COMMENT

'Religious Terrorism'
is a Misnomer

THE TERM 'HINDU TERRORISM' is a misnomer. So is 'islamic terrorism'. Vested interests have created these terms and they will continue to do it according to political need of the time because religion has 'broad-appeal' to masses even in educationally advanced and enlightened societies.

Religions have to be interpreted in the context of social situation of the time. There is mention of peace and harmony in most of the religions while one can also pick up the aspects related to violence from their scriptures. This aspect of violence again depends on interpretation. Same text is interpreted in different ways by different commentators. The isolated examples of violence in Abrahamic religions don't make them preachers of violence and terror, as terror and violence both are the products of social situations, not religious doctrines. Many a time the rulers : kings, cutting across different religions, have used the cover of religion to expand their kingdoms. *Crusade*, *Jihad* and *Dharmyudh*. Surely the wars unleashed by kings cannot be called as religious acts or conforming to religious teachings in any way.

Khap Panchayats today are giving death fatwas for young couples, in the name of religious-caste traditions. Girls are beaten up in Mangalore pub again in the name of Hindu traditions. The mass violence directed against minorities is instigated 'to save' the religious communities, to save Hindu religion.

The practices of many followers of most of the religions need not be exactly in accordance with the scriptures. In the same religion one can see people like Hitler and Nelson Mandela. In the same religion one can see people like Mahatma Gandhi and Nathuram Godse. In the same religion one can see Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Osama bin Laden. To think that any violence is due to religion is a totally misplaced understanding of the religion and society.

In contemporary times US designs for controlling the oil wealth has resulted in a politics which has resorted to the cover of religion. It was in the US brainstorming centres that the core words of Islam, Kafir and Jihad were given deliberate twist to train the AI Qaeda for US goal of getting Russian army defeated in Afghanistan. US media also coined and popularized the word 'Islamic terrorism' and it has become a part of the social thinking. To associate religion and terror is surely one of the biggest crimes against humanity. It is due to the popularization of the word 'Islamic Terrorism' that people started thinking of violence with religious prefix. So naturally when one after the other terrorist group, belonging to Hindu religion and inspired by the politics of 'Hindu nation' came to surface especially after the Malegaon blast, some journalists and others started using the word 'Hindu terrorism', and this also caught on.

This word is as much wrong as the word Islamic terrorism or Christian terrorism. Christianity also talks of peace and the word Islam stands for achieving peace by

submission to Allah. One can say that life of Gandhi has been the epitome of practiced Hindu values. On the other hand people like Godse or Osama bin laden have political goals and they have been presenting these political goals in the language of religion. Religion needs to be de-linked form politics and terrorism: both. □□□ *[contributed]*