

India's Revenge from History

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We must always remember that we must recognise the Ishtas of others and respect them—the other ideas of god—or else worship will degenerate into fanaticism.

Swami Vivekananda¹

The majority of the population in India is Hindu and a sizeable part of it subscribe to a Hindu nationalist ideology. Quite contrary to what was expected India was declared as a secular state. However, the murder of Mahatama Gandhi by a Hindu nationalist Nathuram Godse just five months after the independence in January 1948 raised serious questions about India's secular disposition.

In Prime Minister Narendra Modi's era, the hardliner cult of Hinduism, which is popularly known as 'Hindu nationalism' seems to direct all spheres of life in India. India is secular only on paper. In reality, India is increasingly becoming a Hindu state. All state institutions, i.e., the government, the military, and even the judiciary are leaning towards the dictum of Hindu supremacy.

On 17 May, the Indian court ordered to limit the presence of Muslim worshippers at Gyanvapi Mosque located in the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP).² The order came in the backdrop of a demand made by five Hindu women who wanted to perform Hindu rituals in the premises of the mosque. They believed that the mosque had a Shivling of Lord Shiva.³ The *wuzukhana* of the mosque had a water tank. Beneath the tank there was a fountain, which according to some Hindus, is actually the Shivling of Lord Shiva.

The Hindus believe that Lord Shiva must have appeared in the past on the very site of Gyanvapi Mosque. Lord Shiva is considered to have supreme power when compared with Krishna.⁴ However, there is no evidence that can prove the popular legend about Shiva. The decision of the court is made purely on the suspicion that the fountain 'resembles' the Shivling. It is only

reasonable to question if the court can actually make a ruling based on faith rather than law?

This is not the first case in Modi's India. Ever since the consequential decision of giving the land of the Babri Masjid to Hindus to build Ram Mandir, every mosque in India is under scrutiny of the Hindus—the Hindus who wish to 'correct' all the wrongs done to them in the past by the Muslim 'invaders'. The hardliner Hindus are eagerly probing the mosques to have any connection with the Hindu religion. A law enacted in 1991 calls for accepting all religious places of worship built in the past till 15 August 1947.⁵ The long title of Places of Worship Act is self-explanatory. It says "an Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto." Without challenging the Act, the Ayodhya verdict decided in favour of Ram Mandir by simply stating that, "independence from colonial rule furnishes a constitutional basis for healing the injustices of the past."⁶

Therefore, the court ruled in favour of the majority Hindu population, perhaps to heal the injustice(s) of the past committed by Babar, particularly by building Babri Masjid, on a land that the Hindus believed to be the birth place of Lord Ram.⁷ If the aspirations of the majority will prevail upon law, how the rights of minorities will be protected in India? It is a popular notion that Muslim rulers destroyed temples in India. If a wrong had been done against Hindus in the past, does it mean that same should happen with the Muslims of India in contemporary times? Will Muslims also take

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revenge from history when they might rule India? For how long this vicious cycle would continue? Logic fails to support the argument of 'healing injustice of the past.'

When Ayodhya verdict was due, the Hindutva hardliners used to chant the slogan, "Ayodhya toh bas jhaanki hai, Kashi Mathura baaki hai (Ayodhya is just a preview, Kashi and Mathura are yet to come)."⁸ Gyanvapi Mosque is adjacent to the Kashi Temple. If the trend of finding Hindu connection with the mosques in India will continue, the day is not far when Muslims will not have any place of worship left.

In the city of Mathura, a Shahi Eidgah Mosque is also facing litigation on the basis of a belief. On 19 May 2022, the District Court of Mathura declared the plea made by Shri Krishna Janambhoomi Trust and other private parties for acquiring land of Shahi Eidgah Mosque, maintainable.⁹ The Shahi Eidgah Mosque is allegedly built on the birthplace of deity Krishna.¹⁰ This again is happening in UP. Around 11 cases have been filed for acquiring the land of Shahi Eidgah.

A religiously motivated demand is in the air to rename Lucknow, i.e., the capital of UP. There is a popular belief in India that Lucknow has a connection with the brother of Lord Ram, Laxman.¹¹ Therefore, the Government of India is set to build 151 foot statue of Lord Laxman near Teele wali Mosque in Lucknow.¹² Here another conflict is in the hatching. It is believed that there is a mound of Laxman at the site of Teele wali Mosque. Therefore, the hardliner Hindus wish to search the premises of the mosque which is allegedly built on that mound.¹³

A group of Hindus were also sceptical of Taj Mahal which is one of the architectural wonders, that reflects the rich and diverse Indian heritage and adds to India's historical identity. The hardliner Hindu outfits believed that in the 22 locked rooms of Taj Mahal, there are Hindu idols and that it was actually a Lord Shiva Temple, 'Tejo Mahalaya' and filed a plea to open those 22 rooms.¹⁴ On 12 May, 2022 Allahabad High Court rejected the plea.¹⁵

Recently, the Archaeology Department of India released the pictures of Taj Mahal, claiming that no Hindu idols were found at the site.¹⁶

In Maharashtra, the role of the mosque in lives of Muslims is also being questioned. Raj Thackeray, a regional leader demanded that Muslims should keep the voice of their speakers in the mosques within limits when they use them for Azan.¹⁷ Otherwise, Hindus will gather around the mosque and chant Hindu prayers near the premises. Some 900 mosques have accepted the demand.¹⁸

In Uttar Pradesh also, the mosques have been directed to remove loud speakers that were used for Azan. The Chief Minister of the State, Yogi Adityanath proudly announced while mentioning the removal of loud speakers that "You must have seen how we got rid of unnecessary noise."¹⁹

Muslims are not only directed to remove loud speakers from the mosques but they are also prohibited to offer prayers in the open. In Haryana, the Chief Minister declared last year that outdoor prayers in Gurgoan "will not be tolerated". Gurgoan has 15 mosques for around 500,000 Muslims in the city.²⁰ The authorities have also rejected the demands made by Muslims in the city to build new mosques while construction of new temples continues unopposed.²¹

It is also ironic to note that what Muslims eat is also being targeted by the hardliner Hindus. Muslims eat beef, especially on the occasion of Eid. This religious ritual is in sheer contradiction with the religious belief of Hindus. Hindus worship cows. In Hinduism slaughter/sacrifice of a cow is a serious offence. It falls in the category of *Upa-pakata* (Venial sins).²² In sacred books of Hinduism there are four kinds of sins, i.e., *Ati-pakata* (sins beyond classification), *Maha-pakata* (great sins), *Anu-pakata* (Minor sins which are equivalent to mortal sins), and *Upa pakata* (venial sins).²³

If a cow or ox dies, "there are Sastric penances, but there is also a popular penance, which is to go from door to door with a rope around the neck and grass in the mouth, beg for food by



bellowing, and eat only the grains so obtained.”²⁴ Hinduism calls killing of a cow a sin, while Muslims slaughter a cow on a religious festival.

Probably, this was the reason that Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan reached the conclusion that Muslims and Hindus cannot live together. In a recently published article Tavleen Singh, while commenting on the row over Gyanvapi Mosque clearly wrote: “The message to Muslims who chose India over Pakistan in 1947 is that they made a bad choice. They must now learn to accept that although they chose to remain Indian, they should now learn to live in India as lesser citizens.”²⁵

The hardliner Hindus are hitting upon all symbols of Muslim identity from what they eat, to

what they wear and where they pray. In short, they are targeting the Muslim *soul*. It is scarred, caged, and is in fear. The identity of Muslims which is unfortunately, inseparable from them, is being brutally besieged by the hardliner Hindus in India.

India’s drift towards radicalisation had been there since the beginning, it has only become more explicit in the age of modern technology. However, the pace of this radicalisation process has become faster under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. India is becoming a cage for 213 million Muslims based in the country. The day is not far when Indian Muslims will be left with no choice but to give up everything that distinguishes them as a Muslim.

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