



Stop this Drama of Reaffirmation
Speech in Rajya Sabha
by Sitaram Yechury

Towards a Rational and Democratic India
Speech in Lok Sabha
by Md. Salim

Introduction

The CPI(M) is bringing out a series of six booklets entitled RSS Against India.

The booklets contain essays written by eminent intellectuals, political leaders and activists which have been grouped together to bring out different aspects of the retrograde and divisive role the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has played throughout its history and continues to do at present.

They include (1) The RSS role in India's freedom movement and its communal role in independent India (2) the RSS concept of Hindu Rashtra and its approach to caste, gender and adivasis (3) The "beef" politics of the RSS (4) the RSS understanding of neo-liberal economic policies and of the working classes (5) the RSS distortion of Science and History (6) speeches of General Secretary Sitaram Yechury and Polit Bureau member Md. Salim in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha respectively during the debate in Parliament in November 2015, on "Constitution Day" and on "Growing Intolerance."

Several of the essays in these booklets quote from the published writings of RSS founders particularly from the writings of M.S.Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghchalah of the RSS. It may be asked what relevance do these writings have to an analysis of contemporary activities of the RSS. These are texts which remain the fountainhead of RSS ideology, and continue to determine its world view and practice. Three quarters of a century may have passed since Golwalkar's *We—or our Nationhood Defined* and a *Bunch of Thoughts* were written, but their toxic concepts have been articulated by RSS Chiefs throughout

this period including the present RSS Chief, Mohan Bhagwat's statement that Hindustan is for Hindus. In all these years not in a single statement, writing or text in any of the publications of the RSS or its political wing the BJP has there been even a semblance of a distancing, leave alone a rejection, of any of the formulations made by RSS founders. On the contrary, the present Prime Minister has written a biographical profile of Golwalkar in his book "Jyotipunj" describing Golwalkar as one of his inspirations. Therefore the quotations used in the booklets to illustrate RSS ideology, some repeated, are relevant to an understanding of the "core" of this organization, which has been inspired by videshi fascists--Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Blackshirts.

The question may also be raised that are these exposures of the RSS at all necessary and do they not inadvertently enhance its importance? The RSS, as many of the essays in these booklets show, appeals to the lowest denominator in human behavior in inciting violence against "the other." In doing so it seeks to exploit religious feelings and utilises traditions and beliefs based on social and gender inequalities that still influence a substantial section of our people. Hindutva as preached by the RSS is a political concept coined by V.D.Savarkar, far from the world of ordinary Hindu believers. Those fighting against the utilization of religion for political ends need to be conscious of the dimensions of the battle.

Religion as a political tool is used by fundamentalist forces of various hues and in the name of various religious faiths. The role of Muslim fundamentalist forces who are increasing their reach among sections of Muslim youth are a matter of deep concern and they need to be isolated and fought back.

These forces are encouraged by majoritarian Hindu fundamentalists who falsely claim to represent the nation. These apparently opposing forces strengthen each other and divert attention from the basic problems of the people.

With the advent of the BJP Government led by Narendra Modi at the centre, the RSS not only has free access to the levers of power, which it also in large measure enjoyed during Atal Behari Vajpayee's time, but it actually is in a position of control in this Government. When a roll call

of Ministers is taken for the presentation of a report card to RSS leaders, it is clear who is calling the shots. It is therefore necessary to expose the RSS, its links to the Government and the extra constitutional power it wields today.

Further, Narendra Modi was a pracharak, a full time worker of the RSS owing total allegiance to its ideology, its theories and practice. For a pracharak to become the Prime Minister of India is a big step forward in the RSS project. Gujarat 2002 was a result as well as an experiment of the Hindu rashtra project under his leadership in which he was fully backed by the RSS. In 2013-2014, when differences arose in the BJP as to who should lead the party's bid for power in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it was the RSS which not only backed Modi's candidature but directly intervened to silence the opposition of L.K.Advani and other senior leaders. The Prime Minister's refusal to take any action against those who are his colleagues in the RSS and are now in positions of power in the BJP in spite of their repeated communally provocative actions and statements is a reflection of his loyalty to the RSS. For India's Prime Minister it is RSS first.

It is thus necessary to provide the facts, the deeds and the analysis of what the RSS actually represents. We hope this series will be useful in the struggle to safeguard and strengthen the principles of secularism, democracy and equality.

On behalf of the central publications team we express our gratitude to the authors of these essays, and to the comrades and friends of the Party who helped bring out this series. We also thank the cartoonists for permission to use their work.

Brinda Karat

Polit Bureau Member

Stop this Drama of Reaffirmation

Speech in Rajya Sabha by Sitaram Yechury

Even before this session was announced, our Party had demanded that Dr Ambedkar's 125th birthday should merit a special session, so that some new laws, which we think are important, can be implemented. The attacks on dalits should be looked at. This Government's statistics itself, on the dalits, since 2014, ever since this Government has come to power, show that atrocities on them have gone up by 19 percent. In 2015, we have seen how in places like Faridabad and Ahmednagar, atrocities have been committed against dalits.

The question here is that we need to strengthen laws, introduce new ones and we had therefore proposed 10 new laws. Given that the changes that have taken place in the economy, we had wanted reservations now in the private sector, in education. At least there should be a debate on that and a law passed. We had wanted that SC/ST Sub-Plan should get statutory status, we wanted reservation extended to professional and higher education institutions. We wanted a National Mission for Eradication of Untouchability. The situation of safai karamcharis in Parliament itself is also known. So we need a new law to fix all this.

So, what we wanted was enactments of all the legislations on the basis of which we can carry forward the vision of social justice that Dr Ambedkar stood for.

Now, instead, we have a situation where the Government has come

forward saying that we reaffirm our faith in the Constitution. Where is the question of reaffirming? All of us are here on an oath on this Constitution. What is this question of now saying, "We will reaffirm"? And what is this Constitution Day?

Go through the history. On November 26, this Constitution was signed by the President of the Constituent Assembly. It was voted upon and the draft was adopted and in the draft you have said explicitly 'that on the 26th of January India shall be a Republic in 1950 when this draft will turn into a Constitution and we shall enact.' Can this government answer? I want the leader of the house, to tell us what law governed India from November 26, 1949 to January 26, 1950? Was it this Constitution? Is it known? The law that governed India during those two months after you adopted this Constitution was India Independence Act, 1947 moved by the British Prime Minister Attlee in the House of Commons in London. What is this Constitution then? You were under the British law for these two months. You adopted and enacted this Constitution on January 26. Now, what is this new thing that you are finding now 65 years later on the Constitution Foundation Day? When Dr Ambedkar himself says that on January 26 we are enacting this Constitution and we shall be a Republic, what is this November 26? Yes, that day the Constituent Assembly adopted this draft, but that was not the Indian Constitution yet. That was not the law of our land yet. It became the law of the land on January 26, 1950. You want some day or the other to find yourself so that you can celebrate one more event. The Constituent Assembly met again on January 24-25, 1950. The Jana Gana Mana as the National Anthem was adopted on January 24 and on the 24th and 25th, all members of the Constituent Assembly signed this Constitution and on November 26 only 15 out of the 395 clauses in our Constitution came into operation. January 26, 1950 was when the entire Constitution came into operation.

So, what is this new item that we have? It is a new item now in the Indian Constitution. What are we observing? I am sorry, but I think the entire, what in Hindi we call, *garima* of this House, of the Parliament is being undermined by these sorts of flippant events that are coming in. Yes, for November 26 we have the highest respect for Dr Ambedkar and for everybody else. Does this Government today know that Constituent Assembly began its work on a Resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru called the 'Objectives Resolution'? Does this Government know that out of the eleven sittings of the Constituent Assembly's six of the sittings were devoted

to the 'Objectives Resolution' and not to this draft? A majority of the discussions in the Constituent Assembly was in the objectives put forward by Jawaharlal Nehru. That is our history. Yes, the victor always scripts the history. But, here, the victor is also trying to change the past history! Now, this is the history we have inherited. Like the Leader of the House, I was also born after Independence. I think, many of us are born after independence. And, for all of us, this is inherited history; this is our legacy. You cannot now tamper with that history and tell us a new history! Now, why this Constitution Day? I can only come to the conclusion that this is an attempt to try and worm their way into the national movement when they had no role to play at all. This is the way they want to worm themselves into the national movement and how they want to worm themselves I want to know.

How this order is given? It is a gazette notification saying that 'it has been decided to celebrate November 26 every year as the Constitution Day.' It is a gazette notification. If you want I will place it on the table of the house. It is notification in the Indian gazette, dated November 19. It is issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Does the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment decide a national day to be observed every year?

But, I just want to know how gazette notification comes on 19th and the HRD ministry issues a circular to schools on November 10 saying 'observe 26th November as the Constitution Day.' This is a gazette issued on 19th. What is happening? You have event management. You want to worm yourself into the national movement when you had no role. Here, I wish to put it on record the fact that often we have heard and we will hear also, I am sure, in the course of this discussion, the role of communists, etc., in the freedom struggle. That is an old charge.

We will and have always been paying respects to Dr B.R. Ambedkar. But do tell me, that why did you try and hunt for this new 'event'? We have no objections, but I am just giving the context for all this. What we are trying to say is that you did not have a role in the freedom movement. This is a way to worm yourself into it.

On Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, whom you are mentioning. You have raised many questions, which I am answering. Here, you have asked about the past of communists. I wish to read out two quotes, about your role and

that of the communists.

The British Bombay Home Department, in 1942, during the Quit India Movement observed, "The Sangh has scrupulously kept it self within the law and in particular has refrained from taking part in the disturbances that broke out in August, 1942." This is the record of the British government.

In 1992, there was a special session at midnight in central hall, to mark 50 years of the Quit India Movement in 1942. In that session, President Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma said this about communists, which is available on record here. I quote:

"After large scale strikes in mills in Kanpur, Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad, a despatch from Delhi dated September 5, 1942, to the Secretary of State, in London, reported about the Communist Party of India: 'the behaviour of many of CPI members proves what has always been clear, namely, that it is composed of anti-British revolutionaries.'"

This is the President of India telling this in the central hall of Indian parliament.

At least now stop the baseless charges.

You have objections when I say 'worm into'. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was mentioned, he was a good man, he was in Nehru's cabinet. From there he quit. He was looking to form a political party. Please tell me, is this in the RSS records or not, that then your Sarsanghchhalak, Golwalkar sent four Swayamsevaks to Mr Mukherjee to request him to form a new political party. Who were they? This is your record only, not mine. The four were Deen Dayal Upadhyay, LK Advani, Atal Behari Vajpayee and S.S. Bhandari. All four were sent to form the new party. This happened as Sardar Patel in his communiqué after banning the RSS after Gandhi's assassination, has put some conditions for lifting the ban. One condition being that RSS won't participate in politics. So you needed a political 'wing'. That wing was Jan Sangh whose incarnation today is the BJP.

Our leader of the House here said a lot and read out some parts. He read out Article 44 of the Constitution. It says, 'the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code.' It was quoted. It was also

quoted on the question of organisation of agricultural and animal husbandry. I pointed out then that these are Directive Principles of State Policy, which are not justiciable and enforceable, and these Directive Principles also have the other things, which are not quoted. What do they say? They say, 'the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people.' What did Babasaheb Ambedkar say? The same thing that Article 46 says. Article 47 says, 'the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living.' Isn't it a shame that today, the largest number of children malnourished are in India? Isn't it a shame that majority of the stunted children in the world are from India, today? This is the Constitutional Directive, Article 47. What has been done? You only pick and choose what you want to do and that is where the suspicion comes as to what is your actual motive. Here in the section on Fundamental Duties that are supposed to be enforceable, Article 51A says, 'it shall be the duty of every citizen of India.' If you read Article 51A (f), it says, 'to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.' Is it the composite culture that we are preserving? I will come to that again. What does 51A(h) say? It says, 'to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.' If we hear that Lord Ganesha was the creation of plastic surgery or Karna in the Mahabharata was the creation of stent technology and test tube babies, is that scientific temper? And it comes from no less than Prime Minister. What is happening? What are you implementing? What are you wanting to implement and what not? You are only reviving the hardcore Hindutva agenda. Cow protection, you are wanting to revive. Then the entire question of equality of all citizens to liberty in life. He has quoted Article 30 and said that these are contradicted by Articles 29 and 30. Article 15 says, 'the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.' This is Article 15, Fundamental Rights. He says, "Articles 29 and 30 are in contradiction". Any lawyer would know, any right always comes with what is called reasonable restrictions. I hope, there is no right which does not come with reasonable restrictions. The reasonable restrictions through Article 15 have been detailed in Articles of the Constitution, 29 and 30, where the rights of the minorities to their religion are given. Minorities here meaning not only religious but also linguistic minorities. So, it is said, "This is a contradiction. Don't we want to remove it?" What would Dr Ambedkar say today if you were talking about this contradiction, about this Constitution? He would say precisely the same thing that the duties of a citizen would be the spread of

tolerance, and not the spread of any one particular intolerant point of view.

And that is the bone of contention today. I read in the media that the Home Minister said that secularism is the word that was injected into the Constitution, and, therefore, that is the cause of all problems. He has also referred to, I believe, Aamir Khan; our actor is getting lampooned. He said, "Ambedkar did not leave the country. But he stayed here and struggled". And that is what Aamir Khan also said. He did not say that he is leaving. I am glad he is staying and struggling, and then you accuse them saying that Left is sponsoring all that. Thank you for putting all those people with us. Our tribe is increasing. That is what you are doing. But remember, Ambedkar did not leave the country. He was a patriot. But, Ambedkar renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. You remember that. You remember that, and why was that? That is where the intolerance issue comes in. These are matters again of history. You cannot erase it, and if you want the question of intolerance, take the same speech of Dr Ambedkar of November 25, which the Leader of the House was quoting. This is the same speech, and what does Dr Ambedkar say? He was talking about 'history will repeat itself'. "Will we lose our Independence again...", Leader of the House quoted that. After that, he did not quote the rest of it. What does it say? I am quoting from that speech of Dr Ambedkar. "Will history repeat itself"? That is, will we lose our Independence once again? "Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above the country, I do not know".

As the Leader of the House said, if Dr Ambedkar was here today, what would he say? He would not pose this question. He will say, "Indians are being forced to place their creed above the country". And that is the intolerance that is happening in the country today. Then, what did Dr Ambedkar say? "But this much is certain – this is the speech, which was quoted in the morning – if the parties place creed above country, our Independence will be put in jeopardy a second time – after all the instances he gave, which was quoted by the leader – will be put in a jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our Independence with the last drop of our blood".

Today, when I stand up against this intolerance, I am doing exactly what Dr Ambedkar asked us to do. Anybody who wants to say what Dr

Ambedkar said must be done, we will do exactly what Dr Ambedkar asked us to do, i.e, raise ourselves against this sort of intolerance. This is the same Ambedkar in the same speech.

Then, we heard the question of social justice. The essential point of Dr Ambedkar is missed out. I have quoted this a number of times, but I can't stop myself from quoting this again. Now, I quote it in the full. It says, "On 26th of January, 1950" – please note once again, it is the Constitution Day, the Republic Day – "we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will give equality and in social and economic life, we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of 'one man one vote', 'one vote one value'. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structures, continue to deny the principle of 'one man one value'." That is the contradiction. Then, he continues to say, "If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest. Or else, those who suffer from this inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy that this Assembly has so labouriously built". This is Dr Ambedkar in the same speech. What is the situation today? A hundred multi-billionaires in our country, whose asset value is close to one-half of my country's GDP. And, according to the latest census, ninety percent of the households in my country, today, have an income of less than Rs 10,000, a month. Is this contradiction being resolved or are you only accentuating it further? Are we discussing issues of how we should reduce the gap in this contradiction? Instead, every foreign trip, we find a new concession to foreign capital. Fifteen areas have been opened up to the FDI. Free Trade Agreements on our domestic cultivation of commercial crops!

The agrarian distress is growing. Farmers are committing suicides. Your industrial production index, as per this Government's own statistics, this month has shown a drop from about six percent plus to about three percent. Manufacturing has dropped to 2.4 percent from over 6 percent. Industrial production is declining. Agrarian distress is deepening. Har Har Mahadev has been replaced by Arhar Mahadev in people's prayer to Lord Shiva, so that they at least get dal to eat. Arhar dal is Rs 200 per kg, more expensive than Chicken, it is no longer '*ghar ki murgi dal barabar*', but '*ghar ki dal, murgi barabar.*' What is the meaning of Constitution Day?

Where are we on the social justice vision of Dr Ambedkar? I have mentioned about the atrocities on SCs and STs and about reservation. On the question of growing inequalities, the condition of our people is deteriorating. What is this contradiction? You see the reality. Are we paying homage to Dr Ambedkar? Is this the way Modern India is actually fulfilling the vision of social justice? Forget about the political parties. Forget to which party I belong, to which party you belong. As an Indian, when you are talking about these things, are we being honest to ourselves? Are we doing justice to Dr Ambedkar and all that generation – Nehru, Gandhi, Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Patel – that gave us independence and this Constitution? What had they exhorted all of us to do? Are we doing it? And, you say, "I reaffirm my faith in the Constitution." Without reaffirming that faith, you won't be here. What is this reaffirming of faith?

Come to the issue of federalism. What did Dr Ambedkar say on federalism? In a federal structure, on centre-state relations, what did Dr Ambedkar say? He said that the centre and the states are coequal in this matter. I am reading from the same speech. "It is difficult to see how such a Constitution can be called centralism. That is, the basic principle of federalism is that the legislative and executive authority is partitioned between the centre and the States, not by any law to be made by the Centre but by the Constitution itself." That is the structure of this Constitution. Is the principle of federalism followed? You are talking about the misuse of Article 356. That is only one part of it. We, the Kerala government, were the first victim of Article 356, way back in 1950s. I don't know how many of you were there. Second time, we were victim in 1960s; twice, we were victim in Bengal, in 1967 and 1969.

But, all that apart, what is federalism? Not merely equality, that independent respect of the states, are we granting it today? Then, you talked of judiciary. Let me tell you, what Dr Ambedkar said about judiciary is very, very interesting. I am quoting from the same speech, "Courts may modify, they cannot replace", please note, "Courts may modify, they cannot replace, they can revise earlier interpretations as new arguments, new points of view are presented. They can shift the dividing line in marginal cases, but there are barriers they cannot pass, definite assignments of power they cannot reallocate. They can give a broadening construction of existing powers, but they cannot assign to one authority powers explicitly granted to another."

The separation and the complementarity of the executive, the judiciary and the legislature are hallmarks of our Constitution. Now, this is as far as your judiciary is concerned. But what worries me about is you are paying homage to Dr Ambedkar. Remember, from 1946 to 1950, what was the condition of the world? Millions of people were under colonial subjugation. When these countries became independent, what we did in India was, actually, a revolutionary step then. We granted universal adult suffrage, which nobody else of these countries granted. Europe did not grant and not even the United States of America.

President Obama came here. All of us were very excited in the central hall, both sides. He wrote in the Golden Book of our Parliament, "Greetings from the world's oldest democracy to the world's largest." This was his message. Yes, this was the message he gave. I had to point it out later that evening at the President's banquet. I said, "I think, this is a wrong definition that you are the world's oldest democracy." He said, "Why?" I said, "You got the right to vote, that is, American-Africans, universally in the United States of America in 1962, one year after you were born. The universality of adult franchise in the United States of America came only in 1962; in India, we gave it in 1950." Whether you are a dalit, you are a landlord, whether you are a Muslim, whether you are a Hindu, we gave it in 1950. And, today, what is happening? In Haryana, 86 percent of the people will be kept out of their right to vote and right to contest elections because of various conditions. The State Government has said that unless you fulfil these conditions, you cannot contest or you cannot vote.

In Rajasthan, you put conditions whereby more than half the people are excluded from the universal suffrage. In Gujarat, you have said, 'unless you have a toilet, a pucca toilet, in your house, you cannot vote or contest in local elections'. All these three states have got a BJP state government. You come here to pay homage to Dr Ambedkar and the one important thing that has been done by the Indian Constitution on universal adult suffrage, you deny it to people in the States which have a State Government that is led by the BJP.

The leader of the House made an interesting reference to the Third Reich and Germany. We are happy, and I must pay my gratitude to the leader of the house for having reminded me of the Third Reich and Germany and the dangers of authoritarianism. In 1939, when the debate in the country was going on as to what should be the character of Independent India,

there was a book, which was not thought that it would be very important but a book which had a very, very important implication for Indian politics and India's future, and that was a book called *We-or our Nationhood Defined* by Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar. He is called the RSS Guru. And, since the leader of the House mentioned the Third Reich, I only want to quote from that book about the Third Reich. Who is 'we'? In Hindi 'Swaraj', 'What does 'Sw' mean? Whose Raj is it? Who are we? "we are a Hindu Rashtra", that is the entire import of that book. At that time, speaking of Germany and Hitler, he talked saying that 'only Hindus and Hindus alone are inhabitants of this country'. And, then, what does he say about the Third Reich? I am quoting, "To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic Races, the Jews". I will take a break here, for a moment. You please draw the parallels in India – who is that instead of the Jews and who is that for the race and the culture and its purity. I continue with the quote. I am quoting from page number 35, it says, "To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by purging the country of the semitic races, the Jews. Reich pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for races and cultures having differences going to the root to be assimilated into one united whole. A good lesson for us..." Please understand this.

This is exactly what this Hindu Rashtra is all about. That is why, if you want to pay homage and our shraddhanjali to Dr Ambedkar, please remember what he said in the speech finally. I would like to quote to you what he said about creed: "Without equality, you cannot have liberty. Without fraternity, you cannot have equality and liberty. Without equality and fraternity – fraternity means sadbhavna – you cannot have liberty." If you are celebrating India's freedom and its liberty, equality and fraternity are the two things on which there can be no compromise. And that is precisely what is being compromised in this furtherance of the atmosphere of intolerance.

Finally, let me end by quoting Dr Rajendra Prasad. When he was about to put his signatures on this draft, the future President of India, quoted these lines. He was not yet the President of India; he became the President of India only on January 26 and, then, it was said that the Governor General, Dr Rajagopalachari, cannot administer an oath to our president because the Governor General is an appointee of the British. So, the Chief Justice

was called, in this central hall, and he administered the oath. After that Dr Rajendra Prasad administers the oath for an interim government, adopts this Constitution, administers the oath and directs that under this new Constitution, fresh elections be held after delimitation is completed. That election was held in 1952. And today, we hear, that Sardar Patel was being denied from being India's first Prime Minister. Unfortunately, poor Sardar died in 1950; the first election was in 1952.

What did Dr Rajendra Prasad say? Dr Rajendra Prasad, in his address, hailing that we adopted this Constitution, says, "After all, a Constitution, like a machine, is a lifeless thing....It acquires life because of the men who control it and operate it. India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them."

I am sure when Dr Rajendra Prasad and Dr Ambedkar talked about 'men', they included the 'women' also. So, please don't take offence; I am sure, at that time, women were also part of it. "There is a fissiparous tendency arising out of various elements in our life", said Dr Rajendra Prasad on November 26, 1949. He said, "We have communal differences, caste differences, language differences, provincial differences and so forth. It requires men of strong character, men of vision, men who will not sacrifice the interests of the country at large for the sake of smaller groups and areas and who will rise over the prejudices which are born of these differences.

We can only hope that the country will throw up such men in abundance." Is that the case? I rest my case by asking you the question. What are we seeing today? Have we produced such men in abundance? If not, I think it is time to correct the notion, if you want to do actual reaffirmation to our Constitution and pay our homage to Dr Ambedkar.

27 November 2015.

Towards a Rational and Democratic India

Speech in Lok Sabha by Md. Salim

(Translated from Hindi)

I would like to thank Karunakaran-ji, you (Speaker) and the House that we are discussing this issue in a respectful manner. Whatever the Home Minister said now, we want to tell the entire nation, if we become intolerant in this House then we cannot ask the country to be tolerant. I have sought your permission to speak in place of Karunakaran-ji. I do not want to elaborate on the climate of intolerance which has now emerged in the country. The kind of incidents that have occurred in the past few months in the country have been described by some as "isolated", I reject that. There were price rise and other various issues before the House, but why did we take up this issue? That these incidents are not isolated is being recognised by this House as also your (Speaker's) chair. The way this matter is being portrayed, in reality, it is not like that but much more serious. The word 'intolerance' is not enough to describe it. It's not that there is a lack of tolerance in the country. In fact, tyranny of majoritarianism is giving rise to an explosive situation in this country. That's the reason why this is not just a topic for political debate but also resonates in social, educational, cultural and scientific spheres.

People who have devoted their heart and soul to build this nation, even those in the business sector, they have tried to express their views in this situation of crisis. Today intolerance is more prominent. Democracy is all about debate, discussion and dissent. If there are some views, some actions

we are not in agreement with, that is our right in a democracy. The honourable minister says that it's a 'manufactured dissent'... Manufactured dissent? Who are you trying to insult? Scientist CNR Rao, a Bharat Ratna awardee, (PM) Bhargava, Shri Narayana Murthy, one after another, the list is growing. All these didn't happen in a day. What have we been saying? Attempts were made to cast aspersions against us that 'you are insulting the nation', that 'you are calling the country intolerant. That was being manufactured... Growing intolerance... it means our tradition, culture and heritage, our civilisation teach us tolerance. Now somewhere there is a departure. We are turning away and doing so rapidly. There have been attempts from all directions to give signals... We just now had discussions about the Constitution on the 125th birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar. I don't want to go over that again. Our Constitution is not for being paraded atop an elephant. It is for showing us the direction in which to proceed. And our Constitution gives every citizen the right to freedom of speech.

This is not a fascist country. This is a democracy. We heard several speeches during discussion on the Constitution. Very wise people contributed to the framing of the Constitution but they didn't write a book in the constituent assembly. But wrote about the foundations of our civilisation... We got a Constitution after 200 years of freedom struggle. We have regrets that when the Prime Minister spoke, when the Home Minister spoke, they did not speak about our freedom struggle, which was anti-communal in nature... Some people are saying has this not happened before? Didn't it happen in 1984, in 1977? There is a fable where a wolf is telling a goat that you are soiling the water (*jhootha kar rahe ho*). After that he said if not you, your grandfathers did it. What about your grandfathers?

(L K) Advani-ji is here. Sudheendra Kulkarni, I'm taking his name because he was once a member of BJP's national executive. There are several such names. They are not members of the House. These people have given warning from within. I'm talking about warnings. But it's unfortunate that he who tweets on every topic, he who is a great orator, whom the people with great hope elected as the leader of the country and not just of the Government, it was expected that he would take the country to a position of respect in the world. Development will be the first agenda; everybody will be taken along... You will recall when in Pune technologist Mohsin Sadiq Shaikh was killed, people waited for a tweet. When tweets are posted on birthdays, on suits and kurtas, then at least on this issue too there should have been one. Well, these are not one or two incidents. The

Dadri incident happened. Before that (M M) Kalburgi assassination, (Govind) Pansare's killing. Even before that (Narendra) Dabholkar was gunned down. Why are we having this discussion? We want a rational India. We want a secular India. This will not be done in a day. A civilisation is not built in a day. Governments come and go. We are all temporary... When the NDA was in power earlier and we used to talk about hidden agenda, people would ask what is hidden agenda. No more this is a hidden agenda, everything is out in the open... everything can be seen. From the government, we demanded transparency, return of black money and end to corruption. How have these fringe elements surfaced? First they called stray elements, then they said fringe elements. Who are these fringe elements? Members of this House, members of the Council of Ministers? Dalit children are killed, there will be investigation. But the question is in which culture, when the question of a Muslim or a Dalit arises the analogy of a puppy is made? This is against humanity; this is not a matter of religion. A hint is enough to those who can understand... We also have to tolerate and suffer such ministers... The question was how to bring the marginalised, the poor, the dalit, the tribal, the backward, and the disabled to the mainstream. After independence, this is the biggest concern.

Our Constitution directs us that we bring these sections to the mainstream. From where have these fringe elements come? These are not fringe elements anymore. It's a hub-and-spoke concept. The way it happens in a business proposition, similarly it's happening in a political project. The hub is silent while the spoke is spinning. What is the message being sent out to the nation? Rabindranath Tagore is frequently mentioned in this House, I come from Bengal: *Onnai j kore r onnai j sohe/ tobo ghrina tare jeno trino somo dohe*. Those who do injustice and those who tolerate it, both are equally guilty. Those who don't want to tolerate it — be it any writer or poet, they are returning their awards and life achievements, and on social media, in newspapers and at press conferences we are castigating them... This has happened in the era of kings and monarchs too when there was no democracy. Not everybody is a jester or sycophant.

You can hear the call of Times Square but you can't hear the cry of the time from within India as to what is happening here... current affairs. It is important to hear this. For this there is no need to put your ear to the ground, only with your outgoing call also watch out for incoming calls as to what calls are coming. If the communication is one-way then there would be trouble... I feel that there is 'mann ki baat', 'dhan (wealth) ki baat', 'tan (body) ki baat', but what the country's heart is saying is not

coming out... For that we needed the Bihar election outcome... But is that what we have gathered here to debate? That was not the question. The question was how did the prices of dal touched Rs 200 per kilo. Why did onions become Rs 70-80 per kilo. Because a businessman is closer to the corridor of power, would he hoard dal and raise its value to make crores in profit? The question is not what is cooking in which household... whether it is goat or cow...the responsibility of the Government, politics, political parties, cultural organisation is not to find out whether fish is being cooked or not, whether we are cooking rohu fish or hilsa, the question is who is not able to cook, who does not have enough food? The Government and the political parties should look into these. We are diverting from the issue. The question was of food security so that the poor get two square meals, the unemployed get jobs, inflation is reduced, malnourishment decreases, malnourished children get nutritious food. Instead of this, Akhlaq Ahmed was killed, made a sacrificial lamb... We should be ashamed that his son is in the Indian Air Force. Despite that, I have seen in the media, some people are saying what can be done, some say go this side while others say go that side, but Sartaj (Akhlaq's son) says "*sare jahan se achha, Hindustan hamara*" (Better than the entire world, is our Hindustan). That's the spirit. That's the spirit of India. This does not change with the results of one election. This does not change by words of a government. This is century-old.

(Soon after, Salim quoted from a reputed magazine reported remarks of Home Minister Rajnath Singh on "Hindu ruler", which led to disruptions by the treasury benches and adjournments of the House. Salim delivered rest of his speech after a few adjournments.)

...Allow me to continue. I am not going back to that. I am not going back from my words. What I have spoken, I have spoken. Let the Speaker take a decision... I go by the ruling. She (Speaker) said: "You pause. Do not put it on the record." I quoted in response to that because of authenticity and so many (other) things. I am a member, a private member. I cannot go and enquire. Let the Government do that. Let the secretariat do that. I go by the rules. I have not made any allegation. I have no qualms personally with Rajnath Singh. In fact, I would have been happy if instead of Modi, Rajnath Singh would have been the Prime Minister... Is it that there is a ban on saying this?... Can't I have such a wish?... Have you become so intolerant?... Can't I, as a citizen, speak out?...

Arun Shourie has said in an interview. He is our former Minister, he was

a Minister in the (Atal Bihari) Vajpayee-led NDA Government... I won't repeat what he said... He said a couplet... Lines of the couplet of Habib Jalib: *Woh jo ek shaks tujhse pehla yahan takht nasheen tha/use bhi apne khuda hone ka itna hi yakeen tha* (The one who was enthroned here before you also had illusions of being our god)...

I wanted a discussion. Our people wanted a discussion... Can I quote from Lok Sabha proceedings?... On June 11, 2014, the Prime Minister said in his address...At that time, he just became the Prime Minister. "This slave mentality of 1,200 years is troubling us. Often, when we meet a person of high stature, we fail to muster courage to speak up." For 200 hundred years, from India's adivasi and the Chapekar brothers to Bhagat Singh, Ashfaqulla Khan, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Khudiram (Bose) and Kanailal (Dutta) embraced the gallows but they spoke with the British, looking them in the eye. They never bent their heads. We are proud of that. There is Alluri Sitarama Raju, I won't take all names,... (they are there) in every corner of the country, from Manipur to Kerala... There is a couplet of Kabir, hear it out. *Mera tera manwa kais ek ho re/Tu kehta kagaz ki likhi, main kehta aankhe ki dekhi* (How can our hearts meet/ you talk out of scriptures, I speak from my experience).

What is happening in the country in the past few months, I am not describing that, instead the reality is in front of us and your leaders are also admitting it... What happened with the Sikhs in 1984, did the country tolerate it? During UPA-I (government) when the Nanavati Commission report came, Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister; we discussed implementation of laws and implementation of the committee's recommendations. Didn't we discuss it?

Now if anyone commits a sin and says that the previous one also committed sin...so will this series of sins continue? Somewhere it has to stop. Whether a sin is committed by you or me, a sin is a sin... When I was in school, we often used to recite this poetry: *Hao dharmete dheer/Hao karomete veer/Hao unnotoshir; nahi bhay*. Be firm in your faith, be courageous in your action; then you will have no fear, your head will be held high. Where the head is held high, the mind is without fear. But what has happened today? What has changed? What is being heard? Now the opposite is being said. This is lowering our country's prestige; we can't hold our head high. Is it not that our Prime Minister said our head has been down for 1,200 years?...

What Supreme Court justices (TS) Thakur and Kurian (Joseph) have said

when people from the Jain community sought ban on meat? They said this cannot be an issue. You can't make someone's food habit (an issue). Everyone practices their own religion. The Prime Minister has also said this. The Constitution guarantees everyone (the freedom to practice one's own religion). We have no antagonism towards religion. Everyone has the right. If you set up one against another, look at the whole world. Be it Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or Christianity, whatever the religion might be, if you try to change its stand from soft to hard as (you might think) we have remained soft for long, we have tolerated a lot and we won't tolerate anymore. What is the fundamental question? What has happened in Afghanistan? Islam was there. It was soft. Taliban, Mujahideen came and said soft Islam won't work, we have to harden stand. The whole world was changed. The Buddhas of Bamiyan, which represented the style of Gandhara art, many statues were demolished. Has it helped Afghanistan? Has it helped Islam? Has it helped religion?... What is happening today? The ISIS force... Whoever in this world tries to commit a sin using religion, it also burns down the perpetrator. Now you say it is not "dharm-nirpeksh", it's "panth-nirpeksh". It has been said in this House.

When the Prime Minister addressed this house on Friday (November 27), he said all 12 active religions in the world are there in our country. This is a good thing. Then it was 'dharm', it was religion. But when we say separate State and politics from religion, you say "panth" (sect). There are different faiths...Rajnath Singh has himself said Muslims have 72 firqas (sects). The State should separate itself from firqas... This seems wrong. We have to correct this wrong. I'm talking on the issue of intolerance we are discussing... The basic thought is wrong...I'm saying they use religion, community, I'm saying this being secular. See what is happening in Bangladesh. Here (MM) Kalburgi has been murdered. (Govind) Pansare was murdered. (It's a matter of) rational thought, it's not a question of Hindus or Muslims... Even in a country where cent percent population belongs to one particular community, rational thinkers, liberal thinkers and people with scientific temperament have to fight with obscurantist and reactionary forces... You don't need people from all religions everywhere (to create trouble). The people of such thoughts who want to take our country backwards, the people of this country won't permit this. Like *Vigyan* (science) is called *visheesh gyan*(special knowledge), similarly Bihar means *visheesh haar*(remarkable defeat). Now after this remarkable defeat, try to understand. Shatrughan Sinha understands, (that's why) he is smiling... Our culture, it takes thousands of years for a culture

to take shape. No minister of culture can change our culture... You talk about (APJ Abdul) Kalam so much. You have handed over to him (Minister for Culture) Kalam's bungalow, instead teach him Kalam's thoughts. Then what he said? I don't want to repeat it, everyone knows. What is this culture of the Minister for Culture?... Now you must try to understand why this is happening. This is temple of democracy... In temples, people do upasana every day, not just on the day of its opening. Democracy teaches us this. Freedom struggle handed us down a composite culture, it's a mixed culture, it's like an ocean... There if you search for stream of Ganga, stream of Yamuna, stream of Narmada, Godavari, Cauvery, Brahmaputra, in ocean you won't find separate streams, you will go mad looking for them. This country has only one stream... This composite culture is being hurt. Those who took part in the freedom struggle they tried to assimilate these streams from northeast to west, from north to south. And those who have no interest in this stream, they are trying to break it apart. It is clear.

Swami Vivekananda... there are too many swamis today. Swamiji had taken a march throughout the country and tried to understand the spirit of India. Those whom you are calling 'dogs' they are also human beings, they are also Indians. They also have rights. Those dalits also have to be taken along. Mentioning people of our community, they had said that everyone has to live together in harmony. For this a bridge has to be built... Some people build a bridge, some destroy it. If we discuss this here, there will be altercations. What is happening today in villages, roads, railway stations, tea stalls? People are being divided. Minds of people are being poisoned...

Whether it is Muslims or Christians, they are so big. Where will you push them? Everyone cannot be sent to Pakistan. Pakistan is not that country where Indian Muslims want to go. If that was the case, everybody would have gone there in 1947 itself. We have rejected it. Our forefathers had rejected it. This land is our home. We have watered this garden. You are saying if we eat this, we should go to Pakistan. If we say something, we should go to Pakistan. Where will you send Narayana Murthy, Raghuram Rajan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan? What have you given to Kashmiri Pandits? You have formed the Government in Jammu and Kashmir with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. You have betrayed them also. You divide people and join together to gain power... We don't want division of people or hearts.

Don't provoke fights in the name of Hindus and Muslims. If you want to fight, do it against poverty, unemployment, backwardness, and atrocities against women. If you have courage, launch a fight against India's biggest challenge today. Then we all can be together in that fight...

Whose interests are you serving by dividing people? When Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister, he would say that we are a proud nation during his foreign trips. There was no ISIS then, al-Qaeda was there. No Indian youth joined al-Qaeda then. We are proud of that... Today when the Prime Minister goes abroad, what will he say? Whoever is going is not correct. But some countries are scheming to pull them towards it. Beyond our borders there are such schemings, their agents. You please don't do anything that will make their job easier and push our youths into their camps there. We are not able to stop Kashmir militancy even though there are 10 lakh troops there... Today again, Punjab is burning. It is not a question of Hindus or Muslims... It is burning for the past one, one-and-a-half months. The Akalis there should ponder what they have done along with the Sangh Parivar. Our most beautiful, strongest, patriotic Punjab which had seen most bloodshed for our freedom struggle, is burning today. Why?... If politics is done in the name of religion, the results will be very bad.

I come from Bengal... Today tension erupted in our area over a small piece of land. Today, a small theft of chicken can trigger riots... Madam, on the Ashoka Pillar we have, there is a writing which says: *Satyamev Jayate* (Truth Always Triumphs)... Truth cannot be hidden even if you scream or hold a procession of some artists. Truth is coming out. There is a shloka on truth. This has been taken from the Mundaka Upanishad: '*Satyamev Jayate Nanrutam, Satyen Pantha Vithatho Devayanaha*' (Only truth prevails, not untruth; by the path of truth is laid out the divine way). This is our national religion. Truth will win and our political vision from Buddha and Jainism to Gandhi: *ahimsa paramo dharma* (non-violence is our ultimate religion). But what is happening today?... Instead of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is our ultimate religion, the 'A' has been taken out and placed in front '*Satyamev Jayate*' and '*Asatyamev Jayate, Himsa Parmo Dharm*' (Untruth will triumph, violence is our ultimate religion) is being propagated today. This is unacceptable in this country.



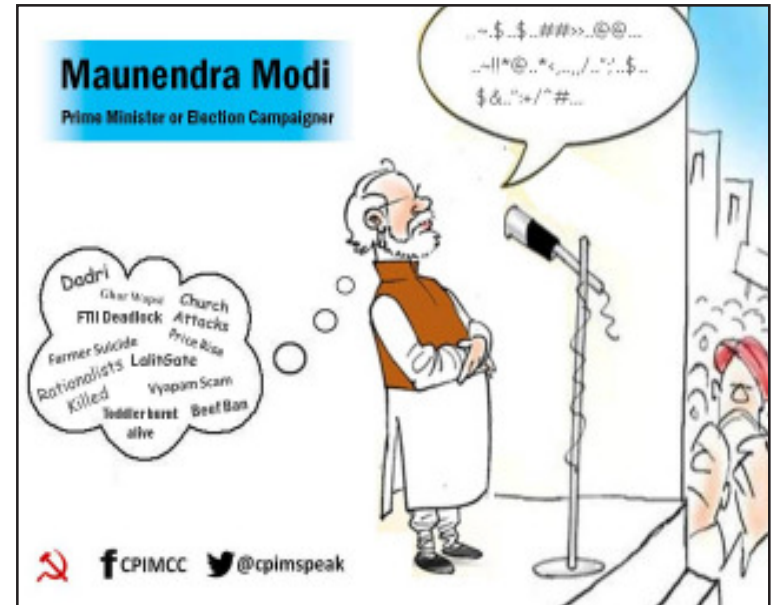
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RSS Against India

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Parliament Debate on “Constitution Day” and Against Intolerance

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