

Another attempt to Polarise on Communal lines

The BJP raked up yet another issue of a mass exodus from Kairana, a small town in Shamli district in UP. According to MP Hukum Singh “many Hindu families were forced to leave Kairana town in Western Uttar Pradesh due to ‘threat’ from a particular community”. Stating the above he released a list of 346 families who had been forced to flee the town. A day later he added that the 346 Hindu families who had fled their homes in Kairana town had done so due to “threat and extortion by criminal elements belonging to a particular community”. He added “It is not about communal incidents...It is not about Hindus or Muslims, the list may not be foolproof. This is about law and order.” The MP alleged that “Muslim gangs” such as the Mukeem Kala and Furhaan gangs were a “menace in western UP and that “local criminal elements have established their roots in Kairana by getting political patronage of a particular party”. Step by step the MP highlighted that the reason for the mass exodus were threats and extortion by a local Muslim gangster who had political patronage from the Samajwadi party government.

Soon after the list of 346 persons was released BJP party chief Amit Shah said at a massive rally in Allahabad, that only the BJP can defeat the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and exhorted the state not to take “Kairana lightly.” The issue was taken up by number of Ministers from the BJP party and the cabinet issuing statements in media that the law and order issue ought to be taken seriously. Home Minister Rajnath Singh, member of the BJP party called for action by the State government if the incidents were true (PTI, Ahmedabad, 2016). Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijju spoke of the deteriorating law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh under the current government.

The BJP and its leadership is expressly and impliedly demonizing the Muslim community on half-baked and twisted facts. A section of Media checked the list of 346 Hindus who were supposed to have left Kairana. A team of journalists sent by The Milli Gazette found, “The Kairana list had the names of four dead persons and 68 who left Kairana long ago. It also includes name of 20 families which are still living in Kairana. This indicates that these allegations are part of a well-designed plan to polarise the society ahead of the upcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly elections next year.

Investigation and tracking down of names by the Indian Express and Times of India exposed that people on the list had died and some left looking for better prospects (Ranal, 2016) (Vatsa, 2016). By fact some on the list who were interviewed said that they had left due to tension during the Muzaffarnagar riots fearing that they will not be able to earn a livelihood in such an environment. Another investigation by Shamli administration found that out of the 346 families listed by Mr. Singh the administration probed 119 of which it found 68 had left Kairana 10-15 years ago for employment, business, and education of children, health and other services. Several on the list were dead and some were found still living in Kairana. It was also reported that some BJP party workers were themselves confused about the names on the list. (Rai, 2016) A group of Hindu sants submitted a report to the Chief Minister in which they rejected the exodus.

ABP News, The Indian Express, similarly found the claims to be false. BJP’s claim regarding the ruling SP patronizing Muqem Kala Gang too is false. Kala was arrested in October 2015 by STF. Criminals have no religion and their activities are neither inspired nor supported by any religion or

religious community. In fact Muslims were as much victims of Muqem Kala Gang as members of other communities. They work for monetary gains.

The BJP has never spoken a word about internally displaced people belonging to the minority communities, even while its national leadership and Union Cabinet ministers problematize alleged exodus of 346 Hindu families. More than 50,000 Christians were displaced following riots in Kandhamal in 2007 and 2008. More than 50,000 Muslims have been displaced and are living lives of misery, nay, lives fit for animals in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts following communal riots in 2013. To this day 5200 families of internally displaced people (IDPs) live in 63 relief camps in Shamli and Muzaffarnagar district. Many IDPs are settled in camps in Kairana. The families fear return due to the volatility of the political and economic situation back home. More than 1.5 lakh were displaced in 2002 communal violence from their homes and have not been able to return even today in Gujarat state. In Assam hundreds of Muslims have been displaced in several incidences of communal violence and are living miserable lives.

Though the BJP MP Hukum Singh openly discarded the communal angle to the mass exodus in his statement, but party members tried to stir the communal pot while attacking the SP government and pointing out 'certain kind of criminals'. The party members have indulged in hate speech propaganda in the villages of Bijnor, Rajhaar, Badwar in Shamli and Muzaffarnagar districts in the past. At Rajhaar village in district of Shamli, the BJP party President while campaigning for Lok Sabha elections in 2013 referred to the Muzaffarnagar violence and addressed the gathering saying, 'the revenge for insult will have to be taken'.
