

Onslaught of Fascist Hindutva on Dalits: Impact and Resistance

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The fascist Hindutva sweep in Gujarat election portends the end of India of our dream. Curtains appear already drawn at least in the short term on the aspirations of the working class to better its future. The process of making India a Hindu Rashtra, whatever it means, has already begun. Gujarat has emboldened the Hindutva forces; they are going berserk vomiting their communal venom all over. While some have declared their resolve to bring about Hindu Rashtra within two years, some have gone further in pronouncing India to be already a Hindu Rashtra. The characteristic double speak of the Sangh Pariwar notwithstanding, the communal majoritarianism shall be increasingly relied upon in the forthcoming elections. The polarization of people on communal lines shall be increasingly engineered whatever be the cost. Gujarat, as a symbolic strategy to win elections is bound to be repeated until the fascist forces have complete sway over this land. The greatest gain of Gujarat is total submergence of the parliamentary opposition; delusion of its strategic distinction and incapacitation of its ideological identity.

Gujarat exposed elections as the instrument of exercising rational choice of people against politically powerful criminals. It showed that the rationale of people can itself be communally colored and people could be transformed into an irrational mob in support of crime. Gujarat shattered many fond illusions, illusions of parliamentary democracy, its capacity to offer an alternative through mainstream politics. In Gujarat, it just bore 'soft' Hindutva in response to the established hard variety. The game has completely exposed the ruling class connivance at the ideological level across the political parties. For over a decade on the issue of Globalisation-ordained reforms this connivance could well be seen by people in the ambivalent but indistinct stands of all the political parties. This connivance is seen far more clearly on the issue of Hindutva. Globalisation and Hindutva are not unconnected; they beget each other, they sustain each other. They constitute an ideology of the ruling class. Its effective counter therefore can never come through ruling class contrivance; it can only be constructed through the ideology of the working class.

Dalits are the most important constituents of this class. They are historically placed in an antagonistic contradiction to the ruling class that mostly comes from the upper castes. Dalits are the worst impacted people from the onslaught of the two-headed monster of Hindutva and globalization. Sadly, they are unaware of this fact. Hindutva's villainous character is exposed in relation to the religious minorities today. Its assimilative overtures towards the dalits appear unthreatening to them. None can however hide its basic fascist character and associated revivalist plan. It may be important in the context to recall the basic motive force behind Hindutva and the direct linkages between its genesis and the emancipatory zeal of the dalits. This paper seeks to do that.

In the last Hindutva experiment in Gujarat, the dalits and tribals were used as the foot soldiers of Hindutva brigade in a large number. Many people lamented this unfortunate development but there have been hardly any attempt to understand the causal linkages behind it. Dalits under the shadow of Hindutva is a symptom; there is no use lamenting symptoms. The cause of this drift can be found as much in the peculiarities of the contending politics vis-à-vis the dalits as in the caste ridden civil society that conditions it. While the Hindutva forces are found to strategically co-opt the dalits, the left has effectively denied them space. It is still wont to conduct ostrich like with Brahmanical chanting of the received wisdoms, while the reality passes them by. The paper therefore briefly deals with the evolutionary aspect of the Hindutva-dalit relationship in Gujarat. It also attempts to delineate the impact Hindutva on the dalits and the need to resist it. Lastly, while taking stock of the pathetic state of resistance to Hindutva in the dalit movement it derives the strategic directions in which this resistance can be organized.

The Fascist Context

Maharashtra is the the *Punya Bhoomi* of Hindutva! It is a great paradox that the land which is fondly called as Phuley- Ambedkar's Maharashtra is also a birthplace of the Indian Fascism. Indian fascism is a product of an evil integration of Hindu majoritarian communalism and the fascist programme imported directly from Italy and Germany. The famous Hindu Mahasabhaite BS Munje, an associate of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and a mentor of the RSS founder KS Hedgewar had visited Italy to study fascism and had a personal audience with Mussolini on March 19, 1931 in Palazzo Venezia, the headquarters of the Fascist government. Munje was very much impressed by the Mussolini's fascist organization as he himself writes. He is on record stating that "every aspiring and growing Nation needs such (fascist) organisations." On his return Moonje started to work for the foundation of his military school and for the militant reorganisation of Hindu society in Maharashtra.

The Italian researcher of Indian politics, Marzia Casolari has done pioneer work in tracing the fraternal links between RSS founders on the one hand and Fascism and Nazism on the other.¹ VD Sawarkar, a father figure of aggressive Hindutva, was admittedly inspired by Italian Fascist Giuseppe Mazzini in founding his secret society in 1904 called Abhinav Bharat which as could be seen is just an Indianisation of Mazzini's Young Italy. He also had great liking for Hitler's Nazism and fascism of Mussolini. He had chided Nehru for opposing Fascism and Nazism in India and openly endorsed them before and during the World War II. MS Golwalkar, RSS supremo after Hedgewar, is too well known to be a Hitler-fan to require elaboration. He often eulogized the Hitlerite model of racial cleansing and even adopted it as his own. He unhesitatingly wanted to model his Hindu Rashtra on Hitler's totalitarian and fascist pattern. His book 'We or our Nationhood Defined' is replete with idealization of the Nazi cultural nationalism (the phrase being used lately to describe the strategy of communal programs by the BJP) of Hitler. Savarkar had supported Hitler's anti-Jewish pogroms and on October 14, 1938 had suggested a solution for the Muslim problem in India when he said: "A Nation is

¹ 'Hindutva's Foreign tie-up in the 1930s- Archival Evidence', available at <http://www.ercwilcom.net/~indowindow/sad/godown/secular/fascirss.htm>

formed by a majority living therein. What did the Jews do in Germany? They being in minority were driven out from Germany”. The Sangh Pariwar’s slogan ‘one nation, one culture, one religion, one language’, resonates the Nazi slogan “Ein volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer’ (one people, one state, one leader).

After independence, the RSS spread its tentacles through a host of mass organizations and created a Sangh Pariwar that variously followed the fascist dictums in its virulent anti-communism, organized terror against ‘internal enemies’ (minorities in India in place of Jews in Germany), rumour-mongering and whipping up a mass frenzy. The fascism of Sangh Pariwar is also manifest in its revivalism (revival of Vedic glory like fascist revival of the ancient traditions of the race - of imperial Rome, of ‘Aryan pride”), absolute statism, expansionist foreign policy (Akhand Bharat that includes not only Afghanistan, Pakistan and entire south Asia but also the far fetched lands like Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia etc. in the far East!!), etc. As the Nazi slogan provided motivation for the most inhuman forms of destruction, the Hindutva slogan has already succeeded in symbolically incapacitating Indian state when it demolished Babri Masjid and enacted an unprecedented carnage of Muslims in Gujarat. As in the Fascist Germany, the Sangh Pariwar has effectively created ‘we-ness’ identity based on Hindu tradition and rituals and in corollary created ‘the other’ apparently comprising Muslims, Christians, Communists and those who are in apparent disagreement with them like Ambedkarite Dalits.

Generally, the origin of Hindutva is traced to Savarkar, who had coined the word and provided its definition but at a conceptual level it goes back to Lokmanya Tilak, who not only saw the potential of religious ideology in political mobilization for the first time but effectuated it by starting public celebrations of Ganeshotsava and Shivaji Jayanti, latter as a protector of cows and Brahmans. The basic reason for it was to win back celebration-loving masses of lower castes that had drifted to observe Islamic festivals like Muharram etc. under the Sufi- influence. Tilak had also propounded the intellectually juvenile “Aryan theory of Race” that claimed a white racial stock for upper caste Indians and accepted Vedas as their core literature. Essentially Tilak thus represented the contemporary Chitpawan struggle to revive the lost glory of Brahmanism that had nothing for the lower castes other than their assigned caste rung. The motive force behind the entire Chitpawan struggle against the British, the militancy of which misled many to class it as revolutionary, was provided by the intense desire to win back their lost kingdom called Peshawai, infamous for its degenerate casteist and reactionary character. The humiliation and oppression of the dalits in Peshawai had reached legendary heights. Dalits were not allowed to use public roads before 9 AM and after 3 PM lest their elongated shadows during these hours should pollute any Brahmin walking the road. They were required to tie a pot at their neck to contain their spit and a sweepstick to their behind for erasing their polluting footprints. When we talk of Hindutva in relation to the dalits this revivalist context can never be ignored!

Ideology of Hindutva

The ideology of Hindutva is based on Brahmanical Hinduism and notwithstanding the camouflage, the entire Sangh Pariwar comprising around 180 frontal organizations are engaged in its propagation. These organizations provide continuum of opinions, apparently conflicting, at times even contradictory, and act as a test bed to check peoples' reaction to new ideas. Thus, they become a good source to get a clue as to what cooks in the Priwar. One of the active organizations in the Sangh Pariwar- Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) had proposed Guru Sabha for ruling the country. Their five point plan for the Hindu Rashtra provides clue as to what is the Sangh Pariwar vision for the country. These five points are: 1. bringing about a Brahmanical social order, 2. Majority (poor) should not have voting rights, 3. Reservation shall only be for the elites, 4. Minorities become second class citizens, and 5. Supreme Court shall be a servant of the Guru Sabha.² The goal of the Sangh Pariwar is to form a Hindu Rashtra which may not necessarily be a religious state as likes of Adwani assure us but it will certainly be the state reflecting the essence of Brahmanism in the garb of modernity with imposition of the pre-modern social hierarchies on all sections of society. They have clear-sighted aim to establish Hitler's Aryan rule in India and impose Manu Code.

As one researcher concluded, the Hindutva project has three essential characteristics:

1. It is hegemonic: The Sangh Pariwar imposes its values by force on others. This imposition has manifested in many form such as checkmating the growth and practice of other religions, saffronization of education, insistence that all people should observe Hindu Dharma, its traditions and rituals, etc.
2. It is homogenizing: It aims at national consensus based on a homogenized Hindu identity. The diverse, creative and critical impulses in the Indian traditions are negated. The multi-religious and plural cultural identities and their traditions are not recognized as part of Indian tradition, but promote only one identity- the Hindu identity.
3. It follows the pedagogy of recapturing and releasing the power of symbols and deities that catch the attention of the people. This attempts to show an illusion of solidarity and takes the persons into uncertainty and disorderly situation. The selection and use of these symbols, events and actors are also associated with pedagogic violence.³

These characteristics are of course integral with fascism. The characterization of Sangh Pariwar as Fascist is not of recent origins. Even Nehru in 1947 had written about the RSS that it was "a private army which was proceeding on the strictest Nazi lines"⁴ As a matter of fact, Hindutva could be potentially worse than the familiar variety of Fascism in Italy, Germany and Spain. Unlike these countries, it has well established caste ridden and hierarchy- structured social base and a well proven oppressive ideology at its service. Those who hesitate to characterize Hindutva as fascism are essentially misled by certain differences on account of India's different socio-political context. In the semi-feudal,

² Indian Express, August 20, 2000: 21.

³ Louis, P., *The Emerging Hindutva Force: The Ascent of Hindu Nationalism*, New Delhi, 2000, ISI. 2000, p. 76-77.

⁴ Jafferlot, Christopher, 1996, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, New Delhi: Viking., p. 87.

semi-colonial society of ours fascism also represents the most aggressively anti-poor, anti-dalit and patriarchal sections of landlords and kulaks. It is the intense class hatred of these sections that finds the most ominous expression, inter alia, in the onslaughts of the BJP-sponsored Ranvir Sena in Bihar, and in the central and various state governments' elaborate arrangements to crush the revolutionary representatives of the rural poor.

Although one can thus note the real agenda of Hindutva, an ordinary person is normally confused by the double speak issued to people from various organizations of the Sangh Pariwar. For instance, writing on the purpose of VHP, Pandya says, "The birth of Vishwa Hindu Parishad is for the unity and integrity of the country and the moral regeneration of Hindu society, its survival with self respect and uplift of Harijans, Girijans and other weaker sections."⁵ One Maharashtra Hindutvawadi explains Hindutva as a casteless concept. He emphasizes, "In fact the removal of caste consciousness and caste identities is the *raison d'être* of Hindutva. Since Hindutva incorporates the well-being of every single Hindu the question of any special consideration of any particular caste does not arise."⁶ One has to carefully note that the thrust of the 'castelessness' of the Hindutva even as per its apologists is not on dalit -Brahmin intermarriages to annihilate castes but on 'special consideration' that the dalits have received in the Indian Constitution.

Dalits as Hindutva's Foot Soldiers

The role of dalits as foot soldiers of Hindutva in Gujarat is lamented by many commentators and has saddened the secularists' camp. But there is hardly any attempt to understand the reasons behind them. In 1981 there were caste riots in Gujarat as a part of the anti-reservation movements of the very forces that constitute the core of Hindutva today. In response to the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslims) strategy of Congress which paid it rich dividend during 1970s. These Brahmin-Bania-Patel-Patidar castes thought of exploiting reservation issue to consolidate the high caste votes. The issue of admission to the post graduate (PG) courses in the medical college of some two students belonging to high caste had sparked off the anti-reservation row and culminated into the state wide riots against the dalits. These two students had such a poor academic record that even if they were considered among the scheduled castes, they would not get admission into any medical college. However, they had bought them seats in the then capitation medical colleges in Manipal, Karnataka. Their performance at the degree level also was not any good as to get them PG admission, reservations or no reservation. The case was thus based on entirely undeserving facts. It rather illustrated the contrary point how academically undeserving but high caste rich students could hold the system to ransom. But no one cared to go into them and rhetoric against the reservation for dalits was blown up to such a degree that it exploded into one of the worst riots in the state.

These caste riots would not compare well with the Muslim genocide carried out in Gujarat this year in terms of intensity but they were perhaps more widely spread than even the latter. 18 out of total 19 districts of Gujarat were affected. Complicity of police,

⁵ Pandya, Anand, *Hypocrisy of Secularism: Injustice to Hindus*, Karnavati, VHP Prakashan.

⁶ Patange, Ramesh, *Hindutva and Participation of Castes in Power*. *Journal of Religious Culture* No. 20 (1998) available on <http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/irenik/relkultur20.html>.

a common feature of such riots was to be clearly seen and was also reported. Dalits did not have any organization of any significance and had to face mob fury with spontaneous unity. At many places they fought literal battles but in balance got very bad beating. No non-Dalit organization came out to help them during or after the riots. No newspaper ever carried any commentary condemning the riots or the high caste rioters. Few if at all had bothered to visit the riot torn areas and none produced the fact finding reports. Dalits were left to fend for themselves, materially, physically and emotionally. There was a discussion organized in IIM, Ahmedabad on this issue while the riots were still on. Excepting for one professor who was a well known Marxist-activist in the campus, not a single person from the hall full faculty members and students expressed any anger against the rioters or anguish for their victims. On the contrary, they enthusiastically spoke against the reservations, how they marred the merit and so on. To the dalit students present there, who had consciously decided not to participate in the discussions on this emotional issue, it was so disgusting that many of them felt ashamed of the place which they considered till then as their greatest pride. It was indeed a mind shattering experience. Much of the discussion ran the stereotype of merit the shallowness of which in that den of meritorious merely confirmed the inveterate prejudice of all against the dalits.

In 1985, just four years later, again the caste riots broke out on the same issue of reservations. This time the reservations however did not pertain to the dalits but to the OBCs in accordance to the recommendations Mandal Commission. Paradoxically, the OBCs to whom these reservations were meant appeared unenthusiastic about them but the dalits who stood to gain nothing came out on streets in their full support. The OBCs comprised motley of castes that constituted a social continuum, one end of which reflected dalit-like deprivation while the other end represented the enviable power. The empowerment of these castes during the post independence period through half-heartedly implemented land reforms and subsequent green revolution brought them in contradiction with the dalit labour that on the other hand was becoming variously assertive about their human rights. These OBCs empowered in economic terms took advantage of their fluid middle position in social hierarchy and consolidated themselves as a political block. With their economic and political empowerment they could easily assume a higher rung for themselves in caste ladder and emphasized it by wielding the baton of Brahmanism vis-à-vis the dalits. These castes therefore would not risk their hard earned social stature and compromise their caste dignity by openly supporting or associating with reservations that were so heavily identified with 'inferior' dalits. Resultantly, in the riots ostensibly against the reservations for the OBCs the dalits again received beatings, probably by the OBCs themselves.

Dalits in Gujarat are known for their poorest level of political consciousness. While the Ambedkarian movement has variously catalyzed the consciousness of human rights among the dalits elsewhere, Gujarati dalits chose to be under their upper caste patronage as 'Harijans', the Gandhian epithet which the dalits have violently rejected all over the country. They were however awakened to the harsh reality by the caste riots in 1981. It was for the first time that the dalits in Gujarat, majority of whom had not heard of Ambedkar till then, came out most enthusiastically to celebrate the birth anniversary of

Ambedkar all over the State. The spontaneous awakening however could not be sustained in absence of organization. Dalit Panthers stands to be the only bright spot in organizational history of dalits in Gujarat but it also failed to hold on in face of various odds. How far could dalits bear the beatings of the powerful in such a situation?

By 1986 the ruling castes-class that had battered the dalits twice in the span of four years realized its mistake in the electoral arithmetic and with the emerging strategy of 'Hindutva' extended a hand of friendship to the dalits. It spelt an acceptable proposition as it promised an end to enmity between the dalits and the powerful high caste and also meant a kind of absorption into the high caste fold, thus meeting their latent aspirations of sanskritisation. Besides, the Hindutva forces had prepared the grounds by buying off some dalits in leadership position with allurements of money and promise of power. The transformation manifested in a massive participation of dalits in the Jagannath Yatra that took place the very next year, i.e., 1986. This process went on and when in 1990 Advani's Toyota Yatra passed through Gujarat, it was enthusiastically peopled by the dalits everywhere. Thereafter, dalit participation became an integral feature of every Hindutva demonstration, including the Babri Masjid demolition.

This process of transformation of dalits into the foot soldiers of Hindutva throws up issues that need introspection by the people who lament this phenomenon: Knowing that the dalits are the most resourceless and historically oppressed people, why is it that even in times of crisis they find themselves utterly isolated without any assistance from every corner? Why has the so called progressive section of the society always kept quite when the dalits face open oppression from the powerful high castes people? Why there is no outcry of civil liberty activists when inhuman atrocities are committed on the dalits and when the state machinery plays a role of accomplice? Why there are no fact finding reports on these incidents? Why the atrocities on the dalits do not nibble at the conscience of the progressive analysts? Knowing that they are vulnerable, what proactive steps these people have taken for preventing them to fall prey to allurements of reactionary people? Why do the dalit affairs have to belong to the dalits alone? The sufferings and oppression of the dalits are as though taken for granted! Do these attitudes not reflect the age old caste prejudice against the dalits- the accusations any progressive would hate to accept?

In the wake of shameful genocide that was carried out in Gujarat by the Sangh Pariwar with the active support from the state, an equally ghastly incident took place in Jajjhar district of Haryana in which five hapless dalit youth were lynched to death by the VHP mob in broad day light in front of a police station. But it passed without any significant attention. There were no fact findings except for one by a CPM team. The other was by a Dalit Human Rights Team. There were no demonstrations, no seminars. It reduced to be just a usual dalit affair. Why does the caste violence not attract the same sensitivity as the communal violence, I often wonder? the reasons are not very far to seek. If you take a stand in the communal strife on the side of the minority, you are called secular. But there is no respectable term to describe the one taking cudgel for the dalits in caste strife. One taking sides of the oppressed castes could only be a dalit is the unstated equation that operates in the society. Next they could be denigrated as casteist. The non-dalits openly taking a pro-dalit stand therefore still remain countable on fingers. This apartheid in

praxis is the gift of leftism that considered castes as virtual and only class as real. This Brahmanic folly had annoyed Ambedkar and outcaste entire Ambedkarian movement as casteist. It has already cost this country a probable lost revolution and received in return a sterile future.

There is never an appreciation of the fact that the resource-less dalits always face double disability: they are the poorest of the poor and additionally suffer from disability of the society that is incapable of treating them as equals. They bear the brunt twice and have to carry double burden in any situation. They get beaten in caste riots by the caste Hindus and in the communal riots by other minorities as Hindus. As workers, they pay membership fees to their trade union but also subscribe to their caste associations as the former hardly took up issues that concerned them. This dual obligation always characterized the dalit existence. Howsoever a dalit person tries to submerge his identity while working for larger goals, the society repeatedly slaps it back in his face. Even in the left circles he is not rid of it; the corroding identity still lingers around him nibbling at his comradeship. The dalits can never escape this psychological torment, wherever he goes. Even the 'revolution' starts appearing irrelevant to him because it also becomes merely an article of faith that all his woes would vanish once it happens. This was the precise question that Ambedkar had posed- what is there in the communist programme that assures a dalit that he would be rid of caste discrimination? The validity of the question has never diminished a wee bit but instead of attempting to answer the same through concrete practice (not through the theory alone), the question itself tends to be ignored as invalid.

Impact of Hindutva on the Dalits

With the establishment of the fascist character of Hindutva it almost follows that its impact on the subaltern sections like the dalits has to be negative. However, this directional statement does not communicate how and to what extent it is going to impact the lives of dalits.

1. Demolition of Dalit Social Agenda

The Hindu Rashtra campaign successfully took the social agenda of dalits comprising untouchability, poverty, inequality and discrimination away from the problems of Dalits. Along with it, the concepts of rights and dignity enshrined in the Constitution are being sought to be replaced by the notion of obligations inherent in Brahmanism. They do not relate even remotely with the inhuman condition that the dalits live in or express an iota of remorse for their social oppression that they themselves caused. Their sole ploy is to include them within their 'us'. This 'us' however is a political homogeneity and does not anyway relate with the socio-economic evils the dalits suffer from. To the extent gullible dalit masses fall prey to the allurements of instant Brahmanisation of Hindutva the social agenda of dalits gets eclipsed.

As seen above, despite the propaganda of falsehood and surfeit of double speak, Sangh Pariwar has nowhere indicated how it would achieve eradication of untouchability,

inequality and discrimination. It firstly tends to deny the existence of these evils as though they were the mis-propaganda of the pseudo-secularists. As for castes, their ambivalence could not manage to adequately hide their support to the institution of Varnashramdharma as a 'scientific' institution of division of labour and their agenda of its revivalism. In the myriad of voices issued from hundreds of outfits of Sangh Pariwar one does not find a trace of apology. On the contrary, there is a full throated advocacy of the system externalizing the blame for its evils to 'them'. None other than the Shankaracharya helps us see the fangs of the current proselytizing Hindutva. While providing the solution to the problem of placing the newly convert Hindus, the Shankaracharya of Govardhan Peeth in Puri had stated that 'low-cost' temples should be built for the Dalits and Tribals who convert from Christianity and Islam. He advocated that they should not enter the existing Hindu temples and they should not also marry other Hindus.⁷ How true Ambedkar sounds when he says that Hinduism cannot exist without castes!

2. Subjugation of Dalit Identity

Although originally a movement of revivalist Brahmans, which is potentially antithetical to the dalit interests, Hindutva could never enact its agenda by ignoring the dalits and tribals who numbered approximately one-fourth of the total population of the country. It is neither feasible from the electoral logic of securing political power nor from the fascist imperative of creating mass hysteria by launching street battles. With this realization the shrewd Sangh Pariwar had commenced working among the tribals and successfully Hinduised their tribal identity. The efficacy of this transformation is only realized in the recent Gujarat experiment. Later, they launched skillful co-optation programme for the dalits.

The co-optation process started from the systematic inclusion of the greatest dalit icon - Babasaheb Ambedkar into the Sangh Pariwar icons. They made him *Pratah Smaraniya* and variously propagated as though he was a staunch Hindutvawadi. They started celebrating his birth anniversaries, organizing festivals and seminars; publishing books with systematic vision of saffronizing him. Although, they chose the day of his death anniversary for their infamous demolition of the Babri Masjid, they have been celebrating the demolition day with the images of Ram and Ambedkar placed alongside. For gullible dalit masses reared on symbolism by the degenerate post-Ambedkar dalit leadership, the cooptation of Ambedkar meant change in attitude of the Brahmin camp. If Ambedkar symbolized concern for dalits, Sangh Pariwar did not lack in resources in making exhibitionist demonstration of this concern. It helped certain eager dalit elites to cross over to the resource rich Sangh Pariwar. Although, dalit masses did not follow these opportunist dalit elites it certainly helped in softening the anti-dalit image of the Sangh Pariwar and at the same time blurring the dalit identity.

It was relatively easier to win over the non-Ambedkarite dalits because they had not changed their Hindu identity yet. This was accomplished through the communal campaign carried out during the Rathyatras, mass mobilizations on Mandir issue, and

⁷ (Indian Express, 9 June, 2000).

later enacting riots. Hindutva campaign admittedly does not recognize dalit- Adivasi identities and as a part of the same programme imposes the Brahminical culture and value systems on them. They have carried out conscious programmes for this acculturation. The process was also variously incentivized by associating material benefits to the poor dalit masses. For example, the All Hindu Kamandal project is today promoted to woo the Dalits to join Bajrang Dal shakhas for arms training on salaries of Rs.5, 000 to 10,000 per month. In the Adivasi belt, every hamlet has a couple of youth activists on the role of the Sangh Pariwar who gets Rs. 1,500 to 4,000 per month. Barring the staunch Ambedkarite mass, therefore one finds the majority of dalit people falling prey to this allurements. The very success of the Gujarat laboratory is largely attributed to the fact that Sangh Pariwar could successfully demolish the dalit identity and implant the Hindutva identity among the dalits.

3. Suppression of Culture

Culture is the most potent weapon in the hands of fascism to subjugate masses. Fascism constructs this culture as a blend of the old traditions, norms and values of the ruling class (caste/ race) that were getting eclipsed by the progressive culture and the artifacts of modernity required for their luxurious living as the majoritarian or national culture and imposes it on all 'others'. This totalitarian and fascist plan comes out clear in Golwalkar's words: "There are only two courses open to the foreign elements (sic), either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities' problem. That is the only logical and correct solution. -- --From this stand point, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt."⁸ Over the last decade the Hindutva forces have severally demonstrated what Golwalkar meant.

As a matter of fact there is nothing like Hindu culture. As all historians know, Hindu is an amorphous identity (Hindu means black in Persian) for the people living beyond the river Sindhu given by the ancient Arabs. What Golwalkar and his cohorts mean by the Hindu culture is a culture of Brahmans that may be extendible to the upper castes, but can never be assumed as the culture of the lower labouring castes under Shudras and much so of the dalits and tribals who were admittedly beyond their varna framework. Despite the Brahmanic hegemony for several centuries, these people have preserved their distinct gods, traditions, norms, values, language etc. – in fact every element of culture. To

⁸ Golwalkar, M.S., *'We or Our Nationhood Ddined'*, Bharat Prakashan: 1, Fourth Edition, 1947.

assume this distinction away is to deny their existence. To hegemonize their culture is forcible submergence of their identity; suppression of their aspiration, subjugation of their spirit and imposition of slavery.

The subjugation of dalit culture is happening in every possible way under the influence of Hindutva. The powerful medium of TV has become a major instrument. Apart from the news channels, the TV beams either the programmes made abroad with a tinge of imperialist culture or Indian soap operas with outright religious and reactionary contents. None of the themes running through these soap operas have even a remotest connection with real problems of people. With their characteristic ubiquity they have overtaken the earlier medium of cinema that fantasized life within a limited time and space for a limited number of people. The impact of TV is indeed devastating. Some sociologists have pointed out that the mythological serials of Ramayana and Mahabharat have significantly contributed in building the Hindutva wave of the Sangh Pariwar. Over the time, exclusive channels have come to dish out anachronistic spiritual stuff in support of Hindutva. TV has become a main medium to propagate consumerist culture through advertisements and even through the serials that portray life of ultra rich and their relationships. The print media also is visibly transformed in its form as well as contents. Newspapers have adopted a tabloid form of the western papers that are known to dish out shallow stuff. In contents, the degeneration is much worse. A significant part of it carries the lighter stuff like cinema gossip, life style concerns of the uppies; astrology and spiritual columns. Even the news being reported has the cultural bias.

At the civil society level, there is a renewed zeal in promotion of religious melas like Kumbh Melas, Vaishno Devis, Santoshi Matas, etc. and the old and the newly invented festivals. Some of them are being planted to divert people from the secular engagements. For example, for some years now there has been visible spate of public Satyanarayan Pujas performed on the republic day in Mumbai. There have of course been rath yatras and kar sevas that galvanize vast masses of gullible people and intoxicate them with Hindutva. The Sangh Pariwar had recognized early the efficacy of education in establishing its cultural hegemony. They have been running thousands of schools that have been silently acculturating people to their creed. Their Vanvasi schools in the tribal areas well exemplified the cultural conversion in the recent Gujarat experiment. Now, having had the reigns of power in their hands, they have been emboldened to saffronize entire school syllabi.

4. Dalit as Cannon Fodder of the Hindutva

Hindutva's core rests on the upper caste /class rich farmers; the industrialist and multiple segments of middle classes that constitute bureaucrats, professionals, traders, etc. latched on to the big capital. These are not the people who could themselves execute socio-economic and political agenda of dominance. Fascism enforces its writ through physical force which typically requires its foot soldiers from the lower strata. In the name of "Hindu Unity" the dalits and tribals are being brainwashed and made to perform this role. Whether, it is Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 or the various riots that resulted in its wake or the recent Gujarat communal carnage, Sangh Pariwar agenda was invariably

carried out through its foot soldiers who came from the dalits, tribals and other lower Shudra castes.

Many commentators lamented significant participation of dalits and tribals in the state-supported pogrom of Muslims in Gujarat. It surprised many because not in the very distant past, the dalits were brutally battered by these very upper caste/class people in the reservations riots there. Suddenly, the rising Hindutva forces realized their folly and started befriending the dalits under the larger alliance of all Hindus. The peculiar state of Gujarati dalits, characterized by the long history of being under the Gandhian patronage, absence of Ambedkarian movement except for a brief spell of Dalit Panthers, frustration that befell through its collapse, increasing crisis on account of job losses, absence of organizational strength and strong ambience of religious organizations impelled the dalits to accept the Sanskritisation overtures and get onto the bandwagon of Hindutva. Their settings that brought them in competition with the similarly placed Muslims in eking out their livelihood helped them moreover to fall prey to the venomous logic of the Hindutva forces that Muslims were 'the other'. They were used by the Hindutva forces in large numbers to carry out the pogrom of Muslims in Gujarat and naturally suffered disproportionately in terms of lives as well as property. They hardly realized that they were used as the cannon fodder in the Hindutva project.

5. Specter of slavery

It is a tactical need of Hindutva that the dalits are included in their 'us' against 'the other' in Muslims and Christians. However, it is inconceivable that the contradictions between the dalits and the upper caste/ class Hindus that constitute the core of Hindutva can be glossed over merely through the emotional slogans of Hindu unity. The need of polarization into the 'us' and 'they' is prompted by the process of gaining political power within the prevailing political framework. Once, this objective is accomplished, the agenda could shift to the next higher level to enforce strict hierarchical social structure, not quite strictly one hopes as based on birth as ordained in the varnashram dharma but one that is externally based on secular considerations but which internally corresponds to the age old caste lines. The simple dictum that is passed in the name of globalization that only the select few should have access to the higher education, as the Ambani- Birla framework for the reforms in education proposed, will effectively exclude all the dalits from the realm of higher education and ensure confirmation to Manu's dictum without actually prescribing so.

6. Increasing Atrocities

With increasing revivalist fervor, the contradictions between the dalits and the non-dalits are bound to increase. The atrocities are but the manifestation of these contradictions, the recent statistics expectedly shows galloping rise in all types of atrocities on the dalits during the decade of 90s that could be identified with the rising onslaught of Hindutva as compared to those during the previous decade.

The recent Jajjhar incident of gruesome killing of five Dalit men in Haryana by a VHP-led mob is a chilling comment on the plight of all marginalized groups in India today, faced with the horror of Hindutva terror. The killing was publicly celebrated by VHP as *Ravan Dahan* and none other than its chief- Giriraj Kishor justified it saying that the cow was more valuable than the lives of those dalits. The incident is a brutal reminder that it is not just Muslims or Christians alone who are threatened with the rapid rise of fascist Hindutva. Since Hindutva is the ideology of contemporary Indian fascism, the modern form of ancient Brahminism, all historical victims of the Brahminical religion and the caste order are seen as legitimate targets. One of the propellants of Hindutva in reality is the deep-seated fear of the growing empowerment of the Dalits, tribals and backward castes, victims of upper caste rule for centuries. As in the still-continuing violence in Gujarat, Hindutva groups have used Dalits and tribals to target Muslims, while at the same time, as the Haryana killings show, they have not hesitated from slaying them in cold blood, indicating to them to them the place that they must accept, on pain of death, in the ideal Hindu dispensation.

State of Resistance

Unfortunately there is no resistance to this fascist onslaught to be seen from the dalits. For many years now, the real issues of peoples' lives have been taboo in the dalit politics that has been getting propelled by the emotional outburst of its self seeking leaders. Whereas, this virtualization of the dalit issues has fragmented the dalit movement into innumerable outfits, it also has given rise to a phenomenon known as BSP that enthroned a dalit lady in one of the casteist and conservative states of India. The numerous outfits literally operate as petty shops dealing in dalit interests in the political super bazaar of India. BSP relatively distinguished itself in terms of its vision (it had certainly a longer term vision than most others), organization structure (BSP has essentially emulated the organization model of the RSS), acute pragmatism indistinguishable from crass opportunism (it has elevated opportunism to an ideological level in the name of promoting dalit interests), and novelty of discourse (it talked of pitting all dalits, tribals, religious minorities, and backward castes against the upper castes comprising Brahman, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas). It created a lot of hope among the dalits. But eventually inevitable happened; this phenomenon too betrayed the rising dalit hope by coming in full support of Hindutva. Mayawati's shameful canvassing in Gujarat in support of murderous Modi was the last straw on the back of the hopeful dalit camel.

Some progressive groups among dalits strove to work among dalits in the wake of Gujarat carnage but they could not even scratch the Hindutva imprint on the minds of dalits. Despite varied efforts of this kind and condemnation that flowed through media, there has not been any awakening among Gujarati dalits as the landslide victory of Hindutva in the recent state election revealed. Even the Jajjhar incident could not shake the dalit organizations beyond the religious conversions that were organized by one newly created outfit under the leadership of Udit Raj. It remains almost the sole outfit that took a firm anti-Hindutva stand during the Gujarat carnage. Ostensibly, Udit Raj has followed the low risk, high return model of Kanshiram so far. He distinguished himself in two respect, one, his emphasis on Buddhism as the path shown by Babasaheb Ambedkar

and two, his relatively radical stand on the contemporary issues. Although, he has taken the inevitable step of launching a political party – Swaraj Party (sic) recently, and set himself to plunge into the whirlpool of electoral politics, it must be said to his credit that he stood alone in articulating resistance to Hindutva.

While this apathetic attitude of dalit movement is a reality, it would be wrong to single it out on that count. As a matter of fact there is almost no resistance to Hindutva in the country from any corner. The activity of resistance is only confined to certain progressive intellectuals and the leftist organizations. But even they could not articulate their resistance creatively enough to appeal to the masses of common people. This disturbing apathy perhaps characterizes the current phase of the history. The forces of imperialist globalization have successfully pushed people into their shells to be autonomous individuals who are too engrossed to get over the crisis of living to imagine the possibility of their long term salvation. The cultural onslaught of globalization moreover has been systematically disorienting their minds from such possibilities and miring them into incessant consumption. It is interesting to note that the spread of globalization is associated with the rise of religious fundamentalism, rightist and fascist movements all over. Even the rise of Hindutva can well be correlated with the process of liberalization initiated after the second-coming of Indira Gandhi through her successor -Rajiv Gandhi to the formal adoption and implementation of these policies after 1991. This strong correlation cannot be ignored when one is confronted with the horrific reality of the absolute fascist rule.

In Conclusion

In absence of any movement on ground to resist Hindutva, only certain directions for future can be indicated:

1. Hindutva is a mass movement and can only be effectively countered by a similar political mass movement. The masses for this movement can be mobilized from the working strata of the dalits, tribals, and the religious minorities like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs etc. and particularly their womenfolk who have potential contradiction of some kind or the other with Hindutva. After the assaults on Christians in Chhota Udepur and Panchmahal districts in Gujarat last year and a full-fledged carnage of Muslims carried out there early this year, dialogues have been started among the people from these strata for coming together but there is not much of progress so far. Though this unity of all the oppressed masses may sound lofty, axiomatic and therefore somewhat clichéd, there is no other alternative than trying the hitherto unachieved. The difficulties are immense but by no means insurmountable. If the problem is approached with creativity, ingenuity and with mutual empathy the difficulties shall be certainly overcome. In face of impending calamity the people do come out with such novel approaches.
2. Hindutva is not a religious movement. It is essentially a political movement and can therefore be effectively resisted by only a mass political movement. Some people, both Hindus as well as Muslims, tend to diagnose the religious mispropaganda being responsible for rousing communal passions in people. Consequently, their

prescription leads to launching a movement to spread correct teachings and tenets of the respective religions. Unfortunately, this is wrong. Because, religion is an anachronistic institution that is incapable of confirming to modern rationality. Contrary to popular belief, nothing sane can come out of religious discourse; it can only apply to and reinforce the baser things. The religious conversions of dalits that have taken place in protest of Hindutva may therefore be said to be misdirected. The experience of the great conversion movement of Dr. Ambedkar may corroborate that even the relatively most rational religion like Buddhism has failed to radicalize the converts or bring any significant change into their lives. There is a similar attempt to detach the majority Shudra castes from Hindutva fold through imparting them a new religious identity in Maharashtra. Although started with noble aim, one apprehends that it might miss wood for trees. Unless it articulates concrete anti-Hindutva/ anti-globalization political agenda out of this mass mobilization its success will remain doubtful.

3. Hindutva is a fascist movement. As Dimitrov pointed out, "Fascism acts in the interests of extreme imperialists but presents itself to the masses in the guise of a wronged nation and appeals to outraged "national sentiments". Fascism relies on falsehood because truth will never favour it. The masses need to be educated on these characteristic so that they can guard themselves against the fascist propaganda of the Sangh Pariwar. The core of Hindu fascism rests on the upper caste /class rich farmers; the industrialist, and multiple segments of middle classes comprising bureaucrats, professionals, traders, etc. latched on to the big capital. It is in service of the imperialists through its policies of globalization. While on one side they kept people in state of confusion with their Swadeshi rhetoric, on the other side they have accelerated the globalization process to the benefit of imperialists. It therefore follows that the movement against Hindutva shall have to be based on the unity of the lower classes /castes potentially in contradiction with not only the Hindutva but also the imperialist forces.
4. Hindutva and globalization are complementary and mutually sustaining. Neoliberalism that provides the philosophical base for imperialist globalization has given rise to fundamentalist and fascist forces world over through atomization of individual and autonomizing its enterprise in the 'market' sans any moral precepts. It is not incidental that the rise of Hindutva (even including the Congress variety followed after the second coming of Indira Gandhi through Narasimharao) has been closely correlated to the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization followed by the government. The BJP with two-MP strength in the Parliament in 1984 gets catapulted to power with 182 MPs in 1999 during this precise period. Without globalization Hindutva cannot survive in its aggressive form. Therefore the resistance to Hindutva must necessarily target the forces of globalization also as its enemy.
5. Hindutva is the ideology of the ruling class and therefore it is futile to expect any alternative out of the mainstream politics. Fascism always uses the prevailing parliamentary democratic framework to secure power and once it is done scraps it. Even during its use fascism does not follow the parliamentary democratic norms to mobilize votes. It relies on fighting on street to create mass frenzy. Rath Yatras, Mandir movement and communal riots are but the examples of it. Bereft with the

ideological weaponry, the conventional parliamentary parties can never match the aggressive strategies of fascism and rather get dragged along its trail. Therefore, the effective counter to fascism can never be articulated through conventional parliamentary medium. The mass movement against fascism has to proactively oppose fascism on street. These street battles may orient and shape up parliamentary processes but the latter cannot be relied as primary counter.

6. While Hindutva could be resisted by people coming on streets, its alley- imperialism brings in state in its support. The resistance to Hindutva has to necessarily take into account this composite force. It will necessitate a viable defensive strategy to the military offensive of imperialism. Exact methods to create this defensive apparatus will depend on the state of mass organization, gravity of situation and available resources.
7. The root cause for Hindutva lies in the weakness of leftism in this country. The leftist forces have consistently refused to learn through their failure through history. Despite the eight decades of self criticism they are yet to come to terms with reality of this land that lies in and around caste. Their doctrinaire approach has variously reflected essence of Brahmanism, which is antithetical to the cause they intend to espouse. In the semi feudal, semi colonial country, the contradictions between peasantry and land owning gentry are distorted by fault lines of caste. Its manifest form is always dalits vs. all others as the pattern of atrocities on dalits reveal. It is imperative for the leftist forces therefore to have a conscious programme to combat caste integrated within the agenda of class struggle. Rather the class struggle in India must necessarily embed caste struggle. They have to come clearly in support of dalits against all upper castes without any vacillations. That alone can win them dalit confidence. And that alone shall decide the fate of the anti-Hindutva struggle.