

The Galvanizer of Ayodhya: Moropant Pingle's Vision in Action

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Whatever The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has been able to accomplish so far is the result of Moropant Pingle's vision and leadership. The claim in no way robs present and past members of the VHP; they all have done remarkable work. Many workers of the VHP are working tirelessly to accomplish the task the organisation has set out for them. But the one who roamed around the country with a single-minded devotion to building the organisation was Pingle. If the VHP has come to acquire a place of respect, the credit must go to Pingle.

Pingle (a senior office-bearer of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) was also instrumental in putting the entire might of Hindu society behind the VHP. I feel he is the man God sent to the RSS to channelise and speed up the flow of the proverbial Bhagirathi to help it achieve its grand objectives. I think it was his good karma in his previous birth that God gave Pingle unparalleled virtues of devotion to the cause of Hindu society.

Every year hundreds of millions of people crisscross the country carrying the holy water of the Ganga on their shoulders to perform the abhishek of Shri Mahadev at various Jyotirling in different parts of the country. It is an appreciable quality of a devotee. But could you imagine a national exercise of abhishek? Pingle alone could think of such a mammoth task. The programme, the Ekamata Yatra, was beyond our imagination. About 12 years ago (in 1983), Pingle resolved to take the Ganga throughout the country, bringing water from Gangotri to every town and village. I started working with the VHP while still taking care of my Delhi prant as a pracharak. I knew Jagmohan, who was the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. I went to see him carrying a map of the entire Yatra on a piece of cloth. It was Pingle's idea to get the map printed on fabric to ensure its longevity from overuse.

The reason for seeing Jagmohan was to get his and the administration's cooperation for the Yatra. Jagmohan was speechless when I shared the basic idea of the whole programme. He said that regardless of its planning, it would create a massive reverberation across India; many smaller Yatras traverse through the country, merging into three big Yatras, followed by a mammoth Yagna in Nagpur. Only a person with extraordinary creative genius could envisage such a programme. I disclosed to him that Pingle had planned the whole programme.

When I mentioned the programme to J.B. Kothari, an industrialist from Kolkata, he said it was impossible. He was not ready to believe that even one Yatra could reach on time, given numerous rituals and programmes on its way; it was difficult to travel 20 to 25 km every day. And delay in one Yatra would automatically lead to a delay in the other. But the Yatras, 92 in total, with the three mega Yatras decorated like chariots carrying the holy water from the Ganga, reached Nagpur on the appointed day. Lakhs of people were gathered to take part in the Ekatmata Yagna.

The skill and organisation that went into planning this huge exercise deserve another article. But let me share with you that around seventy-five crore people participated in the programme. Hindus stand on either side of the street with saffron flags and banners to welcome the Yatras. It was the first of its kind where the entire Hindu society came to support the agenda of the VHP. It was Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's determined effort over the last 60 years that the VHP could accomplish this assiduous exercise. And the man who planned it to the last detail and remained austerely aloof from the limelight was Moropant Pingle.

The Bharatmata and the Gangamata Yatras gained a tremendous response. They put the VHP in the national spotlight. Then, finally, we were ready to launch the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple liberation movement.

In 1983 also, the VHP organised a Virat Hindu Sammelan in Laxminagar (Muzaffarnagar). Gulzarilal Nanda (a member of the Congress party and was twice an interim prime minister of India, and also a minister in central cabinet) presided over it. The chief guest was Sahakaryawah of the RSS, Rajju Bhaiyya, who later became Sarsanghachalak of the RSS. Congress leader Dau Dayal Khanna moved a resolution for the liberation of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. It was a simple proposal which made a monumental change in the country. (Khanna was three time legislator in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, and also a minister in a Congress government.)

The following year the first Dharma Sansad took place at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. It was decided to start another Yatra, the Ram Janki Rath. It began from Ayodhya and gave ample proof of the direction the movement of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi would take. The appeal of the saints and the strong public opinion generated in the wake of these Yatras compelled the Rajiv Gandhi government to open the locks of the Janmabhoomi. However, the movement was small at that time; it was only limited to Uttar Pradesh.

On the occasion of Kumbh in 1989, the VHP organised the third Dharma Sansad. Around the time, another mega convention was held comprising seers and saints on 1st February 1989. Swami Jayendra Saraswati, the Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peeth, presided over it, and the respected seer, Devraha Baba also attended it. The convention decided to carry out the Shilapujan (consecration of bricks) ceremony, for which a contribution of Rs 1.25 was fixed, and further programmes were agreed upon.

Under the guidance of Moropant Pingle, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement was taking an all-India shape. The Shilapujan was organised in every village in India. Collecting a small amount of Rs 1.25 from the person who came to the consecration ceremony, organising the Ram Yagna with the consecrated bricks for every one lakh population, fixing the programmes pertaining to the Shilanyas, planning the arrival of the consecrated bricks in Ayodhya and ensuring the presence of eminent persons for the various ceremonies ñ all of these and many more were planned by Pingle. The entire programme worked in the chain; if one link failed, the entire chain would come to a standstill. The leadership of Pingle made the whole programme a grand success. He was putting in place the stepping stones on which a massive movement would come up. Pingle did not get carried away by emotion or lose control over the situation. Else, it would have affected our goals.

We kept up the momentum and did not lose control; we kept getting closer to our goals. The Shilanyas ceremony was a significant win for us as it showed the great determination on our part to wash away the stigma of slavery of 450 years. It took Hindus one step closer towards constructing a grand Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple.

How did the VHP accomplish the Shilapujan in over three lakh villages in 1989? The answer is that the unstinted cooperation from the Sangh and similar support from other religious bodies and sects. But cooperation could only be sought when the organisation itself had belief in its ability. And Pingle made the VHP capable of skippering a vast ship. Pingle planned to popularize the VHP across the length and breadth of India. The VHP reached 6,500 blocks in the country under his leadership. One block comprised one lakh population; one can imagine that Pingle took the VHP from one end of the country to another with a single stroke of genius. He not only worked tirelessly but kept up strong pressure. All of us acted under his fierce urge and fulfilled his wish to some extent.

Pingle was a supporter of the constructive, creative movement. For him, it meant keeping control over the situation, taking one step at a time and planning

to the last detail. After the Shilanyas, the next phase of the movement was public awareness about the objectives of the temple construction. A flame dedicated to Ram Lalla from Shri Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya was carried to every village and town across the country.

Pingle was once again in the lead. He was also the host at the ceremony. The flame went in every direction; to the west, it went to Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi, Mathura and to the east to Shri Kashi Vishwanath, Varanasi. It was surprising that the state government of Mulayam Singh Yadav did not get a whiff of it. The flame became the light to lit crores of lamps on Diwali of that year. It was a unique thing - the Diwali of Ram Jyoti. It symbolised the awakening of the crores of Shri Ram devotees, reaffirming their commitment to the temple's construction.

The kar seva was slated to begin on 30 October 1989. The Mulayam Singh Yadav government had already started the cycle of repression. A couple of days before the kar seva began, all senior members of the VHP were gathered in Delhi, including Moropant Pingle, to discuss each and every contingency arising out of the proposed ceremony. When a person makes tireless efforts, God also lends a helping hand. Something similar happened on that day. The impossible became possible, and the opposition to the temple once again fizzled out in the face of our determination. After all, kar sevaks had hoisted the saffron flags on all three domes of the disputed structure.

However, the incident of 2nd November shook the whole nation. More than 50 kar sevaks were killed in the police firing. Pingle came to Ayodhya two days later. While the sacrifice deeply shook us, Pingle wanted to avoid any confrontation with the government. He took the path of peace and compromise. He held talks with the government. As a result, all our demands were accepted, and instead of the kar seva at the birthplace, the doors of the disputed structure were opened for the darshan of Ram Lalla.

Meanwhile, the V.P. Singh government had fallen, and Chandrasekhar took over as the prime minister. On the day he assumed office, Chandrasekhar called the entire leadership of the VHP for a meeting at Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia's residence. (Rajmata was a senior Adhikari of VHP.) In the meeting, Pingle categorically said, "There was a temple at the Janmasthan where the Babri mosque now stood. There is ample proof of the temple's destruction. Muslim leaders say that if there is a temple demolished, they are ready to demolish the mosque." His equivocal assertion gave Chandrasekhar the idea to invite a meeting between the VHP and the Babri Masjid Action Committee to discuss their respective evidence.

Pingle remained present in every meeting, but the Babri Masjid Action Committee members, stopped attending the conference. In the meantime, Chandrasekhar's government fell, and the discussion could not be renewed.

In 1991, P.V. Narasimha Rao came to power at the Centre, and BJP's Kalyan Singh formed a government in Uttar Pradesh. By July 1992, the Singh government removed all the obstacles around the disputed site, and the land was levelled. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust got 43 acres. The disputed land measuring 2.77 acres, where the temple was to come upon it, remained under government control. Another round of kar seva started in July.

Rao asked for four months to resolve the matter, requesting us to stop the kar seva. The VHP acceded to the request. But nothing happened in those four months; he did nothing to resolve the dispute. Fed up with the delay, the fifth Dharma Sansad declared 6 December for the kar seva.

The High Court was seized with the issue of the title case of 2.77 acres. It had fixed 11 December to deliver the judgement. Moropant Pingle remained in the huddle with seers and dharma gurus in Ayodhya.

For the first time in the whole movement, such a situation arose that the kar sevaks, who otherwise stayed calm under tremendous stress, felt agitated. The unprecedented security protocols also made us jittery. The luggage of every kar sevaks had been checked for weapons and firearms. We felt that even Shri Ram was overwhelmed by the inspiration.

Kar sevaks were asking - why can't we build a temple anywhere? When the work was stopped in July, everyone believed that the approval would soon arrive and the work for the construction of the Shri Ram temple would start. But Rao could not assure us, nor did we get any word from him. It was betrayal, and kar sevaks were getting impatient as days passed. Another question we asked ourselves was - Can we postpone the kar seva pending the court judgement? Pingle, an advocate of constructive movement, saw the rising tide of frustration and anxiety in kar sevaks.

It was a divine indication. The passion of the kar seva reflected a godly will on 6 December. The structure came down in five hours. The kar sevaks uprooted the iron poles of the barricades and pulled down the walls with their own hands. In the end, Shri Ram's will prevailed.

The controlled passion of kar sevaks was blessed with divinity. It is said that when the divine asserts, it is incarnation. We saw the collective expression of celestial power in Ayodhya on that day. Whatever was decided was fulfilled by divine inspiration.

Pingle is the pivot of the Ayodhya movement. The movement will conclude only when the temple of our dreams is built at the same site. Undoubtedly, the invisible power of Shri Ram has propelled Moropant Pingle's works. His dream will come true not only when the ancient glory of Ayodhya is restored, but also the ancient glory of this Hindu nation is restored.

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