

Love Jihad: RSS Unleashes Weapon of Hate

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*Pichhle saal dange hue, khoob hui khoon ki barish.
Agle saal achhi hogi fasal matdaan ki.*

-Gorakh Pandey

[Last year there were riots, an ample monsoon of blood.
Next year will bring a rich harvest during elections.]

It has been a long standing strategy of the BJP and RSS to try and divide the society on communal lines and use the dogmatic thinking and blind-fold ignorance of some people as side-kicks to gain electoral success. One of the latest ploys for polarization framed by some communal Hindutva outfits is a myth called 'Love Jihad'. It refers to alleged efforts to covert non-Muslim girls to Islam through love affairs. The term was first used in 2009 by a fundamentalist group "Hindu Janjagrit Samity" in Kerala and Karnataka. According to them some Muslim youths, riding bikes and wearing denims and sunglasses try and woo Hindu girls to marry them. Later they are forcibly converted to Islam. Those who refuse to convert are assaulted and even raped. A document of the Hindu Janjagrit Samity claims that young Muslim men are trained in camps on the workings of Love Jihad and then sent to "finish off Hinduism once and for all by ensuring that Hindu girls give birth to Muslim child."

Grotesque inversion of reality

Various cases of so called 'Love Jihad' that made news have been proved to be false one after the other. First reported case of Love Jihad made headlines in Karnataka in August 2009, when 18-year-old Silija Raj ran away with 24-year-old Asgar Nazar and got married. The incident did not go down well with Silija's family who tried various means to bring her back from Asgar's home. Her father also filed habeas corpus petition with the Karnataka High Court alleging that her daughter was abducted and compellingly married with an intention of religious conversion. This case became the first publicly cited example of 'Love Jihad' in India. However the Court ruled out the allegations and asked Silija to live with Asgar. Later while speaking to the media Silija herself also welcomed the verdict of the court and made it clear that she had married Asgar by her own will.

During the run-up to the by-elections in Uttar Pradesh in August 2014 it was alleged by the family members of a girl in Meerut that she was abducted, gang-raped and forcibly converted to Islam by a Muslim youth Kaleem and his friends. But later it was revealed by the girl herself that she had willingly left her house to marry Kaleem. She also said that her family was paid 25,000 rupees by a local BJP leader for making this allegation. As the girl set the record straight, BJP immediately retracted from their earlier stand on this issue and started floating various theories like 'not Love Jihad but Love Development' to divert people's attention. But who would make up for the losses that followed the hate campaign and all those lives and properties lost in riots from the concocted propaganda of the BJP?

Some of the revelations made by the Meerut girl might have pushed the Sanghis to the back foot. But this is temporary. It would be wrong to believe that the hate mongers are going to give up on their hate campaign so easily. Whenever one incident is disproved, another will come up. Propagators of the 'Love Jihad' theory will keep quoting newspaper reports of incidents of crime against women where the victim is a Hindu and the accused is a Muslim or Christian. And some of these incidents might also be true. Here, one thing has to be understood very clearly. Any individual who commits a crime will have a religious identity by birth or by faith. But that religion cannot be held responsible for the crime. Nor is it civilised and rational to look for a religious motive and design behind every crime that takes place on earth.

Since the riots in Mujaffarnagar, RSS has been claiming that in western U.P. Hindu women are being tortured by the Muslim men. However, figures do not endorse this claim. Between January and August this year, there have been 334 reported cases of rape in the said region, out of which in 215 cases the victim is a Hindu. In 190 out of these 215(88%) cases the accused is also a Hindu. Evidently the RSS is showing no signs of getting over its tradition of planning propaganda based on fiction instead of facts.

Gender bias, too glaring to be ignored

Yogi Adityanath, the BJP MP who has also been made the 'in-charge' of Uttar Pradesh by Narendra Modi was found to spearhead the hate campaign. He has been recorded saying "if they take one Hindu girl we will convert hundred Muslim girls." Apart from trying to destroy the prevailing social amity between Hindus and Muslims, these comments bring forth another characteristic aspect of the Hindutva assemblage. The Sangh and several moral policing outfits affiliated to it are often heard shouting against 'commodification of women'. But Adityanath's speech actually shows how brazenly the Saffron Brigade considers women as 'commodities', to be exchanged or settled scores with.

In the initial days of electoral democratic system, women were denied voting rights in most of the countries. Custodians of the patriarchal society across the globe believed that women do not possess the wisdom of making correct choices. The Sanghis do not seem to have come out of this perception till date. For them women continue to be mindless entities who fall easily for branded denims, bikes and sunglasses and take random marriage decisions.

Various Hindutva outfits have been running 'save your girl' campaign across the country to prevent the so called 'Love Jihad'. Unfortunately these organisations are never found to be taking stands against issues of genuine concerns like female foeticide and domestic violence against women. All they mean by saving a girl is to stop her from taking her own decisions in life.

Trying to resist inter-religious and inter-caste marriages is denying the basic idea of India. Not only does it creates an atmosphere of communal disharmony but also curbs the right of a woman to decide who she would love or marry.

Setting the society ablaze

The 2014 Loksabha election saw quiet a different mode of campaign by the BJP. Agendas like building Ram Temple at the disputed land in Ayodhya were kept under the carpet and the campaign spoke more of economic development promises. The fact that the BJP chose to depend more on development issues to manage electoral success clearly shows that even they realise that modern

India is unwilling to get attracted by their age old antagonistic communal propaganda. In such a situation, instead of discussing far off things like Ram Janmabhoomi and Kashmir, it's easier to titillate communal sentiment in peoples' mind by talking about their girls being captured by people of another community.

When myths are drilled into the collective psyche, logic takes a back seat. Based on a concocted concept, when a clarion call is given out to the Hindus to protect their daughters from the boys of the Muslim community, it tends to create a social atmosphere of insecurity and eventually antipathy towards the Muslims.

This kind of hysteria might as well encourage and strengthen regressive social bodies like Khaps in Haryana who are against love marriages per se; and for whom 'Honour Killing' is the legitimate answer to inter-religious and inter-caste courtships.

Defeat the insidious intentions of the hate mongers

These systemic efforts by the Saffron brigade to propagate a falsehood called 'Love Jihad' has once again emphasized the fact that despite all the so called pro-development rhetoric by Mr. Modi like 'pehle sauchalay phir devalay', the BJP and RSS continues to be a serious threat to the secular fabric of our country. More than anyone else, they themselves are aware that no matter how many seats they occupy in Parliament, their political and social existence cannot survive if they don't divide the people across religious lines. And an atmosphere of perpetual communal cauldron serves as the best possible ambience for their growth.

However, the divisive elements have not yet succeeded in the way they would have wanted to. 'Love Jihad' campaign has failed in the southern states of the country, where it initially originated. On the eve of the U.P. by-elections, the BJP decided to make the rumour travel north. But in spite of the high pitched communal campaign, they lost 8 out of 11 seats in the state, including the Kairana seat in the riot-affected Mujaffarnagar. Such schemes fail before the eyes of people. But they are dangerous enough if they are implemented viciously. So every single story manufactured by the malice mongers should be examined and exposed in the public domain, to ensure that not even a single person in the society gets motivated by the deliberate falsehood. Let there be a broad unity of all the well meaning people in the society to combat these reactionary divisive propaganda. Let India of the 21st century stand together to ensure a collective opinion building against the politics of hate.

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