

Why has it become so cool to hate India?

By- Arindam Banerji

Saturday morning, last week was a bad one for me – the first thing I read, was an article from Dilip D'Souza. He pontificated,

"Then what do we say about those who might plot against the obscenity that blights their land, as Stauffenberg did, who fight to free India of it? Are they patriots? If so, what if they welcomed a force from abroad that toppled this hypothetical regime, as many Iraqis did? Are they still patriots?" (www.rediff.com)

I was stunned. D'Souza a recognized and very visible journalist, was insinuating and subtly recommending a foreign invasion of India to get rid of the current government; pretty much like the US did in Iraq. Let's be sure of one thing- I will die defending D'Souza's right to criticize, fight legally against, decry or vote out of office the current Indian government – but, calling for foreign invasion?? Now, that's beyond hate.

All this, when I was just beginning to get over the fact that after the Indo-Pakistani thaw had been announced, Praful Bidwai gleefully announced that India "must give up its inalienable right to Kashmir". No word on strategic goals for India, nothing about not rewarding terrorism. When did this happen? Leading journalists, openly publishing anti-India, hate-India propaganda in Indian dailies, and not a word is said – not a single editorial, no public criticism, nothing? When did it become so cool to hate India? Before we sink into the rhetoric of calling me a scoundrel for bringing up the patriotism issue, let us look at what's really happening.

Blame India first

Immediately, after the Nadimarg massacre of 24 Indians, including women and children, Farzana Versey wrote a scathing article, criticizing the Kashmiri Pandits, blaming them for leaving the valley – essentially the they-asked-for-it point-of-view. Times of India editorials and Kuldeep Nayar came out and blamed the Government of India. Mind you, not a word – not one word, criticizing either the Pakistani generals or the LeT. Akhila Raman blamed India directly and of course, a columnist in Greater Kashmir blamed the Pandits for it all. All these people, subtly yet completely undermined the case the GOI was trying to build in international media on the persistent and genocidal nature of Pakistani terrorism. In essence, these Indians equated the victims with the perpetrators, and made the case on behalf of Pakistan. After all, nobody in international media would cast any doubt on "Indian" writers, when they place the blame on GOI and the Pandits for such a heinous massacre.

The jury had declared their verdict – the ever-so erudite Hafeez Sayeed who postulated "Killing Hindus is the way to move forward" came out looking lily-white, while 4-year old Suraj, who died in his mother's arms was found guilty – he was an Indian, you see. Remember, the Chattisinghpura incident where 35 Sikhs were killed – some Indian

journalists even those writing in international publications, declared that the GOI was to blame. It took an American, Barry Bearak of NYTimes to chase the whole thing down and visit the home of one of the perpetrators in Pakistan. No matter what happens and how it happens, it is India that is at fault, Indians are responsible. Journalists tell me that they must remain balanced. That word again?

The whole balance thing – never allow any good news on India.

This balance thing, happens not just about the Hindu-Muslim issue or India-Pakistan issues. Let me give you another example from a different area - Mr. Vishal Thapar's article on the LCA/Tejas in the Hindustan Times. As you may have heard about the LCA was renamed to Tejas, yesterday. Here is how it was projected in one of the most widely distributed national newspapers in India: "For those ecstatic at the projection of the Tejas' , this all means that the 'Made in India' tag as a symbol of indigenous capability, a sobering thought. Its engine is American, its avionics a combination of French, Israeli and Swedish components, and its carbon composite wings Italian. Given that the three basic components of an aircraft are the engine, airframe and avionics, 'swadeshi' pride gets a dose of reality."

In spite, of the fact, that a simple internet search, would have given Mr. Thapar access to all possible details on LCA – he either chose not to do so or prefers to remain balanced. So, let us take each of his facts one by one. What he did not tell you was the GE engine is a test engine, to be replaced soon by an India's Kaveri. Another fact, the most advanced fourth generation fighter called Gripen, also uses the same GE engine, but nobody calls the Swedish Gripen non-indigenous. It also turns out that the new fifth generation aircraft from the US (F/A22) uses Israeli avionics. Truth is, that apart from a few measly displays, almost everything else in the LCA's avionics- Mission Computers, Radar, Display Processors, Avionics LRU's, databus associated control equipment -is Indian [Nitin, BRF]. The composite wing technology was co-developed with the Italians – in fact, some of the associated software was sold by INDIA to Airbus. No mention of the most-advanced Fly-by-Wire technology in a fourth-generation aircraft, no mention of the sale to Airbus – simply the balanced approach to hide India's accomplishments. Remember, the Americans cherish their flights to the moon, in spite of the fact, that many of the leading scientists were Nazi Germany's rocket scientists. They cherish their jet aircraft which was helped tremendously by Nazi German designs of jet aircraft.

So, why was it so important for us to sound balanced – was it important enough to hide the facts and true achievements? Note - not a single clarification issued by the Hindustan Times either. It is fair to point out however, that the Hindu carried a much more positive article on LCA on the next day. Of course, not to be left behind the ever so-prolific India hater, Praful Bidwai writes "India . . . ranked 54th of 55 countries in an IT survey by International Data Corp. Its score is 871, compared with China's 915, or the US's 5041. (The highest is Sweden's 5062, the lowest Pakistan's 719.) The penetration of Indian households by PCs is under one-fifth the world average. Today, it stands at three machines per 1000 people."

Probably true – but, no mention of the fact that the Indians are designing some of the most advanced routers in the world, they are at the fore-front of telematics technology and developed the first products on web services, which has now become a \$50B technology. So, why the lack of balance on this issue? Would not serve our purpose to make India look good, would it, now.

Protest and you get called Names

Everybody has heard about the Bangladeshi infiltration into India. Most people do not know that large parts of the border areas are now run, owned and practically ruled by Bangladeshis. I have nothing against Bangladeshis – but, when they come to my country, ethnically cleanse Indians out of large areas, happily help the ISI and demand sovereignty for areas that they are squatting on, I have a problem. However, the fact that I have said the above, labels me a Hindu Fascist and supremacist. Never mind, that in the last 17 years in the US, I've never visited a temple – never, mind that I've probably spent more time in a catholic church in my life-time than a Hindu temple – I'm still a fascist.

The recommendations from the Farooquis, Pamelas and Bidwais is very clear – let the flow of Bangladeshis continue. Imply they, that there is nothing wrong in the steady Arabization of most of the border areas and even secession is fine – whatever happens, we must not listen to the fascists. I'm sorry this is not OK with me – I'm concerned about the great Indian culture – the one that includes Syrian Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Muslims, as much as it does Hindus. Unfortunately, we become fascists for trying to stem the tide of Bangladeshi Taliban from entering our country, the same people who for long had an "enemy property act", essentially treating minorities as enemies.

Not only, will many news dailies prevent the publication of anything that is strongly pro-India or happens to protest anti-India activities; but, the name calling against the pro-India crowd definitely gets published. All of you must have heard about the slanderous IDRF campaign, but how many of you got to read the excellent de-bunking done by the Friends of India – very, very few. This seems to happen more and more frequently these days – protest against subsuming India within groups and academic departments that call themselves South Asian (not Indian) – you're a fanatic protest against Romila Thapar's writings – you're a Hindu supremacist protest against stopping charity to innocent Indian kids through false and unproven allegations – you're RSS, VHP or worse.

Openly anti-India activities

Kamal Mitra Chenoy, a professor from JNU, actually testified before the USCIRF on Gujarat, with the sole purpose of having sanctions declared on India. While, what happened in Gujarat was vile and reprehensible, how does it make sense to help other countries declare sanctions on India? Who does it hurt most? As a Friend of India member wrote, "In other words, here was an Indian zealously participating in a charade meant to impose hardship on his own country, collaborating with a wing of a government

that his own comrades are given to routinely denouncing as "imperialist" and hegemonist." Canvassing for anti-India acts are the norm now. The Indian Muslim Council, in the US, very rightfully concerned about what happened in Gujarat, is openly courting and canvassing congressmen and congressional staffers on "Hindu fanaticism". Very thoughtful, but how do we expect the US Congressmen to help? Take action against India!!

Mind you - I'm happy to join their protests in front of the Indian embassy, if they spend an equal amount of time, protesting the killing of twice as many Indians (as killed in Gujarat) every year by Islamic terrorists. Or, will they please tell their US legislators, that India actually has minorities, but minorities have for the most part vanished in the rest of South Asia (Bangladesh has gone from 33% to 7%). Will they please tell, the Americans that from negligible numbers, Andamans now have 60% Christians? Why not present the whole picture – who does it help not to do so? Everyday in the Bay area, Indian speakers are feted by large crowds of Indians and Pakistanis, for claiming how bad India is? How the Hindus are killing all the Muslims? Association of words like genocide, fascist and fundamentalist with India are common. Not a word on the Islamic terrorism that kills thousands every year, not a word on state support for it, not a word on the complete ethnic cleansing that has happened in the rest of South Asia (3% minorities in Pakistan, down from 20%) – no, that would offend our Pakistani friends.

Our own, Arundhati Roy, who feels compelled to go all over the world and announce that "India is an artificial state", recently along with some other anti-India stalwarts attended a meeting to remember Marxist-Leninist separatist Naxals. Mind you, these are the same Naxals who recommend partitioning the country and happily extort and kill innocent Indian citizens. The Bidwais, Pandeys and Roys had to honor them, but, would they ever visit the families of soldiers who died at Kargill? Nope, and nobody called them on it – no protests, no editorial scolding. Our politicians outdo all this. While Congress and the left encourage anti-India elements to settle in India, the right has proposed sundry localized sun-of-the-soil theories. All this just to win a few votes. Who does this hurt? You, me and India. I'm not suggesting that all Indian politicians become honest – that would be a stupid expectation. But, where is our press? Where are the national scolds, which are handed out so readily when we dare to kill a terrorist or two, without reading them their rights? Never surprises me that, more people jumped up to help the professor who facilitated the Parliament attack; than ever did to help the Sikh widows of the 1984 riots.

National Lack of Confidence

I'm keenly aware of the impact of history on national psyche and attitudes – let's face it, at least in the recent centuries, we Indians have been raped, massacred and indoctrinated with gay abandon. But, history in itself is not an acceptable excuse – where are our leaders? Leadership means breaking the mold – not just our politicians, but our managing editors and our news outlet owners – they just standby, they don't feel the need to direct their ire. I have come to believe that our educational institutions have a role here. Passing through the IITs, nobody ingrained in me or my friends, the arrogance to believe that we

could do intellectual work better than the best in the world. Result – we all end up believing, like Mr. Vishal Thapar above, that Indians cannot do the kinds of things that the Anglo-Saxons can – how could they? Other educational institutions are worse – try holding a pro-India, anti-Pakistan program in JNU – chances are you'll get beaten up. Writes Vrin Parker, an American who has spent time in India,

"After having been forced to learn a lot misinformation about India in American schools I became fed up ... I began my own research and soon discovered that it was the Indians themselves ... who are at the root of all the nonsense taught about Hindus in the West."

Acceptance as Normal

It isn't what D'Souza said that has surprised me – it is that this has become accepted behavior in India. Nobody protests, when Arundhati makes up stories that make the Gujarat incidents much worse than they actually were (and they were bad enough), nobody blinks when Bidwais of the world spew their anti-India venom day in and day out, nobody cries foul when anti-India groups are feted by prominent/respected Indians within India and nobody editorializes when Indians go around canvassing foreign governments to take actions against India and Indians. When did this happen? When did it become so acceptable to hate-India openly? Please do not get me wrong – we Indians have our faults. Our caste-system, our riots, corruption, fundamentalism, most of our politicians, extreme poverty and our apathy to all this. Protest against all this, change it, elect someone else, expose it, and write about it – that's all patriotic. But asking for foreign invasion, supporting secessionists, canvassing for US sanctions, inviting arabized Bangladeshis into India, absolving Pakistani terrorism or minimizing Hindu deaths is NOT – it's anti-India.

Remember, that there is a lot of good – ask the Tibetians who have taken refuge in India, ask the Chakma Buddhists, ask the Bangladeshi Hindus, ask the Pakistani Hindus, ask the Afghans who're being treated and taught by Indians, ask the CEOs of the top five technology corporations in the world and ask the Bangladeshis who remember. Let's not hide all this or minimize it, but let's not be satisfied with it, either.