

**ALL INDIANS ARE CITIZENS, NOT HINDUS**

According to Mohan Bhagwat all Indians are Hindus. Pursuing the Hindutva agenda, which flies in the face of the Constitution of India, he seeks to erase cultural and religious diversities and unveils the RSS hobbyhorse of homogenization: one nation, one language, one culture.

Prime Minister Modi avows that the Constitution of India is our national scripture. This makes citizenship the sole common identity of all Indians. We, the people of India, are citizens first and Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, etc., only thereafter. Regrettably Modi keeps mum in the face of the anti-Constitutional posturing of Bhagwat. He cannot do so without perjuring the pledge he has taken to uphold and abide by the Indian Constitution.

The idea that those who live in the territory from the Sindhu (in the North) to the sea (in the South) is an arbitrary invention of Savarkar. In his book titled Hindutva he sets out the logic for it. His explanation is an insult to Hinduism. Savarkar condemns Hinduism as a source of endemic disunity and asserts that it can never serve as a framework for national unity. Hence the need to shift from 'dharma' to 'rashtra'. The RSS ideology implies a rejection of Hinduism. The RSS 'Hindu' supersedes the religious 'Hindu', which, regrettably, Hindus refuse to recognize. L. K. Advani, in his own shrewd way, found a way out of this problem through his Ram Mandir issue, by which he has painted the RSS Hindu in the colours of the religious Hindu.

Maharishi Dayanand's stand on this issue is noteworthy. He held that the word Hindu does not exist in the Vedas or Puranas and that it is imported from Persia, where it means 'black', 'thief' etc. India was, and must remain, Aryavarta: the land of the Arya; meaning, the noble. India is the land of human nobility, not of religious bigotry. I have opposed the RSS agenda of imposing Hindu Rashtra on India, because it forebodes a vulgarization of our spiritual heritage. India was never like European nations, each identified only with one religion. This bigotry is an aberration. It breeds violence and intolerance. This mocks the spirit of India. We should never degenerate into a theological state and regress to the pre-modern misery of religious obscurantism and communal bigotry.

Ironically, Mohan Bhagwat's communal posturing derives some legitimacy from the caste practices prevalent among religious minorities. They have

allowed themselves to be colonized by the caste system and Hinduised themselves. But the caste system is, strictly speaking, not even Hindu. It has no Vedic basis. It is, like Hindutva itself, an arbitrary invention of the Brahminical brain aimed at securing a permanent stranglehold on the rest of Indians. I call upon all religious communities to eradicate caste-based practices from them, if they cherish their distinct religious identities.

The allergy to diversity is against the law of nature and it is unscientific. Diversity is the ineradicable law of nature. Progress generates further frontiers of diversity. Not long ago we had only two or three car makers. Today we have many making a great variety of cars that make our roads streaming river of colours. If the RSS logic is applied to life, we shall regress to the Middle Ages.

I appeal to all Indians to wake up to the danger that the RSS ideology poses to the integrity and dynamism of India. The core agenda of BJP is to capture state power on behalf of the RSS so as to convert India into Hindu Rashtra. An unthinkable disaster stares us in the face. We must rise to the occasion and avert it.