

# The Sangh's Sustained Campaign Against Non-Veg Food is a Step Towards Becoming a Hindu Pakistan - The Wire

*Jawhar Sircar*

Now that we are hell bent on becoming a Hindu Pakistan, how can we do without a [Sunni-Shia divide](#), that has led to innumerable killings among Muslims in the real Pakistan? When hate becomes the cornerstone of the one-religion-one-country demand, then the ghost of Jinnah is bound to roam all over, to ensure that this hate just does not stop at one community.

Hate must 'cleanse' the 'pure' (pak) even more – to liquidate all among the chosen and victorious community who 'differ' and 'contaminate'. Hardly a week passes in Pakistan without some fanatic blowing up whole assemblies of Shias in prayer.

Well, it is not as serious still in Hindustan – because all the rage and killings are still focused on Muslims. But a deadly morning may, quite likely, show the day that is to come. The sustained campaign of the Sangh parivar to root out non-vegetarian food is an unmistakable pointer.

## Majority of Indians are non-vegetarian

The [recent threats](#) at the fish market of Chittaranjan Park in Delhi have set off alarm bells from – there to Bengal and to the Andamans. No self respecting Bengali will allow his fish to be stopped, insulted or even held liable for contaminating the environment around some nearby temples. After all, census data says 98.55 percent of Bengalis are non-vegetarians, and their obsessively favourite non-veg item is fish. And many other states have even higher percentages of non-vegetarians.

What the Sangh Parivar may not be aware is that the vast majority of Indians are proven non-vegetarians – even if some are just token ones. The core of this Parivar and its leadership comes from those castes that are historically associated with vegetarianism. Circumstances conditioned their diets and there is little that can be claimed by way of superiority, either religious or social.

Since one of these castes wrote the holy books, there is a bias in many of them towards abstention from meat and fish, but the same texts contained other prescriptions as well, that the descendants of these religious commentators hardly ever adhere to. As for traders, they moved from place to place, and it was always safer to stick to vegetables in distant stations, as fish and meat could harbour (if not handled well) various bacteria, including Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. coli, Listeria, and Vibrio, which can cause food-borne illnesses.

Their sheer occupational necessity was then converted into a great virtue, and groups that were historically despised for avarice and profiteering acquired brownie points by associating themselves with the diet of the priestly class. This bonding was strengthened through donations for temple building and religious activities.

This historic coupling and abhorrence towards non-vegetarian food continued when the Hindu Right organisations were being formed. Their core leadership is still very much in the hands of strict vegetarian upper social groups. Just run through the names of the top echelons of these organisations and this disproportionate share of such castes will strike everyone.

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Now let's come to facts. Only 5 of the 36 states and union territories of India have vegetarian-majority populations. According to a 2018 survey released by the Registrar General of India, only Rajasthan (74.9%), Haryana (69.25%), Punjab (66.75%), Gujarat (60.95%) and Madhya Pradesh (50.6%) have more vegetarians than non-vegetarians. These were followed by Uttar Pradesh (47.1%), Maharashtra (40.2%), Delhi (39.5%), Uttarakhand (27.35%), Karnataka (21.1%) and Assam (20.6%) after which came numerous states where 95 to 99 percent of people were/are non-vegetarians.

Census-based data establish, that approximately between 65 and 75% of Indians are non-vegetarians. Cherry picked results of the much delayed Household Consumer Expenditure Survey of 2022-23 were released just before the 2024 elections. But the report still stands in the way of the Sangh's desire. It indicates that while the family spend on cereals has come down from 37.42% of their budget in 1999-2000 to 20.32 in 2011-12 and then plummeted to 10.59 in 2022-23 (thanks to free food), the expenditure on meat, fish and eggs went up from 5.59% in 1999-2000 to 10.59% in '22-'23.

### **Laws and bans against non-vegetarian food are being imposed in city after city**

In fact, an analysis of data from two successive rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted in 2005-06 and 2015-16 shows that vegetarianism has in fact been on the decline over the past decade. If, we reject all the *sarkari* data we may opt for a quickie undertaken by the American Pew Centre – that is, hopefully, outside the hated/dreaded Soros zone.

Based on a survey of just 29,999 Indians, it declares that not 30 percent but almost 40 percent of Indians are vegetarian and that most vegetarians don't eat food in non-veg homes. Even so, the largest section is still non-vegetarian and it is very very disconcerting to see how the non-veg is made to feel small – especially when close friends and school/college mates move away from her/his table nowadays. Demanding separate tables, messes, hostels, housing and the lot is akin to Shia-isation –just for starters.

For years, many major cities of Gujarat have prohibited the eating or selling non-vegetarian food, even when nearly 40 percent of the state's population is non-vegetarian. In the holy places of Hindus, fish and meat have been banned for ages, and the rules strictly enforced. While such bans near temples may be understandable, the manner in which laws and [bans against non-vegetarian food are being imposed in city after city](#) is truly alarming.

Haridwar has been completely vegetarian since 1956. Then, towns like Rishikesh, Varanasi, Palitana, Vrindavan, Chitrakoot, Ayodhya, Pushkar and Mount Abu banned meat and fish either in the whole city or in large parts. Even in Deoband, a Muslim holy site, only vegetarian food is available now and even the small town of Dewa Sharif in Barabanki district is veg only.

Besides, in many Sangh-ruled states and local bodies, eggs are being taken out from mid-day meals in schools, despite doctors asserting that eggs are highly nutritious for malnourished children. With one stroke, the livelihoods of lakhs of people are being shut down. The freedom to choose one's food is a democratic right recognised by the Indian Constitution, yet with lower courts (and even higher forums) becoming more and more blatantly one-sided, rulings also tend to favour the government.

Even the Supreme Court upheld the Central Government's decision to ban chicken and eggs from mid-day meals for students in Lakshadweep, declaring it entirely legal. In 2004, the same apex court ruled that Haridwar Municipality's order to stop sales of eggs was fully lawful, clarifying to the petitioner that it didn't violate any fundamental rights.

We did not protest when they lynched others in the name of beef. Now, they are even after our eggs, fish, chicken and mutton. It's really time to wake up and assert our constitutional rights – or else we will soon ensure an intolerant Hindu Pakistan.

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