

RIDDLE OF LEADERSHIP

Vitality and wisdom of Hinduism make many angry within and without India. Ambedkar is one amongst them. Detractors are puzzled that Hinduism can live without any organization, or prophet. Except Hinduism, no religion in world permits merciless scrutiny of its basic tenets. Therein lies its strength. Ambedkar's followers rightly insist that his evaluation of Ram and Krishna merits attention. They must also welcome evaluation of Ambedkar. Like Ram and Krishna, Ambedkar was also a leader. Was he free from faults he finds in Ram and Krishna? Reason is no respecter of persons. This is an attempt to measure Ram, Krishna and Ambedkar with one and the same rational yardstick.

The achievements of Ram and Krishna give them a god-like place in India. Ambedkar deftly chose his targets. The best means to shake Hindus is to make Ram and Krishna roll into dust. Indian elite suffers from innate inferiority complex even today. To them only degrees from Western Universities and certificates from Western scholars are final proofs of scholarships. Inferiority complex was stronger in Ambedkar's time when Britannia ruled the waves.

In case of every person everywhere, paternity is a matter of opinion and maternity is a matter of fact. Hence, worth of person is never judged by who is his father or which godfather quicks him up. He is always judged by the values controlling his conduct even in times that try men's souls. Ambedkar concludes that Ram was neither an ideal character nor an ideal king. He was only a selfish pleasure-monger. His judgement completely contradicts Valmiki's. According to Valmiki only Ram filled his bill of Purushottam. The criteria are: bravery, free from envy, integrity, gratitude, purity, sacrificing self-interest for public good, self-control and truthfulness. Valmiki's manifold illustrations endorse his sound assessment.

Ambedkar dismisses Ram as a "brute" because of his treatment to Sita. What were the reasons behind Ram's tragic conjugal life? To Ram public affairs were always more important than personal matters. Hence in Lanka, after killing Ravan, Ram arranges his funeral, crowns Bibhishan and only then sends Hanuman to Sita. Ambedkar wants Ram to run to Sita as soon as Ravan was killed. Though he was fully convinced about his wife's purity and chastity, Ram abandoned her because public

doubted it. Though a powerful king, Ram did not use force to silence his critics and Ambedkar blames him for not using force to suppress dissent. Ram neither manipulated masses to improve his image nor appointed inquiry commissions and managed favourable reports. To him, voice of people, right or wrong, was the voice of God. Between public probity and personal comforts, Ram invariably upheld the former and inflicted sufferings on himself and his wife. As to love of wife, living or dead, Ram was second to none. He never married again. Ambedkar married second time in 1948 at the age of 56.

Ram rejected the distinction between private and public life of a leader because one influences other just as moon influences the tide. It was Ram's conviction that a leader is fully accountable to the led for his private as well as public life. It indicates the price a person must be ever-ready to pay if he or she desires to be a leader. Understandably, leaders of to-day dislike Ram. Had there been such accountability of the rulers to the ruled in Swaraj, India would not have been rocked by shameful scandals by shameless rulers.

None will approve Ram's treacherous killing of Vali and Sambuka, the shudra performing *Tapasya*. These are two dark spots on the life which was pure as crystal and white as snow. Ambedkar is rightly repelled by them. In modern democracies, leaders retain their leadership only by treacherous elimination of their rivals. Unlike Ram's biographer, Ambedkar's biographers do not list the "Valis" eliminated by him. In Ambedkar's eyes Bibhishan was also a traitor. Yet, according to Subhas Chandra Bose the British adopted Ambedkar and made him a leader. The colonial master nominated him to the Provincial Legislature, sent him as a delegate to the Round Table Conference and appointed him the member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Ram kept his promises to Sugriv and Bibhishan. The British betrayed Ambedkar. In Swaraj Ambedkar became a Union Minister by the grace of Indian National Congress whom he always ridiculed. His followers justify his hankering after office as nothing but a desire to improve the lot of untouchables. Ambedkar frequently crossed swords with Gandhiji. But like him, Gandhiji was never tempted by office. Gandhiji has shown that to carve people it is not necessary to be a member of legislature or a minister.

After his return to Ayodhya, Bharat begged of Ram to accept the throne:

If Ram were, as Ambedkar maintains, a degenerate prince willing away life amidst wine and women, he would have never spent twelve years of his best life in exile. He could easily refuse to honour his father's word to his step-mother, grab the throne and go on merry-making. In Ramraj, there was no poverty amidst plenty. There were neither starvation deaths nor premature deaths. Neither ecological nor mental imbalances. There was no exploitation and no parasites on public exchequer. Freedom of expression was not subject to "reasonable restrictions". It was verily a prosperous land with prosperity for all. Hence that "practical idealist" — Mahatma Gandhi — longed that Swaraj should become Ramraj. Therefore, Ambedkar's assessment of Ram is as wrong as wrong could be.

By M. J. AUDI

Without a proper perspective it is difficult to know Krishna, a man of many parts. Kamsa was keen to kill Krishna right at his birth, but could not decide which way to count the eighth baby of Devaki from top to bottom or viceversa. As a boy he was darling of women of all age groups. As a man, he was obliged to marry 16108 women. Yet he was always a *balabrahmachari*. That should be a perverse mind which interprets man's relations with women exclusively in terms of sex. Was Krishna a womaniser? Womanisers run after women and degrade themselves, whereas women ran after Krishna. If ever there was a Prince Charming on the face of earth it was that *Kala admi* — Krishna.

After killing Kamta, he rejected the kingdom of Mathura offered to him by Ugrasen. He founded the kingdom of Dwarka and gave it to Balam. He was a chauffeur, diplomat, philosopher, shepherd, strategist, waiter and warrior. This *Purnapurush* graced whatever he did. Krishna wrote only one slim and sweet book the *Bhagavadgita*. It is an evergreen masterpiece combining philosophy and poetry. Each verse sparkles with ideas. Each chapter continues to provoke exciting commentaries. Ambedkar was a laborious and voluminous writer. He was eminently qualified to become a vice-chancellor of the most prestigious university of the world or the chief justice of any supreme court anywhere. With correct connections, he could have bagged the Nobel Prize.

According to Ambedkar every deed of Krishna as politician and warrior was "immoral act". He also con-

demns Krishna for his "ethics of untruth". Nowhere Krishna claims his stratagems to win *Mahabharat* war as lessons in morality and truth. He calls them evil necessities to recover rightful share of the Pandavas. His was lit for tat policy. Many times what is comprehensible to commonsense is incomprehensible to the learned and Ambedkar was a learned man. It did not occur to him that truth and morality are first casualties in every war. Ambedkar praised the British. Were the founders of the British Empire in India the paragons of truth and morality?

Ambedkar was not a warrior, but he was a politician. Were all his actions "moral"? Let the facts speak. When Ambedkar was defeated in the first general elections to the Lok Sabha in 1952, he entered Parliament through backdoor by managing a seat in Rajya Sabha by striking a deal with his political opponents. He was again defeated in the 1954 by-election to the reserved seat to the Lok Sabha but did not resign his seat in Rajya Sabha. Was Ambedkar sincere crusader of the poor? Did he exploit the poor for his personal advancement? During the first textile workers' strike in Bombay, Ambedkar's sympathies were not with the workers but with the management of the Sassoon group lawyer of zamindars of U.P. opposing the abolition of Zamindari and Land Reforms Act.

Ambedkar is hailed as "modern Manu" because of his role in the making of the Indian Constitution. What is Ambedkar-smriti? Fate gave him a chance to draft charter for new and just social order but he was found wanting. It was Ambedkar's first and foremost duty to insist that what are called the Directive Principles of State Policy must be called the Fundamental Rights of the people of India. Instead of that only the rights of Brahmins were included in the Chapter on Fundamental Rights in Indian Constitution. Alas! "Modern Manu" was in no way different from ancient Manu. This Brahmin-hater was proud to be known as "modern Manu", took a Brahmin wife. Ambedkar burnt Manusmriti in 1927. In 1953, he was eager to be the "first person" to burn the Constitution of India.

Ambedkar repeated *ad nauseam* that in a poor country like India "bread and butter" are more important than law and order and at the same time insisted upon the rule of law. What is rule of law? Shorn of camouflage, rule of law is an old English trick to perpetuate rule of vested interests in the British Isles. It was

transplanted to India during the British Raj. It continues in Swaraj where the brown exploiters have replaced the whites. To his horror, Mahatma Gandhi found that the so-called legal luminaries are the most obedient servants of the vested interests.

Leaders of today profess that they are wholly public-spirited persons. When these self-proclaimed samaritans make wills, their wealth goes only to their kith and kin and their ashes to the people. Some donate their palaces to the nation in such a way that the maintenance is charged on public exchequer and occupancy rights are vested in their children in perpetuity. If the children become rulers, crores of rupees from public funds are spent upon their smadhias and statues. Unlike the leaders of Swaraj, Ram and Krishna need no artificial respiration through samadhias and statues, parks and universities. Ram and Krishna were not hypocent but transparent. Hence, passage of time endears them to the people more and more. They live in the hearts of people when leaders of today are forgotten the moment they are out of office.

Economic equality between person and person alone guarantees social harmony. Political equality by itself is an empty shell. In a society of unequals, law supports the claims of the privileged. In a society based upon inequality, ideas of justice and freedom are invariably reflections of vested interests. Ambedkar knew very well the significance of economic equality but did nothing to make it a reality. In fairness to Ambedkar, it must be recorded that there was absolutely no difference between the leader of untouchables and the leader of nation. Jawaharlal Nehru waxed eloquent on plight of poor. During freedom movement, he stated that if ever he gets power, his first act would be to hang every black-marketeer by the nearest lamp-post. Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India for seventeen years. He was an uncrowned king with unlimited powers. During his premiership lamp-posts multiplied and black-marketeers also multiplied and flourished. There also emerged power-brokers, racketeers, smugglers and swindlers.

Despite forty years of freedom, touchables and untouchables in India are sailing in the same boat of injustice and misery while the leaders of both are enjoying the best things of life along with their families. Therefore, real issue confronting the people of India is the "riddle of leadership" and not the "Riddle of Rama and Krishna".