

The Ideal State - Is it only a Myth?

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When a corrupt, tyrannical, morally bankrupt and socially negligent entity is confronted by the possibility of losing its (aforementioned) design elements and the consequent enjoyment of power, the reaction is often disastrous for the opposing forces, whoever or whatever they maybe. The Indian polity is one such corrupt entity and integration or tolerance the opposing forces. The so-called largest democracy has failed at implementing egalitarian ideals.

I recently attended a lecture titled *Roots of Sectarian Conflict – India*, at the Asia Society (New York), presented by Atul Kohli, a professor of politics and international affairs. Professor Kohli's diagnosis of democratic India is that it has succeeded at creating a functional democracy in poor economic conditions which, according to him, is a feat not achieved by other similar entities. While concluding that the roots of sectarian conflict lie in the policies of the corrupt Indian polity, which utilizes religio communal violence as a tool to achieve political goals, Professor Kohli provides the ingredients of a possible solution. His list of ingredients includes political sacrifices, formalizing borders, restraining fundamentalism and providing financial support to the oppressed minorities. During the Q & A session, I asked Professor **Kohli why he chose to dismiss - in his diagnosis and solution - the recipe that perhaps the primary cause of the ethnic and religious unrest (since 1947) is a design element of India, specifically article 25 of the Constitution, which labels all minorities as Hindus. He hesitantly agreed but suggested that, if implemented, his plan would somehow resolve the issues of religious oppression and ethnic inequality, which exist.**

The Political and International Affairs academia has the task of analyzing the obstacles to achieving an ideal state with equal rights for all. Among these scholars is a revolutionary historian, politician, and social activist, the late Sirdar Kapur Singh. His laborious efforts, to emphasize to the Indian polity their moral responsibility towards minorities, have gained much attention. **Sirdar Kapur Singh's focus was primarily on the plight of his people, the Sikhs. However, the elements of his solution/plan could easily be applied generically. According to Kapur Singh a minority in any appreciable numbers has the "right to be dealt with as a civic group, and any attempt to atomize this group for exercise of political power over them, constitutes an infringement of this right."** He stated that the Indian polity must recognize certain inalienable rights, such as the freedom of assembly, political freedom and the recognition of the theo-political status given to the Sikh places of worship or generically stated - religious freedom.

The Sikh religion, with its egalitarian principles, has at times obstructed the enjoyment of power valued by the Indian political body. The Sikh ideology, relevant to governing a state, is supported by visionaries such as Bhagat Ravi Das, whose elements for an ideal state are in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture (SGGS, Page 345). Bhagat Ravi Das was preaching about the ideal city in the 15th century, a city he aptly named 'Beghampura' - the "city without sorrows." **A city without suffering or anxiety, where all the citizens live safely in peace.**

There are no taxes on commodities, and wealth is equally distributed, and all are content. His plan of the ideal state supports all undeniable freedoms and birthrights for its citizens.

Recent events of communal violence amongst the Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) unequivocally affirm that the Indian polity is partial in its treatment of the minorities. Fanatical Hindu organizations, such as the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad), which have ties with the prominent political parties, have made it clear that all minorities have to earn the "goodwill" of the majority (Hindus) for their safety to be guaranteed in India. Such statements, indicative of social and religious intolerance, should be of utmost concern to human rights organizations and political activists for they threaten the multiethnic fabric of India, which is already weak from a half century of turmoil.

A keen individual examining the recent events will come to the conclusion that there is a method to the laxity of the state and central government. A methodology that is similar in content and context to the one implemented during the 1984 anti-Sikh *pogroms*. The comments made by Chief Minister Modi echo comments made by Rajiv Gandhi during the anti-Sikh *pogroms*; the ill-timed response of the army was comparable to that of 1984; and similar to the few days of that dark November an 'open hunting season' was covertly declared on a religious minority. Zealous Hindu terrorist groups, such as the RSS and VHP, have devised the term '*Hindutva*' to describe their intolerant sentiments. The use of this term simply equates to the erroneous use of the word '*Jihad*' by the Muslim fanatics who terrorize under the banner of Islam.

The citizens of India - and the world - have to unite in their condemnation of such outrageous terrorism and the "soft" attitude displayed towards the perpetrators of these atrocious acts on humanity. The path of nationalism must not lead to religious oppression and state sponsored genocide. Each and every distinct thread of the fabric of a nation participates in nationalism, but when the majority, wielding the false sword of nationalism, commits religious oppression their actions must be curbed. A concerted and united effort can insure an ideal state.