

A New-Look RSS Coming

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has decided to change the khakhi shorts into any other colour. Good news. It is a quiet acknowledgement of many things. There is more than meets the eye.

RSS is the prime mover of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism or what it prefers to call cultural nationalism. This is a hatemongering ideology, which demonizes the minorities and excludes them. Its leaders have stated that minorities should live in India by appeasing the majority. RSS, began in 1920s, remained in the belly of Indian nationalism and then came out of it with an independent existence. It was banned a few times, especially the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. But it raised its head again during the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi, sharing bed with Jaya Prakash Narayan's movement.

It has succeeded in giving rise to a variety of organizations. Quite a few use the body metaphor or Hindutva ideology: the RSS as the brain, VHP as the arms, Bajrang Dal, BJP as its other body parts. RSS is the fountainhead of saffron Brigade, also called Sangh Parivar (family of organizations) like BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Vanvasi Kalyan etc.

RSS pretends to pass off as a cultural organization but deeply craving for political power as has been shown in Gujarat. Narendra Modi was a RSS *pracharak* who is the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

Not all is well with RSS

DR. LANCY LOBO

(dominated by upper castes) or its sister organizations. The number of RSS *shakhas* has come down sharply or declined in Gujarat as well as in the rest of India. The sister organizations too are not happy with RSS. These sister organizations are not thriving as before. Sadhus are deeply divided and are unpredictable.

The reasons why the number of *shakhas* of RSS has declined are many. It is not easy for the youth to get up early and go to the public gardens for RSS morning drills. Youth stay late nights, watching movies and TV programmes. The youth is exposed to new life style, fast food, entertainment that was never available before. It is difficult to indoctrinate such youth today with the RSS narrow ideology when the world itself has opened up. Youth has many other attractive alternatives than getting into RSS shorts whether khaki or coloured.

However, there are two exceptions: One, the youth of OBC, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will still find the RSS ideology and *shakhas* attractive as they seek acceptance from upper castes. Having been derided, ridiculed, insulted and slighted for centuries, the upwardly mobile youth of these categories is looking for acceptance from upper castes and a new identity. They are fast Sanskritising and these are the

new converts or recruits for RSS. Two, the NRI youth will find RSS ideology attractive in the Diaspora as they do not find acceptance from host population.

They perceive to be discriminated or they cannot cope with the culture there and need an ambience to feel at home. This space has been utilized by RSS very effectively in Europe, Australia and America to round them up and give them a sense of belonging, identity, and solidarity. The number of websites on Hinduism and Hindutva, which assert its superiority over other religions, is countless. Many NRIs also collect money and send it to Sangh Parivar affiliates in India purportedly for development work, which in fact is used for denigrating the minorities.

Hence RSS and its affiliates are desperate to recruit more to their declining numerical strength. This they attempt by changing the colour of khaki shorts. While wishing them best of luck one can only wish they change the colour of their ideology rather than the colour of their shorts.

The affiliates of the Sangh parivar must also realize that repeatedly beating, assaulting and committing atrocities against Christians or Muslim minorities will not in the long run help their recruitment plans. Hate provocations act faster but are short lived. An inclusive India is welcome than an exclusive Hindu *rashtra*. ■