

This issue of the *Marxist* coincides with the 30th anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. This was a development that ushered the dynamics of the metamorphosis of our secular democratic Constitutional Republic into the RSS fascistic project of 'Hindu Rashtra', which is the complete negation of and the antithesis of Indian people's epic struggle for freedom and the consequent Indian State that was established under the Indian Constitution.

Such a metamorphosis is the product of nearly a century-long battle between contenting political/ideological/social visions that emerged during the freedom movement.

A continuous battle between three visions emerged on what must be the political, social, economic, cultural character of the independent state of India. Recognising the Indian reality of rich plurality and diversity, both the Congress and the Communists concluded that the unity of India, as a country and of its people, can be consolidated only when the threads of commonality amongst this rich diversity are strengthened and every aspect of this plurality – linguistic, ethnic, religious, cultural etc. – is respected and treated on the basis of equality. This recognised the fact that any effort to impose uniformity upon this diversity will only lead to a social implosion.

On the basis of this understanding, the mainstream Congress vision had articulated that independent India should be a secular democratic Republic. The Communist vision, while concurring with this objective, went further to envision that in order to consolidate the secular, democratic Republic, the political freedom of the country must be extended to achieve the socio-economic freedom of every individual, possible only under socialism.

Antagonistic to both these was the third vision which argued that the character of independent India should be determined by the religious affiliations of its people. This vision had a twin expression – the Muslim League championing an 'Islamic State' and the RSS championing a 'Hindu Rashtra'. The former succeeded with the unfortunate partition of the country, admirably engineered, aided and abetted by the British colonial rulers, with all its consequences that continue to fester tensions and prejudices to date. The latter, having failed to achieve their objective at the time of independence, continued with their efforts to transform modern India into their project of a rabidly intolerant fascistic 'Hindu Rashtra'. In a sense, the ideological battles and the political conflicts in contemporary India are a continuation of the battle between these three visions.

These three decades since the demolition of the Babri Masjid have seen the consolidation of the fascistic RSS project. This is reaching a point, unless halted by people's popular struggle, of the destruction of the foundational pillars of the Indian Constitution – secular democracy, economic sovereignty, social justice and federalism – fundamental requirements to establish the RSS fascistic project. Central to the destruction of these basic features of our Constitution is the destruction of the independent Constitutional institutions beginning with the Parliament, the judiciary, the Election Commission, the CBI, ED and all other institutions created to function as checks and balances to uphold and strengthen the secular democratic Republic.

Central to the establishment of rabid rightwing fascistic regimes is the erection of a surveillance State and the creation of an education system that is based on promoting irrationality and destroying reason. Irrationalism concludes that rational knowledge of the entire reality can never be comprehended. This entire reality can only be grasped with 'faith' or 'intuition' considered

a higher form of knowledge. Hindutva nationalism feeds people with such blind faith and, thus, feeds itself to promote its twin objectives of furthering the neo-liberal agenda and transforming India into an exclusivist and rabidly intolerant fascistic State.

Thus, a 'false consciousness' of Hindutva nationalism is created by ensuring that objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. By controlling the media and social media propagating emotional appeals and the building of a personality cult continuously bombard the people bolstering the creation of this 'false consciousness' based on campaigns of poisonous hatred and violence.

By reducing India as a subordinate ally of imperialism led by the USA and eagerly pursuing the consolidation of US imperialist global hegemony, this fascistic project seeks to elicit support for its domestic agenda by promoting brazen crony capitalism, looting India's national assets. This fascistic project heaps growing miseries on the vast majority of the people astronomically heightening income and wealth inequalities. Labour laws and democratic rights of the working people to organise themselves in struggles are severely curtailed. All opposition and expression of dissent against the government is severely repressed. In the process, this fascistic project seeks the sanction of imperialism, on the one hand, and the Indian ruling classes led by India's big bourgeoisie, on the other.

The halting of this fascistic juggernaut urgently requires the creation of a counter-hegemony over the society. This counter-hegemony must be based on strengthening the struggles against this fascistic project in a holistic way in the social, political, ideological, economic and cultural spheres. The

struggles of the working people against the policies of class exploitation must be combined with this holistic struggle against Hindutva.

These decades have brought this task before the Indian people with great urgency. The strength of people's struggles based on larger unity like those that which came together in our epic freedom struggles needs to be forged to save the secular democratic India that, *We, the people* established 75 years ago.

Subhashini Ali traces the history of the creation of the dispute of Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi, particularly since the events of the night of December 22, 1949. She discusses elements of the ongoing battle between the proponents of secular democratic India and the propagators of Hindutva. The Hindutva project, in its social vision, is nothing but a throw back to *manuvadi* social order whose hallmark is inhuman caste-based social oppression and the complete relegation of women to inferior status. The hatred against the religious minorities is accompanied with establishing this *manuvadi* project in the social order.

Venkatesh Ramakrishnan gives us an account of his experiences when he was there in Ayodhya covering the events in December 1992 and provides an eye witness account of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. He discusses how the transformation of secular democratic India into the fascistic Hindutva State is 'work in progress' with all its ups and downs that have been going on for a century with this demolition being the landmark event for advancing the social and political hegemony of Hindutva.

Late **Aijaz Ahmad** had been a regular contributor to the *Marxist* for decades. As a homage and more of a tribute, we are carrying extracts from a speech he delivered soon after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 that was published in July/August 1993. Here, he argues that communalism is certainly the cutting edge for the fascist project as a whole but other violences - of caste, class and gender - are always there to *form* the kind of authoritarian personality upon which the fascist project eventually rests.

Finally, in the **Document** section, we reproduce the editorials carried by *People's Democracy* as well as from national dailies. How much has changed in these three decades can be gauged by reading the mainstream national daily editorials, then and now. The fact of using such language and articulating such secular democratic values as they could do three decades ago and not in today's times is itself a reflection of the ongoing metamorphosis of India.