

HARVESTING LOCAL TERRORISM

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“Sow the wind and reap the storm” says the old adage. During the last two decades or so religious fundamentalists, wary of conversions, have been sowing winds of hatred and enmity against the religious minorities especially the Muslims and the Christians. They have sowed systematically the winds of hatred and enmity and have been reaping the storms of pogrom in Gujarat in 2002 and now terrorism in the states of Orissa and Karnataka. These religious fanatics and fundamentalists are not aware of what they are doing on the pretext of protecting their religion when they perpetuate macabre carnage and horrendous crimes against humanity.

These religious terrorists in the guise of protection of their religion are not only making the Indian culture weak and impotent but also a laughing stock for the people around the world. The terrorists, they may be belonging to any religion or no religion or may be agnostics, are piercing the heart of Bharat-mata with their violent attacks and wounding her again and again. They make Bharat-mata bloody and bleeding with the Martyred Fr. Bernarad Digal and the gang-raped nun of Kandhamal, Orissa. We see the bleeding Bharat-mata especially at Kandhamal where about 60 Christians have been tortured and burnt to death.

These religious terrorists, if we can so call them, are hacking Bharat-mata into pieces. Can we allow them to continue to do so? India is the country of Buddha and of Mahavir. India is the country of Mother Teresa and of Sr. Alphonsa. India is the country of Vivekanand and Raman Maharshi. India is the country of Sadhu Sundarsingh and of Gurunanak. Here Gandhiji has scarified his life for communal harmony and religious amity. What do all these great men and women say to these fanatical terrorists who sit on the chest of Bharat-mata?

The English who ruled this country for several centuries have said that, if they leave India, the existence of the minorities would be in danger. But the leaders of our independent movements were visionaries like Nehru, Gandhi, Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel, who believed in the India of unity in diversity and of diversity in unity. Against the English misgivings our farsighted leaders were saying that it is the religious duty of the majority to protect the minorities and assure their freedom and equality.

The great son of Gujarat, known as the iron man of India, Sardar Patel has said in the constitution making assembly that the Indian Constitution is a social contract and that this social contract would continue always.

The protection of the minority is included in the Indian Constitution which upholds the freedom and equality of all its citizens in letter and spirit. This idea of the social contract was even upheld by the Supreme Court in the famous case of St. Xavier’s College, Ahmedabad.

It is obvious then that the religious terrorists do not know or do not want to follow the Indian Constitution. But in the name of the religion, without understanding the spirit of their religion, they are perpetuating religious terrorism on innocent minorities with direct or indirect support of those self-seeking and immoral politicians. This is certainly the most heinous crime against the minorities.

Still I think that this Indian situation is not beyond redemption. While immoral politicians from behind the scene encourage and support the fanatic terrorists there are also good willed people among the majority population of Hindus, who come to the rescue of the minorities against the terrorist attacks. In the Gujarat pogrom against the Muslims many Muslims were saved by their Hindu neighbours. Similarly in the terrorist attacks in Kashmir many Hindus were saved by their Muslim neighbours. These saviours protected their neighbours often at great peril to their own lives! In Kandhamal too stories have emerged of Christians being saved by their Hindu neighbours. Even if the sky is fully covered with dark clouds of terrorism, golden rays of hope often pierce these dark clouds.

The religious terrorists and the immoral politicians protecting and promoting them must know that attacking the minorities on any pretext is a beastly crime. It is the destruction of human culture. Crime attracts more crimes. Revenge calls for more revenge. One lie leads to another and more lies. For instance, we know that after the pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat, for the first time, as we read in the newspapers and hear and see on the television channels the educated and well qualified Muslim youth have turned to crime! Terrorism and senseless killing do not solve any problem.

It may be that some selfish people without vision may gain some profit from terrorism. But in the long run such short term gains create more and more problems. Even after 60 long years both India and Pakistan are not fully free from the ill effects of violent communal clashes of the time of independence!

The world knows how much Gujarat has lost due to the attacks on the minority Christians in 1998 and on the Muslims in 2002. The name of Gujarat has been tarnished beyond repair. The main persons who were associated with them cannot get visas to travel to countries in the European Union and America! A journalist from Canada told a Gujarati journalist attending an international meeting at Quebec that “your chief minister is a terrorist!” When the journalist told his fellow journalist proudly that he was from Gujarat, the land of Gandhiji. His defense that no court of law has proved that the chief minister is a terrorist, did not make any difference.

Let us take the persecution of Christians in Kandhamal district in Orissa. More than 60 Christians have become martyrs of their faith at the hands of terrorists of the Sangh Parivar. Properties like houses and churches, worth crores of rupees have been burned down or destroyed. But the Christians would not attack their enemies in retaliation. No. They would not retaliate. That is not their culture. But it is good that the enemies of the Christians know that in history the Christians have been often the victims of persecution and opposition. The founder of the Christian religion, Jesus, himself as well as his 12 disciples on whose foundation the Christian religion is built, all with no exception had embraced martyrdom. Persecution notwithstanding, Christianity has taken rebirth and has flourished. The enemies of the Christians without knowing it are preparing a fertile ground for sowing the Christian religion afresh and helping it to grow. The persecution of Christians serves as manure for the growth and spread of Christianity.

As the Bible says, gold is purified in fire. Christianity is also purified in the fire of persecution. With the persecution against the Christians at Kandhamal, some people who take advantage of

the Church on the pretext of being Christians may opt for VHP's forced conversion to Hinduism called 'Home Coming'. Christianity is thus purified because they do not have strong faith in Jesus. But the people with strong faith in Jesus will stay Christians and if their faith is challenged they will opt for martyrdom rather than abandon their faith. That is why, in the Christian religion we have martyrs, the likes of which we do not see in other religions. So let my misguided brothers and sisters know that by persecuting Christians they are helping Christianity not only to purify itself but also to grow and spread far and wide in this land of mahatmas and maharshis.

So even if the Hindu fundamentalists and religious terrorists do much violence and terrorists attacks against the Christians, the true disciples of Jesus Christ will stay firm in their Christian faith and follow the path trodden by Jesus amidst much opposition and violence. It is the path of love, service, mercy, compassion and of forgiveness. In short, it is the path of following Jesus' values and attitudes in life. So a Christian will stay by the side of the dalits, the oppressed and the persecuted tribals in the spirit of equality. Christians will stay and serve the weak and the persecuted peopled. For, Jesus has said, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me" (Mt 25, 40). (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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