

Religious Fundamentalism and Nationalism: Reflections on Hindu perspective

Preliminary remarks

We, in India, since 1980s, have been watching, with deep concern, the unprecedented rise of religious fundamentalism, in almost all the major religious communities. The events, such as, conversions of few fishermen in South India, rise of militancy in the north-west, and tribal aspirations in the north-east, have all been ascribed to religious factors by the government in power. The ascendancy to political power of the parties owing allegiance to religious right, and the consequent reaction of the majority religious community has rung warning bells in the ears of minority religious communities throughout India. The assault on Golden temple and the destruction of Babri Masjid, and now Churches, attacks on Christian individuals and their religious institutions, and murder of priests and missionaries, are the events that cannot just be brushed aside by, what the politicians tend to say, 'rare and isolated cases'; rather they are the signs, on the one hand, of growing intolerance of the majority religious community, and the sign, on the other, of hardening of the inner core of their religious identity- *Hindutva* (Hindu-ness). This new phenomenon, and its implications, needs a serious study in order to meet the challenges it now poses to the other religious communities.

I am, at the moment, inclined to limit the scope of this presentation, leaving out the issues in their total aspects, from the point of view of religions that are seriously practiced, and adhered to, in India. I shall be limiting myself, for the sake of clarity and guidance for our meaningful discussion, to the understanding of fundamentalism and Nationalism in the Hindu religious tradition. This will help us to understand the rationale, characteristic and pattern of contemporary Hindu Nationalism.

The terms

One needs to be clear in his understanding of the term, "Hindu". Generally, it refers to a particular religion, and the adherent of that religion, which is a majority religion in India, and the State religion in Nepal. The term, in its broader understanding, also has cultural and sociological connotations and implications. It, therefore, should have to be differentiated from India and Indian. I need not to go into detail in discussing the etymological, political, social and cultural meanings of the term that are associated with it; they are indeed helpful in understanding the process of Indigenisation, inculturation, cross-cultural-communication and Indianization. We may just keep this in mind, in order to understand the confusion, and clarity as well, it creates in the minds of different people, and religious communities. One has to discern the meaning that is applied, and used, by different people of diverse orientations, from the context it is used.

Fundamentalism, in its positive aspect, is always an acceptable term, if it refers to 'going back to the fundamentals of one's religion and it's religiosity. Religious fundamentalism is often at odds with the generally accepted norms of human behaviour. The faithful followers attribute rationality to what is otherwise irrational; they tend to ascribe meaning to otherwise absurd. Last

century and half is generally marked as the revival of Hinduism along these lines: reformation, missionary movements, and construction of temples abroad, exporting priests etc., to note a few. The negative aspect, however, does not bring cheers in the minds and lives of most of its own adherents, certainly not in the life of the minority religious communities. It tends to see the world from its own limited worldview of religio-cultural context, rejecting all the others, and imposes it upon others as well, whether they agree to it or not. Uniform personal laws, cow protection drive, attempts to change historical facts in educational books, *Saraswati-vandana* (singing of praises in honour of Saraswati, the goddess of learning and wisdom) are not just political issues. Theocratic religions and societies do not feel it necessary to apologize for the phenomenon; secularists and pluralists are expected to do so, as this trend is now most obviously marked in the religious communities found in pluralistic societies, such as India.

Nationalism is the most misunderstood and abused term in our context in India. It is an idea that is formed and developed in European setting, and then exported to India through liberal Indians and non-Indians. It first had aristocratic class affiliation, prior to French revolution, before opening way to the priests and princes under Luther's reformation, and finally, giving way to '*hoi polloi*' during the French revolution. Nationalism, as commonly understood is the pride in and devotion to one's own nation and its interest. It is a sense of national identity, often associated with aspirations for national independence or separatism. It is best understood as a pattern of trends and tendencies arising within the complexities of history, which the present Indian Government and Council of Historical Research are trying to unfold.

For the clarity of purpose, may I suggest to limit the use of the term within the context of "collective Hindu consciousness"! What we observe in the contemporary India is a growth of religious Nationalism centered around Hindu religious ideology as a fusion of patriotism with religious identity. Political Nationalism can take a back seat in our discussion here, though we cannot completely immunize ourselves from its role and implication in building up Hindu Nationalism. Religio-politico-utopia of '*Aryavrata*' (Land of the Aryan), *Bharat-varsha* (the land of Bharat, a legendry and mythical king), and *Rama-rajya* (Kingdom of Lord Rama) is the guiding principle of such a Nationalism.

The terms quoted above provide a clue to understand Hindu Nationalism, first within the context of a race, then the integration of races and finally an extension of Divine providence.

It will be helpful to keep in mind that Hindu Nationalism and Hindu fundamentalism are synonymous terms; they are two sides of the same term, Hindu.

Brief survey of the History of Hindu Nationalism

It is difficult to place the development of Hindu consciousness into a particular time in history; it has taken along time to develop, and exhibit itself, as such a consciousness in the collective and group identity of a very diversified people of such a vast land as Indian sub-continent. One can see it exhibiting itself in the hierarchical structures of social and religious institutions within

Hindu community. It is marked by differentiation within Hindu society that is stratified in its very own characteristic order, known as caste system (*Varnashram Dharma / Jati Dharma*). This system provided a process of assimilation of people of different races, classes and religions into one homogenous community. The basic principle of this system is acceptance of hierarchical order, controlled by a privileged few, called Brahmins, under the cover of Divine sanction. This idea was challenged by the Buddhists and Jain thinkers and reformers, but without much success; they only saw it codified in the Hindu *Dharma-Shashtra* (Hindu Personal and Social Laws) and their gradual acceptance in the fast emerging composite society.

This process came to a confusing halt with the arrival of Christian and Muslim trading communities in the first and seventh centuries in Christian era who refused to be integrated with the 'primitive communities' in accordance with the codified laws and preferred to preserve their own identities. The local inhabitants gradually accepted them as different 'nationalities'. The Zoroastrian, and Jewish communities were accepted so in the past, so also these new communities of traders and new settlers. Things developed for the worse once these communities began to accept the members of the 'primitive communities' through proselytizing, especially during the Muslim and European colonial expansion of the sub-continent. This is one of the major factors that gave rise to majority and minority communalism in India.

With the arrival of European colonizers, especially the British, introduced numerous changes into the subcontinent, which led to the growth of new India in the second half of nineteenth century. Inspired by the French and American revolutions, the principles of liberty, equality and self-governance became the corner stone for the new political Nationalism. The social and religious reformations of the nineteenth century within the Hindu community began to show a moderate version of religious Nationalism as well, with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj, Vivekanand, Bipin Chandra Pal etc., taking the lead.

One may, however, note that the rise and growth of Indian form of Nationalism, from nineteenth century onward, rotated around two main axes. The first axis is Hinduism, which originated and developed in the country itself and which is the religion of the masses; and the second is Islam, which is of foreign origin and is the religion of a substantial minority. Both Hindus as well as Muslims used religion as a platform for mobilizing support for their social and political agendas, and by the end of the century, they began to compete with each other on communal terms, a trend that has become distinctive characteristic of Indian Nationalism. Demand for a status to Hindi or Urdu, cow slaughter, protection of personal laws, reservation in jobs, two-nation theory are but a few examples in this direction.

Leaving aside a discussion on Muslim Nationalism, let us concentrate our attention, for the present, on Hindu Nationalism.

a. Moderate Hindu Nationalism

When India was awakened from its centuries long slumber by the colonial and western cultural onslaught, certain Hindu leaders started making a fresh examination of their ancient heritage in order to adjust their faith to the needs and ideals of the modern age. The task was undertaken by the neo-Vedantins who were educated in Europe and influenced by the modern ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity. Most of them were attracted towards Nationalism during their struggle for the emancipation of their motherland since it was their main crutch in their fight against British imperialism. Nationalism exalts attachment and loyalty to a group while the Vedantic philosophy involves love of man, irrespective of caste, colour, creed and nationality, and attempts reconciliation on the lines laid down by the prophets of humanitarian and liberal schools of Nationalism of the West.

The neo-Vedantins undertook socio-religious reforms on the basis of Vedantic thought through which they evolved the aims and objectives of both Indian as well as Hindu national movement. They believed that its message would unite India in a common brotherhood and create favourable condition for her political emancipation. They strongly believed in the unity of God and equated spiritual freedom with the national freedom as well. They were greatly influenced by Islam, Christianity and Western rationalism and liberalism. They combined their doctrinal concepts and principles in order to denounce polytheism and idolatry into which Hinduism had degenerated. They attacked the social evils like caste system, child marriages, burning of widows, female infanticide; and advocated widow remarriage and promotion of equal status for men and women. They favoured English education, and many regarded British rule a necessary evil, as it was conducive to purify Hinduism, yet they were called nationalist of a special order.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Devendranath Tagore (1817-1907), Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84) and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) is associated with this kind of thinking. One can clearly mark the eclecticism at religious front, and a reforming zeal on the social front, in their kind of Nationalism based upon the principles of Vedantic thought and western liberalism.

b. Combative Hindu Nationalism

It was natural that a few would turn to the source of the Vedanta itself, the Vedas, and derive inspiration from it a different kind of Nationalism suited for the Hindu masses. It was Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83) and his Arya Samaj who presented a combative spirit of Hindu Nationalism in religion and politics. He encouraged Hindus to take pride in their race and culture, to turn back to Sanskrit and Vedas and advocated the abolition of non-Vedic practice of caste system. He also introduced the notion of *Shuddhi*, a sacrament for purification, for re-conversion of Christians and Muslims into Hindu fold, a rite that is now often used by the zealots. It identified the prosperity and future of India with the coalescence of Hinduism and Indian Nationalism and stigmatized the obstructions of the coalescence as an inexcusable sin. The attacks on the Christians and Muslims turned their religious Nationalism into extremism,

intolerance and militancy that became the hallmark of the activities of Rashtriya Swayam-Sevak Sangha (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in the recent times.

c. Political Hindu Nationalism

The rise of extremism in religion and politics in India began with the failures of moderates in Congress Party and the unrest among the youth who believed more in revolution than in the passing resolutions. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) was one of the first to oppose the liberals, moderates and progressives as compromisers and strongly believed that social reform cannot be brought about by the foreign government but could only be evolved through a process of organic growth in free India. His overall consideration was the promotion of solidarity among the Hindus; he, therefore, emphasized the superiority of Hinduism and advocated its revival, and identified Indian Nationalism and Hindu Nationalism with Hindu cultural traditions. He politicized the Ganapati festival and converted Shivaji into a cult figure for the purpose of uniting all Hindus under one umbrella to fight against the British rule. Tilak's ideology of Nationalism served both the religious and political objectives. He perused such ideals in order to mobilize and secure the support of the masses and to reanimate and redirect their militant traditions.

d. Integrated Nationalism of Mahatma Gandhi

No discussion on Nationalism would be complete without mentioning Mahatma Gandhi and his contribution in developing the Indian version of Nationalism over a period of more than three decades of active participation in freedom struggle. He considered freedom movement a religious movement designed to purge Indian political life of corruption, deceit, terrorism and the false notion of white superiority. For Gandhi, politics was religion-oriented and was based upon the principles of truth and non-violence. He identified truth with God, and treated religion as a search after truth, irrespective of the way the search is conducted, through science, particular religiosity or social service. This search includes the atheist and skeptic who do not hesitate to deny or doubt the existence of God. He believed that truth is the essence of all religions; therefore all religions are partially true. He taught that the adherents of religions should pay equal respect to the faiths of others and learn from them for their own spiritual growth. Although he preferred to call himself a "*sanatani* Hindu', he was not a fanatic. As a self-respecting person would do, he wanted freedom for himself and his countrymen, because it was only under the condition of freedom, genuine '*Swaraj*' (self-rule) could be nourished and grown. He pointed out that Nationalism as such is not evil; it is the narrowness, selfishness, and exclusiveness that are the bane of modern nations that is evil. He rejected the militancy of fellow nationalists, and held that nations, like individuals, could only be made through the agony of cross, and no other way. It was for this rejection that he was strongly opposed by the Hindu, as well as Muslim, communal nationalists and fell prey to the hatred spread by them.

Gandhi also used the ideal of '*Swadeshi*' (made within the country) for Nationalism. For him, this ideal involves love and sacrifice for the motherland, as well as our obligations to fellow humans. He also brought into focus the desire of the masses to be independent from any product that was produced outside India with a view to extract capital out of the country. He taught his countrymen to initiate programme for the economic and social up-liftment of the society, especially the poor and the villagers. He was deeply concerned with the poor and the oppressed and the untouchability practiced in Indian social system. In order to improve their lot, he set up village and cottage industries in which their labour and expertise can be made use for mutual benefit within the rural and urban societies. He would not compromise when the people are deprived of their legitimate rights. He, on the social front, fought a relentless fight for the abolition of untouchability till the very end of his life.

Gandhi's doctrine of *Swadeshi* reconciles Nationalism with internationalism on the same principles and ideals of altruism, love for humanity and equality of humans before God. For him, the ideals of *Swadeshi*, which involves love, and service of motherland, is not different in essence from our obligation to serve mankind since our capacity to serve humanity is conditioned by our knowledge of the world in which we live. He believed that service to humankind begins with serving our immediate neighbours and then extends beyond national and international borders. His patriotism is cosmopolitan as it includes certain universal values such as love and service. He, therefore, earnestly believed in the ideal of one world which could be attained only when all nations becomes free, when the smallest nation can feel as tall as the tallest; his Nationalism is only a step towards internationalism.

e. Pro-active/Narrow Hindu Nationalism

The extreme religious and militant Hindu Nationalism, *Hindutva* as it is commonly known now, inherited its theoretical and ideological shape in the thoughts and activities of V.D.Savarkar (1883-1966). The core of his ideology was the concept of *Hindutva* (literally, Hindu-ness, as such it encompasses the entire gamut of religious, cultural, social, political and linguistic aspect of Hindu life). In his book '*Hindutva*', Savarkar makes a distinction between Hinduism and *Hindutva* on the basis of racial concept. A person is a Hindu, irrespective of religion he follows, if he has Hindu blood flowing in his veins. To him, *Hindutva* is a history and a tradition of the people of this land; any one out side of it is not a Hindu. One cannot be incorporated into Hindu fold as long as he has not adopted India's ancient culture, its history, inherited its blood and has come to look upon this land not only the land of his love but even of his worship.

The logical implications of such a definition is that neither a faith of foreign origin, nor a person of foreign ancestral origin can ever be a part of the concept of *Hindutva*, even if he has converted himself to Hinduism. So also one's love for India, or one's following Hindu faith, or one's subscribing to the Hindu caste system, is not enough for one to claim any part in the Hindu nation. One must love the Hindu culture, which includes Hindu religion, Sanskrit and other

Indian languages, Hindu architecture, laws, festivals etc., in order to be a Hindu. (Savarkar excludes Urdu, an indigenously developed language as well as English)

Another implication is that Indian Christians and Indian Muslims are not Hindus even if they are recent converts, are resident of this land and are racially pure in blood with Hindu parentage. It is so because they have adopted a new cult of foreign origin and ceased to own Hindu culture as whole. Now they belong to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and hero-worship, their fairs and festivals, their ideals and outlook of life, have ceased to be common with the Hindus. As such, their loyalty to India would remain suspect so long as they do not give up their faith in favour of Hinduism as defined by Savarkar. In the ultimate analysis of his religious outlook, Savarkar openly favours Hinduism as a superior faith compared to other religions, Indic or non-Indic in origin.

Savarkar also has a political message to convey: Hindus of India must unite, for they have to fight their enemies, the non-Hindus. It has a very powerful message, for the inspiration of many, to establish hegemony of a religion, and a race, over others. In a nutshell, *Hindutva* is an extremely exclusivist racial concept which has the potential to destroy any pluralist society.

It is not only the temptation, but also the necessity of the contemporary situation in India, that a discussion on RSS be introduced here, as this organization, and its associates, are the torchbearers of the *Hindutva*.

RSS was founded by Dr. Keshav B. Hedgewar (1889-1940) in 1925 with the expressed mission to organize the Hindus on nationalist lines and to radicalize them to hasten the end of British rule in India. Although its objective was national regeneration, the broad means, methods, membership and strategy it employed to attain its objectives was, and is, to be the solidarity of the Hindu community. It also seeks to instill among its members a militant awareness of their common heritage and destiny. The ideology of *Hindutva* as practiced by the RSS is often associated with communalism, violence against and hatred for Muslims and Christian communities. Under the stewardship of M. S. Golwalkar (1906-73), RSS identified the Indian nation with the Hindus whom it regarded as indigenous sons of the Indian soil. He regarded Hinduism as the heart of the Indian nation and the philosophical principles of the Vedas as the soul of it. Many among the Hindus, he felt, were degenerated during the period of Muslim domination and denationalized through large-scale westernization during British rule. The revival of Hinduism and the revitalization of the Hindu society was his one and only creed, it was not difficult for him to locate the antagonists of the Hindus; the Muslims, the Christian missionaries and their followers, and the westernized Indians. In the vision of realization of *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation), Muslims and Christians would be reduced to secondary status of citizenship. He prescribed military structure for RSS and military discipline for its members.

RSS claims that it is a non-political social and cultural organization, and has overtly kept itself away from party politics of the Indian democratic system; but many doubt about the claim. In the past, as it is now, it has its own satellites, assuming the role of political fronts. *Bhartiya Jan Sangha*, a rightist Hindu party, founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (1901-52) had links with

the RSS; Nehru called it 'an illegitimate child of RSS'. Today it is Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is another associate of the RSS, which is known for its virulence towards the minority communities. Others are Bajarang Dal (BD) and the Shiva Sena.

Extremist Hindu Nationalism of RSS type has immensely contributed in vitiating the political and social atmosphere of the pluralistic Indian society. One can see the disturbing growth of an Indian version of fascism, communalism and religious fundamentalism within Hindu Nationalism that is counter to the real spirit of Hindu religious tradition.

Fascism tries to establish an authoritarian regime by violence, dictated unity and overall priority to military discipline, fighting spirit and ruthless action. It insisted in the principle that the weak would be conquered by the strong. In fascism, service to the nation is the supreme duty. Absolute devotion is instilled into all citizens by the use of all means of communication. Criticism of the government is not allowed, cultural or intellectual exchange with other countries is closely regulated. Fascism is a political attitude, which considers the authority of the nation, state, race, caste or community as the centre of life. In the Indian democratic system the fascist tendencies are slowly entering through the back door in the guise of communalism and religious fundamentalism, creating situations that result into communal and religious conflicts, harmony and riots. It was Indira Gandhi who unveiled her fascist face during emergency period (1975-77), but was resolutely defeated by the Indian electorates in general elections in 1977, apparently ending a threat of constitutional dictatorship. At present, the fascist elements are more apparent in the social system in the form of social hierarchy and in the *Hindutva* ideology of rightist forces.

The origin of communalism, Indian national consciousness and Hindu Nationalism are almost contemporary; they grew together in history. The communal issues emerged particularly during the partition of Bengal and Bengali renaissance, and ventilated through literature, religious societies and organizations and extremist ideology. They were also part and parcel of the 'divide and rule' policy of the government in power, and group managers of political parties. In the Indian political scenario, it has always proved to be a short cut to political success. First it was the Hindu-Muslim divide that formed the centre of communalism in Indian society for political gains, now almost all social and religious groups are prone to such divisions for narrow and instant political advantage.

Hindu Nationalism has also manifested its face through another characteristic that is associated with religious fundamentalism. As it is noted, fundamentalism, in the Indian context, may be understood as the other face of Nationalism. Many religious and political commentators saw in the Rama-janmabhumi-Babri Masjid dispute an indication of the emergence of militant Hindu fundamentalism in India along the lines of Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism. This may give rise to the emergence of other kind of fundamentalism in minority religious communities, such as Christians and the Buddhist, mainly due to the security concerns. The nature of Hindu religious fundamentalism is same as it is found elsewhere; it tends to justify absurdity and irrationality in religious faith, practice and tradition and claim the uniqueness and superiority of Hinduism over

and above all other religious traditions. It resists the idea of integrating the sacred and secular and holds that the religiosity of Hinduism permeates the life of a Hindu. As fundamentalists see it, extremism in defense of their faith is a virtue; moderation in defense of faith is an act of omission, and as such, a sin; group affiliation and pressure always acts as a source of both motivation and psychological support.

Hindu fundamentalism is rather a new phenomenon. It is sustained through four dogmatic assertions: first and foremost is the religious dogmatism that project the Hinduism as the only custodian of true spirituality; the second is scriptural dogmatism that accepts nothing but the Vedas as the depository of all the truth; third is the territorial dogmatism, asserting India as the land of God-realization; and the fourth is the communal dogmatism that asserts the theory of India for Hindus alone. Rejection of such assertions by majority of people, both Hindus and non-Hindus, causes a strong sense of alarm, frustration and feeling of being cornered in the minds of many sensitive and committed Hindus. The ever-growing western influence, increasing Muslim population and its growing influence through its association with the Arab wealth and power, conversion issues, empowering of the powerless by the Christian social and humanitarian service agencies and activists, spread of information technologies in every nook and corner of the country have convinced the Hindus that they have only themselves to support. Personal and social frustration among many Hindus fills their personalities with repressed impulses, such as selfishness, aggression, jealousy, cruelty, feelings of inferiority and hatred against minority communities, expression of which can only invite social censure, but it turns into honourable and heroic, once they are directed against the minorities for the cause of the fundamentalists. The cause behind the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, riots in Bombay and other places against the Muslim community, gruesome murder of the Steins family, murders of Christian priest and nuns, attacks on the Christian institutions and in-habitats are the expressions of such latent and suppressed feelings. The talks of conversion debates and anti-conversion bills are nothing but the expression of Hindu frustration, intolerance and envy to the increasing population of Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Sikh communities and their support for the cause of the down-trodden.

Modern, and pro-active, Hindu Nationalism, with the supportive encouragement of the sympathetic government, is showing its face as a missionary religion characterized by aggressive passions, enthusiasm, numerical obsession and militancy. At the national level, it aims is to consolidate Hindu power by eliminating Christianity and Islam, in order to establish a Hindu nation for Hindus only, replacing all ideologies with Hindu spiritualism and culture. In the global context, their mission is to assert the uniqueness and universalism of Hinduism as the universal remedy for global problems and propagate Hindu culture. In order to fulfill their mission Hindu militants have recently adopted the method of confrontation, combat and conquest. They have realized that they cannot achieve their goals unless Hindus are physically, mentally and spiritually trained, for which history is being re-written, training camps organized,

membership drive undertaken, religious passions aroused, and minority communities attacked and discredited.

3. Reflections

Christian Church and Christians in India have arrived at a crossroad from where they have to make a decision in favour of, or against, their continued witness of faith to their community and nation. The situation is becoming more complex as sporadic acts of violence on the personnel and properties of Christians still continues, along with vicious propaganda of *Hindutva* forces; ministers, Chief Ministers and Prime-Minister are speaking in different tones and language; Christians are charged with internal conflicts and strife; foreign-hand-theory is quite handy and convincing for all kinds of explanation for an act of terrorism.

The Christian community in India has always been very quiet and docile community; it takes a long time to react to the challenges it faces, even if they are annihilating. Last time, it showed its strength and resolve was the time when the famous Tyagi Bill, banning conversion, was introduced in the Indian Parliament for enactment. This time too, it did not, at first, react when a Church at Dang, a rural village in Gujarat, was burnt down and the property of the poor and helpless Christian villagers were destroyed. It was Dr. Rajaratnam who, as the President of National Council of Churches, took note of the incident and rushed to the place to take stock of the things and to show solidarity of the national Churches with the victims of communal hatred. Not only there but elsewhere too he was there to be with the suffering Christian communities. It was NCCI who brought into focus the plight of Dalit and tribal Christians and provided leadership in encountering the propaganda of the *Hindutva* forces. Church and Christians in India are now more sensitive to the plight of fellow-believers anywhere in the country than they were in the past.

Lack of unity and denominational communalism in the Indian Churches are still painful facts that need to be seriously considered. Unity-in-diversity which has been a cementing principle of composite Indian culture can provide us a way to respect each other's historical and spiritual traditions. The principle itself has now been challenged by the descendents of its propounders, a support, and adoption, by a so-called alien and foreign faith will surely bring back normalcy in the most strife stricken Indian society. We failed our people in the recent events that shook the conscience of all the nationalists and secular people of our nation. The leaders of the Evangelicals, Roman Catholic, Church of South India (CSI), Church of North India (CNI) and other denominations were speaking in different tones and were issuing contradictory statements. It took much persuasion, on the part of NCCI and its team of committed workers, to bring the leaders of different Christian traditions together to present an united face of the Church at the time of a grave crisis in the life of Indian Church.

We have yet to learn to stand in solidarity with the people of other faiths on the issues that concern them and lend our support to them. There was not much a whisper when the Golden Temple of the Sikhs was attacked, or the Babri Masjid was raged to the ground, or temples were

pulled down and innocents belonging to the religious communities were killed in communal riots. We did not seek the support of other religious communities, like the Muslims, neo-Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and others who are also missionary religions when Tyagi bill was introduced, and isolated ourselves from other religious communities. Many are surprised to find so much sympathy and support from other religious communities, press and individual to the Christian cause after the manifestation of violent forces of militant *Hindutva* activists. This spirit of solidarity needs to be preserved, maintained and strengthened in order to preserve the unity and secular character of our nation. The ecumenicity of religions in India is the need of the time in order to preserve it from the clutches of bigot and fundamentalist forces. The NCCI and its associate churches should play a key role in evolving, and strengthening, that ecumenicity.

There is much for us to learn from other religious communities, and, at the same time, be sensitive to their feelings and emotions. The words, like 'salvation army', 'conquering for Christ', 'winning the souls', 'every home crusade', 'operation mobilization', can be taken to be same as an attitude of the colonial power and as aggressive as the declaration of 'holy war' against other religious communities. An excuse for aggressive reaction that followed was, thus, provided by such an approach of many of our faithful missionaries of the Gospel. Mission agenda-2000 that was released, with much enthusiasm and pomp and show, did not go well with the majority religious community. They felt that the aggressive evangelism in the form of a programme to reach every village with the message of Christ and providing Bible to every family in India has to be met with the same aggression and show of strength. Thus, a detailed programme was chalked out by different religious fanatic groups, in the form of disruption of evangelical meetings, blocking the ways of the missionaries, harassing the missionaries, burning their literature, attacking, and even killing, the preacher of the Gospel, in order to counter Christian missionary endeavors.

Pluralism, of every shade and form, is a fact of life in our situation in India, so also secularism. This fact is noted and given due consideration in our Constitution, political institutions and parliamentary democratic systems of governance. Articles 15 and 25 gives freedom to every citizen to practice, propagate and protect his way of life and traditions. In the context of atrocities on the minority communities these basic rights are being denied to a part of its citizen, and these rights are to be restored to them. This is not only the responsibility of the minority community but the responsibility of every citizen. The role of communicator is to inform, educate and make them sensitive to the issues so that they may protect their, as well as other's, rights and privileges.

Empowerments of the powerless, voice of the voiceless, and strengthening the weak have been the motives of Christian service agencies and Non-government organizations (NGO). The *Hindutva* forces have targeted Christian organizations in the pretext of their foreign missionary oriented programmes as they are in the forefront in their programmes for educating the uneducated, freeing the bonded labourers, and emancipation programmes for the Dalits, women and tribal. These are considered anti-national activities by these forces. Christian

communicators need to set right the records and help to filter the correct information through his knowledge, and possession, of information technology.

Globalization is in the process of annihilating Nationalism and internationalism, and turning them into some sort of "ism" that is yet to emerge. The tendency now is to import one's own brand of 'ism' into the global market. Hindu Nationalism, in the form of revival of Hinduism with missionary zeal, is preparing itself to launch its programmes for Hindus in Diaspora. It is estimated that the Hindus in Diaspora are poring more Dollars and Deutsch Marks for strengthening *Hindutva* forces and programmes than the overseas Christian missionary organizations. This thrust of new Hindu missionary consciousness, and its implications, is an area that requires further studies and analysis.

Bibliography for reference

1. RCMajumdar, HCRoychaudhury & KDutta: An Advanced History of India, 1946
2. John R. McLane: The Political Awakening in India. Prentice Hall, 1970
3. TNMadan, 'Fundamentalism', Seminar, No.394, June 1972.
4. ARDesai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, 1948
5. Richard P. Tucker: Ranade and the Roots of Indian Nationalism, 1977
6. JFTJordens: Dayananda Saraswati: His Life and Ideas, 1978
7. BRPurohit; Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism, 1965
8. Charles Heimsath: Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms, 1964
9. Partha S. Ghosh: BJP and Evolution of Hindu Nationalism, 1999
10. MKGandhi: My Religion, 1958
11. Luis Fischer: The Life of Mahatma Gandhi
12. Hans Kohn: The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origin and Background, 1956
13. Luis L. Snyder; The meaning of Nationalism, 1954
14. V.D.Savarkar: *Hindutva*, 1949
15. Christopher Jaffrelot: The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1999