is not the enemy

outside, but the enemy within. What is there within, we see outside. So the self has to be conquered first and there will be no enemy outside.

“Be not concerned with other men’s evil deeds or neglect of good: look rather to thine own sins and negligence.” (Dhammapada, 50)

LOVE CAN CONQUER HATE

The Creator has created all and everything with so much love. Our love for God will only be true if we love all equally.

Jesus says in Bible, “You love one another as I have loved you” (John, 15:12)

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt.” (Bible, Luke, 6:27,28,29)

“The devotees of the supreme Lord are beyond hate and vengeance.” (Sri Guru Granth Saheb, p.1145)

“To these, ever harmonious, worshipping in love, I give the Buddhi-Yoga by which they come unto Me.” (Bhagavad Gita, 10:10)

In Buddhism it is written,

“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,” – in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,” – in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at anytime; hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule. (Dhammapada, 3,4,5)

FORGIVENESS

Scriptures tell us to be forgiving. A forgiving person is like God, pure and compassionate. Such a person believes in love and possesses this divine quality.

When Jesus was crucified he said,

“Father, forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke, 23:34)

Forgiveness is very essential for a positive outlook and concentration. A forgiving person is a person of big heart, who sees things in a larger perspective and ignores other people’s misdeeds. By not forgiving one keeps the grudge inside and it occupies the mind not enabling one to move ahead. A forgiving person knows that no one is perfect and he sees himself and God in other person’s heart.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judges; do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.” (Bible, Luke, 6:37)

In Quran, Moses said,

“O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me!” So (Allah) forgave him: For He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Quran, 28:16)

We are likewise asked to show mercy on our fellow men. Forgiveness is a great gesture. A

person who forgives is kind and tolerant.

In Guru Granth Saheb it is mentioned:

“If Truth be one’s Fasting, Contentment the Pilgrim- station and Wisdom and Cognition the bath.

And Compassion the God, Forgiveness the Rosary; then one is a sublime being.” (Sri Guru Granth Saheb, p.1245)

“Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of envy and pride- these are his who is born with the divine properties, O Bharata.” (Bhagavad Gita, 16:3)

On the other hand the person who doesn’t forgive is ignorant and arrogant for whatever he does he thinks he is right.

“And every time I have
Called to them, that Thou
Mightest forgive them,
They have (only) thrust
Their fingers into their ears,
Covered themselves up with
Their garments, grown obstinate,
And given themselves up
To arrogance. (Quran, 71:7)

As forgiving is a brave act, similarly asking for forgiveness. A person who asks for forgiveness has realized and accepted his own faults and sins. He has surrendered his I-ness (false-ego) and has moved towards realizing his inner self. If such a person repents and seeks God’s forgiveness and takes steps to put right the wrongs, God forgives. On the other hand, the false ego is baseless and leads to nowhere.

“The patch-work (of the body) is threaded all through
with the needle of the bones and the stitches of the veins,
The pillar is but of the water (of the sperm),
Then of what O yogi, are you proud?” (Sri Guru Granth sahib, p. 886) (Ramkali M.5(1)

“Seek ye The forgiveness of your Lord,
And turn to him in repentance;
That He may grant you
Enjoyment, good (and true)” (Quran, 11:3)

A sinful person who has remembered God and asked for mercy is better than a person with pride of virtuous deeds. A person who has sinned but is humble, such a person can evolve but a person who is full with pride of his knowledge is stubborn and rigid.

“Even if the most sinful worship Me with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he hath rightly resolved.” (Bhagavad Gita, 9:30)

“Neither is a man wise by much speaking: he is called wise who is forgiving, kindly, and fearless.” (Dhammapada, 258)

To be continued...

Women and Armed Conflict

Pallavi Gupta / Sharifa Siddiqui

Asmita Resource Centre for Women

INDIA

For millennia, rape, sexual slavery and forced migration have been used as weapons of war. Like other war related brutality, these forms of violence against women are sanctioned and frequently ordered by the police, military and other governmental actors. Women's 'invisibility' has allowed gender based human rights abuses to be marginalised and thus while the world community has condemned other atrocities committed during armed conflict, gender specific violence has been dismissed as a natural consequence of war.

Gender specific methods of intimidation, torture and terrorism serve many purposes. In addition to being used to interrogate women in captivity, these forms of violence are employed to drive women and their families from their homes, punish communities for their perceived sympathy and collaboration with the enemy and exterminate the ethnic communities to which they belong.

Since rape has been historically seen as part of the 'spoils of war', conquering armies considered it their right to rape enemy women. This prevailing notion has been used to justify the establishment of incarceration centres where women were detained for long periods of time, raped repeatedly and impregnated. Historical evidence of rape as a weapon of war dates back as far as the Trojan War and continues till this day.

In the 20th century alone, hundreds of thousands of women have been raped in war and armed conflict. The Japanese army sexually enslaved and raped thousands of Korean, Indonesian, Chinese and Filipina comfort women during World War II. American soldiers raped countless Vietnamese civilians and military personnel during the Vietnam War.

During the partition, India – Pakistan were officially separated on August 15, 1947 at the stroke of midnight. According to the census of

1951: 72,26,000 Muslims went to Pakistan from India and 72,49,000 Hindus and Sikhs moved to India from Pakistan.

In the frenzied attempt to despoil and dishonour the departing citizenry, women's bodies assumed the burden of chastity, purity and honour of each community, now became separate nations defined all else by religion¹. Women faced with the brunt of the partition violence. Nearly 75,000 women faced with some sort of violence. Women were kidnapped, raped, molested, paraded naked in the streets, forced prostitution, breasts cut off, bought and forced into marriage, forced change in identity. On December 6, 1947 based on an agreement between India and Pakistan, abducted women were recovered. The definition of who is "abducted": "any woman seen to be living with, in the company of, or in a relationship with a man of the other religion, after March 1, 1947 would be presumed to have been abducted, taken by force."

The problem was that new governments were not prepared for this and resulted in massive violence and murder. Urvashi Butalia, writer and publisher states that officially partition has been forgotten by India, its painful memories put aside. No mention of it was made of it in government documents and its enormous long term human costs do not figure in histories of the subcontinent. Unofficially however these histories live on, inside families and communities, and are told and retold: people recall the time when, suddenly the neighbours turned upon neighbours, friends became foes, boundaries were suddenly set up and whole life time of sharing had to be put aside and new hostile identities assumed. Communities separated into them and us, religion became the maker of identities, and borders were suddenly drawn across villages and communities.

In "dishonouring" a woman you dishonour the religion, honour, and culture of the man associated with the woman. The violence against women during the partition aimed to "Defile the purity" of the other race by impregnating their women and forcing sex. Even though the violence was in one sense indiscriminate against men and

women, the latter quickly became the target of both sides of Hindu-Sikh/ Muslim divide. In the nationalist struggle for independence from Britain, India has been portrayed as a female deity in the form of mother India. With partition, the rhetoric of independence that had urged the restoration of the honour of Mother India, split and turned in on itself, now, in defence of its own national honour, each side set about dishonouring the women of the enemy².

Over 100,000 women were kidnapped or forcibly taken away from fleeing families. There are hundreds of eyewitness accounts of mass rapes and murders of women. In some cases, especially among the Sikh community, men 'martyred' their women and children rather than running the risk of them being dishonoured by the 'Muslims'.

There are accounts of women naked and shaven, being paraded in public places before being killed. Over 100 Muslim women were paraded thus in the grounds of the Golden temple in Amritsar in the Punjab, the Sikhs' holiest shrine, before they were killed.³

Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the leading writers of the partition issue. She reflected upon her personal experience with the Partition and violence on women in her novels. *Cracking India* is one such novel in which she shed light of the events of the partition. She states that "*Victory is celebrated on a woman's body; vengeance is taken on a woman's body. That's very much the way things are, particularly in my part of the world*".

Many writers including Sadat Hasan Manto in many of his stories depicted women as the main character. He brought to the reader how a woman is exploited and used by men for their individual satisfaction. In some of his stories, Manto referred to poor young girls who had horrifying experiences during partition of India in 1947, and as each one of such stories is a 'document' and not just fiction.

With the end of the Liberation war of secession in 1971, Bangladesh was faced with the staggering number of 3 million dead and 200,000 raped by the Pakistani army and razakars in a span of nine months. In 1972, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the first President of Bangladesh adopted a policy of eulogising the 200,000 women raped as birangonas, a public, persuasive rhetoric aiming to reinstate them in marriage and reduce social

ostracism. Hence the kinship norms of purity and honour were articulated in public discourse and dislocated from the status of events pertaining to family and community and instead became events concerning the new nation. This attempt seemed to be unsuccessful as evidenced through the frequent press reports of non-acceptance by their families.⁴ An estimated 25,000 women became pregnant as a result of systemic rape at the hands of Pakistani soldiers intent of impregnating them. While many of these women have been able to obtain safe abortion services, 'incidents of suicide and infanticide many have resulted as a direct result of these pregnancies. It brings home the point of other forms of violence as a consequence of rape and impregnation.

While there is less documentation of forced pregnancies than of rape, recent wars and conflicts bear witness to the prevalence of this phenomenon. In the genocidal conflict in Rwanda, women were held and repeatedly raped for up to nine months. Reports indicate that 10,000 Rwandan women became pregnant – 1,000 of these women gave birth and 5,200 were able to obtain abortions; massive disarray following the conflict made it impossible to track the remaining women. Moreover once women managed to escape homes, they are exposed to the risk of being raped and forcibly impregnated while in flight or in 'safe' places such as refugee camps.

OTHER COMPLICATIONS

Rape often has a grave impact on the immediate and long term physical health of women. Rape survivors suffer from lacerations of the upper vagina or severe to moderate genital injury. Usually lacerations of the upper vagina are characterized by profuse bleeding but rape may also result in anal trauma requiring repair of the mucus membrane.

Rape also places women at the risk of being infected with HIV/ AIDS and other STD. Left untreated STD can lead to a host of severe health complications including pelvic inflammatory diseases, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, blindness, cancer and even death. Rape can also exacerbate existing gynaecological problems.

During rape a woman is often beaten, stabbed or otherwise physically assaulted (gagging). Rape can result in death too. Since women raped in conflict situations are attacked

more than once, their injuries are greatly compounded. Moreover the turbulence during war and armed conflict can prevent survivors of rape from obtaining medical treatment. Women in captivity often do not receive health care while women in flight or in refugee situations may face barriers to obtaining such services; thus increasing the likelihood of additional complications.

Many raped women suffer years of a condition called the post traumatic stress disorder. A single traumatic event can produce profound and lasting changes in psychological arousals, emotion, cognition and memory. Rape and forced pregnancy can devastate a survivor's social and cultural life. In many cultures men who view rape of female relatives as an attack on their status or property have been known to reject their raped wives and daughters. Forced pregnancy compounds the psychological harm caused by the initial rape because it serves as a constant reminder of the assault(s). Pregnant victims are at a greater risk of being rejected or attacked by members of their community. Unable to deny that they have been raped, women in cultures that emphasize virginity and /or chastity are especially vulnerable.

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STATUS OF RAPE AND FORCED PREGNANCY

The International Criminal Court is of relevant while addressing mass crimes against women. The struggle with impunity for mass crimes against women at the international level, the Nuremberg and Japanese military trials, and the phenomenon of "comfort women" that never came to be prosecuted for despite knowledge of the same by the victorious nations.

Akayesu's case

On October 2, 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)⁵ sentenced former mayor Jean-Paul Akayesu to three life sentences for genocide and crimes against humanity and to 80 years for other violations including rape and encouraging widespread sexual violence.

The sentencing of Akayesu to life imprisonment is one small step towards redressing the longstanding injustice perpetrated by the international community against women victims of war. **It is the first time an international court has punished sexual violence in a civil war and the first time rape has been found to be used as**

an act of genocide, as well as an act of torture.

During the trial, Rwandan women testified that they had been subjected to repeated collective rape by militia and that Akayesu made no effort to stop this horror, even though he had the power to do so. They spoke of witnessing other women being gang-raped and murdered while Akayesu stood by, saying to the rapists at one point "don't complain to me now that you don't know what a Tutsi woman tastes like."

Unfortunately, the testimonies of the Rwandan women are not an exception. Worldwide, women in conflict situations are routinely targeted for rape. What is significant is that this time the international community has treated this crime with the same seriousness as other egregious violations of international law.

The problem in the past has not been the absence of a written law, but rather sexist attitudes that view crimes against women as incidental or less serious violations. Rape is a violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 1948 Genocide Convention, the 1984 Torture Convention, and a crime against humanity under customary international law. However, rape has long been mischaracterized and dismissed by military and political leaders as a private crime or the ignoble act of the occasional soldier. Worse still, it has been accepted precisely because it is so commonplace.

The victory that the Akayesu judgment and sentencing represent was hard won. When Akayesu was first charged in 1996, the 12 counts in his indictment did not include sexual violence, despite documentation of the widespread rape during the genocide in general and in his commune in particular. The charges of rape were only added to the Akayesu indictment mid-trial, following concerted pressure by non-governmental organizations and an amicus curiae brief filed by this Coalition in May 1997.

The Akayesu conviction will hopefully set a precedent for more rape indictments by the Tribunal. The Akayesu case has shown that, given safe circumstances, Rwandan women want to tell their stories. Yet sexual violence crimes during armed conflict are still being investigated and under prosecuted. Of the 34 other cases currently pending in front of the tribunal, only one contains charges of sexual violence.

India's experience of Mass crimes against women

Urvashi Butalia, a renowned feminist who has researched extensively on violence against women during the Partition, spoke about the gender based violence against women that was mass in scale but individual in character, and about the history of family violence where families killed women in their own families in the name of family honour. **She said that justice for the crimes against women became impossible because many perpetrators were across the border, and in the name of nationalism, justice for women came to be accorded a low priority.** Within the framework of the new nation-state, women were not seen as citizens in their own right; the state took the responsibility of "rescuing" abducted women, thereby acting on behalf of the women, without any consideration to the women's wishes. Mass abortions were conducted under coercive circumstances, on women who were pregnant through men of the "other" community. Despite abortions being illegal at that time in India, such acts were justified on the basis of non-acceptance of children of mixed unions by the society.⁶

In India the existing criminal law and procedures are meant for crimes against individuals, it cannot be used for mass crimes, as the contexts in which the crimes were committed varied. For gender-based crimes, the existing criminal law provisions are inadequate even for crimes against individuals, and hence it will certainly be inadequate to deal with mass crimes against women.

THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court** is the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC). The most significant provisions of the Rome Statute regarding women's rights are contained in Part II of the statute that defines the crimes that will come within the jurisdiction of the Court. The impunity long enjoyed by perpetrators of gender crimes was perpetuated by the inadequate treatment of these crimes under prior legal instruments. Thus, the recognition of these crimes is key to ending this impunity for gender crimes.

Articles 7 and 8 in the Rome Statute defining war crimes and crimes against humanity, respectively, include a subparagraph listing a

broad spectrum of gender-specific crimes. The enumerated crimes are: rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and any other form of sexual violence also constituting a grave breach/serious violation of the Geneva Conventions (regarding war crimes) or other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity (regarding crimes against humanity). This list of sexual violence crimes is included under the definition of war crimes for both international and non-international armed conflict. In addition to this list, two other gender-specific crimes have been enumerated under crimes against humanity. The first is the crime of persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on various grounds, including gender. Secondly, the crime of "enslavement" is defined as the exercise of any power attaching to the right of ownership over a person, including in the course of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children.

The provisions on gender crimes under the definitional sections of the Rome Statute are a historic development under international law. Previous international humanitarian law treaties failed to properly address sexual and gender violence. Neither the Hague Conventions respecting the Laws and Customs of War nor the Nuremberg Charter contained in the Agreement for the Prosecution and Punishment of Major War Criminals after World War II included any mention of sexual violence. Control Council Law No. 10 on the Punishment of Persons Guilty of War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity for Germany included rape as a crime against humanity though not as a war crime. This was significant because the definition of crimes against humanity requires that the acts in question be either widespread or systematic. The ways in which sexual violence is committed during war makes it difficult to prove these conditions. Sexual violence crimes form part of the culture of war and are often committed on a sporadic basis. War crimes, in contrast, do not require any proof of systematic planning and therefore have a lower threshold of proof that is more appropriate for sexual assault cases. The Rome Statute represents a significant step to overcoming the discriminatory and inadequate treatment of sexual violence crimes under international law. **The Rome Statute includes gender crimes as both war crimes and**

as crimes against humanity. Under the war crimes section, the language makes it clear that the enumerated crimes are crimes of the gravest nature. Rome Statute recognizes a spectrum of gender crimes in addition to rape. It was important to separately identify other sexual and gender crimes in order to recognize the distinct characteristics of the different crimes. This serves to acknowledge the aggravating harm caused to the victim. For this reason, the Women's Caucus fought to separately identify certain crimes, such as forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, and gender-based persecution.

The Rome Statute is the first international treaty specifically listing the crime of forced pregnancy. Forced pregnancy is not found in the Geneva Conventions or the statutes of the two Ad Hoc Tribunals. However, the crime has been recognized as a fundamental humanitarian and human rights violation in the Vienna Conference's Programme of Action, the Beijing Conference's Platform for Action and by the UN Commission on Human Rights.⁷

The Rome Statute also codified for the first time the crime of sexual slavery. The Women's Caucus lobbied to have sexual slavery listed in addition to enslavement and enforced prostitution in order to recognize the particular elements of sexual slavery. The term sexual slavery is preferable to enslavement and enforced prostitution because it includes the sexual aspect of the crime of slavery, while also highlighting the coercive element involved where women are forced to provide sexual services. At the same time, the crime of "enforced prostitution" was retained in the Rome Statute to capture those situations that lack slavery-like conditions. The Rome Statute also established a new definition for enslavement. The definition of enslavement in the Rome Statute draws from prior definitions of slavery, with the important addition of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children. As a result, the crime of trafficking in persons has been brought within the jurisdiction of the Court.⁸

Finally, the ground of gender was added to the crime of persecution under the crimes against humanity section. Gender-based persecution, such as the sexual apartheid regime in Afghanistan, involves the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights by reason of the victim's gender. Prior formulations of the crime of persecution named only political, racial or religious grounds, but not gender. This suggested

that gender-based persecution was less important or less prevalent than persecution on the other enumerated grounds. The inclusion of the ground of gender in the Rome Statute was an important step to ensuring that gender-based persecution would receive greater attention.

CONCLUSION

The failure to address violence against women during armed conflict and especially during partition reflects not only the failure of the state but also the invisibility of women's issues in our subcontinent. The experience of violence against women during partition in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh has been written about extensively but there have been no redress mechanism or access to justice to the women who have faced gross human rights violations. The reluctance to talk about these issues in the three countries reflects not only the unwillingness to talk about collective pain of its women, but the patriarchal nation states that we are living in that refuses to address violence against during armed conflict.

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Join the DOTS...!

Silent Emergence of Hindu Terrorism

Subhash Gatade

I

What is common between Kathmandu - the capital of Nepal ; Thane, Vashi which happen to lie in Maharashtra; Tenkasi, which is part of Tamilnadu and Indore, which lies in Madhya Pradesh? Apropos there seem to be no commonality, although a close look at stray sounding incidents in these places brings forth a pattern which has serious import for the manner in which (non-state) terrorism is viewed in this country. It is disturbing that media which calls itself 'watchdog of democracy' and which has no qualms in stigmatising the minority community on unfounded allegations of 'terrorist acts' has suddenly gone mute since the perpetrators of terrorist acts in all these cases belong to the majority community.

It need be told that Kathmandu - capital of the newest Republic of Nepal- witnessed bomb explosions outside the Birendra International Centre where newly elected members of the constituent assembly had assembled for the oath taking ceremony. Although nobody was killed and only few faced minor injuries, it was a clear signal that elements opposed to the momentous changes in the Nepalese polity were involved in the attack. The local police immediately blamed Hindu fanatics for this cowardly attack.

Close watchers of the Nepal situation did not lose sight of the fact that promonarchy Hindutva forces had even resolved to take up arms for the restoration of *Hindu Rashtra*. This meeting was held in the immediate aftermath of elections to the constituent assembly and was attended by sympathetic elements from both the countries. It had been organised under the aegis of *Vishwa Hindu Mahasangh* an international organisation of Hindus, in Balrampur (India) which was presided over by the 'firebrand' BJP M.P Yogi Adityanath.

If Kathmandu witnessed bomb explosions as a violent reaction to the victory of the Republican forces in Nepal, Indore - the erstwhile capital of the Holkars - witnessed firing by activists of Hindu organisations in full public view. They had assembled there after a rally as a part of celebrations to commemorate the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji. Shivaji Maharaj as he is popularly known was a great secular ruler of 17th century in Western India who fought with the Mughals. The firing incident which was covered by the media took place under the watchful eyes of the local police itself which remained a mute spectator and did not even deem it necessary to file a report on this thoroughly unlawful act. The brazenness of the participants in this celebrations was evident also from the fact that they even handed over the guns to the kids present there who also fired in the air.

Ofcourse it was not for the first time that such firing incidents had taken place. Few months ago marches (*Path Sanchalan*) were organised in different parts of M.P. under the aegis of different Hindu organisations which owe their allegiance to RSS . These *path sanchalans* were also marked by firings at the culmination of the rallies. And as expected there were no police complaints. Nobody questioned how the lathi wielding *swayamsevaks* have suddenly metamorphosed into gun wielding Machos out to silence 'anti-nationals.' Looking at the fact that many areas in M.P. especially Malwa have always maintained a strong presence of Hindutva forces, one can understand the rationale behind such 'spontaneous sounding' firing incidents.

A press conference held in Indore city itself (23rd April 2008) which was addressed by the former chief minister of M.P. and Congress general secretary Digvijay Singh himself had rightly underlined the precarious communal harmony situation in the state. He had even demanded that '[l]ike SIMI, Bajrang Dal should also be banned because this RSS outfit, alongwith some other

allied organisations, indulges in bomb making and giving training in making of bombs. He said that he still sticks to his earlier accusation of making of bombs by Bajrang Dal. He said that RSS has retreated after they accused him of slander." (The Milli Gazette, 1-15 June 2008).

Perhaps the former Chief Minister was alluding to the discovery of a bomb making factory in Nanded (Maharashtra) at the house of old RSS activist which saw deaths of two Bajrang Dal / RSS workers (April 2006). Five other members of the terrorist group were also arrested by the police. The most disturbing part of the whole episode revealed how a well-thought out plan to start a communal riot was on the anvil. Apart from maps of mosques in the area police had discovered fake beards or dresses normally worn by Muslims in the area. Further interrogation of the other accused in the case had also made it clear that the same group was also responsible for a few other incidents - namely Parbhani, Jalna, Purna - in Maharashtra where Muslims had come under mysterious attack at the time of Friday prayers.

It is a different matter that despite a formally secular government in power in the state, and the police did not deem it necessary to unearth the wider gameplan hatched by the top echelons of the Hindutva brigade. It is common knowledge that the 80 plus year 'cultural organisation' and its affiliated organisations maintain strict hierarchy and any such violent action plan on part of its local activists would not have been possible without the involvement of the top bosses of the 'Parivar'. Neither police used any strong law to apprehend the real culprits nor it tried oppose the bail applications moved by the other members of the Hindu terrorist module.

And today according to informed sources the whole issue of bomb making factory and bursting of a Hindu terrorist module lies buried under the hubris of government apathy and connivance of a section of the bureaucracy.

II

The arrest of sevaks of the *Sanatan Sanstha*, a religious group that is behind the *Hindu Janajagruti Samiti* for planting bombs in theatres at Thane and Vashi brings a new dimension to terrorism. Seven people were injured when one of the bombs the sevaks planted exploded in the

parking lot of Thane's Gadkari Rangayatan theatre on 4th June.

Ramesh Hanumant Gadkari, Mangesh Nikam, Santosh Angre and Vikram Bhawe, the four bombers, are all full-time activists of the Sanatan Sanstha, living in ashrams run by the organisation..... ..

Police say that they had planted a bomb outside a mosque or dargah on the Pen highway last Diwali, to check its intensity, but it did not explode. Nikam had earlier set off a bomb in the house of a family in Ratnagiri that had converted to Christianity, and was on bail awaiting trial.

(**Terror's new face**, Herald, Panjim, 19 June 2008)

Whether western India - especially Maharashtra, Goa - has slowly and silently emerged as a epicentre of a different sort of terrorism ? Bomb explosion in Nanded in April 2006 at the house of a RSS activist and busting of a Hindutva terrorist module and a repeat of similar explosion in Feb 2007 in the same city which also witnessed two deaths could be said to be two major incidents to mark the emergence of homegrown Hindutva terrorism. It is no mere coincidence that three major stalwarts of the idea of Hindutva - Savarkar, Hedgewar-Golwalkar and Bal Thackeray - hail from this area only. And the dilly-dallying adopted by the powers that be vis-a-vis these explosions in Nanded was a clear signal to these forces that they can move ahead with impunity.

And recent events in Thane, Panvel and Vashi rather demonstrate that hardline Hindutva groups which have secretly and surreptitiously built a wide network of active and sleeper cells are ready to go to any extent to make their voice heard. Far away from the scrutiny of the police and the intelligence establishment, many such new outfits have sprung up which are indoctrinating a gullible citizenry about their agenda of hate and exclusion under the cover of 'spiritual gatherings' and distribution of spiritual literature .('Quitey, hardline Hindu outfits build a network across Maharashtra, Goa' (Indian Express, June 23rd, 2008)' Terrorist acts committed by these groups in the above mentioned places and their capacity to indulge in similar acts elsewhere are an indicator that unless they are dealt with firmly

they would be able to spread their tentacles elsewhere as well. And the day would not be far of when Hindutva terrorist network can reach nook and corners of the country rivalling the *Jihadi* terrorists.

Date 31st May 2008. Venue : Vishnudas Bhave auditorium, Vashi, Maharashtra.

The show of the muchdebated drama 'Amhi Pachpute' was already on. Little could the organisers of the drama had imagined that show of another kind was unfolding outside the hall.

Thanks to the alertness and presence of mind shown by people present there, a bomb placed by some miscreants was spotted. A bomb squad immediately rushed in which neutralised the bomb and a major disaster could be averted. Of course, the police neither felt the need to interrogate leaders of 'Hindu Janjagruti Samity' which had organised spate of protests against the drama supposedly for 'hurting religious sentiments of Hindus' nor ventured to move beyond its idea of 'usual suspects.' Left to itself it would have preferred to close the file after some time citing 'lack of any clues'. But it had no idea that what lied in store for them.

Within next four days a similar feat was repeated. Of course the venue had shifted to Thane, another city in Maharashtra and the location was the basement of the 'Gadkari Rangayatan Auditorium' where another show of the same drama was on. Unlike Vashi, here bomb explosion could not be averted leading to injuries to few people.

It was clear to even a layperson that an organised group of miscreants was behind these incidents. Looking at the gravity of the situation the 'Anti Terrorism Squad' of the Bombay police was given the responsibility of investigating the case and finding the culprits.

The ATS was successful in nabbing Ramesh Hanumant Gadkari (Age 50 years) and Mangesh Dinkar Nikam (Age 34 Years) - fulltime activists of 'Hindu Janjagruti Samity and 'Sanathan Sanstha' - from Panvel (15th June 2008) and the very next day it caught Vikram Bhave and Santosh Sitaram Angre and charged the four with masterminding the bomb explosions in Vashi and Thane. Police also revealed that these terrorists were also involved in another bomb explosion around four months back when the film show of

'Jodha Akbar' was going on in Panvel (20th February 2008).

The Sanstha denied any knowledge of their activities and said that they did it on their own. It is clear that protestations of innocence cannot be taken at face value and the police needs to thoroughly investigate the affairs of the *Sanatan Sanstha* as well as *Hindu Janjagruti Samity* which have been registered as charitable organisations in Goa. Definitely they cannot evade responsibility in the act as their literature talks of 'elimination' of 'evildoers' and claims that it is a 'religious duty' to combat and counter 'enemies of Hinduism'.

The editorial in 'Herald' further adds that :

"..[S]anatan Sanstha and the Bajrang Dal, two Hindu fundamentalist organisations that are both linked to bomb blasts, are the main constituents of the broad joint front called the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, which has been holding public meetings all over Goa claiming Hinduism is in danger, and making provocative speeches."

III

According to a writeup in Indian Express (June 18th, 2008) : "...the arrests were enough for Deshmukh to point fingers at the possibility of Hindu groups being involved in subversive activities too. "Normally, when such incidents take place a particular community is suspected, " the Chief minister said in a statement late on Monday. "But the arrest of two people belonging to a Hindu organisation proves that such suspicions are baseless. Criminal do not belong to any religion."

Investigations into the antecedents of these arrested activists have revealed that they have had tryst with bombs and violence in the past. The Chief of the Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad told media persons that "Various members of these organisations are being questioned. If their role is found in the planning or execution of these incidents, we will certainly write to the centre and seek that they are banned." (Indian Express, 23rd June 2008).

As of now it is difficult to predict how things would unfold but a notable fallout of these explosions and consequent arrests is that at least there is broader awareness about these Hindu extremist groups which work like wheels within wheels, and are quietly mobilising Hindus on a cocktail of Ramrajya, Hindu Dharma and "dharmakranti"-religious revolution. Hindu

Janjagruti Samiti and Sanatan Sanstha are both registered in Goa as a charitable organisation, a new outfit Dharmashakti Sena was also floated by them in 16 Maharashtra towns and cities on Gudi Padwa day this April. Pictures of its inaugural rally in April show young men dressed in military fatigues.

Herald further adds that (**Panjim, 22th June 2008**)

Defence of Hinduism is one of the biggest themes in the literature and meetings of the HJS and the SS. The massive 44-volume compilation titled 'Science of Spirituality', published by the Sanatan Bharatiya Sanskruti Sanstha and 'compiled' by Dr. Jayant Athavale, founder of the Sanatan Sanstha, Hinduism is consistently portrayed as being under threat from the forces of Christianity and Islam, aided and abetted by the 'so-called secularists', who are seen as traitors to Hinduism. The volumes have titles like 'Protecting Seekers and Destroying Evildoers' and 'Reinstatement of the Divine Kingdom'. Defending the faith against the various purported threats by allegedly anti-Hindu forces is stated to be the primary duty of all true believers.

The nature of this 'defence' is spelt out in great detail. It involves identifying those who work against 'dharma', making lists of such people, and then moving to 'eliminate' them. It is claimed that all this is part of 'spiritual practice'.

Interestingly all talk of Hindu Unity in the worldview of HJS falls at the altar caste and other regressive practices in our society

Believers are exhorted to guide offenders away from the path of incorrect practice. The volumes in the series support the regressive and obscurantist practices of the past, including the caste system, talking repeatedly about the proper role of various castes in society.

While curbing the activities of these organisations or banning them would demand extra efforts on part of the government, as of now there are very many things which can be done to stop their vicious, hatefilled ideas reach a wider cross-section of society. It's literature itself provides many clues.

For an organisation which is so ultra-sensitive about the slightest imagined insult to Hinduism — imagined or real — the literature of

the Sanatan Sanstha is rife with attacks on other religions. Priests are depicted with horns, indicating that they are devils. There are frequent references to the Bible, alleging that it promotes incest and other immoral practices. In September 2004, 'Sanatan Prabhat' carried a statement saying that the body of St. Francis Xavier should be destroyed. It has also carried other scurrilous articles about Goa's patron saint. In November 2005, 'Sanatan Prabhat' published an article, 'Mohd. Paigambar: An incarnation of Tripurasur [an 'asur' or demon]', which led to rioting in Miraj town of Maharashtra, and the imprisonment of the editor of 'Sanatan Prabhat'.

After having created an ideological framework which creates a fundamentalist mindset and makes it the 'duty' of the true seeker to defend the faith against all those who are projected as attacking it, it is disingenuous of the HJS and the SS to disclaim responsibility for the acts engaged in by their members. Ex-members of these organisations talk about the cult-like atmosphere that is created, with unquestioning obedience being stressed. Members are then brainwashed into believing that Hinduism is under siege. Against this background, and with all the talk about 'defence' and 'elimination of evildoers', it is hardly surprising that adherents begin to explore ways of taking direct action to defend the faith. In this regard, the philosophy of the HJS and the SS is not all that different from the philosophy of terrorists, whom they claim to oppose.

(*Herald, Panjim, 22 June 2008*)

Of course, if the government is serious about curbing these extremist organisations, it can start with filing criminal proceedings against the 'bible' of the HJS itself - namely the 'Science of Spirituality' under section 153 (a) and (b) and related clauses on the basis that it promotes disaffection and disharmony between different communities.

But would it be proper to say that only Western India is witness to the silent emergence of Hindu terrorism or the phenomenon is slowly acquiring a national identity.

IV

TIRUNELVELI: The special police team, led by Deputy Inspector General of Police, Tirunelveli

Range, P Kannappan has arrested three persons in connection with the Tenkasi RSS office bomb blast case.

The investigations revealed that the blasts were planned to provoke a backlash between two groups of different and dominant communities in Tenkasi. Speaking to reporters at Tenkasi on Monday, Inspector General of Police, South Zone, Sanjeev Kumar said on January 24, there was a bomb blast at the RSS office and an auto, parked inside the new bus stand at Tenkasi, was destroyed.

Following this, special teams were formed to nab the accused. Investigations revealed that S Ravi Pandian (42), a cable TV operator, S Kumar (28), an auto driver, both from Tenkasi, and V Narayana Dharma (26) of Sencottai had planted 14 pipe bombs in the office of Ravi Pandian.

...Moreover, the bomb blast inside the new bus stand was planned to divert the police investigation, said Sanjeev Kumar. ..

(3 arrested in Tenkasi bomb blast case, **Tuesday February 5 2008 08:12 IST** , Express News Service (Newindian express))

It is for everyone to see that S Ravi Pandian (42), a cable TV operator, S Kumar (28), an auto driver, both from Tenkasi, and V Narayana Sharma (26) of Sencottai today represent the less reported phenomenon of Hindutva terrorism. For all practical purposes till 23rd January they remained activists of Hindu Munnani - an affiliated organisation of RSS - engaged in what they seem to be a 'patriotic' work.

Today they are the new face of 'terrorism' unleashed by the Hindutva brigade.

But not only these three 'musketeers', one should add names of four more who were apprehended on 5th February, identified as A. Balamurugan (20), S. Velmurugan (18), A Murugan (24), all hailing from Tenkasi and Maasaanam (20) of Shencottai. They have been arrested for assisting S. Pandian in making bombs and detonating them at the RSS office and town's new bus stand. According to 'The Hindu' (6th Feb 2008) the police even recovered bombs and detonators from them.

Looking at the hierarchial nature of the Sangh Parivar outfits, these blasts would not have been triggered without the knowledge of its top brass in Tamilnadu.

Thanks to the painstaking efforts engaged in by the Mr Kannappan, DIG Tirunelveli range, who did not fell prey to the usual stigmatisation and terrorisation of the religious minorities, and after thorough investigations into the incident (24th January 2008) which involved bomb blasts at RSS office in Tenkasi and another one at the bus stand apprehended the culprits.

It is now learnt that the Sangh Parivar organisations which fared miserably during the last elections were keen that Tenkasi does a 'Coimbtore' and they are able to get few sympathy votes. It may be told that this is the 10th anniversary of the Coimbtore blasts which had seen deaths of innocents.

A report filed by M.H. Jawahirullah (www.twocircles.net) :

According to Sanjeev Kumar, IG, South Zone, the bomb blast inside the new bus stand was planned to divert the police investigation. DIG of Police Kannappan said the trio tested the capacity of the bombs at Papanasam before executing the plan. Since the bombs contained substances like ammonium nitrate, electric detonators, batteries and timer devices, the explosion was possible within 30 to 40 seconds, said Kannappan. The Investigation is still going on. The Police said 14 pipe bombs were assembled and the operations began from July last year.

There are reports that the Tirunelveli Police have indicated that the explosives used in Tenkasi are similar those used in the Makkah Masjid blast at Hyderabad. It is incumbent that in the light of the revelations in the Tenkasi blasts , the CBI should reinvestigate the Makkah Masjid Blasts and other Blasts which took place in different parts of the country.

V

General Secretary of Congress Party Mr Digvijay Singh has attacked Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan and RSS about recovery of arms in Shyampur District Sihore. While releasing a letter to the press which he has written to the Chief Minister Mr Singh categorically stated that members of RSS themselves are engaged in sending swords and knives to instigate communal violence. The two miscreants from Shyampur who were found to be in possession of arms and were duly apprehended belong to RSS only. The letter specifically mentions that since the accused belong

to RSS the chief minister would not take any action in this matter. You are under pressure from RSS also. Mentioning his earlier letter Mr Singh said that Mangilal and Phool Singh were arrested for delivering 24 swords and four knives at Satyanarayan Bhati's house on 16th March. These two persons belong to RSS. Within a few days of the recovery of the arms, minorities in Narsinagarh and Talen (Rajgarh) came under attack and five people from both the sides lost lives.

The Congress leader mentioned a letter written by Sihore S.P. which says that despite attempts by the police the two accused have refused to divulge the information about the source of these arms. To conclude, the point one would like to emphasise that whether it is possible to link Tenkasi with Vardha or Nanded with Ahmedabad or for that matter Sihore or in our own atomised world view or not ?

(‘Sangh sends Swords and Knives’ *Bhaskar*, Hindi Daily (19th July 2007)

The arrests by Hindu terrorists from Thane and Panvel was followed by a controversial editorial in *Saamna* - edited by Bal Thackeray - in which he praised Hindu organisations involved in the blast, but asked them to make better “hindu” bombs instead of the low intensity bombs to match those made by “Islamic Terrorists” and explode them in “mini-Pakistans” in India. It also added that to save Hindus, Hindutva organisations need to form suicide squads much on the lines of Islamic terror organisations. According to the editorial, “Islamic terrorism” was “flourishing” in the country and to counter it, “Hindu terrorism” of the same power should be created.

It was quite natural that the provocative utterances received condemnation from a broad spectrum of political opinion - with many parties demanding prosecution of Bal Thackeray - but inadvertently or deliberately so it served a dual purpose. On the one hand it helped temporarily deflect the attention of the concerned people from the silent emergence of hindu terrorism and on the other hand it was a tacit acknowledgement of its existence and growth.

Of course looking at the danger it presents before the situation of communal harmony in our

country it is high time that apart from strategising against what is known as *Jihadi* terrorism, we also focus our attention on terrorism which is being unleashed by the majority community namely Hindu terrorism. It is high time that security establishment decides to make a radical rupture from the prevalent understanding vis-a-vis terrorism., polity gathers enough courage to admit its past mistakes and make a fresh beginning and the civil society at large breaks itself free from its community specific prejudices, then only it would be possible to rein in the scourge of terrorism.

Perhaps few words of advice from a senior journalist like Prem Shankar Jha would be opportune at this moment. In a writeup for Outlook (May 26th, 2008) immediately after the Jaipur blasts he said :

..An effective anti-terrorist strategy requires us to look even more deeply into ourselves. The police and security agencies only mirror the prejudices of the majority community and these have become more pronounced in the past two decades. Why has no one in office ever formally expressed regret for the terrible pogroms that have scarred the face of our society—from the '93 Mumbai killings to the '02 Gujarat massacres. Why are Indian courts suddenly handing out death penalties by the dozen, with a predisposition to singling out minorities? Indeed, so great has been the bias and so quixotic the rulings that it has provoked Amnesty International into making a scathing criticism of the Indian judiciary.

India's war against terror has just begun. But security forces cannot fight on their own. If our political leaders and the public don't do their part, we will find ourselves losing.

A balanced approach would enable us to look at facts with an open mind and would also help us look at minor details or minor clues to reach the perpetrators of such acts. Is not it a disturbing thing that while India is witnessing terrorist actions in different parts of the country but most of the cases the security people have not been able to make any headway in the investigations. Forget catching the real perpetrators of such acts they are being blamed for the manner in which they have targeted specific community en masse. There have been countless stories of violations of human rights of

very many people documented by different people/formations.

Take the case of Jaipur blasts, one still remembers the story of one Vijay who was immediately spotted after the Jaipur blasts, who told the police the name of his other (lady) accomplice, who were supposedly responsible for the blasts. Nobody has heard about Vijay after that incident.

Take the case of Malegaon blast. A few victims told the police that a body with a fake beard was recovered from among the dead bodies. Looking at the fact that in Nanded bomb blasts the issue of fake beard had been raised prominently, the security agencies could have finetuned direction of their investigation, but they persisted in the old manner only. And they did not bother to question the hospital people when they flatly denied that any such body was recovered.

It has been around one and half month that the tragic Jaipur blast took place but police does not seem have become any more wiser. According to Times of India (27th June 2008) “..But as days have passed, suspect sketches, clues and leads once touted as vital have proved worthless and loudly proclaimed theories proved thin. Rajasthan police went on a manhunt in the city’s shanties where Bangladeshi immigrants are holed up. They came back empty handed.” It also adds “Investigators are not ready to name HuJI as a definite suspect any more and only say its role and that of some Pakistan based terror outfits have not been ruled out.”

Similar is the case of other bomb explosions. The Hyderabad Mecca Masjid blast is being probed by CBI. It is almost a year now and nothing concrete has emerged.

Would it be proper to assume that the police or the security establishment have finally decided that after any such incident they would keep moving in circles, leave the issue unresolved and would move to a new issue/incident.

As already stated, perhaps the need of the hour is to get out of the stereotyped understanding vis-a-vis terrorism. Perhaps it is necessary that we transcend the habit of stigmatising or criminalising a particular community for all ills of the society. Perhaps it is necessary to ask those

questions which were never asked earlier.

It has been quite some time that many Urdu papers have been raising a point about such terrorist acts which merits consideration. It talks of involvement of Israeli-US agents in all such incidents. Looking at the proximity of the Hindutva lobby with Israel, it is also being said that secret Hindu terror organisations are receiving training in Israel. Apparently these Hindu organisations are sending groups of cadres to Israel for agriculture training. But under the cover of this alibi the Israeli special forces are training the Hindutva cadres on bomb handling and fabrication techniques.

The correspondence between a terrorist action and its likely beneficiaries need also be matched. One thing is sure that the more such terrorist actions take place in India, it would further increase communal polarisation (although it is to the credit of the composite heritage of the country that there have been no communal flareups in any part of the country after such acts, despite provocations from the majoritarian elements) and would help keep India in US ambit. US which has made a mess of itself in mid-east wants to build the US-Israel-India axis to maintain regional hegemony. It frowns upon any regional cooperation of India with its neighbouring countries especially from the mid-east. It is not for nothing that it has consistently opposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline.

Many commentators have written that Jaipur blasts definitely benefitted BJP in Karnatak elections. Can it then be said that some stray Hindu terrorist group at its own level executed the plan so that another member of the Hindutva family reaps its benefits.

VI

Any peace and justice loving person would admit that the question of (non-state) terrorism needs to be revisited urgently. While our concern about the growing network of *Jihadi* terrorism is welcome and we should not slacken our struggle against its criminal, anti-people activities/manifestations, it should be conceded that our approach towards the whole question of terrorism has remained imbalanced or at best partial. One can cite incidents after incidents where the involvement of RSS, Shiv Sena or one of their

affiliated organisations can be clearly demonstrated in acts which are considered 'terrorists actions' in today's parlance. It is a different matter that 'Islamic Terrorists' or 'Maoists' seem to be the usual whipping boys for the media or the intelligence people.

Look at the mental image of terrorism which exists in the minds of the people.

Would it be possible to ask ourselves then what could be said to be the first act of terrorism in independent India ?

Everybody would agree that killing of Mahatma Gandhi by a Hindu fanatic Nathuram Godse constitutes the first terrorist act in independent India. Godse, a Maharashtrian Brahmin, was associated with Hindu Mahasabha at the time of Mahatma's assassination and had his initial forays in the world of politics with the RSS. The world at large knows how the Hindu fanatics had planned the murder of the Mahatma and how the likes of Savarkar and Golwalkar were held responsible for creating the ambience of hate which culminated in the gruesome act.

If somebody poses before you another simple query relating to similar episodes in the sixty plus year trajectory of independent India - then what would be your response. Perhaps you would like to add the death of Indira Gandhi - killed by her Sikh bodyguards, killing of Rajeev Gandhi - who fell to a suicide attack by a Tamil Hindu woman, or for that matter demolition of the 500 year old Babri mosque by the marauders of the RSS-VHP-BJP-Shiv Sena. If one follows the debate further you would like to underline the 1984 riots (actually genocide of Sikhs mainly perpetrated by Hindu lumpen elements instigated by the then ruling Congress Party), emergence of Khalistani terrorists movement or the five year old Gujarat genocide executed with military precision by the RSS and its affiliated organisations.

Compare all these major episodes in the history of Independent India - which encompassed many a terrorist acts within them - with the mental image which conjures up in your mind when one listens to any terrorist act in any part of the country. Does it have any resemblance with the image of a member of the majority community or one of those minority communities? You would

agree that the mental image has features specific to one of the religious minorities in our country.

Question naturally arises why is it that despite their participation in many a gruesome incidents, the role played by them in instigating riots (as noted by many a commissions of enquiry) or their admission before camera about the planning which went in making a genocide happen (courtesy *Tehelka* sting operation) the Hindu fanatic who doubles up as a terrorist has not become a part of our social common sense. (To reemphasise one needs to underline that one is not being soft towards the likes of Lashkar-e-Toiba or Jaish-e-Mohammad, their activities are definitely condemnable but how is that every terrorist act in any part of the country is attributed to them and equally dangerous other outfits belonging to the majority community are allowed to go scotfree.)

Perhaps there is no simple answer to this query. One will have to delve deep into our past, take a dispassionate look at the anti-colonial struggle and also the tragic phase of partition riots. Simultaneously we will have to discern the threads of our present, understand for ourselves the role of different actors as well as the role of ideologies to reach any tentative understanding. It is for everyone to see that in a multireligious, multilingual country like ours the complexities of the situation are itself immense. We find ourselves in a situation where while 'communalism' of the majority community could be construed as 'nationalism', every assertion by the minority community on genuine demands tends to be seen with a 'communal' colour. And it follows from this that 'terrorism' unleashed by the majoritarians is easily disguised under the bursting of 'pent up anger' against the minorities.

Of course despite tremendous odds on our way to reach the kernel of truth, we should not feel disheartened in our journey. It is true that forces of hate and exclusion appear more organised today, but we should not forget the fact that there have been a number of occasions when despite provocations the masses did not get carried away with their agenda. We have on our side the glorious composite heritage of our country - which needs to be replenished - and the many silver linings in the otherwise bleak scenario.

Community Trainings on Composite Heritage & Peace Building

Pervaiz Mohabbat

Cathe Foundation
Lahore, PAKISTAN

Cathe Foundation / HAC Alliance organized three training workshops of 2 days for the organized community Peace groups in districts, Kasur, Lahore and Faisalabad province of Punjab (Pakistan) on 23-24th, 29 & 30th of August and 13-14th of September 2008 respectively through which, 113 community representatives and leaders benefited. Cathe Foundation / HAC Alliance is working in conflict based communities where mixed population of all existing religions live and the minorities face discrimination on the basis of religion. Cathe Foundation / HAC Alliance during the last three years has been engaged to harmonize, organize and train potential community leaders to live in harmony for sustainable development and peace. In order to boost up their spirit of unity and harmony, different trainings have been organized to use Composite Heritage as a strong tool to bring people closer and create opportunities for them to practice communal life.

Objective of these trainings was to practice the intent of Composite Heritage as a major source of bringing people together irrespective of their caste, creed and socio-economic background.

Pervaiz Mohabbat and Basharat Gill were resource persons of these trainings who made participants understand the spirit of the contents, "Composite Heritage, binding forces, dividing forces, cultural and socio-economic factors that help people to come closer and strategies to better community life while reaching peace" etc. using the training manual published by ISD.

At the closing ceremony of the trainings, participants were awarded with certificates by Pervaiz Mohabbat who in his closing remarks said, "Being members of one family, there is always a difference of opinion but it does not mean a prolonged conflict. Most of the cultural values still bind us to think positively, act positively and help others to be positive. When we are not positive ourselves, we can not expect from others to be positive as well. So let us start from ourselves to change the dilemma of conflict by accepting others as they are which the Composite Heritage clearly gives".

Composite Heritage

Chandra Mohan

Cornerstone
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Cornerstone in association with ISD, New Delhi organized a workshop on Composite Heritage from the 4th to 9th February 2008 at Kanyakumari. 24 NGOs from Tamilnadu participated which later as a result led to the formation of Issue Based Peace Building Network called "Uravugal" meaning "Relations". The same group of NGOs came together for a Local Capacity for Peace workshop at Madurai few months later to know that Composite Heritage is a transformation model of Local Capacity for Peace for building common culture and traditions which are non discriminatory in nature and capacitate grass root people in upholding peace through collective action of protection of Common Heritage.

The followings were identified and learnt by the participants in the CH Workshop

1. The people of the country have shared traditions, culture, festivals, music, tales, paintings, crafts, agriculture, fishing methods, common worshipping places, places of sufi and bhakthi traditions, and collective struggles.
2. These shared traditions have been building democracy in this country and are promoting secularism, commonalities, acceptance of one another and harmony.

3. These shared traditions or shared culture, behaviors are called Composite Heritage.
4. There are Composite Heritage which connect the society and there are Composite Heritage which divide the communities such as caste and untouchability.
5. Tamilnadu part of South India has several common traditions which have capacities to bind the people; the compassion, good will, tolerance and different characters of harmony.
6. There are several organizations and movements working in South India particularly in Tamilnadu to build commonalities and promote common struggle for Rights, Right of livelihood and dignity to all human beings. They are working in the area of dalit empowerment, women empowerment and empowerment of the marginalized.
7. These organizations should strive forward to promote collective struggles which are connectors so that not only life is made with dignity but the common traditions which are non discriminatory are preserved.
8. Participants identified several practices of people as Common Heritage and vowed to build these common traditions.
9. Each NGO came up with an action plan to build commonalities on the common traditions identified locally.

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