

# Editorial

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

## The greed

The one basic thing that could make much of almost everything much easier, simpler and smoother, yet seemingly impossible to accomplish is the act of coming clean. It would indeed take a much greater strength of character to own up to our mistakes and shortcomings, and still greater willpower to refrain from deliberately committing acts we consciously know is wrong and false.

The few fortunate ones who have the grit and will to transcend these urges are acknowledged and respected, even revered. On the other hand, a new breed of "Go-Getters" who would not stop at anything to achieve their goal is on the rise- the pressures of present day society helping in developing and pruning such mindset to perfection. They are the restless, hyperactive and aggressive ones who do not cater to emotions and aesthetics. Modern parents and guardians are increasingly urging their wards to adopt the letter approach towards life in order to carve out a place in the society that invariably results in a level of respect- respect that again is dependent on the earning capacity, the social circle adopted and living status maintained.

Increasing compulsions for security in terms of food, shelter and a step towards a more secure future could be the factors that prompted the collective thinking towards adopting such an attitude towards life.

But then, does that justify the adage "All is fair and love and war"? Is our life becoming a daily struggle, a battle- if not a war, we are destined to wage every single living day of our lives? Where does that leave us with any room or opportunity for improvement- not the financial kind, but a more rounded and holistic one as a person? The present developments in the society - particularly that of mindless atrocities and lack of considerations that is becoming rampant would be, to a large part, a spill-off of this new approach towards life.

Greed takes precedence over everything else, making our lives worse off than when we started. What then could be the panacea for these aberrations that has come to plague our lives of late? The answer lies within us- common knowledge which just needs to be acknowledged, and more importantly to act on. Putting up a façade of make-believe and a show of benevolence and righteousness will not absolve anyone of the crimes and wrongs. This is of utmost importance for everyone, and more so for those who are donning the role of public representatives. Concepts like beauty, peace and harmony can only be experienced if we can rise above our petty urges and look at life- that of ourselves and the ones around us in a different and totally new perspective- one that does not have anything to do with wealth, power or fame.

But how does one explain these "abstract" concepts, even after knowing them to be true, to someone struggling to earn a square meal on a daily basis? Aren't there adequate schemes and programs to alleviate these basic sufferings being borne by a majority of the people in the State? How do these people who are consistently trying to find any menial job just to earn enough to eat come to know of these schemes if they are not informed, and more importantly, assist them in getting their fair share? Who would not want a little extra, even inspite of having more than everything they could possibly ever need in life? The best persons to validate this observation will be in the performance of those in whose hands are the reign of power and affairs of the State.

"The earth has enough to satisfy man's needs but not man's greed": Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

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# Neither Soft Hindutva Nor Soft Secularism Will Help the Congress Revive Itself

Courtesy The Wire  
By : Prem Shankar Jha

Almost four weeks have gone by since the Congress suffered its second crushing defeat at the hands of the BJP, but Rahul Gandhi, still the titular head of the party, has yet to break his silence. So far, only one of its senior leaders, Veerappa Moily, has had the courage to tell him what every member of the party knows: that every day of silence is strengthening the impression that he has thrown in the towel and bowed out of politics altogether. For a party that has severely discouraged the development of collective leadership and relied ever more heavily on the fading charisma of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to woo voters, this is the kiss of death. Rahul Gandhi may have been a reluctant Congress president. But he did accept the responsibility that goes with the position. So, however disappointed he may be, he has a duty not to destroy the party along with himself.

The challenge he faces is a Promethean one. It is to transform a once-dominant party that has been fighting only rearguard actions to prevent a further erosion of power for the past four decades, into one that admits that it has nothing more to lose and go back on the offensive again.

To do this, he has to infuse the



removal of A.K. Ramanujam's study of the Ramayana from the Delhi university Syllabus, and banned Chicago scholar Wendy Doniger's book on Hinduism altogether. Most shamefully, it did not lift a finger to enable M.F. Husain, the great artist who was chased out of India by the goons of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for daring, as a Muslim, to paint images of scantily clad gods and goddesses, to return to his beloved India even to die here. After its defeat in 2014, the Congress's soft secularism has degenerated further into

outcome it can take away from its defeat, it is the realisation that there is no middle ground in the battle of ideas that lies ahead. To combat the poison of Hindutva, the Congress needs to stop parroting imported words like secularism and pluralism, both of which have clichés, and rediscover the guiding philosophy that has underpinned the practice of all religions in India over the past two-and-a-half millennia. This is 'Dharma'.

### What is Dharma

Dharma is the original faith of Vedic India. There is no reference in the Vedas to Hindu Dharma,

Yoga in Hinduism during the classical period.

"Dharma" was the word. Gautama Buddha used to describe his sermons on the four noble truths and the eight-fold path. Western students of comparative religion, have done Buddhism a disservice by presenting it as a new religion, because this has made it one among several religions, including the three Messianic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

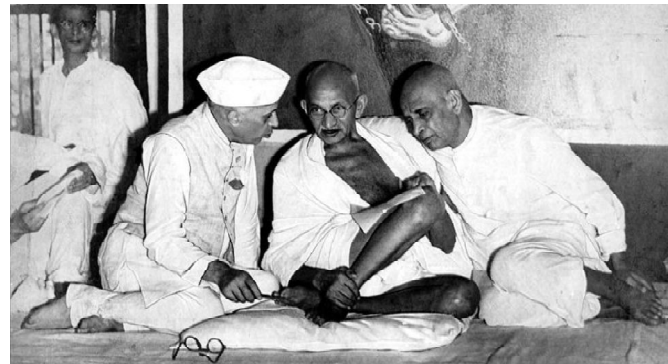
Buddha's use of the Vedic term suggests that he considered himself to be a social reformer and not a prophet. What he had rebelled against was the corruption of Dharma, and the growth of Adharma. These were caused by self-absorption, avarice, expensive and impoverishing ritual, and Brahminical control. Buddhism was, in fact, the first great recorded rebellion against organised religion in human history.

Buddha's use of the Vedic term suggests that he considered himself to be a social reformer and not a prophet. Photo: PTI

### A critical difference

Describing Buddhism as one of several prophetic religions has obscured a critical difference between Hinduism, Buddhism and other mystical religions, and the Messianic ones. This is that Messianic religions have to be professed. Belonging to one of them requires a profession of faith in it and a repudiation of other faiths. It is a surrender of oneself to the 'true' God, whose reward is the possibility of gaining absolution for one's sins through repentance, in this life.

Dharma, by contrast, has to be lived. Only virtue in this life can gain the soul freedom from the chain of rebirth. It requires no profession of faith, no submission to a single prophet. And it offers no easy absolution from sin. It is the Hindu way of referring to Buddhism, as Bauddha Dharma,



Congress party with a renewed commitment to the nation that Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad had set out to build. This was an India free from religious and caste prejudice, in which people belonging to more than a score of ethno-linguistic nationalities could live as equals and prosper. Only if the Congress succeeds in rediscovering the idealism of its early days will it succeed in harnessing the idealism of youth to the freedom fathers' idea of India once again.

File picture of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Credit: Wikimedia Commons **Soft Hindutva**

The first step on this road must be to formally repudiate its policy of "soft Hindutva". Soft Hindutva is the descendant of "soft secularism", a policy of continual appeasement that the party adopted in the 1980s when it began to lose its dominant party status within Indian democracy. The turning point was its opening of the locks on the Babri Masjid in 1985, followed by its overruling of the Supreme court on the triple talaq issue in 1985.

Since then, it has made one compromise after the other till it lost its moral standing with the people. Thus, it allowed Tasleema Nasreen to be chased out of India by Muslim bigots after she had fled to India in search of safety from the bigots of Bangladesh; banned Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses; allowed Gujarat to ban Joseph Lelyveld's book on Mahatma Gandhi; allowed the

soft Hindutva. This reached its nadir when the party began to highlight Rahul Gandhi entering temples, praying and emerging with a *teeka* on his forehead before the Gujarat elections. Automated calls began asking subscribers, "Don't you know that Rahul Gandhi is a *Janeudhari* Hindu (i.e. a Brahmin)?" Soft Hindutva has not only further marginalised the already besieged secular elements in the country, but also legitimised the Sangh's 'hard' Hindutva. This is abundantly clear from Narendra Modi's brazen claim to the legacy of Swami Vivekananda: his appropriation of Sardar Patel for the RSS without a murmur of protest from the Congress, and the outrageous claim to the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi he made on Gandhi Jayanti last year. Both Rahul and Sonia Gandhi attended the function, but instead of walking out in protest, they sat silently while Modi took away India's proudest legacy. It was as if, for them, Mahatma Gandhi's assassination by Nathuram Godse was an accident of history: the act of a single deranged fanatic like Gavrilo Princip's at Sarajevo in 1914, and that the carnage at Ahmedabad in 2002 never happened.

The Congress needs a long period of introspection on its own past errors, before it can even hope to make a comeback. If there is a single "good"

because the word Hindu was brought to India from Persia more than a millennium later, ironically, by the Muslims. Dharma was not a religion in the modern, contentious, sense of the word because the Messianic religions that now dominate discourses on religion had yet to be born. Dharma defined the right way of living: it prescribed how people needed to relate to each other and to the wider world around them. The Rig veda differentiates between different forms of dharma, such as *prathama*



Dharma, *Raj Dharma* and *Swadharma*. But every one of these centers around the concept of human Duty, which was "to Uphold, to Support, to Nourish". Dharma is what became Karma

and the remark that Hindus frequently make even today - "yeh mera Dharma hai" - that capture its essence.

Prem Shankar Jha is a Delhi-based journalist and writer.