

Today's Martyrs – Dr. John Dayal



Dr. John Dayal is a long time defender of Christians in India - he has been arrested while defending the rights of Christian Dalits ('those who are trampled upon': untouchables) - and sits on the government's National Integration Council. On December 25, 2014 he wrote an article for UCA News that outlined the major changes underway in his country since the May 2014 installation of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] majority government under Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi. This analysis deserves careful consideration by anyone seeking to understand the current events and possible future of the world's largest democracy; here are some excerpts:

"On December 18 [2014], India's National Minorities Day, Rajeshwar Singh, the head of the Dharma Jagran Manch [Faith Awakening Forum] declared on national television news channels that his organization had set a 2021 deadline to cleanse India of 'alien Islam and Christianity'. Another group said Christians would not be allowed in Himalayan regions that are sacred to Hindus...

"The Indian government has not indicated whether Singh is being prosecuted under India's strict laws against religious discord. So far the laws have been largely used to target Christian pastors, and in recent months, Muslim youths venting their anger against the government on Facebook...

"Meanwhile, members of the Council of Ministers and spokesmen for the BJP, which controls many Indian state governments, have been vocal in support of the Sangh Parivar. The Parivar is a large and almost omnipresent family of Hindu militant organizations created by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh [the RSS paramilitary organization] in the past two decades. The Dharma Jagran Manch, the Bajrang Dal [youth organization] and the powerful Vishwa Hindu Parishad are among the more prominent of its groups with aggressive cadres...

"RSS affiliated groups have launched a campaign to convert poor Christians and Muslims to Hinduism, a process they call Ghar Wapsi, or homecoming. They argue that every Indian is actually a Hindu, and Christians and Muslims are those who strayed, or were bought by missionaries...

"Protestant pastors are being beaten up, home churches raided almost as a matter of routine, with the police looking on, or actively participating. Santa Claus, of course, has been proscribed...

"The fact that the Sangh Parivar runs over 57,000 ideology-based schools for children in villages across several states, especially in areas populated by tribal and Dalit groups, makes available a cadre of youth and their parents ready to do their bidding...

"The federal minister for education, former TV actress Smriti Boman Irani, has ordered a revision of text books, particularly of history, to incorporate more ancient Indian traditions including references to Hindu

sacred texts. Various important councils in the ministry are now chaired by luminaries wedded to the thesis that India is the fountainhead of all knowledge in the world. The BJP and the minister hold that Hindu sacred texts are a 5,000-year-old source of knowledge on such diverse subjects as plastic surgery, aviation, nuclear weaponry and genetic engineering...

“Muslims and Christians feel they are being strangled by a tightening noose, in the villages and small towns by Sangh cadres who have the police on their side, and nationally by the federal and state governments who seem to endorse the hate campaigns and the violence...

“All too many people in office and heading Sangh groups have said that the constitution is an inheritance from Britain that has no place in Hindu Rashtra, the Land of the Hindus. This is something that must worry not just Indian religious minorities, but the world”

Indeed, this should be a matter of concern for the entire world. We have seen this pattern before, in fact many times. We know from historical experience that supremacist mass movements such as these never end well.

So does John Dayal, from personal experience. Weeks earlier he had written another article which lauded his aunt and godmother, Sophie Joseph. This Christian nurse shared a simple apartment in Delhi with her husband, a retired army officer. On October 31, 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh guards, and within hours 3,500 Sikhs in Delhi alone lay dead, murdered at the hands of their neighbors. Aunt Sophie went through her apartment building and pulled her Sikh neighbors into her residence and hid them. When the mob came she stood in her door and refused to allow them in to search her rooms. An entire family was saved by her actions.

The events of 1984 were spontaneous and openly emotional. The events of 2014 and after have been much more calculated and organized, and the emotions of pride are buried deep. Pray that other emotions such as sympathy and empathy will come into play for the people of India, and that their hearts be converted so that they may love their neighbors, feel for them, be concerned for them. Otherwise, the future looks very bleak, and the only real unknowns are to what level events will devolve and what measure of humanity will be lost.

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