

Lying about the RSS



By Meenakshi Lekhi | Issue Date: September 09, 2018 | Updated: September 01, 2018 17:37 IST

From a weapon to a shield, from an alibi to a subterfuge, from a stratagem to a code, from a shelter to a force—lie has many virtues, except that it is a lie. Yet, some people take up lies as the only means of survival in the world and hope to gain undue mileage in life. Congress president Rahul Gandhi's recent European trip was full of such ridiculous and shocking lies. What the Congress president, or for that matter, president of any other political party chooses to speak, is his or her discretion, and the response is given by other parties at the appropriate level. Rahul either lacks knowledge or is lying once again about Jawaharlal Nehru's invitation to the RSS contingent to participate in Republic Day parade in 1963. However, what drew my special attention was Rahul's remark in Berlin, repeated in London, where he compared the RSS with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), saying both are fundamentalist organisations and that both exclude women. I felt obliged to respond to this contention.

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, is a transnational organisation of Sunni Muslims with the objective of establishing the Quran and the Sunna as the only references for organising the lives of the Muslim family, individual, community and state. In the words of its founder Hassan al-Banna, it is to "reclaim Islam's manifest destiny—an empire, stretching from Spain to Indonesia". The MB grew throughout its eight decades and spread to nearly all Muslim countries around the world where, in a number of them, it has been found either involved in terrorist activities or supporting terrorist groups. So, it was banned in countries like Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Russia. Further, the MB believes in gender-based segregations and restrictions. During the 2012 elections in Egypt, the MB rejected the candidacy of women for presidency.



Illustration: Bhaskaran

On the other hand, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is an avowedly nationalist organisation dedicated to revitalisation of the Indian value system based on universalism (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*), and peace and prosperity to all. However, the main emphasis of the RSS has been the Hindu renaissance, based on the original values of egalitarianism and social regeneration, while protecting the cultural diversity of the natives. Further, if women are not admitted in RSS shakhas, it has got nothing to do with any ideological segregation. Practical considerations

like timings of the shakhas and the nature of physical activities make mixed shakhas impractical. In order to get over this problem, the RSS founded women-specific Rashtra Sevika Samiti in 1936, under the leadership of Laxmibai Kelkar. The Samiti organises separate shakhas for women with emphasis on "matrutva netrutva, kartrutva (motherhood, social leadership, professional excellence)". Moreover, in 2013, the RSS came up with the concept of 'family shakha' which are weekly shakhas where yoga, games and discussions are organised.

Hence, it is absolutely false to say that RSS does not accommodate women. The fact is that the RSS is a unique organisation that is open to all sections of society including Muslims, Christians and dalits. In reality, the Congress and the left parties believe that BJP can be fought effectively by weakening the RSS, hence denigrating the latter on all possible forums is a central plank of their strategy. However, serving lies and proffering ridiculous arguments in support of their strategy often backfires, causing more harm to them than to the RSS.

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