

# HISTORY AND COUNTER-HISTORY

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**T**hough it is of dead people, history does not die. The reactionary side always carries history along with it like a shadow. For it is the former that has written it. The country is experiencing the horror which follows when the progressive side is not able to rally counter-history behind it. Ambedkar had warned that they who do not understand history, are unable to change it. How can counter history be formulated without changing established history?

To propagate counter-history means disseminating the enlightenment of social transformation. Ambedkar had asseverated that there can be no social revolution in thought, i.e. without enlightenment. The true followers of Phuley and Ambedkar wanted to accomplish the revolution of caste annihilation, and that is why they tried to formulate a non-brahmanical history. Though it proved to be negative, nobody can say that it was not a counter history.

All non-BJP parties and semi-political outfits have justified the ban on communal organisations and have admitted that it is negative. Nevertheless, enlightenment according to them is no more than impressing upon the people the fanatic, anti-constitutional, undemocratic, anti-judiciary character of the Hindu fundamentalist parties and organisations. Yet any thoughtful person will agree that this 'enlightenment' is not counter-history at all.

The strength of the BJP can hardly be estimated from the votes it secures in the elections. 99% of the Hindus, who do not vote the BJP, worship Rama. Traditional communist parties still believe by implication that all problems, even of those of enlightenment, can be solved by economic or class struggles. Sharad Joshi is a new votary of this dogma. He also asks "Why is Sharad Patil digging up corpses buried thousands of years ago". But the Puranic Rama has risen to down Shetkari Sanghatana's mass dharana against the import of wheat, and thus the corpses of thousands of years old have mounted on the neck of every kind of emancipation like vampires.

## Rama Against Rama

**D**uring the discussion on the no-confidence motion brought by the BJP in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Mahabharat was used as an arsenal from which

weapons were hurled against each other by both the sides. It was quite natural for Atal Behari Bajpayi to cite brahmanical history. The same is expected also from Arjun Singh and Balram Jakhad. But the National Front (NF) and the Left Front (LF) did not make any effort to counter brahmanical history even by brahmanical history.

It does not mean that the NF and LF do not use brahmanical history to rebut brahmanical history. In the Maharashtra State Conference in Defence of Reservation held in Bombay, Sharad Yadav argued that Rama was a champion of Sudras and women. Participating in the discussion on the no-confidence motion against the V.P Singh government, the CPI(M) MP Somnath Chatterjee indirectly eulogised Rama by condemning Ravana and the Rakshasas as demons and evil incarnate. The CPI leader AB Bardhan drew applause from the peasant audience who had congregated in the Shetkari Panchayat at Pune when he quoted 'Tulasidasa's 'Rama-canta-manasa' to say that while Ravana was seated in a golden chariot Rama was without a chariot and likened them to L.K Advani and V.P Singh respectively!

## Religious Suppression

**O**fficial figure of the people killed after the demolition of the Babri mosque was 1,119. More than that were killed during the foundation ceremony ('sila-nyasa') at Ayodhya. Far more serious than Ayodhya are the problems of Mathura and Kashi. Archaeologists have not been able to clinch the dispute as to whether Rama temple was demolished in order to build the mosque. Indian Express has been reporting since 19-12-92 that the pillars, stone inscriptions, etc. of the demolished mosque belong to the prior existence of temples at Kashi and Mathura. The great Muslim savant Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi states in his *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* that Aurangzeb destroyed the Visvesvara temple at Kashi in August 1669 and the Krishna temple at Mathura in January 1670 and built there mosques (pp 396-397). He goes on to say this decision of Aurangzwb was not religious but political; for he pulled down those religious institutions which had sheltered Shivaji after his escape from Agra on August 28, 1666. He adds that 'no general order for the demolition of the temples and



schools was ever issued. The Brahmins, and the Hindu and Jain scholars continued to receive patronage and charities even after 1670". He points out that the Satnami bairagi rebels and Rana Kunwar Bhimsingh destroyed mosques (pp 396-397). The Sikhs did the same thing.

The tradition of mental suppression of the defeated by destroying their religious buildings was not started in India by the Muslim conquerors. It was started by the Aryans whose heritage the Hindu fundamentalists claim. The Sabhaparva of Mahabharata states that the peerless Sabha of the Pandavas was built by the Asura architect (visvakarma) Maya, not only according to the plan of the Asura king Vrshaparvas assembly hall but also by carting its building material— The site from where Maya brought the building material is so inaccessible still (Uttarena tu Kailasam Mainakam parvatam prati/III 2), that it is evidently mythical. The ruins of the Naga tribal kingdom ruled by Takshaka were still smoldering and hence Maya must have brought the building material of Takshaka's sabha destroyed by the Pandavas. We are further told by Mahabharata that 8,000 Kinkara slaves, formerly owned by the Naga kingdom, toiled day and night for more than fourteen months to build Pandava's Sabha, from which it becomes clear that the Naga tribe had not remained a backward Adivasi tribe, but had become a tribal kingdom whose wealth was produced by the Kinkara slaves. But, may it be the Asura Vrshaparva or the Naga Takshaka, they were non-Aryans.

Indian history attests to the fact that the Buddhist kings patronised all religions, and the standing testimony to their religious tolerance is that the Indian republic has adopted the wheel of Asoka as its national symbol. But, as less a person than P.V. Kane declares in his monumental 'History of Dharmasastra' that the brahmanical kings treated the Buddhists with utmost cruelty — '...King Pushyamitra of the Sunga dynasty is charged with having proclaimed that whoever would bring to him the head of a sramana would receive one hundred dinaras. Mihirakula, king of Kashmir, is accused by Yuan Chwang (-Huan Tsang) with having overthrown Buddhist topes in Gandhara, with destruction of monasteries and the slaughter of myriads of Buddhists; king Sasanka is said by Yuang Chwang to have destroyed the Bo tree (Bodhidruma), replaced the image of Buddha by one of Mahesvara and to have destroyed the religion of Buddha and dispersed the order. King Sudharvan is supposed to have issued at the instigation of Kumarita that he would put to death any servant of his who did not kill the Buddhists—' (Vol. V, p II 1024).

It is for the emancipation of the same Buddha temple at Bodhgaya that the conflict between the Hindu mahant and the Buddhists is assuming the dimensions of Ayodhya. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has intervened here also.

The same VHP, which has drenched the country in blood for Ayodhya, is not prepared to hand over the Buddha temple to the Buddhists. BNS Yadav throws more light on the fanaticism of Brahmanism in his 'Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century'—

A Fuhrer has reported about 47 kheras or deserted sites of fortified towns in the Aldeman pargana of Sultanpur district (UP), which he considers as the "ruins of Buddhist cities destroyed by fire when Brahmanism won its final victory over Buddhism. Further, the Tibetan tradition informs us that Kalcuri Karna (11th century) destroyed many Buddhist temples and monasteries in Magadha the Badaun stone inscription and an inscription of a feudatory chief of the Caulukyias speak of persecution. The Sunya Purana also informs us that the followers of the Dharma-mangala cult were persecuted by the Hindu priests to such an extent that they welcomed the invading Turks as the saviour Bodhisattvas. The Tibetan text pad-sam-jon-zang contains a doubtful tradition of the library of Nalanda by some Hindu fanatics...(p 346).

According to a tradition Nagarjuna's great vihar at Nagarjunakonda was destroyed by Sankaracarya. Sudraka's (A D 100) Sanskrit drama 'Mricchakatika' says in Act VIII that the Buddhist order was persecuted during the reign of the brahmanical king Palaka of Ujjayini.

This is the counter-history vis a vis brahmanical history which demands destruction of disputed non-Hindu religious edifices. But, even this counter-history cannot go beyond demanding the implementation of the act promulgated by the Rao government that the *status quo* of all the religious structures should be observed.

But the BJP affirms that Rama, Krishna, etc. are not matters that can be decided by law courts. Being matters of religious belief they are beyond the purview of law courts and constitutional means. Hence, the above-mentioned act is not binding on it. And Advani has already announced the further programme of building Krishna and Visresvara temples (Indian Express, 2-12-92).

That is why the struggle for counter-history does not stop at the period of Baber, but goes up to the periods of Mahabharata (B C 900) and Ramayana (B C 1000). Before taking up the Phuley defamation campaign, Dr Bal Gangal had undertaken the Buddha defamation campaign. After that Maratha Mahasangh and Shiv Sena launched a mass political campaign for deleting the appendix 'The Riddle of Rama and Krishna' from Vol V Dr Ambedkar's 'Writings and Speeches' entitled 'Riddles



in Hinduism' on the one hand, while Durga Bhagwat and M.G Vaidya conducted an ideological campaign for the deletion on the other. This double-edged campaign was opposed by Dalit parties and organisations only by conducting a mass political campaign, while the Sanskritist Dr Rupa Kulkarni and the historian Dr Y.D Phadke tried to rebut the ideological campaign independently. Though the appendix was incorporated by the Maharashtra government, the Hindu fundamentalists succeeded in turning the alienation of the OBC from the Dalits into antagonism. Kulkarni and Phadke proved to be unequal to the task. One reason is that they are not political workers and the other is, that instead of showing also the limitations of Ambedkar's negative non-brahmanical enlightenment they made utmost efforts to justify it.

The left parties did not intervene even politically in this conflict. The real reason why they did not intervene in it ideologically is that they have not a single scholar who is capable of doing it.

Negative non-brahmanical and Ambedkarist methodologies did not take into consideration the revolutionary contributions made by Rama and Krishna to the societies of their time. On the contrary, damning them to be completely reactionaries, upheld Ravana as against Rama and Kamsa as against Krishna. It is this that has antago-

nised the Hindy OBC. This does not at all mean that Rama and Krishna should not be shown as ruthless protagonists of caturvarnya and women's slavery. But if Marx's remark that man has drunk the nectar of social progress out of a human skull is a historical truth, then VK Rajwade's conclusion that Indian society made unprecedented progress through the establishment of caturvarnaya has to be considered a historical truth. It is on this criterion that Rama, who established caturvarnaya society, proves to be a revolutionary. Similarly, Krishna, who established the first ever oligarchy (a-rajata) in India that stopped reckless holocaust of numerous agnostic slaves and innumerable animals in sacrifices and abolished the Brahmana varna and the post of priest-king (rajarashi) who had interest in the sacrificial religion (karma-kanda), has to be considered a revolutionary relatively. If this relative revolutionism of Rama and Krishna is brought out before showing how their glorification today is fatal for the struggle for total equality, the alienation of the Hindu masses can be overcome. For though the Hindu masses worship Rama and Krishna, they also want caste annihilation. This positive non-brahmanical enlightenment can definitely reach the grass roots if it is taken up by writers and artists.

Courtesy, *Frontier*,  
February 13, 1993.

I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,  
But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation.  
Kings rule or barons rule:  
The strong man strongly and the weak man by caprice.  
They have but one law, to seize the power and keep it,  
And the steadfast can manipulate the greed and lust of others,  
The feeble is devoured by his own.

T.S. Eliot  
*Murder in the Cathedral*