

A Man of Dignity and Compassion Former VP

Hamid Ansari By SYEDA HAMEED|24 July 2022 11:54 AM

I was reading a clipping from Times of India dated November 20, 1993. Its title was 'Gandhi called traitor at Bombay meeting on Godse'. It was organised to commemorate Nathuram Godse and included his brother Gopal Godse. It was held in Patil Maruti temple off Ranade road. Some statements were reported such as 'Gandhi was a blood sucker worse than a bug, though he talked of non-violence.' 'In jail, Godse said that his ashes should be immersed in Sindhu river since it was the only river that remained sacred , other rivers were polluted by Gandhi's ashes.' In the meeting, Gopal Godse declared that Gandhi was the Father of Pakistan not of India. The term used for his assassination was Vadh which is used in mythology for slaying a demon. One speaker, SG Shevade declared that his only regret was that Gandhi's murder was delayed. 29 years have passed since this event. In 29 years several similar events have been held from time to time in diverse parts of India. The question then is whether this hatred is a fringe phenomenon or has it become mainstream? Former Vice President Hamid Ansari's vilification is living proof before the eyes of the world that hatred and denigration is alive and well. In his last interview before demitting office of India's Vice President, Mr Ansari had said that Muslims in the country were experiencing "a feeling of unease". Intolerance and vigilantism has resulted in violence, mob lynching, beef bans, and "Ghar Wapsi" campaigns. "The very fact that (the) Indian-ness of any citizen (is) being questioned is a disturbing thought." He said that millions of Indians- Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians share this feeling . He ended his speech with these poignant lines: Mujh pe ilzaam itne lagaye gaye Begunahi ke andaz jaate rahe In his farewell speech on the occasion, the Prime Minister spoke of Mr Ansari's family background and his postings in West Asia. He indicated that Ansari had remained a 'prisoner of this thought.' "A major portion of your (Ansari's) career as a diplomat was associated with West Asia. You spent several years of your life within such confines, atmosphere, thought process, debates and amidst such people," he said. The PM obviously referred to Ansari's postings as an IFS officer in Muslim countries such as United Arab Emirates,

Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia and others. He also referred to Ansari's family being part of the Khilafat Movement. The above two statements of the Honourable PM are indicators of the mindset and the relationship between the Government and the former Vice President. Ansari's tenure as Vice-President was a glorious period in our history. Dignity, probity and compassion marked his demeanour. That he did not take part in the Yoga Day was twisted out of shape by a compliant media. I am a Muslim but there is not a day when I don't perform Yoga at the crack of dawn, including the Surya Namaskar. But I didn't take part in Yoga Day. Will I be pilloried for that? On Republic Day 2015, Ansari was cornered for not saluting the national flag when it was hoisted, and the national anthem was being sung at Rajpath. He stood at attention along with the visiting US president Barack Obama (chief guest at the parade), and First Lady Michelle Obama and defence minister Manohar Parrikar. The flag protocol demands that only the President salutes the flag, plus any officer in uniform. When he was VP and after demitting office Ansari had only one objective; loyalty to the ideals and values of the Constitution. Questioning the patriotism of Indian Muslims has become the favourite pastime of trolls on social media. But when this is done to a Vice President, it insults not only the person so targeted but the Republic and its Constitution. Listing the spate of attacks on Mr Ansari by unknown people violates all sense of decency so let it not be repeated. This couplet of the poet Riyaz Khairabadi says it all.

Kyun itne unchen jaayen kyun ulti munh ki khaayen

Padta hai apne munh par jab aasmaan ka thuka

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