

India: Democracy as Majoritarianism

Saturday 22 June 2019, by [GATADE Subhash](#) (Date first published: 30 April 2019).

Subhash Gatade's *Hindutva's Second Coming* deals with the question of normalisation of majoritarianism which India is currently witnessing. The book is divided into three sections. The first section tries to situate this issue in a larger South-Asian context and to find any commonality in the experiences of people and the societal roots of the current political shift in South-Asia. Section two of the book deals with the "pioneers of the Hindutva Supremacist" movement and their upcoming icons for the "New India". Section three is devoted to finding ways to fight this menace that is attempting to destroy India.

The following is an extract from the Preface of the book.

"We can never forget that everything that Hitler did in Germany was 'legal,' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did was 'illegal.' It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany, but I am sure that if I lived in Germany during that time I would have comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal... we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive.

— Martin Luther King, Jr

What is the signature of democracy?

It is the understanding that minority voices will be allowed to flourish and they will not be bulldozed. At the apparent level majoritarianism - rule by majority - sounds very similar to democracy but it essentially stands democracy on its head. For real democracy to thrive, it is essential that ideas and principles of secularism are at its core. The idea that there will be a clear separation between state and religion and there won't be any discrimination on the basis of religion has to be its guiding principle.

Majoritarianism clearly defeats democracy in idea as well as practice.

While democracy's metamorphosis into majoritarianism is a real danger, under rule of capital - especially its present phase of neoliberalism - another lurking danger is its evolution into what can be called as plutocracy - government by the rich.

As India enters the race for elections to the 17th Lok Sabha, these are the two broad questions which are staring in everyone's mind, whether the same dynamic - which has made the last five years as unique in Independent India's history - will continue or we will witness a rupture.

It is a disturbing scenario when the biggest democracy in the world seems to have taken a '[Q]uantum Jump In Wrong Direction Since 2014' (Amartya Sen) - prompting even the normally reticent community of scientists to ask people to reject the politics 'which '[d]ivides us, creates fears, and marginalises a large fraction of our society' and remind them that "[D]iversity is our

democracy's greatest strength; discrimination and non-inclusivity strike at its very foundation.'

Whether there would be further normalisation of majoritarianism or ordinary people's desire to live a more inclusive, egalitarian life and in a less toxic world would ultimately triumph the designs of the hatemongers and secondly, whether free run being given to the crony capitalists and moneybags would be over and ideas of redistribution would make a comeback with vengeance.

What has added a new dimension to this dynamic is the existence of a 'self-proclaimed cultural organisation' called RSS - whose principles, ideology and activities contravene the very basis of Constitution - which is de facto ruling the country. It is an organisation whose principles "[d]epicting Indian nationalism in terms of the faith of the religious majority - have serious negative social and political implications for sections of the citizen-body and are in violation of the Constitution."

(<http://caravandaily.com/rss-principles-are-in-violation-of-constitution-detrimental-to-india-hamid-ansari/>)

It was exactly 42 years back that Indian people defeated the attempts to throttle the democratic experiment by their more secretive, sinister and communal forces are on ascent who are also popular among a significant section of people.

Courtesy: Indian Cultural Forum

Subhash Gatade

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