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India

Radical Socialist condemns the killing of M.M. Kalburgi

- News from around the world -

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Renowned scholar, rationalist and epigraphist M.M. Kalburgi, formerly the Vice Chancellor of Kannada University in Hampi, was murdered by two assailants on August 30, 2015, in a continuation of vicious attacks on rationalists and intellectuals by the Sangh Parivar and BJP. Dr. Kalburgi, a key organiser of the Dharwad Sahitya Sambramha (Dharwad Lit. Fest.), openly spoke up against idol worship and had recently questioned the Lingayat orthodoxy claiming that they were not Hindus. This invited resentment and hostility from RSS and the Hindu right, because the Lingayats are an important voting block for the BJP and have been instrumental in the election of the first BJP government in Karnataka in 2004, with chief minister BS Yeddyurappa being a Lingayat.

The killing of Dr. Kalburgi is far from being an isolated incident. The right wing Hindu forces are bent on creating communal disharmony and hostility based on the perpetuation of Hindu myths and stereotypes. Thus, anyone who seeks to question received religious orthodoxy, especially those of Hinduism, are perceived as threats and are dealt with accordingly. Narendra Dabholkar, who was a prominent anti-superstition and rationalist activist from Pune, was also killed by right wing communal forces in August 2013. Investigation agencies and governments in Maharashtra, both the saffron combine BJP- Shiv Sena and its predecessor, the so-called secular Congress- NCP in Maharashtra have failed to bring the perpetrators to book.

Govind Pansare, a veteran CPI leader, intellectual and rationalist, known for his scholarly work on Shivaji, was killed by right wing fanatics in February 2015. Even after the Maharashtra police having in place a Special Investigation Team for probing Govind Pansare murder, the assailants are till date to be brought to book. Tamil novelist Perumal Murugan announced on January 2015 that he is giving up writing after he was attacked by right wing caste Hindu forces. Soon after the tragic murder of Kalburgi, Bajrang Dal has openly cheered his death and threatened to kill Mysore University professor K.S. Bhagwan, who happened to be a close friend of Dr. Kalburgi.

Scholars, activists, and ordinary working class citizens committed to fighting religious fundamentalism should deplore these acts of intimidating intellectuals and rationalists as cowardly, undemocratic and immoral. We need to realise that this is a broader project of a homogenisation of Indian society, where dissenting voices against majority views, particularly those held by the Hindutva forces, are being muzzled. The ruling party BJP has among its ranks MPs who have demanded that Gita be declared the national book of India. Attack on rationalist should hardly be a surprise when organisers of the Indian Science Congress state that the invention of aeroplane was in the Vedas.

Just as we see in Bangladesh, where one after another rationalist bloggers are being killed by the right wing Muslim fundamentalists, so we see in India a disturbing trend of attack on multiplicity of opinions and pluralism by the Sangh parivar. It is easy to condemn fundamentalists in a different country. Radical Socialist is truly committed to a secular and multicultural India, and thus condemns the killing of M. M. Kalburgi. We have and will continue to fight, on the ground, all those forces in Indian society who are committed to spreading communalism and hatred and stand in the way of rational thought and progress.

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