

The Sangh Parivar : Civil Society's sin of indulgence
(The message and meaning of RSS resolution)

K.Balagopal
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The resolution or whatever the RSS passed in Bangalore asking Muslims to be nice to the Hindus (read: the Sangh Parivar) if they wish to lead secure lives, is nothing new. Many commentators have, to their credit, said that the tone of the resolution is offensive. But it is necessary to record that in various not very inconspicuous corners of the country – such as for instance the city of Mumbai – Muslims have received the message long since, and are living by it.

What we need to confront today is not the increasingly obnoxious tendency of the Sangh Parivar to throw its weight around – after all it takes no great courage to bully people when you are assured the police will look the other way – but the permissive atmosphere in our society that lets them do so. It is not so much the permissiveness of the officialdom that is in any case trained to not make too nice a point of its duties when those in power take to violence, but the permissiveness of Indian society in general which looks upon the Sangh Parivar with the indulgence usually reserved for wronged children.

It is this that needs to be confronted straight on. Too many people in our country believe that Hindus have somehow been wronged by India adopting a secular form of State, and are therefore tolerant of rowdyism indulged in by organisations claiming sanction of Hindus. It is this indulgence more than the active connivance of the police as in Mumbai 1992 and Ahmedabad 2002 that allows the Sangh Parivar to behave like a particularly nasty mafia gang.

Look at the Supreme Court and the Allahabad High Court, both of which have the Ayodhya case on their files. One after the other, leaders of Sangh Parivar outfits have been declaring in loud and clear tones that they do not accept the jurisdiction of the Courts over the dispute, and that even if the judgement goes against them they will go ahead with the temple construction. People have been served contempt notices by self-righteous judiciary for lesser impudence. Even poor Justice (Retd) Krishna Iyer was not spared when he commented on the needless theatricality of a judge of the Kerala High Court in ordering a sick contemnor to be brought on a stretcher to his Court. Arundhati Roy has even been jailed for a few sentences in the affidavit she filed in the Supreme Court. But Acharya Giriraj Kishore and the sundry other sants and mahants? They are yet to see what a contempt notice looks like.

Unless one is to infer that the judges of the Allahabad High Court and the Supreme Court are afraid of the wrath of the millions of Hindu gods, the only possible conclusion is that the Courts are not free from this baseless feeling widely prevalent among educated Indians that Hindus have

some how been wronged by India choosing to be a secular State, and therefore deserve a certain license to indulge in rowdyism and bully the minorities.

This permissive attitude needs to be named and condemned outright. Those who hold this belief, if drawn into an argument, will point out wistfully to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. They dearly wish India had been like those countries. They will not look at muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, Egypt and Turkey which are putting up a valiant fight against the Islamic equivalents of the Sangh Parivar.

One of the things all of us can be proud of in the choices made by our forebears at the time of Independence is that they wanted India to be a democratic, secular country. That has not been for the benefit of the minorities alone, but also of the mass of people on the lower rungs of Hindu society and women. If India had been shaped according to the wistful dreams of Acharya Giriraj Kishore and his friends the self-proclaimed holy men, women of Hindu Society, the dalits and OBCs would probably have been where they were in the forties. At any rate, their aspirations could not have taken the support of the Constitution for granted. After all, are not muslim women the worst sufferers of the decision of some countries to adopt Islamic regimes?

It is possible to point to some real and some imagined instances when secular parties like the Congress colluded with muslim orthodoxy to the detriment of genuinely secular governance. But the time, if ever there was, is long past when such instances could be used to justify the misbehavior of the Sangh Parivar, for that has reached dimensions of brazen criminality.

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