Saffronisation of Administration, Education and Culture

By

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Education and Culture

“We don’t want friendship with India because it is not practical ...

The BJP suits us. Within a year they have made us into a nuclear and missile power. *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* is getting a good response because of the BJP’s statements. It is much better than before. We pray to God that they come to power again. Then we will emerge even stronger.”

This is what information secretary of the *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba*, an Islamic fundamentalist organisation of Pakistan, said to Bharat Bhushan, correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, India’s premier English daily, in Islamabad, in a long interview published recently. *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* was in the forefront of the Kargil adventure. Subsequently, it engaged itself in drumming up opposition to Pakistani withdrawal from Kargil. It constantly talks about *jehad* against India.

On the eve of the Lok Sabha polls, this support from BJP seems to be from an unexpected quarter. But it is not surprising. Communal extremists of India and Pakistan have a common agenda and they thrive on each other’s success! They are the birds of the same feather.

**Saffronising the National Security**

BJP-led 18 Party coalition government of Atal Behari Vajpayee embarked on a campaign of saffronising India by detonating some nuclear devices at Pokhran in Rajasthan in May 1998, known as Pokharan-II nuclear tests. The incident was as good as saffronising the Indian security. It induced Pakistan to conduct their own nuclear tests within 20 days. Both claimed to become nuclear power! Suddenly, the Indian superiority over Pakistan in matter of armed forces vanished and was
replaced by nuclear parity between the two countries.

Naturally, this gladdened the Islamic fundamentalists like the Lashkar and the rulers of Pakistan. They lost no time in catching hold of this new strategic advantage. They began preparations for the Kargil Campaign right after the May 1998 nuclear tests. By January 1999, Vajpayee government was fully aware of the Pak intentions behind intrusions in Kargil. But New Delhi did not know how to respond. Her hands were tied with Pokhran-II. Vajpayee’s ‘Bus Ride’ to Lahore did not deter Islamabad from going ahead on Kargil campaign.

"Pakistanis had set up missiles, built about 10 helicopter bases near the LOC and were in full readiness to launch a major offensive on India within days of the start of conflict by them in Kargil." This was revealed by J.N. Dixit, member of the National Security Advisory Board and former Indian Foreign Secretary, in London on August 2. *(The Hindustan Times, August 3, 1999, P. 8).* India was not prepared to respond adequately.

So, it was New Delhi and not Islamabad that rushed to US President Bill Clinton for help. As soon as conflict started in Kargil, Vajpayee rushed an urgent letter to Clinton who was in Germany attending G-7 summit. That letter led to G-7 intervention in Kargil conflict to reign in Pakistan, internationalising in its wake the Kashmir issue and inviting ‘personal interest’ of Clinton in Indo-Pak talks which may amount to mediation. This is exactly what Pakistan wished for and India was opposed to.

If not saffronisation of the armed forces, then what was it that brought two senior army officers to the National Executive Committee meeting of the BJP to report on the Kargil situation during the height of the Kargil conflict? Pokhran–II nuclear test was one of the saffron agenda. Saffronisation had something to do with unprecedented summary dismissal of Navy chief Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat in December 1998. After all, he was accused of having a “half Muslim” (Parsi) and “CPI card holding” wife who, being a prominent
Glory to the martyrs of Kargil, the valiant officers and Jawans who undid the damage done by the saffronised perception of our national security.

When the BJP-led coalition came to power over a year ago, it adopted a National Agenda for Governance (NAG), leaving out BJP’s own agenda of constructing the Temple in Ayodhya, repealing Article 370 of the Constitution and adopting common civil code. But it was feared that the leading and dominant partner of the coalition had a hidden agenda which would be sought to be implemented behind the back of the secular segments of the ruling combine. Saffronising administration, education and culture has proved to be the most significant part of that hidden agenda.

Significantly, BJP kept to itself the sensitive departments of Home, Human Resources Development and Information and Broadcasting while other less important departments were allotted to its allies. These departments became its instruments for penetration, infiltration and indoctrination in the sphere of administration, education, culture and mass communication etc. from long-term point of view.

For instance, the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) has been packed with those who have openly taken the RSS position on the Masjid-Mandir and other issues. The moves on Prasar Bharati are meant to acquire a tight grip on this powerful electronic media.

**Peddling RSS Bigwigs in Administration**

Three top leaders of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the parent organisation of the BJP and their ‘Sangh Parivar’, the repository of their communal ideology, were installed as Governors of UP, MP and Bihar, thus converting these Raj Bhawans into the citadels of the Saffron Brigade. It is well known how rajyapal Sunder Singh Bhandari obliged the BJP-Samata combine by dismissing the Rabri Devi government in Bihar and how the Parliament had to intervene to restore that government within a month in early 1999.
He went out of way to appoint many pro-BJP teachers as Vice-Chancellors of the universities ignoring the list of candidates provided by the Bihar government. Tussles between the MP governor Bhai Mahabir and the state Congress government, are also well known.

Even after getting reduced to the caretaker status, the Vajpayee government has not refrained from appointing their choicest persons to most important posts. For example, Home secretary B. P. Singh has been replaced by Kamal Pandey disregarding the objections from opposition parties. Another choice person has been appointed as the chairman of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT). He was the chairman of the NCTE. After his term expired, he was given a full term extension some six months ago. Now he has been shifted to the coveted post of the chairman of the NCERT. His only qualification is said to be that he was a student of the HRD minister and a trusted supporter of the Sangh Parivar.

As a matter of fact, Vajpayee government transferred 21 senior bureaucrats within 24 hours of its becoming the caretaker. Just the other day, Chief Election Commissioner Dr. M. S. Gill had appealed for restraint in actions and decisions. "The bureaucratic shuffle is the Vajpayee regime's answer to the poll panel chief. It seriously offends constitutional propriety and democratic conventions," said Rajiv Dhawan, a constitutional expert.

Former Chief Election Commissioner T. N. Seshan said, "A transfer of four or five officers is certainly a routine administrative exercise, but to transfer 21 seems to stretch the logic. Legally the government may be right. Not morally". But the Information and Broadcasting minister Pramod Mahajan is in no mood to listen to any such sane advice. He said: "It is the government's prerogative to change officers and we did it. It can be the subject of critical comments in the media but for us it was routine. If the need arises, we will go in for more transfers."

This aggressive posture smacks of antipathy against democratic
norms. For two decades a convention has been established that the caretaker government functions in a restricted manner, taking no policy decisions or high level changes in the bureaucratic set up unless it is absolutely necessary. This is so because a caretaker government has no mandate to govern, it has to function only as a stopgap arrangement. But the caretaker Vajpayee government has flouted this convention with impunity.

**Flouting Democratic Norms**

Clear indication of the BJP’s combative mood were provided on May 1, 1999. Cabinet secretary Prabhat Kumar issued a confidential order to all ministries clarifying that the government enjoys “all powers”, meaning thereby that there was no need to exercise any restraint because of being a caretaker government. The BJP leaders asserted that the word “caretaker” did not exist in the Constitution, so the Vajpayee government was not bound to forego any of its powers.

Apparently, BJP leaders are in a hurry to extract as much benefits as possible from their being in power till the elections, one such benefit being saffronisation of the administration by filling important posts with their own candidates. This will also serve to mollify the ‘Sangh Parivar’, that had many grievances against the government.

However, this partisan power politics of the Vajpayee regime which, having lost the confidence of the house and there being no Lok Sabha to control it, is acting like a “super government”, is giving a serious jolt to the democratic norms and ethos of the responsible and accountable governance. It smacks of authoritarian tendencies. This regime defies the President as in case of calling the Rajya Sabha session during the Kargil crisis and clashes with the President and the Election Commission in case of Telecom package. Such instances are large in number.

**Smuggling RSS Views in Education**

The most brazen attempt at saffronising education was made in the education ministers’ conference on October 22-24, 1998 in New
Delhi. Educational reforms and evolving a new education policy were objectives of the conference. But the controversy and confrontation began with the agenda and opening ceremony of the conference.

Such conferences always open with the National Anthem. But the organisers, the central Human Resources Development department of Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, replaced it with the Saraswati Vandana. This was objected to by most of the Education ministers of the non-BJP ruled states, including those of the TDP and the SAD, the partners of the BJP-led alliance at the Centre. Andhra Pradesh Education minister Ms. Pratibha Bharati said that a wrong tradition must not be introduced and the tradition of opening with the National Anthem should be continued. The Education minister of Punjab said that the central government is encouraging the RSS style in Education.

They were not opposed to Saraswati Vandana as such. What they objected to was its introduction to an official function of the government. Even Murli Manohar Joshi agreed and announced that the proceedings would start after the National Anthem. But after the National Anthem, the Saraswati Vandana was allowed to be sung. This provoked the non-BJP Education ministers. They walked out of the Conference Hall alleging that the Centre was introducing RSS ideology in education.

**RSS Agenda in Education Ministers Conference**

The second item on the agenda that invited concerted opposition from the non-BJP Education ministers was the proposal to invite P. D. Chittalangia, an RSS functionary, and to ask him to read a paper on Educational Reforms. He was to read his paper in the very beginning of the proceedings. In essence, the conference was supposed to deliberate on the educational reforms proposed by the RSS ‘educationist’. The purpose was to make the conference adopt the education policy of the RSS.

The non-BJP Education ministers staged walk out to protest against this item on the agenda. The third item on the agenda these minis-
ters protested against was the annexure circulated among the participants for consideration containing recommendations prepared by so-called educationists of the Vidya Bharati, an educational institution run by the RSS.

Education ministers of West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Punjab and Pondicherry vehemently opposed the agenda, shouted slogans against smuggling RSS ideology into Education and staged noisy walkout. Dr. Joshi relented. He announced that Chittalangia’s paper would not be considered and annexures would be removed from the agenda.

Manjit Singh, Education minister of Punjab said: “We are supporting the central government on the basis of National Agenda and not on the basis of the agenda of the BJP. It is very unfortunate that the BJP is deviating from National Agenda and is trying to implement its own agenda. This has put us in an embarrassing position.”

Educating the Education Ministers

Inviting a private person like Chittalangia to deliver lecture on educational reforms in Education ministers’ conference is really surprising. He is not even a well known educationist. An industrialist by profession, he is a member of the Vidya Bharati, an RSS institution. He runs an institution named ‘Friends of the Tribals’ Society’ under guidance of the RSS. This organisation runs schools in tribal areas through which communal ideology of the RSS is inserted into the innocent minds of the tribal children. This RSS ‘educationist’ was invited by the organisers of the conference to guide the Education ministers!

And here are some samples of what reforms such ‘educationists’ recommended to the conference:

1. Indianisation, nationalisation and spiritualisation of curriculum.

2. Compulsory teaching of the Sanskrit from Class III to X.

3. Amending Article 29 and 30 of the Constitution to provide
the same rights to all citizens that have been provided to the mi-
norities in these Articles.

4. Education for only selected students, commercialisation of edu-
cation.

5. ‘Morality’ and spiritualism to be taught at all levels of edu-
cation.

6. Marks to be replaced by ‘grades’ in examinations.

7. Twenty to twenty five per cent of the curriculum has to be
about the Indian culture at all levels.

8. House keeping to be made the compulsory subject for the
girl students.

Sanghi Experts Getting Official Status

The HRD department claimed that these recommendations were
prepared by educational experts. But the fact is that these recom-
mandations were prepared by the National Educational Reforms Con-
ference organised by the Vidya Bharati of the RSS in August last
year. Vidya Bharati runs thousands of schools throughout the coun-
try to propagate the RSS ideology. ‘Experts’ invited in that confer-
ence were all connected with the RSS. Institutions engaged in run-
ning schools and colleges such as the Ram Krishna Mission, DA¥,
Kendriya Sanstrita Pratisthan etc. were not invited.

Significantly, many such ‘experts’ friendly to the RSS have been
included in important councils and committees of the government.
For example, Kirit Joshi, chairman of the Dharam Hinduja Interna-
tional Centre, has been appointed a member of the Governing Coun-
cil of the Shimla based Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. J. S.
Rajput has been inducted into NCERT.

Some of the ‘experts’ belong to such organisations which are known
to be connected with the Sangh Parivar. They include Ram Prabhash
of Sanatan Dharma Sansthan, New Delhi, R. C. Verma of Columbia
Foundation School, G. K. Kamvar of the Society of Jain Schools,
Jaidev Sahni of the Education and Training Institute, Nripendra Narain

Inclusion of the recommendations of the RSS outfits in the agenda of the Education ministers’ conference was not accidental. Dinanath Batra, general secretary of the Vidya Bharati, revealed that M. M. Joshi had called a meeting in which he had assured that these recommendations would be added to the agenda of the conference.

**Saffronisation in BJP-ruled States**

These recommendations are already in vogue in the states ruled by the BJP. For example, the Secondary Education Board of Rajasthan has prescribed many books published by the RSS outfits for teaching in the schools. One of the topics in these books is the knowledge of culture (Sanskriti Gnan). Some samples of knowledge imparted through these books are:

1. Map of India contained in these books depict Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar as Indian territories.
2. Originally, the Iran was inhabited by the Indians.
3. India is credited with carrying the light of culture to China.
4. Classics of Homer were influenced by the Ramayana.
5. The languages of the Red Indians of the North America originated from the Indian languages.
6. Hind Mahasagar is ‘Hindu Mahasagar’, Sea of Arab is ‘Sindhu Sagar’ and Bay of Bengal is ‘Ganga Sagar’.
7. Isa Masih is said to have stayed in the Himalayas for long and received wisdom from the Indian saints.
8. About the Muslims, it has been said that though they do not believe in idols, they intensely wish to go to Mecca to have a ‘darshan of the Shivling’.

**Propagating National and Religious Chauvinism**

Imparting such ‘knowledge’ smacks of not only communalisation of education but also of religious chauvinism. But distorting history
Two years ago the RSS organised a conference of the officers of the Delhi government, then ruled by the BJP, at Kurukshetra. Purpose was to equip the officers with the ideology of the RSS. And the syllabus for the school students of Delhi for year 1998 included such historical personalities as M. S. Golvalkar, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Vir Savarkar and Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji. Except Shivaji, all are the RSS personalities. In Allahabad a meeting of state's top officials including IAS officers was organised where RSS chief Rajju Bhaiyya delivered lecture.

Fortunately, people of Rajasthan and Delhi have got rid of the saffron menace. Last year, they routed the BJP in the Assembly elections and threw them out of power. But in UP, Maharashtra and Gujarat saffronisation of education continues unabated. People of Maharashtra may discard the BJP-Shiv Sena combine in the Assembly polls scheduled to be held in September next.

**Dangerous Obsession with ‘One Culture’ Myth**

A culture that impels some body to attack people gathered in a prayer meeting at a sacred place of worship, simply because those people belong to some other religious community, can never claim to be the Indian culture. Unfortunately, this is what the saffron brigade has done in Gujrat when they attacked the prayer meetings of the Christians and burnt their churches and Bibles last year. In Madhya Pradesh four nuns were raped at Jhabua. VHP termed it as a natural reaction. In Orissa, a Christian missionary Graham Stains and his two minor sons were burnt alive at Manoharpur. Such attacks on the Christians were organised also in other states. After the Muslim minority, now the Christian minority has been made the target of attack by those who are obsessed with the obnoxious concept of ‘cultural nationalism’ and ‘one culture, one people, one nation’ theory.

**Queering the Sport’s Pitch**

Shiv Sena (SS) chief Bal Thackeray, too, served the interests of the Islamic fundamentalists when he announced last year that his outfit would not allow Pakistani cricket team to play matches in
India. His minion Shiv Sainiks went on rampage. They sneaked into the Firoz Shah Kotla cricket ground and damaged the pitches prepared for Indo–Pak matches. They attacked the office of the Board for Cricket Control of India (BCCI) located in Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, beaten up the staff and officials and ransacked it. They even threatened the Indian cricket players of dire consequences if they dared to play matches with the Pakistan team. The situation in Mumbai became so serious that the BCCI had to decide to shift their office to Kolkata, which they withheld only after they got the assurance of protection from the state government.

'Sportman spirit' is alien to those who are addicted to communal-fascist ideologies. But the Central government was committed to provide protection to the Pakistan cricket team. Thus, the Shiv sainiks, the closest ally of the BJP and a constituent of the BJP-led alliance government at the Centre, put the Vajpayee government in an embarrassing situation. Instead of taking strong action against the huligans, the Home minister L K Advani rushed to Mumbai to pray to the Shiv Sena supremo to put off the agitation against the Indian tour of the Pakistan cricket team.

**Targeting Films and Film stars**

As with sports, so with arts and artists. Shiv Sainiks ransacked cinema halls to prevent the film *Fire* from being screened because it was uncomfortable for the forces of the Hindutva. Dilip Kumar, one of the great actors of the Indian films, is planning to leave Mumbai and shift to Delhi. Reason is that the Shiv Sainiks can not tolerate thespian Dilip Kumar who dared to accept the award of *Nishan-e-Imtiaz*, the highest civilian award of Pakistan, though he did it after consulting the Prime Minister Vajpayee. After the Kargil conflict flared up, Shiv Sainiks set about forcing Dilip Kumar to return this award.

Earlier, reputed actor A.K. Hangal and actress Shabana Azmi and others suffered witchhunt by the Shiv Sainiks for their secular credentials. Such witchhunt and vandalism was not confined to cine
artists alone. M. F. Hussain, a painter of international repute, suffered similar vandalism at the hands of Shiv Sainiks and other outfits of the saffron brigade during 13 months rule of the BJP-led alliance. Hussain’s paintings were destroyed by Bajrang Dal in Ahmedabad.

Surprisingly, these ‘cultural nationalists’ are not worried about cultural imperialism and western life styles being pushed through the western private channels of the electronic media. Foreign media moghals are provided with more and more facilities to dominate the ever expanding viewership of the TV networks. Now caretaker Vajpayee Govt. is trying to hand over Radio Channels to foreign private companies to provide ‘direct to home’ broadcasting facilities. FM channels have been privatised.

They are also not worried about the vulgarisation of our national language Hindi by the electronic media. A mixture of Hindi and English (Yehi hai right choice baby variety) is being projected through it. In the BJP-ruled state of Gujrat, the Saffron Brigade went on rampaging the Churches and the mission schools and colleges with impunity as the Police and the administration had no guts to lay their hands on the hooligans. Rather, the police became accessory to the Crime when it began to prepare dossiers of the people belonging to the minority communities.

That reminded one of what the SS goons had done during the Nazi program against the Jews in Germany in the thirties. They had marked the houses of the Jews in advance to locate them during the attacks. As the Sri Krishna Commission has recorded in its findings, the Shiv Sainiks took the help of voter lists to locate the shops and houses of the minority communities during the Mumbai riots of 1992-93.

The centre turned a deaf ear to the cry and complains of the victims. Prime Minister visited Gujarat and said that the incidents have been ‘exaggerated’. By calling for a ‘national debate’ on conversion, he virtually justified those who were committing the crime!

Historical evolution of the composite culture, aptly defined as
unity in diversity, the pluralism, is the basis of the Indian Nation. Any attempt to impose ‘one culture’ myth will prove to be disastrous. Identifying culture with religion will prove to be even worse. Such attempts may serve the interests of the Islamic fundamentalists, Indian or Pakistani varieties, but not the national interests of our country. A new brand of a mixed language called ‘Hinglish’ is being popularised among the new generation. Films and serials depicting sex, violence and horror and spreading obscurantism and superstition are polluting the minds of the youngsters and pushing them towards crimes, causing serious setback to moral, ethical and social values. Such degeneration is a matter of least concern for the saffron brigade and their Sanghi rulers.

Dislodge Them Before It is Too Late

Saffronisation of national security resulted in the Kargil crisis. Saffronisation of foreign policy is pushing India into the dragnet of US imperialism. Saffronisation of our country will cause a serious threat to our national sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic polity. If the BJP alliance comes back to power after the L.S polls, it will indulge in saffronisation with vengeance. So, the growth of saffronities has to be curbed.

The need of the hour is to unite all the secular, democratic and patriotic forces to defeat the BJP-led alliance and prevent them from coming back to power.
Electoral Aims of the Communist Party of India

☐ Defeat the BJP and its allies, and prevent their return to power; to protect the secular character of our country, strengthen the brotherhood among the people, and advance towards social justice;

☐ Increase the representation of the CPI and the other Left parties in the 13th Lok Sabha, so as to play an important and influencing role in the country’s political future, and for effectively voicing the interests of the toiling masses;

☐ Ensure the success of secular and democratic parties and forces and strive to build the Third Front in India’s politics so as to curb the emergence of a two-party system which both BJP and Congress desire.

Election Symbol