

Muslim India, 1999

The year 1999 was a year of political instability and uncertainty. P.M. Vajpayee lost the vote of confidence by one vote in April, 1999 and yet another General Election was held in October, 1999, in which BJP-led NDA secured a working majority, thus giving relative political stability to the country for the time being.

Thus 1999 became the first complete year of BJP rule in the country. The tactical measure to place controversial issues, including the Babari Masjid Question and the Uniform Civil Code, on the back-burner and out of the National Agenda for Governance helped several professedly secular parties to join the NDA and yet project a secular face to the electorate. The Kargil effect and the Vajpayee effect and the Dharma of Coalition had their impact on the voting pattern though BJP vote remained more or less at the same level.

The NDA, under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee, consolidated its hold on the machinery of governance and had its way through the Parliament with a lifeless and leaderless, disorganised and divided, opposition and succeeded in harmonising occasional notes of discordance between the BJP and its major 'secular' allies – the DMK, the TDP, the Samata, the JD(U) and the TC.

But there was continuous tension in the relation between the Sangh Parivar and the NDA Government. No doubt they managed in mutual interest, to keep the facade of all's well but the growing pressure by the hardcore of the RSS and its front organisations like the VHP and the Bajrang Dal became evident for accelerating the pace of saffronisation of administration, for imposing the Sangh-approved cultural norms on the people of the country, for taking a hardline against the ISI (read Muslims), the foreign missionaries (read Christians) and Pakistan. Often, in the final analysis the Vajpayee government was unable to withstand the pressure. Government's submission to the dictates of the RSS served to open the eyes of many academicians, journalists and opinion-makers who had set store by the 'liberalism' of Vajpayee and by the inevitable softening of the BJP in power. But when and how the widening cleavages within the ruling coalition will open into fission cannot be anticipated.

Vajpayee had made his point but there remained a growing suspicion that he was playing at two levels. **He was identifying himself with the RSS goals in the long term and asking for freedom of action in the short-term and at the same time giving the Sangh Parivar the freedom of penetration and saffronisation, in the field of education, culture, information and public administration.** Thus, there was a trade-off between Vajpayee as the Prime Minister and the Sangh Parivar as the driving force. Vajpayee also correctly counted on that the 'secular' conscience of the

NDA partners would be gradually lulled into silence by the greed of power and pelf and that they would not rock the boat of the coalition. Thus **one set of 'secular parties today stand discredited in the eyes of the secular forces.**

What about the other set? Having exaggerated its influence and rejected the possibility of coalition. The Congress failed to take off under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and had its worst innings since Independence in 1999. The Left knew its limitations but engaged in internal debate on the degree of proximity and cooperation with the Congress, Samajwadi Party or RJD. BSP continued to plough its lonely furrow-confirming the suspicion that it may not be averse for an eventual deal with the BJP.

All this meant that **Muslim India's disenchantment with the secular parties continued to grow and consequently the desire, first evidenced in 1998, to assert its political weight without committing itself, across the board, to any particular secular party, even at the State level.** Thus for the first time in 1999, the Muslim Agenda was formulated, a joint undertaking of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, All India Milli Council, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-ul-Ulama-e-Hind and All India Muslim Personal Law Board – the five most representative Muslim organisations of national eminence. But it still remained too far from developing a nationwide consultative machinery, from recommending a slate of candidates for the Muslim electorate, at least in Muslim majority and Muslim-concentration constituencies. Thus the Muslim vote was divided and, to that extent, became ineffective. The essential point that emerged was that some Muslim organisations have an inbuilt or traditional linkage or prospective dealings with one political party or another and **it is not possible for them to go beyond the negative objective, of defeating the BJP and its allies, to the positive objective of maximising Muslim representation in the legislatures.** To weld the classes, the sections, the denominations, the political tendencies, the regional particularities into one functioning whole is no easy task, given the historic handicap and individual interests. But there is a ray of hope. All over the country there is a growing demand for a Muslim political party – for a central point for coordination, monitoring, data collection, identification of Muslim aspirations and above all negotiations with other political parties on terms of equality. **In the final analysis, Muslim India realised in 1999 the urgent need for a Muslim political platform or a Muslim-driven political party.**

With emphasis on Empowerment through Participation, **Muslims demand for proportionate**

reservation in legislature, public employment, development allocations, welfare benefits and credit flow has begun to crystallise and take an all-India character. This is the real gain of 1999.

Move to Review Constitution

Muslim India saw a threat to minority rights and its religious and cultural identity in the plan of the Vajpayee Government to set up a Commission to Review the Constitution and warned that it would not accept any dilution or erosion of its Constitutional rights. It saw in it a long-term plan to prepare the ground for transforming the Secular State into a Hindu State.

Government Institutions

The National Commission for Minorities with the eminent jurist Dr. Tahir Mahmood as the Chairman completed its term in November, 1999 with an excellent record of performance. However, it was largely an exercise in futility as few of its recommendations were accepted by the Government and none of its reports were presented to or discussed by the Parliament. No successor was appointed immediately.

The Linguistic Minorities Commission, the National Minorities Finance and Development Corporation and PM's 15-Point Programme for Minorities Welfare, the Central Wakf Council and the Maulana Azad Foundation were largely inactive throughout the year -- some to the point of oblivion.

No Major Communal Flare-up

In many ways an extension of 1998, the year 1999 was another year without any major communal flare-up but under an increasingly saffronised administration, in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity the community endured harassment and humiliation and even rank injustice or illegality. The Sangh Parivar has developed the fine art of applying psychological pressure and making whole communities withdraw into mental and physical ghettos and vacating public space. The danger lies in rural and even small urban communities succumbing to illegality and becoming used to it as the normal pattern of life.

Babari Masjid - No Progress

Perhaps to satisfy its donors and keep its appeal, the VHP maintained the tempo of preparation for the construction of the proposed Mandir on the site of the Babari Masjid, on the one hand and, on the other, repeatedly asserted that law or no law, **the Mandir will be constructed soon, "as suddenly by the Karsevaks as they had demolished the Masjid"**. However, the Sangh Parivar, one feels, will have to wait for a BJP Government both in Delhi and UP when it can launch the operation with impunity.

The title suit has made little progress during the year, while the CBI case continues to be frozen by the defiance of the accused, including Home Minister Advani and HRD Minister Joshi. The Liberhan Commission has also been functioning by fits and starts but unfortunately the

AIMPLB which had undertaken to represent the Muslim case before the Commission has not fulfilled this onerous task with due sense of responsibility.

But there is a ray of light, while the Muslims have not forgotten the demolition, some Hindu leaders are beginning to look for a feasible compromise. The BMMCC has reiterated that if the site of the Babari Masjid is restored to the Muslims, the Ram Mandir may be constructed on an adjacent site, wholly or partly on disputed land.

Kashmir: Surge of Militancy

The political disenchantment of the Kashmiri masses expressed itself in virtual boycott of the general election in the Valley and a walk-over for Farooq Abdullah's National Conference, which joined the NDA and the Vajpayee Government! Hurriyat leaders remained incarcerated for most of the year and there were no negotiations at any level. **In the eyes of the Kashmiri people, Farooq Abdullah became not more than a puppet on the string with the State being under virtual martial law.** Following the Kargil war, there was an upsurge of insurgency with audacious attacks on military installations. There was also evidence of increasing foreign presence among the militants. The Kashmir situation thus remained bogged down in a no-win situation, with no sign of any breakthrough.

Threat to Personal Law, Masjids and Madarasas

There was no direct attempt to tamper with the Muslim Personal Law but the State and the National Commission of Women continued to prepare the public mind for a common civil code.

The Supreme Court failed to give an authoritative interpretation of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 out of the divergent judgements of various High Court. Masjids and Qabristans in Punjab, Haryana and H.P. continued to remain under adverse possession and throughout the country there were attempts to seize Qabristans and shrines. Political parties made sympathetic noises but the Muslim case has yet to penetrate the curtain of indifference and antipathy, arising out of the memories of the Muslim rule and partition, which are kept alive by an officially sanctioned scare about Madarasas and Masjids serving as 'dens of ISI activities'.

Aligarh Muslim University

The Aligarh Muslim University passed through a difficult year with frequent violence on the campus and continuing friction between the administration and a section of the staff and the students. The University had to be closed down. The authoritarian Vice-Chancellor ran the University under 'emergency powers' bypassing the Court, the Executive and the Academic Councils and played to the political gallery. In a real sense, the University has lost touch with the community. It is no longer a Muslim University but just a Central University.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Conversion

True to its vision of India as a Hindu country, the Sangh Parivar kept up their pressures to obstruct conversion from Hinduism to any other religion and to facilitate the reverse flow which they termed as 'Home coming'. Specially in tribal areas, they tried to incite the tribals against Christian missionaries resulting in the Staines killing in Orissa and the depredations against the Christians in Gujarat and other parts of the country. The Muslim Indians and other secular forces expressed solidarity with the Christians. **This sudden assertion was directed by Nagpur against the possible emergence of Sonia Gandhi as the P.M. and the Pope's coming visit to India.**

Infiltration

Bengali-speaking people throughout the country, specially Muslims residing even in West Bengal and Delhi, continued to suffer discrimination and harassment. Hundred of thousands were excluded from the electoral rolls on suspicion of being Bangladeshi infiltrators specially in Assam and West Bengal, apart from thousands in Delhi, Bihar and Maharashtra. Over the years the 'foreigners issue' has secured the BJP a veritable base in the NE, particularly in Assam.

Muslim Organisations

The All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, the All India Milli Council, the Jamaat-i-Islami Hind, the Jamiat-Ulama-e-Hind and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board continued to work at the national level. But lack of coordination and mutual distrust reduced their usefulness and effectiveness for the community.

An irreparable loss was the passing away of Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, who, in many ways was accepted as a point of reference.

Movement for Empowerment of Muslim Indians was established to secure the support of the Muslim elite to the cause of the political, educational, social and economic empowerment of the community. At its Convention in New Delhi in May, 1999 was adopted the Delhi Declaration. However, by the end of 1999, except in Tamilnadu and AP, it had failed to strike roots or undertake a campaign to implement its Declaration.

Some extremist organisations also tried to expand their activities and particularly the Students Islamic Movement of India and the Milli Parliament but though they remained marginalised, they served to provide grist for anti-Muslim propaganda.

Muslim World

1999 saw little interaction between the Muslim Indians, as a community and the Muslim world. Some States continued to support their old faithful but they lacked vision and grasp of the Indian situation and made little impact. Some institutions like the IDB continued to offer support for educational activities, which falls far short of what is needed – a crash programme for funding

higher education for Muslim Indians in India.

Muslim India was deeply perturbed by the invasion of Chechenya by Russia in violation of the terms of the 1994 Treaty. It admired the valour of the Chechens and called for international intervention. However, the Indian Government, to its dismay, supported the Russian action as a defence of its territorial integrity.

Ironically, Muslim India interpreted the secession of East Timor from Indonesia, under UN auspices, as part of a Western plan to dismember Indonesia while it hailed the dawn of peace in Kosovo and the return of the Kosovans to their land and their virtual separation from Serbia under the UN flag.

Muslim India took note of liberalisation of the Iranian regime and the turbulence in Pakistan. There was also growing sympathy for the Iraqi people.

Indo-Pakistan Relations which had taken an upward swing with P.M. Vajpayee's visit to Lahore and the promise generated by the Lahore process fell to an all-time low with the Kargil war. For most of the year there was stalemate though the direct bus service between Delhi and Lahore continued to ply.

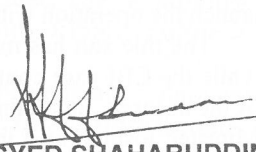
Overview

On the whole, the year 1999 was a year of transition. Political under-representation, economic deprivation, pressure for religious and cultural redefinition, social humiliation, administrative saffronisation and secular setback all joined to create a new, unprecedented challenge for the Muslim Indians. With their religious and cultural identity as the real target, with the secular order itself under threat, with the Hindutva forces gaining new allies among the erstwhile secular parties, the Muslim Indians realised the need, as they had never done before since 1947 - of a secular political platform of their own.

Muslim Indians cannot win their legitimate rights without an organised nationwide campaign, synchronised with the wider battle for Social Justice which continues to rage in the political arena, without forming an alliance with all the deprived social groups in the country.

But Muslim unity, which alone would give weight and credence to such a political formation remains a distant drama and, at the turn of the century. The political energy of the Muslim Indians remained scattered, divided on ideological, denominational, political, regional and even caste considerations. They have to realise that their destiny is undivisible and at the same time inseparable from that of their motherland and specially from that of other deprived groups all seeking JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND DIGNITY.

New Delhi,
1st April, 2000


(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

Withdrawal of Gujarat Circular on RSS

CPI(M) Demands, 5 February, 2000

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) deplores the prime minister's justification of the Gujarat government's decision to lift the ban on government employees participating in the activities of the RSS...

It needs no reiteration that the RSS is a political organisation with a clear-cut political-ideological perspective, working in the guise of a "social outfit". The RSS, which aims to establish Hindu Raj based on the philosophy of Hindutva, guides and controls its political arm, the BJP. The notification issued by the BJP government in Gujarat is nothing but a measure aimed at infiltrating and communalising the administration in the state...

The Polit Bureau ... strongly condemns the stand adopted by Vajpayee and appeals to all the secular and democratic forces to voice their protest and thwart the nefarious designs of the BJP...

(Source: The Peoples Democracy, 13 February, 2000)

RSS Chief's Statement

... The Gujarat Government's decision was obviously based on its own assessment that the RSS is a socio-cultural organisation and not a political body...

The RSS had not sought the withdrawal of the circular prohibiting government employees from participating in its activities, because RSS work has never been dependent on any Government's attitude, positive or negative, towards it.

I would therefore like to reiterate ... that the RSS for its part is unconcerned whether the original circular of the Gujarat Government exists or not. (Source: The Organiser)

Vajpayee Leadership: Waning Public Confidence Editorial, The Mainstream, 19 February, 2000

... Vajpayee's public image has definitely suffered a dent because of his personal behaviour... His open defence of the Sangh has indeed alienated him from liberal democratic opinion in the country. The picture of Vajpayee that has emerged as a consequence is that of a helpless prisoner in the hands of the RSS, not one of a leader who knows his mind and steers clear of the Sangh without being unduly hostile to it...

Bereft of decisive actions the Vajpayee leadership is showing signs of drift. Such a leadership gives the impression that it could succumb to pressures from various quarters... No wonder the public confidence that this leadership enjoyed even a few months ago is now on the wane.

Supreme Court on Government Employee's Participation in Politics

State of Madhya Pradesh, Petitioner vs Ramashanker Raghuvanshi and Another, Respondents.

S. MURTAZA FAZAL ALI & O. CHINNAPPA REDDY, JJ.

... Past affiliation with some recognised political party cannot be a disqualification for absorption in government service – Termination from government service merely on the basis of a police report suggesting unsuitability because of participation in "RSS and Jan Sangh activities, held, not justified.

Per Chinnappa Reddy, J.

To seek a police report on the political faith or past political association and activity – neither illegal nor subversive – of any (appointee) to government service violates Articles 14, 16, 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(b) and is repugnant to the basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution and entirely misplaced in a democratic republic dedicated to the ideas set forth in the Preamble of the Constitution. McCarthyism is obnoxious to the philosophy of our Constitution. Only if such past affinities are considered likely to affect the integrity and efficiency of the individual's service can the incumbent be denied employment.

The respondent is neither alleged to have indulged in any illegal, vicious or subversive activity nor the organisations in whose activities he participated banned or alleged to be devoted to subversive or illegal activities. Hence the respondent cannot be turned back at the very threshold on the ground of his past activities. Once he becomes a government servant, he becomes subject to the various rules regulating his conduct and his activities must naturally be subject to all rules made in conformity with the Constitution. ...

We are not for a moment suggesting that even after entry into government service, a person may engage himself in political activities. All that we say is that he cannot be turned back at the very threshold on the ground of his past political activities. Once he becomes a government servant, he becomes subject to the various rules regulating his conduct and his activities must naturally be subject to all rules made in conformity with the Constitution.

(Ref: (1983) 2 SCC 145)

UP Government will not permit Government servants to participate in RSS activities.

- UP C.M. R.P. Gupta

Please Keep Doors of Public Administration Closed to RSS

Insaf Morcha Convener Shahabuddin's Letter to PM Vajpayee, 19 February, 2000

"The controversy raised by the Government of Gujarat's decision to allow government servants to become members, or to participate in the activities, of the RSS (and its various fronts organisations, by implication) is not set at rest by the RSS Chief's declaration that RSS will not press the Central Government in this regard. Nor is it settled by your announcement that the RSS does not want its members to join the Government.

For one thing, the Government has not yet publicly prescribed the RSS membership as a pre-condition for government service. For another, the question is actually the reverse: whether the Government wants its employees to join the RSS.

Two questions arise:

- 1) Whether there is currently any bar on any person, who has been a member of the RSS or has been participating in its activities e.g. attending the Shakhas, being admitted into government service.
- 2) Whether any Government servant, who is in service, may join the RSS or any of its front organisations or participate in their public activities.

In our democratic system, a Government servant may become a member of a political party or organisation but he cannot take an active or prominently part in its activities. There is no such bar on members of social or cultural or even religious organisations or institutions. So ultimately it has to be decided whether the RSS, along with the hundreds of its front and attached organisations, is a social or cultural or religious organisation or a political organisation.

Right from independence, the RSS, though not a political party, has been considered to be a political organisation, particularly after the establishment of the BJS and subsequently the birth of the BJP. It has played a consistent role in their working and taken a stand on all political questions of national concern. In fact its social and cultural views are defined in political terms.

Therefore, what is more important, even if it is defined as a social or cultural organisation, in its philosophy, its ideology, its very *raison d'être* which runs counter to Nationalism, Democracy, Secularism and Federalism on which the Indian State is based.

RSS stands for Hindu Nationalism or, more refinedly Cultural Nationalism based on Hindutva or Hindu Culture.

RSS does not believe in Democracy because it rejects the rule of law; to achieve its objectives it methodically generates and exploits religious and even racial sentiments. Not only it admires fascism, its pronouncements have a fascist ring.

The RSS is not secular because it aims at the Hinduisation of the Indian society and polity, through assimilation, forcibly, if necessary, of all religious

minorities and because its Hindu-centric vision of India envisages the supremacy of the Hindus and leaves no space of dignity for any non-Hindus.

The RSS does not believe in Federalism because it wants the country to be governed as a monolithic, centralised state.

My submission to you is that if any person, who believes in the ideology of the RSS and associates with and whose mindset has been formed by the instruction in the Shakhas can be neutral or free from bias in a situation of conflict of interest between Hindus and non-Hindus. Such a person is not fit to be a public servant in a multi-religious society, in a multi-level polity, whatever his level.

Seen from another angle, such a Government servant, particularly in the law-enforcing machinery, will not command the confidence of the minority communities in a situation of tension. This will cast a shadow on the goodwill of the administration and affect its efficiency and performance.

This means that while the Political Executive will inevitably have a political colour, the public administration should be politically colourless, and remain neutral in situations of conflict at the interface between various social groups.

That is why, I plead with you not to open the doors of public administration, at any level, to any person, who is directly or indirectly involved in politics and who is actively associated with any organisation, political, social or cultural, whose basic postulates and concepts are contrary to the foundations on which the Indian State rests."

Review of Functioning of Constitution

Soli Sorabjee's Reply to Shahabuddin, 18 February, 2000

You may rest assured that so long as I am on the Review Commission there will be no tampering with the fundamental rights of the minorities. The apprehension which you have expressed about the transfer of Uniform Civil Code to the chapter on Fundamental Rights is without any basis.

The Commission will be course be inviting views from all sections of the civil society in the form of a questionnaire.

Shahabuddin's Response, 19 February, 2000

I sincerely thank you for the kind assurance in your letter of 18 February, 2000.

Indeed, all minorities will be grateful to you for your vigil on their rights.

Saffron Brigade as Cultural and Moral Police

S. Rajagopalan
On Reversal in Gujarat

At the end of a wholly avoidable controversy, the BJP has emerged with egg on its face. For the Congress-led Opposition, it has been nothing short of a fairytale end to a potent political campaign at a time when its morale was at a rather low ebb.

There is little doubt that the BJP has had to pay a heavy political price. Its credibility has been called into question by the headlong rush with which its government in Gandhinagar lifted the ban (on employees joining the RSS) and then retraced its steps at the prodding of an embattled Vajpayee regime.

The reversal is certain to leave the BJP's committed supporters cold. The hardcore segments of the Sangh Parivar are hardly enthused by the manner in which the Vajpayee Government has had to yield ground to the opposition and its own "secular allies" within the NDA fold.

In retrospect, as BJP circles concede in private conversations, there was little sense in the party's government in Gujarat belling the cat on such a sensitive issue, knowing full well that its reverberations will be felt far and wide.

The Congress and the Left ... crying hoarse about the BJP's "hidden agenda", got some justification for their relentless campaign, thanks to the ... Gujarat government.

After the Lok Sabha polls ... the Opposition in general and the Congress in particular were bereft of issues to pin down the ruling coalition.

And then, out of the blue, Gujarat happened. Sure enough, it brought the rather disparate Opposition together... Political observers feel that if the Gujarat circular had to be undone in this manner, the undoing could have been done much earlier.

Even now, sections of the Opposition are still intent on a discussion on the RSS issue, possibly under Rule 193 instead of the punitive Rule 184. The purpose is clearly to rub salt in the BJP's wounds...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 9 March, 2000)

The Prime Minister and Home Minister had on several occasions spoken of their long and loyal association as members of the RSS. Had they subscribed to the RSS oath when they became members of that body? And does it override the oath they took when assuming the offices they hold today?

- Arjun Singh, Congress Leader

Saffron Hooliganism Undermining Democracy
Editorial, The India Today, 14 February, 2000

... No cultural police has the right to disrupt (Deepa Mehta's) work. The inability to tolerate another view – and the damaging of an M.F. Husain exhibition, the violence against a City of Joy or the banning of a Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoy are all manifestations of this – is mobocracy, not democracy.

The methods of the Sangh Parivar ... are ... objectionable. Their logic too is questionable... Two and a half millennia ago, Gautam Buddha made more critical remarks about Varanasi – about its takeover by a self-serving priestly elite... Presumably the Kashi Sanskriti Raksha Sangharsha Samiti will next run a posthumous campaign against that first great dissenter. From stopping cricket matches to film screenings, saffron vandalism holds all India to ransom. It is a painfully familiar routine – first create a violent situation, then force the state to cancel the event citing a law and order problem... The only loser is Indian democracy, having to give that much more room to intolerance.

Bajrang Bullies

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 21 February, 2000

... The Bajrang Dal ... has reluctantly shifted (its Convention) to Mathura, but not before ... its cadres stormed through police barricades and raised their flag at the venue (in Bhopal). The Dal – a product of the RSS family – has now threatened to initiate an agitation. Spearheading the programme are recognised Hindutva icons like BJP MP and former Union Minister Uma Bharti and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Giriraj Kishore, though ... the Bajrang Dal has occasionally revealed its preference for strong-arm methods.

Perhaps the Dal is sometimes made to double up as a front organisation for the BJP and VHP and, therefore, leaders of these bodies have an obligation toward it... The recent unfortunate happenings ... taken together, these paint a illiberal picture of India... The question is: has the Sangh Parivar stopped caring about whether its actions embarrass the government in Delhi?

A Law Unto Themselves

ABVP activists assaulted a school teacher in Marcela in Goa ... for setting an "unpatriotic" question for last month's SSC preliminary examinations.

Dharmanand Khotkar, a teacher of Konkani language at Sharda English School, was beaten up and his face painted black by 13 ABVP men. Six people have been arrested... Francisco Sardinha government which depends on the support of the BJP, is dragging its feet on the issue.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 4 February, 2000)

Testing Secular Waters

A.J. Philip, Associate Editor, The Indian Express, New Delhi

... Vajpayee's clean chit to the RSS ... and ... Advani's open-mindedness on the question of allowing central government employees to join the RSS are all intended to test the waters. If the near-silence from the BJP's allies is anything to go by, it will not be long before central government employees will be able to take part in the morning shakhas of the RSS and attend their government offices later in the day.

The central issue is how participation of government employees in the RSS will compromise the political neutrality of the government. It is true that the RSS is not a banned organisation but that does not legitimise involvement of government employees in its activities, either...

(The) "apolitical character" of the 75-year-old organisation has enabled it to withstand the pressures of time. But that does not mean that the RSS has not played any political role. It is as political a body as any other except that it has a long-term view, unlike the Janata Dals or the Congress, whose vision is narrow and chair-centric, and all its actions are in furtherance of it...

Its claims of political disinterestedness had a selfish motive too. During the British period, it did not want to antagonise the government and thereby invite retributive action. Walter Anderson and S.D. Damle, who are otherwise favourably disposed towards the RSS, in their pioneering study on the RSS, *Brotherhood in Saffron* were constrained to write: "When the British banned military drill and the use of uniforms in all nonofficial organisations, the RSS complied." It even stayed aloof from the Quit India movement earning, in the process, a certificate of good conduct from the alien rulers while Congress workers led by Mahatma Gandhi went to jail in their thousands.

After Independence, when Sardar Patel's plan to allow the RSS cadres to join the Congress did not fructify, Golwalkar felt the need for some sort of political cover. He knew without political support, the RSS could virtually turn into a football in the political field. He, therefore, lent the services of four of his able cadres to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee when he founded the Jan Sangh in 1951. Among the cadres lent were Vajpayee, endowed with consummate oratorical skill, and the mild-mannered Advani. They can hardly be blamed if, half a century later, they feel beholden to the RSS and are compelled to oblige their parent body out of sheer gratitude.

Since 1951, the RSS has always guided or directed the activities of the Jan Sangh and its latter-day avatar. Not only that, it also participated in the 1952 movement against cow slaughter and several other political agitations, including the Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat and the

anti-foreigner agitation in Assam. By no stretch of the imagination can these activities be described as cultural, however loosely Vajpayee may define the adjective.

... The RSS is authoritarian in its emphasis on discipline, in its refusal to recognise the specific character of minorities and in its intention of reforming the Hindu mentality absolutely to prepare the advent of a new man, implying the need to extend its sway over the whole society. It is yet to repudiate Golwalkar's original prescription.

... It does not recognise the tricolour and has reservations on the Constitution of India... On Republic Days and Independence Days, the national flag does not fly atop the RSS headquarters at Nagpur. This is because the RSS recognises only the ochre-coloured standard associated with Shivaji. Strictly speaking, Godse may not have been a member of the RSS when he shot Mahatma Gandhi, but Gandhi Jayanti is not sacred for the RSS. Nor is the Jana Gana Mana revered. In fact, Vajpayee was virtually crucified when as the then president of the BJP he announced that the new party stood for Gandhian socialism, whatever it meant.

Similarly, the RSS has not yet abandoned its Akhand Bharat project. The map of India that it uses includes countries like Burma, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tibet and Afghanistan...

... The fears that the RSS generate are not confined to some sections alone. At one point, even Vajpayee was constrained to argue that the political activities of the RSS affiliates "do not help an organisation (the RSS) to establish its apolitical credentials. He further argued that "it is possible that some people genuinely feel apprehensive about the RSS. A certain onus accordingly devolved on the RSS, an onus that has not been discharged effectively by the RSS".

Elaborating on this theme, he wrote, "Its (the RSS) repudiation of the theocratic state was welcomed. Yet, the question could legitimately be asked — why does it not open its doors to Muslims? Recent statements of the RSS chief, Deoras, indicate that non-Hindus are being encouraged to join the organisation.

A natural corollary of this process would be clear enunciation by the RSS that by 'Hindu Rashtra' it means the Indian nation which includes non-Hindus as equal members." (*Indian Express*, August 2, 1979). Two decades have passed since Vajpayee wrote this article but the RSS is yet to repudiate the fundamentals on which Hegdewar, Golwalkar and Balasaheb Deoras built up its edifice and Rajendra Singh soldiers on. Until then the fears will remain.

(Source: The Indian Express, 11 February, 2000)

Mani Shankar Aiyar On Vajpayee's Lakshman Rekha

... The RSS has a political programme. It was to carry out this programme that the Jan Sangh was fielded in the political arena as the sole and authentic voice of Hindutva. The Jan Sangh might have changed both its name and its stripes but it remains quintessentially the instrument of the RSS for carrying out the *Sangh Parivar*'s agenda for the establishment of a Hindu *Rashtra*...

The RSS is not some saffron equivalent of a Rotary Club. It has a holistic mission dedicated to making over the entire character of the nation, an objective which cannot be achieved without a political instrumentality in the political arena. That instrumentality is known as the BJP. Which is why when the "double-membership" controversy erupted in 1979, Vajpayee and Advani, preferred losing their seats in the cabinet to losing their membership of the RSS.

... Vajpayee has come to the mournful conclusion that an RSS agenda cannot bring the BJP to political power — or keep it there. This is not a conviction shared by those who politically fathered him. They have not put him where he is to carry out the programme of others; they've put him there to carry out their programme. This he is not in a position to deliver. And so he pleads for a *Lakshman Rekha* to be drawn, and not violated, between the socio-cultural work of the *Sangh Parivar* and the political agenda of the BJP-led NDA. It is a distinction which the *Parivar* is unable to recognize, still less observe, with the scruple Vajpayee desperately needs to keep his coalition going...

... The *Sangh Parivar* ... gave Vajpayee the mandate to establish the political framework within which this remaking of India could be secured. He, however, has turned into a Ravana of secularism and, moreover, has the gall to ask the RSS to desist from invading his sphere. The RSS, understandably, refuses to be ravished in this fashion. So, for Vajpayee, there is no escaping his dilemma. He has to decide, not once for all, but repeatedly, indeed all the time, **whether he is a fully subscribed member of the RSS or leader of a secular coalition.**

... Vajpayee's goals are not their goals. He wants to remain in power without purpose. The *Sangh Parivar* wants power with a purpose. That purpose has been clearly spelt out, nowhere more explicitly than in the RSS equivalent of *Mein Kampf*, Guruji Golwalkar's "*We, or the Nation Defined*". The BJP may disavow this unbridled work but they are still stuck with the Guruji's "Bunch of Thoughts", the *Parivar*'s equivalent of Hitler's "Table-Talk"... The relentless, multi-pronged assault on Vajpayee will continue. By those to whom Vajpayee owes his primary loyalty — the RSS. They broke the Morarji government. It is they who will blow the NDA apart.

(Source: The Indian Express, 22 February, 2000)

RSS as Political Organisation Sajeda Momin, Asst. Editor, The Statesman

... The repeated description by various BJP leaders of the RSS as a "socio-cultural organisations" began to sound alarm-bells within the NDA. It was obvious that they were trying to push their Hindutva plank through the back door. An acceptance of the RSS as only a cultural organisation would then legitimise their activities and their hold over the BJP... Considering that the RSS believes in leaving no tell-tale signs around, it has no paperwork, membership list or cards and the way to membership or allegiance is to attend shakhas — which most BJP leaders have done at some stage — the connection is pretty clear.

Former UP chief minister and still a self-confessed member of the RSS Kalyan Singh has pointed out the Sangh's role very clearly: "**I have spent a great party of my life in this organisation (RSS) and I can say that right from the distribution of election tickets in the BJP to selecting Cabinet ministers, it is only the RSS which calls the shots. What else is political activity**". He should know considering he has been taking orders and acting at their behest for decades.

It was only the new-found opposition from the NDA that forced the BJP-RSS to retreat... The RSS at this juncture cannot afford to antagonise their allies in Government and long may this dependence continue! ...

... The RSS and the BJP have decided to control culture... The state gives its tacit consent by dismissing it as "popular protest". None of the actions being taken by the Sangh Parivar are on the NDA agenda. It is obvious that the Sangh is trying to push them in through the back door. The BJP's silence is understandable, that of the other constituents of the NDA is not.

(Source: The Statesman, 21 February, 2000)

Vajpayee Govt. and the Sangh Parivar Editorial, Indian Express, 14 Feb., 2000

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has asked the Sangh Parivar to draw a Lakshman Rekha within which it can raise contentious issues... That Vajpayee has a difficult task in managing the contradictions of running a heterogeneous coalition without antagonising the Parivar cannot be overemphasised. When some overzealous members of the Parivar see the government as theirs alone and are eager to have their agenda implemented, it is a sure recipe for trouble. It is yet to sink into their mind that the Vajpayee government draws its legitimacy from the election manifesto of the National Democratic Alliance... Besides, the liberal image of Vajpayee... All this should have automatically forced the Parivar to draw a Lakshman Rekha on its own.

... But ... Vajpayee is not just a theologian delivering discourses on morality. He is the Prime Minister entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the rule of law

(Contd. on Page 156)

Muslims as the Target of New UP Population Policy

After bringing in the controversial legislation banning construction of religious places without prior permission of the state authorities, the Uttar Pradesh government has now decided to introduce a population policy which will target "specific groups and communities which have a higher rate of growth of population".

Announcing the decision, Uttar Pradesh chief minister R.P. Gupta said, "There are groups and communities which feel that if they go on increasing their number they will capture power one day. Such a way of thinking has to be disincentivised". The "disincentive", to begin with, means debarring those having more than two children from contesting panchayat elections, he said.

The Chief minister said that in order to control population there "should be some restrictions on contesting elections, only then can be menace be controlled". Gupta made these announcements ... while addressing a three-day conference on population issues in Lucknow. Opposition parties, however, have cried foul.

They say this obviously is yet another move by the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh to target the minorities, especially Muslims.

State Congress President Salman Khurshid, told (*Asian Age*) ... he was not at all surprised ... but he was "shocked" at the audacity of it all.

"Gupta is blatantly implementing the RSS agenda. He represents the core of RSS and BJP, with all its warts and moles, without the sugar-coating that they have in Delhi...", he said.

Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh, too, minced no words while lashing out at the Gupta government.

"This is a direct attack, the second in a row after the religious places legislation, on the minorities. The RSS agenda, so far hidden, is now out in the open. Gupta is only repeating the established Sangh line on Muslims whom the RSS ideologue Golwalkar described as 'videshi' and said their population needed to be controlled otherwise they would capture power one day." ...

Though political observers feel UP needed a population policy they, however, said there should be only one criteria, economic criteria, for defining "groups and communities". In this case, however, they said the Uttar Pradesh government's intentions appeared 'suspect' because of Gupta's political track record.

Gupta's recent statements that he would not mind having a Ram temple constructed Ayodhya, provided it was done peacefully, had political parties up in arms.

Then he brought the religious places legislation banning construction of places of worship without prior permission of the state government, which created yet another furor...

(Courtesy: The Asian Age)

There's a Lot in a Name! It's Not Lucknow But Laxmanpur

Editorial, The Statesman, 23 February, 2000

The aromatic *biryani* and succulent *kebabs* for which ... Lucknow is well-known will soon disappear if the government of UP are allowed to work their will. The Awadhi delicacies have become intolerable to the RSS family because of their association with the Muslim past of the city... The real issue of course is not food but eradicating the city's Muslim past, and to this end the BJP has resurrected its nine year old demand of changing the city's name from Lucknow to Laxmanpur, saying that the city was built by Laxman. When the BJP first came to power in UP under Kalyan Singh, a major point on their agenda, apart from rewriting history textbooks, was changing the names of places with Muslim associations. The others identified included Allahabad, to be changed to Prayag... Faizabad would be changed to Saket, and the district of Faizabad to Ayodhya. The state Government did their worst but due to virulent opposition to this communal move, they were forced to ease off and finally the government was dismissed before they could proceed.

The renewed demand under Ram Prakash Gupta is instigated at the instance of the RSS, who realise that if they are able to set a precedent by rooting for Laxmanpur then there are other changes waiting in the wings, e.g. Ahmedabad to Karnavati, Delhi to Indraprasth and new names ... for Aligarh, Kanpur, Hyderabad... It does not rest with changing names of cities, Muslim sounding localities must be renamed too. The area in Lucknow known as Tilewali Masjid because of the large mosque on the hill, they argue, should be called Laxman Tila because it was built, so the fantasy goes, after destroying a (Mandir in) Laxman Tila. What is the proof? In the words of Swami Vamdev, in the context of the demand to break down the Jama Masjid in Delhi - "break down the mosque and you will see the proof"! He (also) argued that the Babari Masjid "fell down on its own!" ... Logic fails to meet such arguments... Can we please have a cultural and social response?

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Sonia Gandhi and the Future of the Congress

M.J. Akbar, Editor-in-Chief, The Asian Age

An old friend of the Nehru-Gandhi family ... drew a one-line portrait of Sonia Gandhi, "She is not a natural friend-maker." The unspoken ... implication was that while this may be a virtue for a recluse, it is less than wholesome in a person who seeks to prosper through a career in public life.

I had a question... how did he explain (Indira Gandhi's) success in politics? She had an instinctive feel for the right option, he responded. She had a tremendous array of information rivulets, he added; she always kept more than one stream available, and believed that truth had more than one dimension. But friend-maker? I insisted. As an admirer of Indira Gandhi, he could not quite get himself to admit a weakness. Instead he pounced on a strength: she knew how to build instant chemistry with anyone she met. In a few minutes a visitor would be jelly... Even (her) public meetings have become frosty.

There are understandable, if not entirely acceptable reasons. When Sonia Gandhi entered politics, her great strength was the fact that she was apolitical. Her great weakness now is that she is still apolitical. The party which welcomed the "cleanliness" of a clean slate, is in deep depression because the slate still remains clean. They now call it vacant. By this time - and president Sonia Gandhi is now a few serious elections old - Congressmen expected her to have learnt, at the minimum, the alphabet of Indian politics. No one thought she would pick up much grammar; but no one expected continued ignorance of the alphabet either...

The weakness has become public with Sonia Gandhi's presence in Parliament. Her deputy in the Lok Sabha, Madhavrao Scindia, can compensate for her silence up to a point; but he cannot usurp her role without seeming rude or, worse, implicitly stressing her incompetence...

A political party cannot be inspired by a speech-written leader; and its voters cannot be enthused by a leader whose eye contact is with the text rather than them... When she meets the political class, ... she has nothing to contribute to the dialogue.

This helplessness becomes dangerous when mixed with ambition. Once, in those distant days of self-imposed exile, Sonia Gandhi was merely powerful. Today, power has been fueled with ambition. She wants to be Prime Minister of India, and will not let anything come in the way, least of all the Congress party... She has brushed aside any suggestion of accountability after the pathetic performance of the Congress in the last Assembly elections... She is beyond rebuke, above suspicion; she is both Caesar and Caesar's wife.

It is a fact of political life that the weaker you are the more possessive you become about power. You do not

have the confidence to make space for another point of view. Indira Gandhi, who never veered away from democracy either before or after, became a dictator only at her weakest hour... Sonia Gandhi has ... begun to confuse herself with the Congress. Sonia is Congress and Congress is Sonia.

The nominations to the Rajya Sabha have been remarkable for their self-centered motivation. She did not treat the Congress a political party, as a collection of individuals and interests through whom she had to string a common denominator; she treated the

Congress as an extension of her personal needs and demands. Anyone who did or could have challenged her was denied a ticket, and replaced by a non-entity whose only qualification was complete subservience to Sonia Gandhi...

Paradoxically, Sonia Gandhi is only as strong as Congressmen are weak. She can be confident about their impotence. As they themselves cheerfully admit, cowardice is one of the elements that unites the party... There is possibly a case to be argued in favour of cowardice; perhaps there is nothing else which will work with as fractious a lot as Congressmen. But even cowardice needs a justification. Congressmen were happy to advertise their cowardice under the dominating leadership of Indira Gandhi, but there was a quid pro quo. Congressmen gave India Gandhi their loyalty; she in turn gave them victory in elections. Even when she lost an election, which she did ... once, she gave them hope. The equation between Indira Gandhi and here Congress worked because it was a two-way street.

Sonia Gandhi's tenure is unusual because she is demanding total obedience after she has sucked out all hope. No one believes that she can deliver any election victory... The party contemplates the prospect of five years in opposition with Sonia Gandhi as its leader with, once again private, despair. There is no doubt about it; as long as she is leader, it will be five years in opposition no matter how abysmal the performance of the government. Sonia Gandhi is a problem on two counts: she is incapable of mounting a serious political challenge to the BJP; and as long as her ambitions take precedence over party interests there cannot be any plausible unity among non-BJP parties...

Sonia Gandhi possibly feels that she has time on her side... Neither her age nor the age of her colleagues is the issue. The issue is what will the state of the Congress be in five years. The party has disappeared from most of India. It would be a tragedy if the only Congress to survive after five years were the Overseas Congress.

(Source: The Asian Age, 19 February, 2000)

BJP Lost Between Secular India and Hindu State

Eminent Journalist Prem Shankar Jha

... At the centre of the struggle was an issue that could decide whether India remains a single, united nation or disintegrates into smaller sub-units in the coming years.

That issue is the safeguarding of Indian pluralism. Among all the countries, India is unique in that it is a federation of scores of different ethnic groups – linguistic, tribal and religious. The only way all these groups can stay together voluntarily is if they are convinced that their core identity is secure while they construct the larger, modern identity that is the Indian nation-state. The core identity is, in a real sense, primeval for it is what we come into the world with...

The modern identity is constructed. It is what we subscribe to because we see, in this identity, opportunities of self-fulfillment. The opportunities may be social, cultural and educational, but they are above all economic. As these are availed of they add new layers to one's identity. The interaction between the core and constructed identities creates new amalgams that are shared more and more widely within the nation. The end product is the modern nation-state...

... The achievements of Indian democracy ... can be traced to a carefully calculated succession of decisions that firmly entrenched India's pluralism and diversity into Constitution and into political practice. The struggle over the membership of the RSS that one witnessed in the Lok Sabha is a struggle to ensure that this carefully constructed pluralism is not endangered.

... For the RSS has been the fountainhead of an alternative view of India, as a culturally Hindu state. Allowing employees of the State to join it is therefore a signal that the State is prepared to align itself behind this alternative vision of India.

No one can, or indeed wants, to deny that India is predominantly Hindu, and that its culture, although composite, springs mainly from Hindu roots. But there is a world of difference between a historical fact and a (state) ideology... The latter immediately forces various minorities to reassess their relationship to the State. In short, to ask themselves the simple questions: "Do we belong here, can we continue to belong here, and if so, on what terms?"

Fortunately, the logic of Indian pluralism has begun to assert itself in the face of this threat. The BJP has come under pressure not only from the Congress and other Opposition parties, but also from its own allies in the NDA. This has forced it to start backtracking on its earlier promises...

But overt action to change a particular law or rewrite the Constitution is not the only form that this threat is

taking...

Every such action makes it more difficult for Indians to answer a Naga or a Kashmiri when he asks what such a State offers to him... The BJP's Hindu chauvinism can easily legitimise a burst of ethnic chauvinism in other groups.

The BJP's Maharashtra Secondary School Board's textbooks on Indian history already emphasise the importance of Shivaji to the exclusion of practically everything else in Indian history. Other states have only to detach themselves from the two all-India secondary school examination system – the CBSE and the ICSE – and the start rewriting their own histories, for future generations of Indian children to lose all sense of a common nationhood...

The BJP remains trapped in the dilemma of whether to serve its committed supporters or the nation as a whole. It is trying to resolve it by yielding to its partners on major issues, while appeasing its diehards on issues like appointing them to key posts in the fields of education and culture, changing syllabi and rewriting textbooks, which fall below the radar screens of their partners in the NDA. Unfortunately, it is precisely these actions that give the greatest jolt to the core identities of the various ethnations that make up the Indian Union.

Vajpayee, Advani and others will soon have to decide which master they wish to serve – the India whose unity they have sworn to uphold, or the mythical Hindu nation that commands no more than one-fifths of the national vote.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 10 March, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 153)

prevails in the country. Unfortunately, on the issue of Water, it was not the writ of his government ... that ran at Varanasi... For a government which is keen to shed its image of being soft, it's no advertisement that a handful of people could nullify its decision taken after considerable deliberation and that too at the highest level.

The capitulation of the government on Water may encourage the Parivar to pursue its own divisive agenda... After a certain stage, some of the allies may not remain silent as Tamil Nadu chief Minister Karunanidhi has hinted. His advice not to rake up contentious issues like allowing government employees to participate in RSS activities when more important problems face the nation can be ignored only at the government's peril.... The question is what will Vajpayee do if the Parivar does not operate within the Lakshman Rekha. □

On Limits of Hindutva Politics

Eminent Academician and Commentator Praful Bidwai

Hard-line or sectarian politics based on elitism or exclusion of whole communities/groups of people does not work beyond a point in India. What appeals is moderate, inclusive, consensual and secular politics. That is the main lesson from the unenviable situation in which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) finds itself.

To put it starkly, the party has painted itself into a corner and created rifts with its own allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on three major issues: links with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the budget and Bihar. It could end up paying heavily for this.

On the RSS issue, the BJP ... faced a serious motion of censure in Parliament, tabled by the Congress. This sought to reprimand the Government for its failure to defend the secular character of the Constitution in Gujarat...

The BJP's allies were unwilling to vote against the motion; they would rather that the censure be made under another legislative procedure which does not involve a vote.

This should cause little surprise. No one but the BJP likes the RSS. The communal-sectarian organization with its links with European fascists going back to the 1930s, its non-participation in the freedom struggle, its consistent anti-minorities stance and its opposition to pluralism is a political liability.

And yet, Prime Minister Vajpayee recklessly defended Gujarat Chief Minister's RSS decision on the ground that it is a purely cultural organization.

Now, in a democracy, you cannot have a politicized bureaucracy and police committed to a particular party. That would make for partisan, sectarian governance. Secondly, the RSS is anything but purely cultural. It is the ideological-political progenitor and mentor of the BJP and its organizational gatekeeper.

The RSS has a political agenda with hard positions on everything from the CTBT. To economic policy from the origins of the Aryans to center-state relations and from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Three years ago, it even decided for the BJP that all its state presidents must be RSS leaders.

In truth, the RSS first used the cultural label in the 1930s as an excuse to keep out of the freedom movement. It now uses it to evade accountability to any democratic forum... Imagine how someone convinced that most Muslims are a mere internal shadow of Pakistan will behave in a communal riot? You cannot expect an RSS bureaucrat to be ... fair to the minorities.

The BJP ... is equally in trouble with its allies who

oppose aspects of the budget – sharp 70 per cent increase in ration-food prices for the officially recognized poor and a decrease in fertilizer subsidy... It is now under pressure to roll back these hikes. That would be embarrassing...

It is in Bihar that the BJP faces its worst challenge. It failed to provide leadership to the NDA in the Assembly elections. Four months ago, the NDA bagged 76 per cent of the state's Lok Sabha seats. In today's Assembly, it holds less than half that proportion...

The NDA paid the price for the BJP's Hindutva agenda and its hostility to backward classes. The Muslim masses punished it for supporting the BJP's agenda to Hinduize education and tamper with the Constitution. Muslims chose the secular but corrupt Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) of Laloo Prasad Yadav against the communal and only less corrupt NDA...

The NDA's internal power balances have now changed. Its non-BJP components have gained in political weight. They are likely to become more assertive. At the same time, internal differences within the BJP have sharpened. Advani and Govindacharya will come under attack from party rivals for the Bihar fiasco...

They must recognize that public opinion is turning against Hindutva....

By vetoing the BJP's sectarian agenda, the non-BJP parties have much to gain...

(Source: The Arab News, Riyadh, 17 March, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 160)

humiliation ... would spur the Hindutvavadis to take recourse to acts of blatant chauvinism-cum-jingoism based on unalloyed communal hatred to "disprove" the growing comprehension that India had become a "soft state". The total confusion in governance under Vajpayee in dealing with Pakistan ... has heightened the Sangh Parivar's resolve to establish India has a "hard state" by emphasising its "macho" credentials... The efforts to deepen the RSS' infiltration in administration besides other measures like trying to poison the young minds by distorting history texts ... are all the ingredients of the BJP/RSS/ sinister "hidden agenda" now raising its ugly head making a mockery of the NDA's manifesto.

In this ominous situation it is now upto the civil society to act, and act fast, to preserve our secular democratic heritage the RSS' fascist onslaughts are seeking to destroy... It is not yet too late to mount that resistance today but one is not sure of tomorrow.

On BJP-NDA Interaction

Eminent Academician Partha S. Ghosh

The Bharatiya Janata Party's RSS connection become a matter of controversy whenever the party has come to power... The present experience is no exception. But there is a qualitative change now. There was a time when the party depended solely upon the RSS for votes and ideological support. Today, the RSS depends upon the party.

Two factors account for this: one, the rapid expansion of the BJP thanks to an unprecedented exodus from other parties by people who have little to do with khaki shorts and an expanding base among the Indian diaspora. Two, the technological and modernisation process which is making the RSS ideology increasingly outdated.

... India is not the Shah's Iran. Its democratic institutions are firmly rooted and all channels of democratic protest are available to the people. This factor together with the reality that technology is moving at a breakneck speed is leaving the RSS-type ideology gasping for its basic survival.

What is happening in Gujarat or UP may apparently sound alarming, but it is symptomatic of a fear of extinction. The best strategy for the BJP now should be to force the bees to remain in their hive and avoid fiddling with it lest they fly helter-skelter, making peaceful life miserable. A.B. Vajpayee and many others in the party realise this, but go astray at times under sudden existential pressures of politics...

Now about the rapid expansion of the BJP. We must understand that the BJP can no longer be treated in isolation without reference to two factors. One, its dependence on other political parties as well as on all those leaders who have joined it of late, and two, its traditional connection with Hindutva. Both the important for the party and they need delicate balancing. An appeal to Hindu sentiments helps the party, but the RSS, the VHP, and the like do not necessarily serve the purpose. On the contrary, their overt display of that sentiment, as reflected in the anti-Water violence, the anti-Pope agitation, and the controversy over conversions, becomes counter-production.

Given the plurality of Hindu religion, a pro-Hindutva understatement is more appealing to the masses than tom-tomming it. If the backward caste movement is a permanent fixture in Indian politics ever since V.P. Singh Mandalised it, so is the 'Hindu vote' a reality in Indian politics ever since BJP gave it political respectability. But that Hindu vote alone, say, 25 per cent, is not sufficient to ensure the BHJP remains in power. More important is that

crucial 25 per cent plus in the other parties' turf. If the BJP identifies too much with the RSS variety of Hindutva it would not only alienate its partners in the NDA, but also those non-RSS BJP members for they would be reduced to second class members in the party. **The danger is so real** that it may rend, leave alone the NDA, even the BJP, asunder...

(Source: The Times of India, 13 February, 2000)

[Partha S. Ghosh is Director, Indian Council of Social Science Research]

Neena Vyas

On RSS-BJP Relationship

In fact, the RSS is in on all major policy issues, and often "coordinates" its other affiliates to create the political climate to help the BJP... The relationship is so intimate that it is unthinkable the BJP can decide who its party president should be without "consultation" with the RSS top brass. In 1998 the RSS asked the Prime Minister to drop Jaswant Singh from the list of Ministers sent to Rashtrapati Bhavan...

Again, the RSS was very much in the picture when the BJP decided to jettison the then Delhi Chief Minister, Sahib Singh Verma... When Madan Lal Khurana fell out of grace after his outbursts against the BJP and the RSS, he had to make peace with the RSS masters before retaining his place in the BJP. And in 1998 the Prime Minister had to "settle" economic policy issues at the RSS level...

The BJP brought Ayodhya on its agenda in 1989 after the VHP had "created" the political climate for it. It has put it on the backburner in deference to the "compulsions of coalition politics". But Ayodhya as well as Kashi and Mathura temple- mosque controversies remain on the RSS-VHP live agenda, reappearing every now and then in the BJP when loyal 'swayamsewaks' like the current Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister blurt out the truth.

The recent eruptions on the face of the Indian polity - the protests over Deepa Mehta's film, *Water*, Bajrang Dal bands parading girls and boys in the streets of Kanpur for celebrating Valentine's Day, the first sign of a call for a new dress code for schoolgirls, the recall of two volumes of the "Towards Freedom" history project - are all loud signals that the RSS ideology is very much at work. It is immaterial who its agent might be - the VHP, the Bajrang Dal or the Vajpayee Government itself. They are part of the same Sangh Parivar of which the RSS is the head. The RSS has kept away from direct entry into politics, preferring to practise it by remote control.

(Source: The Hindu, 20 February, 2000)

On NDA and RSS

Eminent Socialist Leader Surendra Mohan

... When the ban was imposed on the RSS in 1948 after the assassination of Gandhiji, the reason was that communal feelings were high owing to the fact of partition, and although every effort was being made to control the situation, the RSS and similar groups were busy exploiting it. Then, the RSS leaders gave an undertaking to ... Home Minister, Patel, that it would not indulge in political activities. But being essentially a political movement wedded to the creation of a Hindu Rashtra and unifying India, the RSS could hardly keep that promise. After the sad demise of the Sardar ... in October 1950, the RSS set up the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951.

It is well known that the RSS deputed Balraj Madhok, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Vasantarao Oak and Atal Behari Vajpayee to launch the Jana Sangh. They enlisted the cooperation of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee who had resigned from the Union Cabinet on the issue of atrocities committed in East Pakistan against the Hindus... The executive head was always to be from the RSS. (Later) the RSS revised that strategy. It (got) Balraj Madhok and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya to take over the Presidentship as well. Moreover, in every State unit, the Organising Secretary of the Jana Sangh was to be appointed by the RSS bosses at Nagpur, in order that its control over the organisation was ensured.

In 1969, Balraj Madhok proposed to his colleagues that the Jana Sangh should unify organisationally with like-minded parties like the Swatantra Party... The RSS did not accept this proposition, for the unified party could not have been amenable to its organizational control. In disgust, Madhok left the Jana Sangh...

When the Government imposed internal Emergency in 1975, it banned the RSS. Without bothering about the suppression of the civil liberties and democratic rights of the people, the RSS leadership pledged to the Prime Minister that if the ban was lifted, it would fully cooperate with her in implementing her 15-point programme although ... it had (already) joined the JP-led movement for total revolution. However, this request was turned down. Later when efforts to unify the non-Congress and non-Communist Parties were being made, the (then RSS) General Secretary Madhav Rao Mulay, wrote to the leaders of these parties that its full-time workers will not accept any offices in the united party, nor would they contest elections. He did this in order to remove the misgivings which these parties, except the Jana Sangh, entertained that it shall establish its control over the new party. However, after the formation of the party and its government, the old ... habits started to work. Moreover, all efforts to amalgamate the allies mass organisations of the coalescing parties were stoutly opposed by the RSS and the Jana Sangh group.

The struggle within the Janata Party formed in 1977 over the issue of dual loyalty of the ex-Jana Sangh

workers to the party and the RSS split the party and brought down the government (of) Morarji Desai...

The RSS has its own committed and controlled mass organisations among students, youth, women, workers, farmers and the Scheduled Tribes to propagate its politics of Hindutva, which thrives on anti-religious minorities hate campaign. Most political parties ... follow this same pattern. Each one of them has such front organisations. (But) the BJP has no student wing, for the RSS-controlled ABVP is there to work for it at the master's bidding. The BJP has no trade union wing either; once again, it relies on the BMS.

The RSS is in its daily activities a para-military organisation, training its cadres whom it catches young in the art of wielding blunt instruments. There are daily parades, marches, (lessons in) martial arts and worship of the saffron flag, which is considered the symbol of Hindu nationhood. Several reports on communal riots have pointed to its role in those flare-ups. However, the Prime Minister himself started public life as an RSS pracharak, and went over to party work on its instructions. **If it has been decided to play up the controversy and saffronise the entire administration, how can he demur?**

(Source: The Mainstream, 19 February, 2000)

RSS as a Threat

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 14 March, 2000

... With K. Sudarshan, who has the reputation of being a hard-liner, replacing Rajendra Singh, there is speculation whether ... Vajpayee's appeal to leave the Government alone will be jeopardised. Although Sudarshan has acknowledged the compulsions of coalition politics which restrict the Government's scope for following the Hindutva line, even his forceful articulation of the RSS agenda may put the Government under pressure. Although there is nothing new in what he has said, the reiteration is still likely to jolt the Government's friends into realising the retrogressive nature of the organisation which stands at the head of the Parivar. Whether it is the economy or the ... Constitution or the West or the minorities, it is clear that the RSS continues to occupy the most extreme position on the right of the political spectrum. Even the slightest concession to any of its demands, so righteously made by the new chief, cannot but inflict irreparable damage on the multicultural Indian society.

... The dangerously divisive RSS agenda may even serve to bring him closer to his allies in the NDA. But the point is not whether the agenda is implemented. It is that such a regressive programme poses a grave threat to the country, apart from being a threat to the Government. That an organisation, known for its proximity to the largest ruling party ... can flaunt the sectarian agenda so brazenly is a cause for concern. □

Bihar: Saffron Setback in Hindi Heartland

Amulya Ganguli, Asst. Editor, The Hindustan Times, New Delhi

Once again the Hindi heartland has come to India's rescue. The last time it saved the country from Indira Gandhi's tryst with fascism was in 1977 when the Congress did not win a single seat from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Now Bihar has put a spoke in the wheels of an even more dangerous variety of politics – religious fundamentalism – by denying a satisfying performance to the saffron camp. Earlier, in the parliamentary polls, UP had also shown that its approval of the BJP was not as whole-hearted as before.

The BJP's problem is that it will now be under pressure from three sides. On one side will be the new assertive regional satraps like Chautala and Patnaik who, like Chandrababu Naidu, Mamata Banerjee and Karunanidhi, can claim to have emerged as influential political figures in their own right who will no longer be as beholden to the BJP as before.

On the second side will be the disgruntled allies in the Samata party and Janata Dal (United) who may begin to wonder whether they are not harming themselves by aligning with the Hindutva lobby...

Misgivings ... are likely to make them somewhat prickly companions for the BJP, which may also begin to wonder about the usefulness of such unreliable political weathercocks... (An) ideology (will) fascistic overtones...

That the hard-liners were already becoming impatient was evident... (When) even Vajpayee had to request the Parivar to observe a Lakshman rekha so that the Government is not embarrassed...

But the Bihar results have shown that not only will the BJP ever reach the cherished goal of coming to power at the Centre on its own, even its allies may either slowly begin to drift away or increasingly become less dependent on Big Brother. Evidently, then, the prospect of a Hindu rashtra will remain a distant dream. But that is not something which the Sangh Parivar can accept with equanimity. After all, it has waited for seven decades since the formation of the RSS to reach the present stage where success was seemingly within sniffing distance.

What is more, its hidden agenda is now an open one and no one, least of all the minorities, is in any doubt as to what it stands for. Besides, its earlier reputation of being a disciplined organisation, comprising people of integrity, has also been shattered. Earlier, the Congress was known as corrupt and the BJP as communal. Now the BJP is known both as corrupt and communal.

For the Hindutva lobby, therefore, it has become a now or never situation. It has to get to the top at one go because its agenda is so contentious that the BJP cannot

afford to follow the customary meandering political process... But that is not how the BJP functions. Its real policies are always kept partly under cover.

When the impatient kar sevaks exposed the real agenda in December 1992, the BJP became the untouchable of Indian politics ... which compelled it to abandon (of) contentious ... programme for the sake of winning greater political acceptability. The retreat was a wise move. But (it) was a preparation for a leap forward. At least the hard-liners so believed. But if the political retreat becomes electoral, the party may not be able to withstand the resultant internal strains.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 6 March, 2000)

K. Balchand

On Bihar Assembly Election, 2000

The Assembly elections have proved (that) single-handedly (Laloo) inflicted one of the most cruel blows to his detractors and asserted his supremacy in the State.

Despite suffering some losses, Mr. Yadav successfully led his party to emerge as the single largest (party) which commands the largest following in Bihar. It wasn't only the masses that rallied behind him; there were other circumstances that worked in his favour...

(It became a) question of survival, be it for the minorities, Dalits or a section of the upper castes. The people seemed to settle for the alleged "jungle raj" of the RJD rather than the "maha-jungle raj" that members of the BJP-led NDA had let loose.

The strategy of the BJP and its allies ... to wrest power solely on the strength of "criminal" elements came a cropper. This underscored the limitations of the BJP and its partners... The combine's hunger for power was not backed by the necessary camaraderie, both at the organisational level and at the individual level, creating bad blood right down to the grassroot level.

The advancement of the elections proved detrimental to the NDA more than the ruling RJD. It stalled the merger of the Samata Party with the JD(U) and gave little time for the alliance partners to sort out the thorny issue of seat-sharing, which ... was no more than partial; and this too was announced after the expiry of withdrawals for the first phase and just a day ahead of the last date of filing nominations for the second phase. This worked to the advantage of Mr. Yadav... Mr. Yadav cleverly exploited the weakness in the NDA camp by leading the party from the front with the motive of exposing the fight within the combine and its failure to project a leader.

The NDA prospect was also hampered by the fact that

(Contd. on Page 163)

V. Krishna Ananth On Social Churning in Bihar

... The Laloo era witnessed much social churning, pushing the traditional rulers – the land-owning Bhumihars and the Rajputs – to the margins... (Yet) the concept of land to the tiller was a far cry throughout these ten years: Social justice was reduced by Mr. Laloo Yadav to a mere slogan. This was the period when the notorious Ranbir Sena, the private army of the landowning Bhumihars and the Rajputs, was born in Bhojpur (in 1993)... That the state machinery under Mr. Yadav failed to even apprehend the killers is a tell-tale comment on the reality that prevails in Bihar...

(For) Laloo Yadav ... social justice began and stopped with “empowering” the intermediate castes (the Yadavs, Kurmis and Koeris). The Bhumihar-Rajput contractor lobby was replaced with Yadavs and other intermediate castes...

But the social churning initiated by the socialists in Bihar, based on the foundations laid by the powerful peasant movements ... forced the landlords to leave their lands behind with the tenants (belonging to the intermediate castes) and “settle down” in Patna. Here they managed to obtain civil contracts and also manipulate the state apparatus through their kith and kin who had by then entrenched themselves in the bureaucracy. Young boys, sons of rich landlords, were sent across to Delhi and other places for “better education” and thus managed to corner a chunk of postings in the IAS and IPS and were able to return to Bihar and control the civil administration.

It was this Congress(I)-managed balance that was disturbed by ... the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations. And Mr. Laloo Yadav as Chief Minister would confer IAS and IPS on men belonging to the intermediate castes and ensure that they were placed alongside the direct recruits (mostly from the upper castes) so that the administrative set up was not reduced into “their” private fiefdoms.

Thus began the process by which the Bhumihars and Rajputs were edged out of the category called civil contractors... Laloo's inner circle (stepped in). These contracts simply meant money-making enterprises and their “services” were expected at times of elections. It is this process – set rolling in the beginning of the Nineties, reaching its peak by 1995 – that now stands shaken.

... The complete lack of any developmental activity and the oppressive social order that still prevails leave Bihar on the brink of another kind of social churning ... rendering parts of Bihar into strong centres of influence for extreme-Left platforms such as the CPI(ML-Liberation), the Maoist Coordination Committee (MCC) and the People's War Group.

(Source: The Hindu)

Laloo's Last Laugh Editorial, The Times of India, 28 Feb., 2000

Not for nothing is Laloo Prasad Yadav a phenomenon. Pundits and psephologists wrote his epitaph, his opponents threatened to wound him, burn him and sink him in the Bay of Bengal... Mr. Yadav was all alone in an election where the other side constituted a magnificent union of bigwigs... The NDA dazzled the voters with the colour and spectacle of its campaign; on show were the dozen-odd central ministers from Bihar, the prime minister and Bollywood cinestars, all of whom criss-crossed the state in helicopters...

The best that Mr. Yadav was offered, by his own associates, was a 100 seats... Nevertheless, defying all predictions of a resounding rout, Mr. Yadav has returned to haunt his enemies, and with numbers that could once again place him in the chief-ministerial chair... Mr. Yadav's vote base has remained intact for over a decade through times good and bad in a state notorious for its instability...

... Bihar was nothing short of a war for the Vajpayee government... In the end, the one-point mission failed – and for the reason that it was a one-point mission. The NDA had no programme other than to replace Mr. Yadav. As a consequence, the different constituents did not gel together... Second, the fact that the BJP's hidden agenda was no longer hidden. Minorities and other vulnerable sections – who stand to lose the most in a communally surcharged environment – voted with a vengeance against the BJP. The moral of elections-2000 is inescapable: It is not enough for the leopard to talk about changing its spots, it must deliver on the promise.

(Contd. from Page 162)

with none in command, ticket distribution was done in an haphazard manner distancing several caste groups in their areas of dominance. The NDA ended up as a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth.

In his isolation, Mr. Yadav drew strength from the dispersed secular forces which successfully attacked the NDA from all sides. The Congress(I) and the Left parties attacked the NDA more than the RJD which blunted the NDA's attack against it.

The NDA's repeated hammering of its slogan of “jungle raj” and the alleged unparliamentary language used by some of its leaders against Mr. Yadav also had their own negative effect... Mr. Yadav successfully projected himself as the martyr being hounded for championing the cause of the downtrodden. It is also true that there was none in the NDA to match his tenacity and determination addressing no less than 200 meetings.

(Source: The Hindu, 27 February, 2000)

Representation of Deprived Groups by Outsiders

Gopal Guru, Mahatma Gandhi Professor, University of Pune

... One of the leading tribal intellectual activists, Wahuru Sonwane, has been questioning representation of tribals by urban-based upper caste leaders. This resentment is articulated in his celebrated poem, "Stage", which says: "We have never reached the stage, neither were we invited to occupy the stage; but our stage was occupied by those who kept telling us our own miseries and pains. Our miseries remained ours; they never became theirs."

Even in the realm of electoral politics, the Dalits argue that they just make a rhetorical appearance in the election manifestoes of political parties but never get real representation in terms of access to material, social and cultural resources. This issue has now acquired dangerous proportions with Dalits protesting violently against those who claim to speak for them...

This raises two fundamental questions. First, are the objections of the Dalits, tribals and women justifiable? Whose claims of representation are authentic and valid? Do they become automatically valid because someone is born in a particular social situation or do the claims become valid just because someone has more academic degrees or belongs to a "great" family? And finally, does the common Dalit and tribal really require any kind of representation?

Let us understand these questions. One, such particular claims can be justified on the ground that they enable historical recovery of authentic voices of Dalits, tribals and women. Two, representation of Dalits by non-Dalits may accord to the claimant a kind of morally, often egoistically, superior position, which then demands all the time a kind of hierarchical relationship involving Dalit humiliation on which this ego is based. Third, the assumption in such claims is that Dalits, tribals and women are incapable of developing a democratically-informed internal reasoning and hence need to be given such democratic reasoning from outside. Such an assumption expects the Dalits to undergo a kind of *agnipariksha* conducted by the non-Dalits... On these above grounds one might justify Dalits objecting to the initiative taken by non-Dalits on their behalf.

However, such culturally-specific perspectives towards representation, though initially desirable, are essentially problematic for two reasons. First, they do not provide sufficient conditions for the transformative politics of Dalits, as they tend to foreclose the possibility of Dalits acquiring a morally universal leadership to speak in a universal language of emancipation. Second, these culturally-specific claims of representation assume that the Dalit claims for representation are automatically valid and authentic. Is it the case? The Indian experience of claims

of Dalit representation goes against all such arguments. In other words, it cannot be argued that someone's being born in a particular caste or sex or region or religion makes her or his claim automatically valid and authentic. If that were the case, the common Dalits would not have rejected their own leadership in the post-Ambedkar period. In such a situation, it is important to understand the validity question in terms of the ability and commitment of claimants to get to the truth, piercing through different and often intersecting layers of social reality that surrounds the common Dalits. The leadership claims must also be aimed at deriving a meaning from this truth. Second, the representational claims should have certain moral stamina and stature that require a claimant to uphold the dignity of those who are being led. For example, the representational claim should not involve patronising or condescending tendencies which seek to humiliate the led. Such claims, loaded with the language of patronage, tend to deny the led the capacity to think and act with authenticity in universal terms.

... Hence, Dalits will refuse to be led by those, both Dalits and non-Dalits, who refuse to see the complete truth.

(Source: The Hindu, 25 February, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 176)

Matriculation Higher Secondary Boys' School was started by the Members of the Executive Council of SIET.

... Born in 1918 and brought up in a highly religious and socially committed family, Fatima Akhtar dedicated herself to the cause of women's education and social service...

(She) was the first Muslim woman graduate in the Naayath circle of the Muslim community. Her early education was in Corporation school and the Government Hobart High School, Royapettah. She graduated in Physics in 1941 from Queen Mary's College, Chennai. In 1957, Begum Fatima Akhtar became chairman of the Southern India Education Trust. This entailed the onerous responsibility of leading the Governing Body of the SIET Women's College. She also served as a Syndicate Member of the Madras University and as a member of the Board of Secondary Education. She held the post of Vice-President of the Madras University Women's Association and the International Women's Rights Society. She was also associated with a number of other social organisations. The unique blending of a secular education with religious training, which is a hallmark of the Southern India Education Trust, is a tradition established and carefully nurtured by Begum Fatima Akhtar. She also encouraged research in Islamic Studies...

(Source: The Milli Gazette)

UP Public Religious Buildings Bill, 2000 (Extracts)

Joint Memorandum of Minorities Educational Institutions & Deeni Talimi Council

... The Bill appears to have been (drafted in a hurry) without taking into accounts its repercussions and implications... The suggestion made during the debate in Vidhan Sabha to the effect that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee was brushed aside. The undue haste betrays the Government's motive and is confirmed by the abundance of vagueness and lack of specificity...

... Its genesis itself is untenable. The Chief Minister and the concerned Minister are on record linking the introduction of the Bill primarily to the State Government's assessment of the situation on the Indo-Nepal border. It was stated that the population of Muslims in that area has in recent times registered an unusual growth, and that, further, there has been a mushroom emergence of madarsas and mosque. This situation, the Minister seems to have inferred, provides an operation threare for ISI activists... There is no evidence to show that madarsas have harboured ISI agents, nor have the increase in population and the trend relating to establishment of madarsas been analysed to prove that the growth of madarsas and that of the population of Muslims during this period have been abnormal...

Violation of the Constitution

... The restrictions imposed by the provisions of the Bill are violative of Articles 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30 of the Constitution... The term "building" includes any structure or enclosure in any part of the building. "Construction" includes expansion, conversion or reconstruction of a building. The definition extends the scope of the Bill to even minor alterations in a religious building. It will be seen that the Bill leaves considerable scope for ... harassment which persons desirous of constructing, expanding, altering or even repairing a religious building will have to undergo.

No Provision for Appeal to Judiciary

It is strange that on such a sensitive issue the only appeal provided is from the judgement of a bureaucrat to another bureaucrat, both of whom, in the situation as it obtains, will be under political pressure.

... The construction of religious building and earmarking and establishment of a religious place do require collective effort. Under the new dispensation the donors will normally withhold their donations ill such time as the District Magistrate's approval has been obtained and the District Magistrate in his turn may initially reject the application on the ground that funds for construction are just not available... Those subscribing to the construction of a religious building which fails to receive the District Magistrate's permission, can be prosecuted for abetment of an offence that has unnecessarily been made a

cognizable offence, on committing which one can be arrested without a warrant. In sum, the Bill, can make its enforcement erratic, arbitrary and capricious...

(Under) Clause 6 ... even those buildings which are likely to be used as public religious building will be covered by this provision... The Bill is also ... according to Government's own statement in the Vidhan Sabha and outside ... directed against religious buildings and religious places of one particular community, namely the Muslims.

... ISI activists can be squarely dealt with under Section 120(A) and 120(B) of the IPC for criminal conspiracy to commit an offence. Section 121 of IPC can also be invoked in such cases because ISI is evidently waging a war against the Government of India... The State Government has not taken care to use the powers available to it under IPC and has resorted to a legislation which instead of dealing with, a limited number of offenders brings in hundreds and thousands of innocent persons within its cruel ambit... In a situation where a) the enforcement of existing laws has been very ineffective; b) the State police is biased against the weaker sections and minorities; and c) the Indian Penal Code, adequately provides for dealing with offenders in question, it is highly inappropriate and inopportune to add yet another punitive Act to the Statute Book... The Bill, if enacted, will lead to widespread communal tension. Muslims consider it a direct attempt to interfere with the profession and practice of their religion.

It is unfortunate that instead of eliciting the cooperation of the Muslim community in fighting the ISI menace a studied effort is being made to alienate them irretrievably... It has been correctly suggested ... that the Bill should provide for participation by members of different communities in deciding the desirability of having yet another temple or mosque in a locality.

... The Bill seems yet another step in the unannounced but unmistakable changeover from the welfare State to a police State.

... The proper way of dealing with the subversion was to make a provision in the Bill authorising the State Government to apply it, as the need arose from time to time, to areas where conditions were disturbed due to ISI activities. The time-honoured method of dealing with a problem is to localise it and not to generalise it.

... The ill-conceived and unfair piece of legislation has sent ripples of grave dissatisfaction. All over the country Muslims are feeling terribly insecure. They consider this Bill as an engine of torture and an effort to

(Contd. on Page 166)

Joint Memorandum to President on UP Bill (Extracts)

... No one can object to the UP Government wishing to deal firmly with ISI activities. The question that arises is whether this is the real motivation, or, it is an excuse to give unfettered powers to the District Magistrates so that these can be used to serve the purposes of the RSS...

It is, therefore, our submission that as the protector of the Constitution, you should take such steps or measures, as you consider appropriate to ensure that the Bill ... is not enacted for the following reasons:

1. If the ISI has to be dealt with, or there are other objectionable activities of any religious group or individual ... existing provisions and laws can be applied...
2. Objections from the Muslim community are being met by maintaining that the Bill does not discriminate against any religion as it applies to all religions and faiths. If this was so, then why is the only justification or motivation being attributed to the increased ISI activities? ... It is thus against the Muslims that the provisions of this bill will be used ... in violation of Article 15 of the Constitution.
3. The provisions in the Bill are draconian and fascist in character... As Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Jains, Buddhists and Christians would all need to take prior permission before organising any religious activity outside a recognised place of worship.
4. Wide discretionary powers have been given to DMs. It is left to the DM to determine whether he thinks that any place 'is being used, or is likely to be used', for any kind of religious activity... Any order of the DM ... cannot be called in question in any civil court.
5. The provisions of the Bill will enable the present Government of Uttar Pradesh to pursue their hidden agenda through the officials. It ... is now making appointments of officials; particularly DMs and Commissioners, on the recommendation of party cadres.
6. Securing prior approval for ... normal repairs as well, would led to unwarranted red tape, and consequential corruption.
7. Above all, the provisions of the Bill are in violation of the letter and spirit of Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution... If permitted to be enacted, it would destroy the secular fabric of our great nation.

Romesh Bhandari
O.P. Sharma
Kanti Bajpai
Anuradha Chenoy

A.S. Qureshi
C.P. Bhambri
Kamal Mitra Chenoy
and Others

R.K. Jain
Zoya Hasan
Zafar Jung

UP Minister Calls Critics 'Traitors'

UP Minister for Housing and Urban Development Lalji Tandon, called those protesting against the "UP Public Buildings, Places of Worship Regulation Bill 2000" traitors. He was addressing press persons at UP Press Club, Lucknow on March 6.

Tandon alleged that land was being purchased from poor farmers in Indo-Nepal border areas and madrasas being built thereon were used in 'anti-national activities'. When asked to clarify which madrasas of which place organise the alleged 'anti-national activities', Tandon failed to give any satisfactory answer.

(Source: The Dainik Jagaran)

(Courtesy: The Radiance, 12-18 March, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 165)

interfere with the profession and practice of religion. Protests and meetings are being held against the sinister move all over the country... We implore, in the interest not only of the Muslim community but also in the interest of maintenance of law and order and communal harmony to intervene and withhold your assent to the Bill and send it back to the State Government for reconsideration... This would necessitate the redrafting of the Bill...

Saiyid Hamid
President

M.I.H. Quraishi
General Secretary

Habibullah Azmi
Secretary

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Muslims in a State of Terror in UP

Seema Alavi, Asst. Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

The ... BJP rule in Uttar Pradesh may have witnessed no major communal riots, but the Muslims in the State feel terrorised. The Government's scant regard for the judiciary and the "rule of law" and its increasing reliance on a saffronised administrative machinery has created a situation of despair and helplessness in the community. If six years ago the demolition of the Babari Masjid shocked Muslims beyond belief, today the claim of their Chief Minister, Ram Prakash Gupta, that he will assist in the "peaceful" construction of the Ram temple at the Masjid site in Ayodhya has numbed them. They see their State slipping beyond the ambit of law, and into the lap of an administration which has no qualms in flaunting its brigade of saffron bureaucrats and police officers. These are the willing boys out to execute the orders of a Chief Minister who is convinced that his domain includes the judiciary as well.

The report card of the state reflects these trends very well. Muslim officers in the police and administration have been cooling their heels in obscure postings. Officers with proven anti-Muslim bias have been posted in Muslim dominated districts some of which also house Islamic seminaries. Not surprisingly, they have raised an unsubstantiated hysteria about ISI activities originating from mosques and madrasas in their jurisdiction. The ISI card has given them a free licence to intimidate and harass innocent and law abiding Muslims who frequent madrasas for both religious and secular education. The marginalisation of Muslim officers and harassment of ordinary citizens is matched by the unofficial ban on recruitment of Muslims in the police and Intelligence ... organisations.

The imbalanced composition of these outfits means not only loss of employment opportunities for the Muslims but also a denial of power and status that is linked to these forces.

A demoralised and marginalised community naturally withdraws into a ghetto mentality. As it seeks succour in its community institutions, the madrasa and the mosque, it finds that it is getting further stigmatised and targeted. For in the BJP's political dispensation, these hitherto innocuous institutions are the new villains: dens of ISI and hubs of anti-national activity. It is another matter that so far despite the mobilisation of the entire State machinery to ferret out ISI from madrasas we are still waiting for any concrete evidence of these institutions' involvement in anti-national deeds.

The Uttar Pradesh Regulation of Public Religious Buildings and Places Bill 2000, passed by the U.P.

Legislative Assembly marks a culmination of this concerted vilification and harassment campaign against the Muslims...

The intentionality inherent in the Bill is based on a certain stereotype of Muslims as being terrorists and ISI agents. The Bill quite clearly targets them while disseminating an image that projects them as "anti-national". It gives immense powers to the district magistrate to tame the "anti-national": the DM will have the power to demolish any mosque charging it with harbouring or training foreign terrorists. Also without the permission of the DM no addition or renovation of mosques and madrasas will be possible... One can imagine the reign of terror that will be unleashed once this Bill becomes law.

In the given political context, the long term implications of the Bill are even more alarming. The Bill has the potential of including in its purview domestic residential spheres of the Muslims as well...

The Muslims in U.P. are a frightened lot. Their anxiety is not made any easier by the attitude of the opposition parties in the state. No major protest in the state has been launched by the opposition...

The Muslims of Uttar Pradesh feel politically dumped and isolated. They have been flocking in large numbers to their religious leadership to seek help... But by and large the Muslims look towards the larger secular liberal opinion in the country for support. As they await help, it is important to remind ourselves that their systematic cultural gagging is symptomatic of the more dangerous assaults on the secular democratic fabric of Indian society. At stake is civil society.

(Source: The Hindu, 27 February, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 181)

In my opinion, if one wants to understand the evolution of Hindu radicalism in the post-independence period, one has to take into account both the domestic roots of this phenomenon and the external influence on its development.

In the 1920s and 1930s fascism was an international phenomenon. As such it was bound to influence the ideology and practice of similar movements all over the world. Since many of Bal Thackeray's most outrageously anti-Muslim and racist statements are literal quotations of Savarkar's speeches and theories, **it is legitimate to conclude that such influence is still alive in today's militant Hinduism. (emphasis added)**

(Source: The Economic and Political Weekly, 22 January, 2000)

VHP Feverishly Carving and Polishing Stone Pillars in Ayodhya

Debashish Mukerji, Associate Editor, The Week

Inexorably, relentlessly, the work goes on. Angry noises are periodically made elsewhere – in Parliament, in the media; angry noises subside. They barely reach the VHP *karyalaya* (workshop) at Karsevapuram in Ayodhya. And even if they do, they make not a whit of difference. A giant stone cutter has been whirring, chisel and hammer have been striking sandstone continually for nearly ten years. Less than two kilometres away stands the heavily guarded “makeshift temple” of Ram Lalla, upon the most controversy-ridden piece of land in the country. It is the spot where the chiselled stones are finally headed.

The workshop is crowded with huge blocks of pink sandstone, plinth slabs and intricately-carved pillars. These are the pieces the VHP and its sister organisation, the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, will use to build the much-talked-of “glorious temple to Lord Rama” on the spot where the Babari Masjid stood until December 6, 1992, and which the makeshift temple now occupies...

Added Champak Rai, key VHP functionary in charge of temple construction: “The intermittent furore raised in Parliament are really quite meaningless. If the opposition parties are so concerned about the work going on here, why did they not try to stop us when they were in power? We continued our work through all the years of the Narasimha Rao regime, as well as through the United Front rule which followed”.

... Those who assumed that with the BJP putting aside its three ‘contentious issues’, including the construction of the Ram Mandir, the Ayodhya chapter had been brought to a close, could not have been more mistaken. The BJP may have sent Rama into permanent *banwas* (as a recent *Organiser* article commented) but not the VHP.

Right from September, 1990, when the workshop started, the building blocks of the proposed Ram temple have been prepared in deadly earnestness...

“The Ram mandir will be a two-tier structure, and nearly half the work, almost the entire ground floor, should be over before the year end”, maintained Anubhai Sompura, the Architect.

A miniature model of the proposed Ram temple stands enclosed in a glass case near the entrance to the workshop.... “At one extreme corner is the *Singh Dwar*, the entrance”, he said. “Next to it is the *Nritya Mandap*... The third section, the *Rang Mandap*...

The fourth section is a short passage, or *Koli*, leading into the heart of the temple, the *Garb Griha*, where, on the ground floor, the idol of Ram Lalla will be installed. Above the *Garb Griha* will rise the towering temple spire to a height of 128 feet. Surrounding the entire structure,

for circumambulation, will be the 10 feet wide *parikrama*, the entire area being 268.5 feet long, and 140 feet wide...

... With the workshop having grown extremely crowded with the growing number of blocks and pillars, the VHP has purchased 22 acres nearby, to which its workshop will be extended. More living quarters for workers for also being built on the new site...

But it is not enough to merely prepare the building blocks. The all-important site, too, has to be prepared for construction... “First we shall fill up the pits and depressions in the area with stones and level the land with bulldozers”, said Champak Rai. Then we shall building a ‘raft foundation’ – a six-foot-thick concrete layer over the entire area...”

Can the VHP ever hope to gain possession of the disputed spot? Although the Central government has acquired the entire area, the last Supreme Court judgement ruled that the state could only act as a custodian, to hand the area over to its rightful owner once the title suit pending in the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court is disposed of. It cannot use the land as it likes or allot it to any party. But a judicial decision on the title suit, already pending for 50 years, is unlikely to be every reached...

Until the court reaches a decision, or some other ‘solution’ is found, the near impregnable security at the disputed site, with its maze-like metal barricading, its watchtowers and searchlights and policemen, will remain... Devotees ... come single file for their darshan, with policemen watching their every step. And even if, as on December 6, 1992, with the covert backing of the BJP government – which rules both in Lucknow and in Delhi – the VHP is able to defy court orders and storm the premises, the social and political fall out is bound to be catastrophic...

But Champak Rai remained unperturbed. “Having started we are going to carry on”, he said... When we start will be decided by the Dharam Sansad.” Are the VHP and the Nyas prepared to defy the court orders in force? Rai quoted Ramachandra Paramhans... “Paramhansji said he would obey court orders only if they were in consonance with dharma. My view is the same”, he said...

The tantalising question then arises: will the country soon see a sequel to the great Ayodhya drama, the first part having ended on December 6, 1992? “In every major movement, there are lulls and peaks”, VHP leader Ashok Singhal has said... So will it be with the Ayodhya movement.

More than seven years have gone by: when will the

(Contd. on Page 169)

B. Premanand On Babari Masjid Question

... The concept of God is that he is the creator of the Universe, Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omni-present.

Rama is believed to be the 7th Avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu... It is significant that he did not care for his own Janmabhoomi Temple... Why did Rama allow Babar to destroy his temple at his birth place and ... to build Babari Masjid?

... We are wondering why gods need the help of their followers to protect them and save them from the onslaughts of other religions...

... When god is believed to be omnipresent how could he be locked in places of worship? Our sincere advise to VHP, BJP and Babari Masjid Committee is that if there gods are all-powerful ... they (should) leave the matter to their gods instead of trying to protect them and their religion (and) do not play with the peace and harmony of the people of our country (and) turn our country into bloodshed, instigating the people to mass hysteria and destruction...

(Source: The Indian Skeptic)

Shahabuddin's Response to The Indian Skeptic, 13 December, 1999

I have seen your brief article on Ram Janambhoomi and Babari Masjid issue.

I know you are an atheist. But as a theist, I believe that the Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent God Operates not through godmen and miracles but through the laws of nature and the free will of Man. So, I can understand the origin of human conflict, including aggression against other religions.

When the Sangh Parivar demolished the Masjid, we were not praying for angels to come down and save it. We were mobilising the political, judicial and legislative systems and the people, but the demolition squad proved itself to be more powerful than the Constitution or the Law. As Shri V.P. Singh very correctly said: "They demolished not the three domes of the Masjid but the three domes of governance – the legislature, the judiciary and the executive". What irks me is your false equation between the offenders and the defenders; between the Sangh Parivar and the Babari Masjid Movement.

In your judgement, should the Babari Masjid Movement surrender to the blatant violation of the rule of law and not even take peaceful, legal steps for exposing the culprits and regaining the Masjid?

Once the carving of the stones was complete construction would start in no time (despite) the law and order enforcement machinery and the courts... The same machinery was there when the idol was placed inside the disputed structure or when the locks of the structure were opened or when the shilanyas was performed or when the Babari structure was demolished. Similarly, the temple would be constructed in the presence of all the government agencies and courts without any obstacles.

- **Paramhans Ram Chandra Das,**
President, Ram Janmabhoomi Trust

(Contd. from Page 168)

next phase begin? Ayodhya is rife-with stories of how the VHP intends to build a mass movement again on the issue of temple construction, just as it had done on the matter of demolition. However much it may embarrass the ruling BJP, VHP sources feel, the Central government is unlikely to take repressive measures against a member of its own RSS Parivar. The state government's attitude ... is likely to be much more conciliatory.

The first step for the VHP, sources aver, will be to set up the ground floor of the temple, initially not at the disputed site, but upon the land recently purchased by the VHP. "We want to test out whether the temple is structurally all right", maintained the VHP source. But the real purpose, it is claimed, is to use the standing, half-build temple to rouse popular feeling in favour of temple construction... "We hope the interim structure will mobilize the masses again, after which we will make our assault on the disputed site"

(Source: The Week, 5 March, 2000)

The Congress should make it clear, if it comes to power, whether it would construct a mosque at the site in Ayodhya.

- **J.P. Mathur, BJP Leader**

How can the case progress when the prosecutors and the accused are the same...?

- **Madhavrao Scindia, Congress Leader**
On the Babari Masjid Demolition Case

*Sincere Greetings and Best Wishes for the Id-ul-Adha to
All Subscribers, Readers and Well-wishers of Muslim India*

- *Syed Shahabuddin, Editor*

Matter of Autonomy

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 24 Jan., 2000

... The State Government ... needs to do three things before the ball of the autonomy argument can be placed in the Centre's court. First, it should resist the temptation of using the autonomy demand as a tactic to divert public attention from what may be administrative and political failures at the local level. Secondly, it should address the grievances of the State's different ethnic groups and regional entities in an equitable manner... In fact, the autonomy plan can evolve only after the government has moved to correct these internal disharmonies...

Clarity on Kashmir

Editorial, The Times of India 10 Feb., 2000

... Unfortunately, successive Indian governments have tended to treat this proxy war as a law and order problem in which the army merely extends 'aid to the civil power'. The unified command in Kashmir is not a truly integrated command appropriate to fight the Pakistani plan. Upgrading and equipping the paramilitary forces to take on the responsibility of fighting the proxy war – with the army providing back up support – has not so far been tried.

Only ... on January 17 has a move in this direction been made... (but) decisions do not meet the requirements of the situation. What is needed in Kashmir is a totally unified command, under an army general, with all forces totally integrated and intelligence performing an operational role as part of the counter-proxy war campaign under that command... The decisions are merely improvisations and fall far short of a total rethinking on the most effective command structure and force composition... The Government must also (do) some fresh thinking on the political front... If it is interested in a permanent solution, the Centre must take the lead in liberating Kashmir from the clutches of dynastic politics. It should also assume the responsibility of reviving a normal political process, not excluding the release of some of the imprisoned dissident leaders.

We have schools training people from all over the Islamic world for terrorism, and no country can shut eyes from these camps.

- Benazir Bhutto, Former Pakistan Prime Minister

I believe that there are elements within the Pakistan Government that have supported those who engaged in violence in Kashmir.

- Bill Clinton, US President

M. K. Tikku

On Limits to Kashmir Autonomy

... The autonomy proposals do not represent the will of all the sections of the State's population. Moreover, little effort had been made to evolve some kind of a consensus on the subject before presenting the document for a discussion with the Centre...

... Many in Ladakh and Jammu do not see the question of autonomy and related issues the same way as the ruling National Conference does. In fact, the people of Ladakh had for many years been pressing for a closer integration with the Centre. These two regions - apart from the State's other smaller ethnic and cultural entities - have harboured a grouse that too much power has remained concentrated in the hands of the State's ruling elite, and too little has flowed down to the regional and sub-regional levels. They have aired apprehensions that any further devolution in the name of autonomy could only strengthen the existing hegemonic structures in the State. And though the State government had put out a separate report on internal autonomy which is supposed to have addressed issues concerning local power-sharing, there again has been little effort to open these issues to a wider debate before arriving at any conclusions...

... Before one gets down to discussing the content of an autonomy package, it is important to underline what its modalities should be.

First, it is not a deal to be worked out with just one party, even if that be the ruling party...

Second, the majoritarian principle shall not apply. In other words, if even the smallest ethnic, linguistic or cultural group in the State harbours any reservations on a proposal, it cannot be enforced because the majority party wants it so.

Third, the re-arrangement of the power-sharing apparatus should start from the bottom ... and not be super-imposed as a deal between ... New Delhi and Srinagar...

... The proposals would (also) need to be viewed in the overall framework of the Indian Constitution...

... Any amount of autonomy is no substitute for good governance. And good governance is what has been eluding the people over the past half a century. For one thing, the failure to evolve a reasonably articulate and democratic opposition in the State has been responsible to a large extent for the failure of good governance. The Centre ... has found it easier to deal with one party or leader in Srinagar rather than having to deal with several...

There is a need to pull the autonomy debate out of historical syndromes...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 14 February, 2000)

Outlines of Possible Solution Shahabuddin's Letter to The Greater Kashmir, 28 February, 2000

With reference to Iffat Khan's analysis of the Situation in Kashmir (20 February, 2000), I feel that the past with all its burden of mutual recrimination (who threw the first stone?) is no longer meaningful, far less central, to the debate on the Kashmir problem, if the object is to find a solution acceptable to all concerned.

I also feel that the crux of the matter is cool, unemotional, contemplation by the Kashmiri-speaking people, particularly the people of the Valley, on their future. It is transparently clear that whatever the USA may wish, neither India nor Pakistan shall agree to complete independence for the Valley. Neither will the Kashmiris ever accept the status of just another political or administrative unit of India and Pakistan. The choice then lies in autonomous status for the Valley within India, or within Pakistan, or under the joint umbrella of India and Pakistan.

I have for long firmly believed that the last is the only viable and durable alternative – which will give not only the substance of freedom to the Kashmiris but also bring them double benefits in terms of trade, tourism, education and development resources. At the same time this solution will, at least partially, placate the egos of both the suitors. India would not have been forced to abandon the Valley, Pakistan would have acquired a legitimate access to the Valley, and the Kashmiris would have the whole of the Sub-continent as their second home.

There is no reason why India and Pakistan should go on bleeding economically (and physically) to the detriment of the future of the people of the sub-continent for the sake of the Valley which constitutes only 7% of the territory of the State of J&K on 15 August, 1947 and which constitutes 0.005% of the territory of India (excluding J&K) and 0.02 of the territory of Pakistan (excluding J&K). Time has come for the people of the sub-continent to serve a notice on their governments and force them to drop the curtain on confrontation and enact a new scene of cooperation.

* *We are demanding autonomy within the framework of the country's Constitution.*

* *Hum autonomy lena aaye hain, or autonomy le ke jayenge. (We have come to get autonomy and we will return with autonomy).*

- J&K CM Farooq Abdullah

Pan-Islamic Groups Active in Kashmir

Hizbul Mujahideen

Year of Formation: 1990

Origin: Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir and PoK.

Headquarters: Muzaffarabad in PoK.

Objective: Merger of J&K with Pakistan.

Area of Operation: J&K

Sponsors: Jamaat-e-Islami of PoK and Kashmir, ISI, Pakistan.

Training Camps: Muzaffarabad in PoK.

Leadership: Maulvi Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin.

Harkat-ul-Ansar

Year of Formation: 1993 (Originally Harkat-ul Jihad-e-Islami, the group split in 1985 into the Harkat-ul Jihad-e-Islami and the Harkat-ul-Ansar. The two reunited in October 1993 to form the Harkat-ul-Ansar).

Origin: Linked to the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam and Tableeghi Jamaat in Pakistan.

Headquarters: Islamabad, Pakistan.

Objective: Fight for the global supremacy of Islam, liberate areas with a Muslim majority, protect Muslims in non-Muslim areas...

Area of Operation: India, Pakistan, Burma, Bangladesh, and Tajikistan.

Sponsors: Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam, Tafleequl Islam and Hizb-e-Islami, all based in Pakistan as also the ISI, Pakistan.

Training Camps: Khost, Afghanistan.

Leadership: Fazal-ul-Rehman Khalil and Abdul Rashid.

Lashkar-e-Taiyaba

Year of Formation: Early 1980's

Origin: The armed wing of the Markaz Dawa wal Irshad which is affiliated to the Jamaat-e-Ahle Hadis, Pakistan.

Headquarters: Muridke near Lahore.

Objective: To establish the rule of Allah throughout the world, (to fight holy war against India).

Area of Operation: India, Kashmir in particular.

Sponsors: Jamaat-e-Ahle Hadis, Pakistan, Pakistan's ISI, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait.

Training Camps: Kunar, Afghanistan.

Leadership: Hafiz Mohammed Sayeed, Zafar Iqbal and Zaki-ur-Rehman.

Al-Badr

Year of Formation: 1998

Origin: It comprises the hardened elements of the Hizbul Mujahideen from both PoK and J&K.

Headquarters: Muzaffarabad in PoK.

Objective: Merger of J&K with Pakistan.

Area of Operation: J&K

Sponsors: Jamaat-e-Islami of PoK and ISI, Pakistan.

Training Camps: PoK.

Leadership: Bakht Zameen.

(Source: The Times of India, 26 September, 1999)

On Urdu Medium Education and Urdu Teaching at School Level

Shahabuddin's Letter to Azad Academy Journal, 25 March, 2000

Apropos Mr. Azad Gulati's article 'Urdu Medium Education' (March, 2000), in the existing circumstances as well as keeping in view the constitutional provision, one must clearly distinguish between the use of Urdu as medium of instruction at the primary level and at higher levels of education. At the primary level, it should be **mandatory** for all students whose Mother Tongue is Urdu i.e. whose parents declare Urdu as the Mother Tongue. On one hand, social pressure should be built up for such declaration and on the other political pressure on the state to provide due facilities without any pre-conditions or numerical limits in all Urdu-concentration urban wards/rural Panchayats where one or more government primary schools should be Urdu-medium as needed.

Secondly, at the middle or junior level, Urdu should be taught as a compulsory language to all such children. At the secondary level, Urdu as the Mother Tongue, should be the First Language under the Three-Language Formula for such children. In all states, the Second Language should be the principal language of the State and that should also be compulsory; Urdu-speaking children should enjoy option only for the third language, perhaps between English, Persian and Arabic. The medium at this level will be and, in my view, should be the principal language of the State, except as mentioned later.

The problem arises in non-Hindi States where the Urdu-speaking student has to be proficient, apart from his Mother Tongue Urdu, in Hindi, the national link language and English, the international link language. This foursome can be reduced to three by prescribing a composite Urdu-Hindi course which would give the Urdu-speaking student a working proficiency in Hindi. This is not a new idea and was, in fact, introduced in Andhra Pradesh. Incidentally, among the major Urdu concentration States outside the Hindi majority zone, only Maharashtra (with Marathi as the principal language), Andhra Pradesh (with Telugu as the principal language) and Karnataka (with Kannada as the principal language) figure. Others like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir etc. together account for only 8.4 per cent of the total Urdu-speaking population of the country.

The above scheme does not rule out the existence or establishment of Urdu-medium Secondary schools by the State as a token of its commitment to promotion of Urdu, say, one in each Urdu-concentration district and by the Urdu-speaking community as a measure of its linguistic aspiration. These schools will generally find it difficult to get affiliated to the local Secondary examination boards. It

is hence that the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) came into the picture. It should have statutory authority to affiliate such schools scattered throughout the country, conduct examination and award certification.

In the States where Urdu is used as medium of primary education, it is the SCERT which should prepare and publish the standard Urdu textbooks for the primary level in all subjects. This should not involve too much labour or resources because already any member of Urdu textbooks as well as supplementary reading material are available. For other subjects, basically it would be a matter of translation from the principal language of the State to Urdu.

For the higher classes, Urdu textbooks were at one stage prepared by the Jamia Millia Islamia and also by the Aligarh Muslim University. They can serve as models and the MANUU can build on their foundations to prepare and publish Urdu textbooks from Class VI to X for nationwide use or get them published by the NCERT.

However, what is most important is the creation of adequate number of Urdu and Urdu-medium teachers for the Urdu-medium primary schools and for Urdu-teaching high schools. Even more important is to find trained teachers to fill up these posts. This task can be undertaken only by the State Governments which should set-up Urdu and Urdu-medium teachers training colleges. These teachers would naturally have the same emoluments, enjoy the same service conditions and the same degree of economic security as other government teachers.

As far as the NCPUL is concerned, its area of responsibility should be limited to standardisation of Urdu syllabus and publication of supplementary reading material and reference books. But these tasks should be undertaken in intensive consultation with the MANUU. It can not be the executive responsibility of the National Council for Promotion of Urdu (NCPUL) to provide Urdu-medium instruction at the secondary or college level, to recruit Urdu and Urdu-medium teachers or to finance Urdu-medium schools. MANUU should certainly serve as the Coordinator among Urdu Academies, Urdu institutions and even Urdu NGOs and to serve as a liaison between the State and the Urdu-speaking people.

As for the Gujral Committee recommendations, though there is no point in flogging a dead horse, some of the recommendations which are still relevant should indeed be taken up by the MANUU, NCPUL and all other official and non-official Urdu bodies.

We can use the Indianness of Urdu to improve relations with Pakistan. (Urdu) is (India's) daughter. It is wrong to tie the language with any religion.

- Gopichand Narang, Noted Urdu Critic and Writer

Jamia Urdu's Petition to Allahabad H.C.

Letter to Shakil Ahmad, 24 Feb., 2000

Jamia Urdu, Aligarh has filed a writ petition in the Allahabad High Court on Urdu's place in School education. Abul Kalam Azad Research and Education Foundation, Sikandrabad, UP desired to intervene and sought the Editor's opinion. His advice follows: -

I have gone through the petition. Permit me to say that the contents of the petition are largely irrelevant. No legal right can be made out on the basis of articles or recommendations of any Committee. This writ should be based **only** on the Constitution, the laws, the rules and the Government orders.

Secondly, the writ confuses three different issues

- Teaching of Urdu as the Compulsory Language for those whose Mother Tongue is Urdu at that level.
- Urdu as medium of instruction at primary level under Article 350 A of the Constitution.
- Urdu as the First and Compulsory Language in the Three-Language Formula, which is applicable **only** at secondary level, not at the primary level. There is no such thing as a real or artificial Three-Language Formula.

Our case is that: -

- In UP, the State Government has not provided facilities for instruction through the medium of Urdu at primary level, at all;
- In UP, the State Government has not provided facilities for compulsory teaching of Urdu as Mother Tongue at the primary level; and
- In UP, the State Government has modified the Three-Language Formula in practice in a manner that the basic purpose of the Formula - to safeguard the interest of linguistic minorities - is defeated. In effect the Formula has been reduced to Hindi, Sanskrit and English **or** Hindi and English **or** Hindi and Sanskrit, leaving no educational space for the Mother Tongue for any student whose Mother Tongue is Urdu, except at the cost of learning English.

The proper provision under the Formula for Urdu-speaking children should be Urdu, Hindi and English, in that order.

The Formula was first subverted by putting numerical conditions for teaching of Urdu in schools. Subsequently, it has been subverted by changing the syllabus itself.

The writ petition should trace the history of the language component of the primary and secondary education of UP, particularly in respect of facilities for instruction through the medium of Urdu at primary level and teaching of Urdu as First Language at the secondary

(Contd. on Page 174)

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Jamia Millia Islamia: Annual Report, 1996-97 [Extracts]

Brief History

Jamia Millia Islamia was established ... in October 1920 in Aligarh (in) response to Gandhiji's call to boycott educational institutions run by the British Raj in the country...

Current Profile

The Jamia Millia Islamia received the status of a Central University by an Act of Parliament on 26 December 1988. It imparts integrated education right from the Nursery stage to the University level and offers Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degrees, as well as diploma and certificate courses, in many subjects in its six Faculties, namely, the Faculties of Humanities and Languages, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Engineering & Technology, Education and Law...

The Jamia also has a **Mass Communication Research Centre**. The centre offers a Ph.D. programme and a two-year M.A. course in mass communication...

The Academy of Third World Studies is a full-time research centre funded by the UGC under its Area Studies Programme.

The **Dr. Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies** is a centre, established to promote ... an understanding of Islam and of the movements of liberalisation and modernisation in Islamic countries. It publishes two journals *Islam and the Modern Age* in English and *Islam Aur Asre-e-Jadid* in Urdu.

Centre of Adult & Continuing Education and Extension offers a Master's Degree course in Extension Education... It also runs Adult Education Centres and conducts Continuing Education course and population education programmes...

Dr. Zakir Husain Library has a collection of 2,33,386 books... The library also offers a one-year course in Library and Information Science...

Computer Facilities: In addition to a Computer Centre there are five computer units... The Department of Mathematics offers both on M.Sc. course in Mathematics with Computer Science & Advanced Diploma in Computer Applications.

The Centre for Coaching and Career Planning (prepares) students of Jamia ... belonging to the weaker sections ... to appear at various competitive examinations (of) the UPSC etc. and other Central/State Governments and Public/Private Undertakings.

No. of Ph.D. Degree Awarded

S.No.	Department	Recipients
1.	Urdu	6
2.	Hindi	2
3.	Arabic	1
4.	Persian	1
5.	Islamic Studies	2

6.	History & Culture	2
7.	Mathematics	4
8.	Chemistry	2
9.	Physics	6
10.	Bio-Sciences	8
11.	Geography	3

Results of Various Courses

Course/Subjects	Students Passed
Faculty of Education	
B.Ed etc.	246
M. Ed. Etc.	32
Faculty of Humanities & Language	
B.A. Hons.	57
M.A.	117
M. Phil	11
Ph.D.	26
Certificate in Language	50
Diploma in Language	28
Adv. Diploma in Language	7
Faculty of Social Sciences	
B.A. (Hon)	206
B.Com (Hon)	34
B.A. (Pass)	114
M.A.	236
Faculty of Natural Science	
B.Sc. (Hon)	59
B.Sc. (Pass)	7
B.Sc. (Vocational)	10
M.Sc. (Hon)	84
P.G. Diploma (Cartography)	7
Faculty of Law	
LL.B.	15
Library Science	
B. Lib & Infor. Science	16
Faculty of Engineering	
B. Tech	113
M.Sc. (Electronics)	15
M. Tech.	9
Diploma	85
Certificate	44

(Contd. from Page 173)

level, after giving the Constitutional provisions including Schedule 8 which recognises Urdu as one of the National Language and the Linguistic Census, 1991, in respect of UP. The Annual Reports of the Linguistic Commissioner since the beginning or at least since 1991 can be of great help in tracing out the national and UP situation in respect of use of Urdu in schools.

I have my doubt whether the Foundation shall be allowed to be an Intervener. However, another writ may be filed by an eminent Urdu organisation working in UP.

Ehtashamuddin Khan On AMU Crisis

... Criminalisation is said to be the major problem of the university. To check this, the demand for an IAS officer as the Vice-Chancellor was raised. Considered an able administrator, M. Rahman, as IAS officer with an experience of working in Jammu and Kashmir, took over (as) Vice-Chancellor some five years ago...

As the term of Mr. Rahman comes to an end, the situation remains the same. This calls for a thorough introspection... The point is the VC and the students remain in the University for a limited period... The trouble lies, according to some AMU watchers, with the teachers and those who run the system.

A residential university, AMU has 15 halls of residence... The Provost is in-charge of the hall and is assisted by several wardens and some students bearing different hall posts... Hall posts are distributed only to the senior students who are generally puppets of the administration with little or no acceptance among the students. Similarly Provosts are those who are in the good books of the VC... Policies are imposed on the students without caring about their consent.

It is in the halls of residence where criminalisation is engendered. Small lobbies of students exist in the halls. They are basically rusticated or ex-students. They are used as and when required by the powers-that-be.

When their aspirations and frustrations ... get high, these finally culminate into violence. The halls of residence deal with heavy finance. There is no check or audit on the use of funds in the halls...

What is worse is that the university fails to provide any perspective to its students... Therefore, students fail to identify or articulate their problems, their causes and solutions. Genuine democratic voices have been suppressed by the high-handedness of the administration...

Most of the elected bodies have been dissolved since long. The students do not find any platform to express their grievances. The students resort to violence as the ultimate solution to every problem.

The problems are immense and complex, and intertwined. Key issues like the selection process of the VC and the arbitrary powers given to him need to be thoroughly reviewed. Functions, structure and the process of election to the AMU Court, Executive Committee and the Academic Council require to be debated.

Better admission policy and transparency in the appointment of teachers are other issues that deserve immediate attention...

(Source: The Pioneer, 22 January, 2000)

On Declaration as Minority Education Institution I - Allahabad High Court

Yogendra Nath Singh and another, Petitioners v. State of UP and others, Respondents.

O.P. GARG, J.

Constitution of India, Article 30, 226 - Declaration of Institution as minority educational institution - Challenge as to - Locus standi - Students, ex-students as well as teachers have locus standi to challenge declaration.

... Claim for benefit of Article 30 by minority community - Institution established to impart general and technical education to all and sundry - Not established for any particular community - Could not be declared as minority community institution.

Where the Society/institution came to be established by certain prominent citizens which included not only members of the Muslim community but several Hindus, it was established for the spread and promotion of the education in general; there was no provision specially with reference to the Muslim minority community; the basic object of the establishment of the institution was to impart general and technical education to all and sundry, institution was not established for the benefit of the minority community... Membership of the Society was open to all and not confined to any particular community... The Scheme of Administration as approved by the DDE ... also reflects the same characteristic and totally negates the plea raised regarding minority character of the institution, there could be no escape from the conclusion that the institution was not established as a minority institution by the members of any particular community for its own benefit or for the promotion of any religious thought and ideals. (Source: AIR 1999 Allahabad 356)

II - Calcutta High Court

Shiva Nand Pande and etc., Appellants v. Bhagwan Das Harlalka and others, Respondents.

SATYABRATA SINHA & S.N. BHATTACHARJEE, JJ.

Constitution of India, Articles 29, 30 - Minority institution - What is - School alleged to be established in State of West Bengal by some Hindi speaking people - However, record showing that school was originally established in two sections viz., Bengali and Hindi indicating that intention was to establish school and not school for Hindi speaking people - School cannot be held to be minority institution only because teachers, students, trustees were Hindi speaking and medium of school was also Hindi...

(Source: AIR 1999 Calcutta 321)

Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed Women's College, Chennai

The Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed Women's College (formerly SIET Women's College), founded by the late Justice Sayeed and his wife Fatima Akhtar, is maintained by the Southern India Education Trust (SIET). It is one of the premier educational institutions in the state of Tamil Nadu, imparting education in Arts, Science and Commerce. This is a minority institution affiliated to the University of Madras... Established in 1955 with 150 students out of which the Muslim girls were only 27, the institution was upgraded into a first grade college in the year 1957. Over the years, the college has grown into a prominent institution having nearly 4906 students – 3156 in the day college and 1750 in the evening college.

The college is situated in a campus of 16 acres owned by the trust, with essential infrastructure facilities. The SIET houses several of its institutions including the Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed Memorial Matriculation Higher Secondary School for Boys, the Fatima Basheer Memorial Matriculation Higher Secondary School for Girls and the SIET Vocational Training Institute. The day college has a qualified faculty strength of 147 teachers. There are 62 members on the non-teaching staff. The day college offers 24 programmes (including M. Phil. And Ph.D.). The evening college, as a self-financing unit offers 16 programmes. The college has a central library, computer centre, health centre, student counselling centre, dyslexia centre, laboratory, nursery school, centre for children with mental disability. SIET competitive exam coaching centre, sports facilities, swimming pool, canteen, vehicle park and a book stall. The evening college has the faculty strength of 71 and 13 in the non-teaching staff. The evening college has its own laboratory and library facilities. The other supporting facilities are shared with the day college.

The college has always been open to all eligible women students from all parts of the country irrespective of caste and religion, encouraging empowerment and overall development of women. The programmes are generally in conformity with the mission, goals and objectives of the institution. Many co-curricular and extra curricular activities such as NSS, NCC, sports programme, general awareness programmes, karate and swimming reflect this. This college has been awarded the rare distinction of a five-star rating by the UGC.

The visionary founder of this institution, Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed, left behind an endowment as the financial support base for this institution, apart from (donations from) philanthropists... Now the resource mobilization is mainly through State/Central Government grants and through fees generated by self-financing course. The motto of the college is "Learning is Light from God".

Aligarh College of Engineering and Management, Aligarh

Aligarh College of Engineering and Management (ACEM), Aligarh, has been established under the aegis of the Crescent Charitable Trust (Regd.) to impart technical and professional education in the field of Engineering, Computers and Management to produce skilled manpower required by the industrial and business houses and educational institutions, in India and abroad.

ACEM aims to provide the best possible education for students belonging to the Muslim community in an academically redo and professionally oriented ambience to produce a competitive mindset.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Agra has already granted affiliation to the B.B.A. and the B.C.A. courses in the first phase of establishment. The College is striven to get affiliation for Engineering courses, MBA and MCA courses in the second phase.

At present total strength of students in BBA and BCA courses is 70...

... Realising the limitation of AMU, JMI and other known institutions the Crescent Charitable Trust has ventured into the field of education, particularly professional education. Our aim is to provide some secondary school qualified young Muslim boys and girls ... to the maximum opportunity, within our limited means, to compete with their counterparts in other communities.

The viability of professional Colleges in India will continue to be very high for decades to come because of the huge gap between (support and demand). In AMU for example, there are 430 seats in Engineering and 25,000 applicants every year. This year there were some 80,000 applicants in UP MCAT (Combined Engineering Entrance Test conducted by UP Government for Colleges under its jurisdiction)... At the output point companies literally line up to recruit well qualified manpower as the demand again exceeds the supply in the field of Telecommunication, Electronics, Computers, Information Technology and Management.

Presently the College is functioning at Medical College Road, Aligarh, India. A beautiful campus is being developed. A 10-acre plot near the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh has been purchased.

... Justice Basheer, 'Sir Syed of the South', passed away on the 7th February 1984. The name of the SIET Women's College was later changed to Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed Women's College in order to perpetuate the memory of the Founder.

In June 1979 Fatima Basheer Matriculation Higher Secondary School for Girls was established. In the same year the Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed Memorial

(Contd. on Page 164)

Islamic Development Bank: Annual Report, 1997-98 (Extracts)

Operations for Muslim communities in Non-Member Countries

In 1418H, the Bank approved 30 organisations amounting to about ID 7.90 million (US\$10.66 million) from the IDB Waqf Fund (previously called the Special Assistance Account). Seven (7) operations amounting to ID 2.92 (US\$3.95 million) were approved in 7 member countries, and 23 operations amounting to ID 4.98 million (US\$6.71 million) were approved for Muslim communities and societies in 15 non-member countries.

During 1418H, 14 operations amounting to ID 1.63 million (US\$2.18 million) were approved for Muslim communities in India as part of a US\$30 million grant approved in 1405H for the support of vocational training and educational activities. At the end of 1418H, 163 operations had been approved amounting to ID 23.13 million (US\$29.07 million). Only US\$ 0.93 million remains from the amount originally approved. Operations approved for 1418H are shown in Table below:

S.No. Project	ID	US\$
	(Million)	
1. Mohibuddin Muslim Education Society (Hostel & VTC for Girls), UP	0.11	0.16
2. Al-Ameen Education Complex (Al-Ameen Char. Fund Trust) Assam	0.09	0.12
3. VTC for Imarat Shariah Education & Welfare Trust, Bihar	0.12	0.16
4. School & Hostel for Barua Ahle Hadeeth Educ. Centre, Barua	0.13	0.18
5. College of Engg. & VTC for Islamic Council for Productive Education, UP	0.12	0.17
6. Daruttalim Wasanat Polytechnic (Construction & Equipment), UP	0.14	0.19
7. Matiabruj Seva Sadan Hospital (Extension), West Bengal	0.09	0.12
8. Momin Women's College (Konkanmus Education Society), Maharashtra	0.09	0.12
9. VTC/Hostel-Jamia Aisha Alislamia (Tauhid Education Trust), Bihar	0.10	0.13
10. VTC & Hostel for Patna Muslim High School, Patna, Bihar	0.15	0.19
11. Extension of Princess Durru Shehvar Children's Hospital, Hyderabad	0.15	0.20
12. Girls Hostel for Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi	0.12	0.15
13. School & Hostel for the Aid for the Disabled Society, Assam	0.08	0.11
14. Milad-e-Sharif Memorial College (Extension/Equipment), Kerala	0.13	0.18
Total	1.63	2.18

A summary of Wakf Fund activities shows that up to the end of 1418H, a total of 432 operations and programmes amounting to ID 381.27 million (US\$457.41 million) have benefited from the Fund. Out of this total, ID 257.53 million (US\$10.03 million) has been approved for

175 operations in member countries and ID 123.74 million (US\$ 147.38 million) has been approved for 257 operations for Muslim communities and societies in non-Member countries....

Scholarship Programme

Initiated in 1404H (1983-84), the Scholarship Programme is solely for Muslim communities in non-member countries. It aims at helping needy and meritorious Muslim students in the countries concerned to pursue undergraduate studies in medicine, engineering, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, veterinary sciences, agriculture and computer science at universities in their home countries, or in other IDB member countries...

The scholarships are awarded as interest-free loans (qard hasan) to academically meritorious but financially needy students recommended by their respective Muslim communities...

In each country, the Programme is implemented by bona fide Muslim organizations consisting of Muslim scholars, educators and community leaders...

In 1418H (1997-98), the Bank spent US\$3.5 million on the Programme. At present, there are 2,165 students studying under the Programme. A detailed list of countries and the number of beneficiaries from each country is provided in Table below.

From the inception of the Scholarship Programme up to the end of 1418H, the Bank has granted scholarships to Muslim communities in 51 countries, including 7 member countries. The total amount spent since the inception of the Programme is US\$25.7 million, benefiting 4,323 students. Of this number, 1,725 students have completed their studies and 411 students have been unable to continue with their courses, leaving a balance of 2,165 students still studying under the Programme.

S.No.	Country	Com. Utiliz. 1418H (1997-98)	Number of Graduates	Number of Non Completion	Present Number of Recipients
1.	Ghana	133	59	14	60
2.	India	1446	810	49	587
3.	Kenya	113	58	8	47
4.	Nigeria	436	90	39	307
5.	Philippines	269	106	42	121
6.	Sri Lanka	175	87	1	87
7.	Tanzania	171	82	18	71
8.	Thailand	206	82	16	108
9.	Afghanistan	248	82	36	130
10.	Others	696	269	210	647
Total		4323	1725	433	2165

Number of Scholarships Utilization During 1994-95 - 1997-98

S.No.	Country	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
1.	India	152	112	117	138

RSS Unmasked in ICHR's Compilation

The RSS has been unmasked in the third part of the ICHR's project "Towards Freedom" – the documents on the movement for Indian independence in its last phase – edited by Prof. Partha Sarathi Gupat (that came out in 1997). There is a full chapter in that volume on "Communal and Separatist Movements" wherein numerous documents reveal the viciously communal propaganda the RSS was conducting in the forties while being careful not to come in conflict with the government as such so as to conserve its energy for its ultimate objective. A few examples should suffice.

The first is the summary of a report on the RSS officers' training camp held in April-May 1942 at Poona.

"M.S. Golwalkar of Nagpur, the Chief Organiser of the Sangh, addressed the volunteers on seven separate occasions. On 26th April 1942 he said ... the Hindus alone had so far proved loyal to the country; therefore they alone were eligible for enrolment to the Sangh. Whoever, forgetting his traditions, joins hands with the enemies should be killed even if he were their own brother, because only he who follows and sticks to their principles would be regarded as their real brother. The mental apathy of the Hindus should be removed and a feeling of hatred towards the men of other religions, who were getting high-handed, should be created in them. The Sangh was doing this work".

("Towards Freedom", Part 3, page 3052)

"On 3rd May 1942 he (Golwalkar – Analyst) made an important speech in which he clearly revealed the communal and Fascist nature of the organisation. He said that the Sangh had been started not only for combating Muslim aggression but for completely extirpating that disease; it was therefore necessary to have proper men at the helm whose attention should be focussed on the achievement of their goal".

("Towards Freedom", Part 3, page 3053)

A report from the Deputy Commission, Buldana district, D.O. No. 174-S, dated Buldana, the 28th November 1942, reads:

"In regard to the objects of the organisation (RSS-Analyst) the information so far received by me leads me to the conclusion that the Sangh does not want to come into conflict with Government but desires to build up and conserve its power for a two-fold purpose –

- (1) To seize power, if need be by means of violence, in the event of anarchy in the country.
- (2) To defeat the Muslim power in the event of a civil war or at least to give a threat to the Muslim organisation to avert the possibility of a civil war.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has, however, no plan to either fight Government or even to oppose it".

("Towards Freedom", Part 3, page 3024-25)

The RSS activities today are the same as they were in the forties. If anything, they have become even more vicious in their anti-minority (primarily anti-Muslim) tirade.

It is against this backdrop that one must realise the danger the RSS poses to our secular democracy. What needs to be understood is that it is not just another "political" outfit. What it stands for is far more ominous: being avowedly communal in character and pledged to propagate and disseminate communalism, the RSS's activities run counter to the aims and objectives of our Constitution. ...

(Source: The Mainstream, 11 March, 2000)

IHC Resolution on Historical Research

The Indian History Congress has always stood for the updating of syllabi to take into account the additions to knowledge brought about by historical research, and to better inculcate the scientific outlook. It had in the past appreciated NCERT's efforts in this behalf.

Recently, press reports have suggested that these improvements are in danger of being lost owing to a plan to overhaul the entire NCERT-designed curricula and to replace the present textbooks by those to be written on supposedly new "Nationalist" lines. General denunciations of the present NCERT textbooks reported in the press suggest that it is no longer the intention to promote a rational conception of India's cultural development as a composite nation, and obscurantist and divisive notions may be freely introduced.

The IHC feels that the project of changing the structure of syllabi and curricula should not be undertaken without proper scrutiny and debate by the community of historians and educationists. No hasty action should be taken to introduce changes and no matter which is alien to scientific historiography should be brought into textbooks...

(Source: The Mainstream, 12 February, 2000)

The Vajpayee Government has unleashed an era of cultural terrorism. The real face of the RSS is now showing through the mukhota (mask).
- Sonia Gandhi, Congress President

Orissa's New Anti-Conversion Order

The Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967 and Orissa Freedom of Religion Rules, 1989 state that those intending to convert as well as the priest proposing to carry out the conversion must send prior intimation to the District Magistrate...

... This amendment is a tacit move to discourage anyone from converting to Christianity...

The Orissa Government has (now amended the Rules by a) Notification No.63286 dated 26.11.1999 (which reads as follow):

In Exercise of the powers conferred by Section of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967 (Orissa Act 2 of 1968) the State Government do hereby make the following rules to amend the Orissa Freedom of Religion Rules 1989 namely:-

- (3) On receiving the intimation under Sub-rule (2) the District Magistrate shall inform the concerned Superintendent of Police in detail who shall pass on the information of the concerned Police Station and the Officer-in-Charge of the Police Station shall ascertain objection, if any, to the proposed conversion by local enquiry and intimate the same to the District Magistrate.

The copies of the Notification were sent to all the Churches across the State...

The Notification (thus) demands that, after receiving an intimation from a convert and the priest, the District Magistrate will intimate the same to the Superintendent of Police who, in turn, will pass the information on to the Officer-in-Charge of the local police station to conduct an inquiry...

Church leaders in Orissa have challenged in court the state's order that requires prior government permission to convert to another religion. What the state government has done goes against fundamental rights", said Archbishop Raphael Cheenath one of the petitioners against the November 26 notification.

Archbishop Cheenath stated on March 8: "The Court has accepted their petition, which will come up for hearing in a few days.

(Source: The Indian Currents, 19 March, 2000)

The BJP is opposed to conversion by inducement. It is unfair and illegal to attract people to other faiths by providing education, health-care or monetary help.

- Venkaiah Naidu, BJP General Secretary

On Muslim Insecurity in India Nehru's Letter to MP C.M. Shukla,

20 March, 1954

You sent me with your letter of the 27th January a note on the activities of Muslims in Madhya Pradesh. I am sorry for the delay in acknowledging it.

There are all kinds of trends among the Muslims in India and some of them are undoubtedly objectionable. I think, however, that we should not be led away by these and we should try to judge the broad situation objectively. If Muslims generally in India are unhappy or dissatisfied, then the fault is ours and not the Muslims'. This indeed would apply to any large group of persons. The Muslims in India have suffered a tremendous shock from the Partition and its consequences and it was and is up to us to make them feel that they are completely at home in India and their interests lie in India and not elsewhere. If we fail to do so, it is not much good our saying that Muslims are being misguided by some of their leaders.

It is a fact that there is a great deal of frustration in the Muslim mind in India. I am not referring to people who maybe pro-Pakistan. There are not very many like that. But conditions have arisen in India, which bring continuous pressure on the Muslims in various ways. There is the question of employment in government services, all India and state. There is even the question of education facilities in colleges and the rest of it. Even in business there is pressure against them. It is not surprising that they lack security for the future."

(Source: The Indian Currents, 19 March, 2000)

Religious Freedom at Maturity

The freedom to choose one's religion is actually no freedom, as one has to follow the religion of one's parents... Real religious freedom could be practised when one had waited till one's maturity and chose his or her religion, just as certain age was prescribed for voting and for marriage.

... Religious leaders should embrace Article 51 A of the Indian Constitution, which aims to promote harmony and the spirit of brotherhood amongst all, transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities. Gender equality, promoting vegetarianism and inter-dependence of creation are some of the points (to be) stressed.

- Swami Agnivesh

Hindutva's Fascist Inspiration and Foreign Tie-up in the 1930's

Italian Scholar Marzia Casolari

To understand militant Hinduism, one must examine its domestic roots as well as foreign influence. In the 1930s Hindu nationalism borrowed from European fascism to transform 'different' people into 'enemies'. Leaders of militant Hinduism repeatedly expressed their admiration for authoritarian leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler and for the fascist model of society. This influence continues to the present day. This paper presents archival evidence on the would-be collaborators.

... Defining the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and, in general, the organisations of militant Hinduism as undemocratic, with authoritarian, paramilitary, radical, violent tendencies and a sympathy for fascist ideology and practice, has been a major concern for many politically oriented scholars and writers... As a result, the fascist ideological background of Hindu fundamentalism is taken for granted, never proved by systematic analysis...

... Many of those who witnessed the growth of Hindu radical forces in the years around the second world war were already convinced of the Sangh's fascist outlook. Particularly acute was the perception that the Congress had of these organisations and their character.

... As shown by a confidential report circulated within the Congress most probably at the time of the first ban of the RSS, after Gandhi's assassination, the similarity between the character of the RSS and that of fascist organisations was already taken for granted. In fact, the report itself states that the RSS

1. ... Started in Nagpur some sort of Hindu Boys Scout movement. Gradually it developed into a communal militarist organisation with violent tendencies.
2. The RSS has been purely Maharashtrian Brahmin organisation. The non-Brahmin Maharashtrians who constitute the bulk of C.P. and Maharashtra have no sympathy with it.
3. Even in the other provinces the chief organisers and whole-time workers will be found to be inevitably Maharashtrian Brahmins.
4. Through the RSS the Maharashtrian Brahmins have been dreaming of establishing in India 'a Peshwa Raj' after the withdrawal of Britishers. The RSS flag is the Bhagwa Flag of the Peshwas - Maharashtrian rulers (who) were the last to be conquered by the British - and after the termination of British rule in India, the Maharashtrians should be vested with political powers.
5. The RSS practises secret and violent methods which promote 'fascism'. No regard is paid to truthful means and constitutional methods.
6. There is no constitution of the organisation; its aims and objects have never been clearly defined. The general public is usually told that its aim is only physical training, but the real aims are not conveyed

even to the rank and file of the RSS members. Only its 'inner circle' is taken into a confidence.

7. There are no records or proceedings of the RSS organisation, no membership registers are maintained. There are also no records of its income and the expenditure. The RSS is thus strictly secret as regards its organisation. It has consequently ... (National Archives of India (NAI), Sardar Patel Correspondence, microfilm, reel no.3, 'A Note on the RSS', undated).

Unfortunately the document stops abruptly...

The preceding discussion has shown that :

- a) the main historical organisations and leaders of Hindu nationalism had a distinctive and sustained interest in fascism and nazism;
- b) fascist ideological influences on Hindu nationalism were present and relevant; and
- c) to a certain extent, these influences were channelled through direct contacts between Hindu nationalists and members of the Italian fascist state. No doubt, beginning with the early 1920s, and up to the second world war, Hindu nationalists looked at the political reality of fascist Italy, and subsequently of nazi Germany, as a source of inspiration.

One of the results of the contacts between fascism and Hindu nationalism was the attempt to militarise Hindu society and to create a militant mentality among the Hindus. If it is true that the Hindu society elaborated its own patterns of militarisation - I refer to the *shakhas* as a typically Indian phenomenon- it is equally true that a most relevant result of fascist influence was the transmission of a more functional organisation and a stronger political character to the already existing organisations of political Hinduism.

At the ideological level, the most meaningful effect of the fascist influence is represented by the way in which Hindu nationalism developed its own concept of diversity, transforming 'diverse' people into enemies. Of course, the concept of internal enemy is already implicit contained in Savarkar's Hindutva. Nevertheless, the continuous reference to German racial policy and the comparison of the Jewish problem in Germany with the Muslim question in India reveals the evolution of the concept of 'internal enemy' along explicitly fascist lines.

(Contd. on Page 167)

RSS Institutions in the Country

TAMIL NADU

1. Swami Vivekananda Rock Memorial, Kanyakumari.
2. Swami Vivekananda Education Society, Chennai.

KERALA

3. Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission, Muzol in Vayanad.

KARNATAKA

4. Hindu Seva Prathisthan Rashtrothan Parishad, Janaseva Vidya Kendra, Chaannenahalli, Bangalore.
5. Ashvini Hospital, Madikeri.
6. Gangamma Chikkumbi Muth Bal Kalyan Kendra, Belgaum.

GOA

7. Matru Chaya, Dhavali, Phonda (Kavale)

ANDHRA PRADESH

8. Saraswati Vidyapeetham, Bandalguda, Hyderabad.
9. Deen Dayal Puram, Nagayalanka, Vijayawada.

WEST BENGAL

10. Khoribari Kendra, Khoribari, Darjeeling.
11. Sri Aravind Chatravas, Gopali, Midnapur.
12. Kalyan Ashram Chatravas, Bagmundi, Purulia

ORISSA

13. Rishikul Residential Sanskrit School, Dumbermail, Sambalpur.
14. Sankaracharya Sanskrit Kanyashram, Jalasapeta, Phulbani.

BIHAR

15. Birsa Seva Sadan, Lohardaga.
16. Sandeepani Ashram, Dhurva, Ranchi.
17. Vidyalaya Chatravas, Barkhatsena, Pancharan West.

UTTAR PRADESH

18. Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Vidya Mandir and Chatravas, Gorakhpur.
19. Shri Ram Vanavasi Chatravas, Gorakhpur.
20. Chhatravas, Chikitsalay, Vidya Mandir, Ghorwal, Sonabhadra.
21. Gramoday Prakalp, Jayaprabhagram, Gonda.
22. Birsa Munda Chatravas, Kanpur.
23. Deen Dayal Dham, Nagla Chandrabhan.
24. Seva Kendra, Agra.
25. Shiv Gopal Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Halwani, Nainital.
26. Upper Bhagirathi Ghati Vikas Samiti, Maneri, Uttarkashi.

DELHI

27. Seva Bharati Seva Prakalp.

HARYANA

28. Seva Bharati Seva Prakalp, Madhav Kunj Vijaynagar, Rohtak.
29. Vanavasi Chatravas, Bhivani.

PUNJAB

30. Peedit Seva Prakalp Samiti, Amritsar.
31. Seva Dham, Chandigarh.
32. Nirogi Bal Ashram, Kotakpura, Faridkot.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

33. Himagiri Kalyan Ashram, Shilli, Solan.
34. Kanya Chhatravas, Sangla, Kinnor.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

35. Veda Mandir Bal Niketan, Ambaphala, Jammu.
36. Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission, Ambaphala.

37. J&K Sahayata Samiti, Jammu Geeta Bhavan.

RAJASTHAN

38. Keshav Vidyapeeth, Jamdoli, near Jaipur.
39. Sri Ram Ashram, Sri Ram Vidyalaya, Mohakampura, Baswada.
40. Vanavasi Chatravas and Vidyalaya, Kotda.
41. Kshaya Nivaran Pariyojana, Jaipur.

GUJARAT

42. Kanya Chatralay, Ukai, Surat.
43. Seva Prakalp, Rajkot.
44. Saraswati Sheti Vidyalay and Chatravas, Pall, Sabarkantha.
45. Chatravas, Chikitsalaya, Vidyalay, Balwadi, Sidumbar, Valsad.

MADHYA PRADESH

46. Seva Bharati, Seva Kendra, Bhopal.
47. Seva Bharati, Seva Kendra, Indore.
48. Sri Anand Hindu Anathashram, Pimpalkheda, Dhar.
49. Chitrakut Gramoday Vishva Vidyalay, Chitrakut, Satna.
50. Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, Moolasthan, Jaipur.
51. Bharatiya Kushta Nivaran Kendra, Sontji, Champa.

MAHARASHTRA

52. Vanavasi Kanya Chatravas, Dhantoli, Nagpur.
53. Dr. Hedgewar Raktapedhi, Nagpur.
54. Pt. Deen Dayal Swasthya Yojana, Nagpur.
55. Vaidyakeeya Chikitsa Kendra Medical Mission, Chikhaldara, Amravati.
56. Dr. Hedgewar Hospital, Aurangabad.
57. Sondara Gurukul, Dongri, Beed.
58. Earthquake Affected Rehabilitation Centre, Rebe Chincholi, Usmanabad.
59. Swami Vivekananda Vaidyakeeya Pratisthan and Research Centra, Latur.
60. Ekalavya Vanavasi Vikas Vasati Griha, Yamgarwadi, Usmanabad.
61. Vanavasi Kanya Chatralay, Harsul, Nashik.
62. Swaroopvardhini, Pune.
63. Janakalyan Raktapedhi, Pune.
64. Udyog Dham Rehabilitation of Leprosy Affected, Talegaon, Pune.
65. Ekamnik Grameen Arogya Prakalp, Warsa, Dhule.
66. Vanavasi Kanya Chatralay, Talasari, Thane.
67. Dr. Hedgewar Seva Prakalp, Mangaon, Sindhudurg.

NORTH-EAST

68. Bhaskar Vidyapeeth, Parvatipur, Assam.
69. Sadgiri Memorial Dispensary, Laikor, Meghalaya.
70. Reng Bang Home Sevashram and Shishu Niketan, Phulni, Assam.
71. Chatravas and Vidyalay, Difu, Assam.
72. Ziliangsung Heraka School and Chatravas, Tening, Nagaland.
73. Kalyan Ashram Chatravas and Vidya Bharati Vidyalaya, Kakching, Tripura.
74. Ratanmani Seva Mission Vidyalaya and Chatravas, Dhumachada, Tripura.
75. Mehta Chatravas and Vidya Bharati Vidyalaya, Halflong, Assam.

(Source: Amrut-Kumbha of Service Streams, Ekta Prakashan, Pune.)

Jaya Parkash Narayan, 1968 On RSS as Political Manipulator

The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds that tie it firmly to the RSS machine. **Nor can the RSS be treated as a cultural organisation as long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party.**

(Source: The New Age, 20-26 February, 2000)

Morarji Desai, 1979

Some friends have repeatedly complained that the RSS is trying to capture leadership in the government. The RSS like other political parties, is free to influence politics and is doing that too. My only objection is that the RSS people are trying to influence politics with the camouflage of being a cultural organisation.

I have advised the leaders of the RSS to merge with other like-minded organisations or the Sangh should get affiliated to the Janata Party. They however refuse to accept my views in the belief that they have a separate cultural identity and they have nothing to do with politics.

Even now I feel that the RSS should merge into the organisation supporting the Janata Party. But if they are determined to retaining their separate identity I would again say that they should open their doors to non-Hindus like Muslims and Christians.

I have always condemned the Hindu Rashtravad of RSS, because it is dangerous ideology and is contradictory to our ideology of composite Indian nation. In a democracy every organisation has a right to propagate its philosophy and ideology. That is the essence of democracy. And yet when it intends to establish its hold on politics we have to be watchful that its philosophy or ideology does not undermine the basic philosophy of nationalism.

I have no objection to the RSS being affiliated to the Janata Party but it will have to change its Hindu face and become fully secular. If it does not do that it should withdraw from politics and sever all connection with every constituent of the Janata Party.

(Source: The New Age, 20-26 February, 2000)

The BJP is a political arm of a family of militant Hindu organisations that have a broadly neo-Fascist hue. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is a bulldog Brahmin with Churchill's touch.

- The Independent, London

A.B. Vajpayee, 1979 On RSS's Political Role

RSS claiming to be a social and cultural organisation should have taken greater pains to demonstrate that they did not seek a political role. Patronising a press that takes sides in the sordid politics of power, involvement in youth bodies that interact with political parties; participating in trade union rivalries such as the one which recently brought enormous misery to the people of Delhi by callously cutting the water supply – these do not help an organisation (RSS) to establish its apolitical credentials.

It is possible that some people genuinely feel apprehensive about the RSS. A certain onus accordingly devolved on the RSS, an onus that has not been discharged effectively by the RSS. Its repudiation of the theocratic form of the state was welcome, yet the question could legitimately be asked: Why does it not open its door to non-Hindus? Recent statements of the RSS chief Deoras, indicate that non-Hindus are being encouraged to join the organisation. A natural corollary of this process would be

clear enunciation by the RSS that by Hindu Rashtra, it means the Indian nation which includes non-Hindus as equal members.

(Source: The New Age, 20-26 February, 2000)

RSS Leader H.V. Sudarshan's Views

India's only chance of emerging as a strong nation lies in teachings of Hindutva.

No amount of foreign wealth can lead to the development of the country which has lost its self-pride under the influence of the

Western culture. We must rise against attempts to destabilise the country's security and integrity.

Hindutva is the only identity of the Indians irrespective of their religious faith... Consciousness regarding Hindutva is on the rise all over the country, especially in the southern part of the country.

Unless the message of Hindutva is spread across India, the ISI activities will continue to pose a serious threat for the country. It is the RSS which can strengthen India's security and integrity and will lead the country to the path of glory.

The West Bengal Government is not eager to solve the infiltration problem as the ruling party CPI(M) is interested in getting votes of these Bangladeshis. These foreign nationals receive ration cards to claim as valid voters of the country. It seems that the Left Government in the State has not yet aware that there are large number of Pakistani-backed ISI agents among these infiltrators.

(Source: The Organiser, 27 February, 2000)

Oath of the RSS

"Before the all-powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I become a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in order to achieve all-round greatness of Bharatvarsh by fostering the growth of my sacred Hindu religion; Hindu society and Hindu culture. I shall perform the work of the Sangh honestly, disinterestedly, with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this oath all my life."

(Source: The Indian Currents, 20 February, 2000)

On RSS Lost between Culture and Politics

Noted Columnist Swapan Dasgupta

... In an age where bluntness and brevity are at a premium, the discourse of the Sangh Parivar is replete with riddles and parables, resonant with hidden meanings.

... On February 11 the top brass of the RSS family gathered for an awards ceremony hosted by its Hindi weekly Panchajanya, "which nationalism are we talking about?" asked RSS Joint Organising Secretary K.S. Sudarshan. "The one that talks about India or the one that speaks of Bharat? One that says India is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic nation in the making? Or one that believes that we are one nation, one people and one culture?"

Sudarshan's preferences were undisguised but Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee chose to have the last word... The problem, he noted wryly, isn't insurmountable. "It's a question of approach and behaviour..."

... As opposed to Vajpayee's 13-month first innings when the government and the RSS seemed on a collision course, the second innings has so far been marked by a spectacular degree of bonhomie. The Prime Minister has endorsed the RSS' self-perception of being a "cultural" body and the home minister has asked for a status paper to determine whether or not restrictions on Central Government staff participating in RSS functions can be removed... On its part ... the RSS has been most supportive of the Vajpayee Government...

... The RSS had four demands on the Government: promote rural development, encourage small-scale industries, focus on rural welfare and enhance national security...

... "A Government or a political party has to take its own decisions", Advani told India Today. "Decision-making cannot be from any outside organisation but the Sangh Parivar is always concerned about values and ethics to public life. Therefore, it is legitimate for the Sangh to extend its moral authority on the functioning of a government in which there are swayamsevaks".

The question is: What are the parameters of "moral authority"? "We are just a sorting office for ideas", says Sudarshan, adding that, "Every person has a right to advise. Let the Government consider"...

BJP ministers are naturally reluctant to talk about the RSS' intrusive style. The experience of both Kalyan Singh in Uttar Pradesh and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat in Rajasthan shows that displeasing the RSS has a direct fallout when it comes to electoral mobilisation. Despite its phenomenal growth, the BJP remains dependent on the mobilising skills of the 4,000 RSS full-timers during

elections... It is just not possible to flower in the BJP with an antagonistic relationship to the Sangh.

This is why it is not feasible for lesser BJP ministers – Vajpayee and Advani may be the exceptions – to disregard the advice of the RSS leadership... "We are in the RSS simply want that the front organisations are given as much advantage as the NDA alliance partners are getting", says Chari. ...

To deter the RSS from muddying its hands in economics, the Government would love it to focus on its self-confessed agenda – culture. The RSS is quite pleased with the Ministry of Culture's celebrations of the 125 years of Vande Mataram and the HRD Ministry's anti-Left stance. But there is a menacing flip side in the form of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal. Unlike other RSS front organisations, the VHP has evolved into a rogue elephant. Comprising mainly sadhus who are not bound by the niceties of civil society, the VHP and the boisterous Bajrang Dal are always on the look out for confrontation... Leaving the Government looking very foolish and even ridiculous.

It is primarily to keep the delicate RSS-Government relationship on an even keel that both Vajpayee and Advani have been emphasising the umbilical cord that ties them to the Sangh. The charisma of the prime minister and the authority of Rajju Bhairya have so far ensured relative harmony... It knows that keeping the RSS at an arm's length is the only recipe for a prevention of the dual membership battle that brought down Morarji Desai's Government in 1979.

Ultimately, however, there is no alternative to the RSS actually practising its claim to be a purely cultural organisation.

(Source: The India Today, 21 February, 2000)

State-wise RSS Branches

Assam	900	Andhra Pradesh	1660
Bihar	2300	Delhi	1500
Haryana	600	J&K and Himachal	450
Gujarat	900	Kerala	4149
Karnataka	2305	MP	3230
Maharashtra	4000	Rajasthan	3500
Punjab	775	Tamil Nadu	1051
Orissa	1481	UP	9000
West Bengal	1500	Total	39,301

(Courtesy: Mr. S. Akhtar, Journalist)

Sangh Parivar: Protectors of Hinduism? Mohan Rao in The Voice of People Awakening, February, 2000

It is amazing how selective the members of the Sangh Parivar, those self-appointed custodians and protectors of Hinduism are... The film Water apparently was attacked because it showed a widow in Kashi as a prostitute. That was an insult to Hinduism. But we have yet to hear of Sangh Parivar or their UP government taking any action to protect the real widows in Kashi, Mathura and Vrindavan...

Actually, the highly exploited condition of Varanasi's widows has been an old state of affairs, even immortalised in the late 19th novels of Tagore and Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya. What is shocking is that it still persists. The situation is fostered by the property laws of north India, which unlike the southern states, do not give any share in a deceased man's property to his widow. All of his property either goes to his sons or, if he has no sons, to his brothers. The wife thus becomes pauperised and is regarded as a burden on her sons or brothers-in-law after he husband's death. But our self-styled protectors of Hinduism feel no reason to remedy these laws, nor do they feel the need to institute any government financial schemes for destitute widows, as states like Tamil Nadu have done. And nor do they want to take action against the abuses the widows face in Kashi. But had they been around a century ago, they would no doubt have drummed Tagore and Saratchandra out of town, to protect Hinduism.

There are many more examples of how Hinduism is being concretely misused and abused across the country... (Many) sadhus are criminals or anti-social elements in saffron, greedy, lustful and capable of anything.

The focus is of course the huge properties owned by the temples and ashrams, and even more important, their annual collections from pilgrims... What is more, many of the sadhus are actual fugitives from the law, as ashrams allow them anonymity or a new identity... So, where is the Sangh Parivar? Is all this not a massive and direct abuse of Hinduism? When dacoities, property battles and even murders are taking place under the cloak of saffron robes, and actually within the temples of a sacred city, where are our self-styled protectors of Hindu sentiments? Or, are these anti-social swamis the Hindus whom they are protecting.

Today they (BJP) are wearing a mask of secularism to trick you. But these are the people who demolished a religious shrine and who even today are attacking minorities in certain States.

- Sonia Gandhi, Congress(I) President

Nazi Inspiration Behind Savarkar & Golwalkar Tapan Raychaudhuri in Perceptions, Emotions and Sensibilities, OUP

A group of Indian scholars has recently published a tract tracing the history of the RSS and its affiliates. It projects in brilliant detail a sinister record of ideology and organisation structured around xenophobia, the project for a nation state which would relegate non-Hindus to the status of a subject population. Savarkar first spelled out this new notion of Hindutva in 1923 when he declared that only those who thought of India as the Holy land as well as the Fatherland could be true patriots. Since this joy was inaccessible to Muslims, their patriotism should always be suspect. In 1925, in the wake of extensive communal riots on a scale without precedent, Hedgewar established the RSS in direct response to the new quest for disciplined cadres of Hindu communalism.

The founder's analysis of the political situation which necessitated the new organisation is illuminating: "the yavan-snakes reared on the milk of non-cooperation were provoking riots with their poisonous hissing". The riots were Muslim riots because in every single case "it is they who start them". Thus "it became evident that Hindutva was Rashtriyata" i.e. Hinduness was the same as nationalism. It was hence necessary for dedicated Hindu youths to organise in self-defence. Golwalkar, who succeeded the good doctor to the leadership of the RSS, developed the notion of cultural nationalism as distinct from territorial nationalism. The idea that those who lived within the geographical boundary of a country constituted the nation was rejected.

He (Golwalkar) defined his notion of cultural nationalism along the following lines: "German national pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by purging the country of the Semitic races - the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hinduism to learn and profit by..."

(Source: The Indian Currents, 5 March, 2000)

If there is an impression that I am pursuing an RSS agenda, what's wrong?

- UP CM Ram Prakash Gupta

The RSS is a Social, Cultural Organisation only in name. It controls the BJP.

- Former UP CM, Kalyan Singh

The Fascistic Character of RSS

Eminent Academician Achin Vanaik

... The Prime Minister himself has pronounced and affirmed a shameful deceit. The RSS is "only" a cultural and social organisation! This idea of Vajpayee as an amiable moderate, a secular and liberal democrat at heart has been nothing but a media creation. There are no moderates in the Sangh because all who are unshakably committed to its ideology are by definition adherents of an extremist and authoritarian political project. The 'moderate' versus 'extremist' divide in the Sangh pertains only to differences regarding tactics - the manner and pace at which its overall project of basic transformation of Indian society is to be carried out. The Vajpayee who said "the RSS is my soul" has spoken loud and clear.

... Hindutva and indeed all anti-democratic, authoritarian projects operate with a very different understanding of what the relationship between State apparatuses and their own political project should be... The Sangh must try and legitimise its various calculated steps in the direction of undermining the restraints imposed by the existing institutions, rules, norms and mores of Indian democracy.

Gujarat is today the principal laboratory for testing the waters, as it were. There are two points to note here. First, it is an assault that is being carried out on various fronts to see how far it can go in establishing new norms which then became the "accepted base" for further forward movement... Second, as the Sangh's strongest trump card, the authority of the Prime Minister is used to justify such advances. That is to say, his deliberately manufactured and promoted aura of "moderation" is used to counter criticism, and where possible, settle the issue once and for all... Vajpayee has fulfilled his expected role.

... The big lie about the purely social-cultural character of the RSS must be maintained to deflect criticism of what the Sangh is up to in Gujarat. The RSS must be the only "purely social-cultural organisation" in the world that regularly in its journals pronounces opinions and positions on all kinds of political issues. The RSS was deeply involved in the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign mobilising its mass cadre base for that purpose. Is it its contention that this campaign was a purely social-cultural movement and not in any way or only incidentally a political campaign? ... Within an hour of (Pokhran test) the RSS' Organiser came out with a special issue commemorating Pokhran-I on a day not its usual day of issue. It is open knowledge that the RSS vets Cabinet appointments and was privy to the draft of the National Agenda for Governance even before it was shown to other coalition partners... The RSS is the only purely social-cultural organisation in the world that tells a political party, the BJP, that its national organising secretaries must be RSS members, and indeed gets its way. The list is endless.

... While the BJP is at least democratically

accountable to the electorate, the RSS is not! Moreover, it is not even democratically accountable to its own membership since its key officials are all selected from the top not elected from below. The RSS is not even accountable to the ordinary member of the BJP in any way! Never in the political history of India as an independent country has there ever existed such a state of affairs as has been inaugurated by the BJP in power. It is already a measure of how far the Sangh has got in transforming the public and media understanding of democratic practice ... that such a situation no longer comes in much comment let alone condemnation, opposition or institutional rectification! It is not just the ideology of the Sangh that should have made it an untouchable in the democratic arena, it is the very institutional character of the Sangh as a collective entity. This has not been altered to adjust to democratic realities. Instead democratic realities and perceptions have been adjusted to render this unexceptionable!

The great difference between the authoritarian projects of classical fascism and that of the Sangh is that the former had one chief instrumentality to carry it out - the state... The Sangh ... has two instrumentalities - the state and the RSS. Indeed, not the former but the latter is the "skeleton" on which the new transformed India is to be rebuilt. The ... transformative project, therefore, is more flexible and longer term. It is ... a question of ... suborning state structures to the RSS whose dominance in civil society must also be pursued independently, and with the help of the state apparatuses...

(Source: The Hindu, 15 Feb., 2000)

Vidya Subrahmaniam On RSS and Hinduism

... The two-nation theory was first propounded by V.D. Savarkar in 1922 in a handwritten manuscript titled "Hindutva"... Hindutva so influenced RSS founder K.B. Hedgewar that in time it became the philosophy of the Jan Sangh and the BJP as well.

But what was the central point of Hindutva? Savarkar believed that Hindus were a nation, that they formed a single national group by virtue of accepting India as their fatherland (pitrubhu) and holy land (punyabhu). Savarkar was certain that Muslims and Christians, who worshipped holy places outside India ... did not fit into his definition of a nation.

M.S. Golwalkar, who succeeded Hedgewar, left no doubts on this score in his "Bunch of Thoughts"...

The RSS mindset is, then, not the Hindu mindset... What the RSS preaches is not Hinduism. Not if Hinduism is seen as a tolerant platform that allows anyone and everyone to clamber aboard...

... RSS propagates ... is a revivalist vision that is

(Contd. on Page 178)

RSS Determined to Demolish INDIA 'Peacefully' and 'Slowly'

I.K. Shukla

Uttar Pradesh CM Ram Prakash Gupta deserves kudos for having pithily and pointedly made public the secret saffronite determination to demolish India peacefully. Those agitated about Babari Masjid having been "demolished peacefully" and Ram Mandir slated for being built quite as peacefully pace Gupta, having now someone to be beholden to for being truthful this once.

He said he would allow the Mandir built in Ayodhya as peacefully as the Masjid was demolished peacefully. There is no ambiguity, no grey area of nuances, and no scope for misunderstanding at all. In fact, it is lies that have always characterized the Sangh Parivar right from its inception. That RSS is a cultural organisation has been its boldest lie...

From day one it was more than merely a political outfit, it was a totalitarian drive. And, Project Peaceful Demolition did not start with Babari Masjid. It started with the repudiation and assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. For Gandhi epitomized India as more than a geographical entity and historical accretion as a nation-state.

Gandhi's India was a cultural construct in the widest possible sense. It was this India he lived by, preached, promoted, propagated and perished for, at the hands of the assassin who, advisedly, severed his formal ties with the RSS before perpetrating the crime. His mentors and ideological kin sedulously carried forward the dark deed he stained India with.

As if paying Nathuram Godse a tribute his acolytes have multiplied his crime at the macro level. No retraction or denial is either necessary or useful. Because that will only compound the lie. Read properly Gupta's declaration is tantamount to a very timely warning. Intent and modus operandi could not have been mingled so decisively any better. The Masjid was demolished really "peacefully". Since there was no organized resistance to the demolition, it was certainly "peaceful". Had there been an organized resistance the police and army were there to "pacify" it.

It was peace and pacification all the way. From New Delhi of Narasimha Rao to UP of Kalyan Singh peace via "pacification" of potential resistance was mightily ensured. In a similar fashion, says Gupta, "peace" will be maintained, law and order preserved, to facilitate the construction of the Mandir... In the mindset of the saffron brigade what is law and order and what signifies peace are strikingly clear in Gupta's statement. It is in this light that we should understand the bloody orgies of Meerut, Maliana, Dangs, Surat, Manoharpur and scores of other places aimed at "teaching a lesson" to Muslims and Christians via annihilation and mass extermination. The colour of this neo-Hindu fascism is saffron.

The "peaceful demolition" is proceeding apace. From the rape of nuns to burning of churches and murders of priests, from the parade of a priest stripped of his clothes (Bihar) to burning a Muslim tailor after chopping off his hands (Orissa), from forcing tribals to adopt Hindu modes

of hierarchical degradation to looting their lands and homesteads, from forcing urine down the throats of nuns (Bihar) to setting ablaze sleeping kids with their missionary father (Orissa), from videotaping the rape and humiliation of Muslim women in Surat to setting afire their localities, and depriving them of their livelihood in scores of cities, it has all been "peaceful". And it is such peace we are promised more of in the future. Certainly one in Ayodhya.

The mutilation and mayhem characterizing the communal revision and doctoring of history textbooks is just another facet of the same "peaceful demolition". Those remonstrating can be shown the door or silenced forever, "peacefully". To further this sinister drive, rabid communalists and avowed murderers have been pitchforked into power in the Indian Council of Historical Research, Indian Council of Social Science Research, and National Council of Educational Research and Training.

The clamour for a presidential form of government, for a 5-year tenure of a minority government bereft of the confidence of the legislature, for a Constitutional review to rescind minority protections and the system of checks and balances, are all pieces of the same diabolical design so daringly called "peaceful demolition".

Destruction of Deepa Mehta's film (Water) sets in Varanasi, and earlier, of M.F. Hussain's paintings have been equally "peaceful". Gupta is not a loose cannon. He is a devout knickerwallah... He is feeling emboldened to push the RSS agenda through in UP after Gujarat, the prime paradigm of Sangh Parivar. He is not indulging in skullduggery. He is uneasy with wearing a mask. That art belongs exclusively to Vajpayee ("RSS is my soul") whom media has anointed as "liberal", "democratic" and "secular", who alternates between sleep and smile respectively signifying insouciance and craftiness, and who, when confronted with the heinous crimes of the Sangh Parivar in Gujarat, calls not for their punishment but a national debate on conversion.

Whether it be the domestic policy predicated on a pluralistic consensus and egalitarian impulse, or the foreign policy of the nation posited in popular sovereignty and economic self-determination, the BJP (and its cohorts) have industriously wrecked the nation's distinction as a democracy, its dignity as a culture, its stature as a beacon of inspiration and morals...

(National) sovereignty has been surrendered to aliens under the aegis of the Sangh Parivar, slogans of Swadeshi facilitating the fraud. (This) is in accord with the Sangh agenda of ethnic cleansing (communal genocide), wrecking of societal cohesion, cultural degradation, (turning people) into bigoted robots, thwarting creativity through terror and brainwashing, repressing dissent and civic freedoms... Our freedom (stands) abridged...

(Source: The Indian Currents, 13 February, 2000)

Maria Moreira On Brazilian Muslims

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America. Although there are no official statistics, the Muslim population in Brazil is estimated to be approximately 1 million people, with a total population of more than 170 million.

This number includes reverts to Islam, Arab immigrants and their descendants. Brazilian reverts make up for no more than 1% of this number, about 10,000 people. Therefore, within a population of over 170 million, the small number that make up Brazilian reverts to Islam have very little power.

Next April, Brazil will celebrate 500 years of its discovery, and a major controversy is surrounding the event. In traditional Brazilian history, the discovery of the country is attributed to a Portuguese navigator named Pedro Alvarez Cabral. New historical sources however, seem to offer another fact: that the discoverer might have been a Spanish navigator.

More and more historians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are becoming aware of the strong Muslim presence in the early Americas. Many evidences of the Muslim presence in Brazil, including inscriptions with the name of Allah, have been found. In the language of the Native Americans, words of Arabic origin have been identified, and even the names of some Brazilian cities which were supposed to be related with the native American language, seems to have Arabic origins.

If all this information is confirmed and introduced officially as part of Brazilian history, it means that faithful Muslims were the first ones to discover Brazil more than 500 years ago.

Also, through the Muslim slaves brought from Africa, we can easily identify the influence of the Islamic culture, although greatly distorted nowadays. This is especially evident in the northeast region of the country.

All of this proves that Islam is not an alien to the Brazilian culture. It's indeed an important part of it...

Muslim Americans: Right to Pray at Work

A group of 30 US Muslims who quit their jobs at a Sunwantee electronics plant near Atlanta, Georgia because their boss wouldn't let them pray went back to work on December 1. In an agreement announced by a Solectron official on November 30...

Solectron officials agreed to schedule work breaks to accommodate the Muslims, who need a five-minute break to pray at sunset. Solectron also set aside special rooms where the Muslims can pray and restrooms where they can have ablution. The settlement was brokered by the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations.

(Source: The Radiance Viewsweekly)

Indonesian President Wahid As Seen by Saeed Naqvi

President Abdurrehman Wahid ... is a Muslim cleric with a wide knowledge of Hindu scriptures. He heads a country with the world's largest Muslim population and yet, contrary to conventional expectation, a friend of Israel, particularly of Shimon Peres...

In his meeting with Prime Minister Vajpayee he dwelt at length on the Hindu civilisational and cultural width, embellishing his conversation with references to the Mahabharata and the Ramayana...

Wahid, should he survive the upheavals in his own country, is the sort of leader we must engage on a broad civilisational basis. His tolerant and catholic vision of Islam has applicability in India as well.

Islam, according to Wahid, is a set of beliefs, a personal ethic; it cannot replace a civilisation. Islam is the dominant colour of the Arabian civilisation. But the dominant colour of Indonesian civilisation is Indonesian. Religion conditions personal lives of individuals. They do not replace civilisations which accommodate them.

Wahid is wary of labels like "syncretic cultures" and "secularism", even "federalism"...

There is no room for religious extremism in Wahid's framework, but he does have an explanation for extremism and fundamentalism. In coping with modernism some religious groups tend to protect themselves by erecting around themselves walls of "formalism". Intolerance is the consequence.

In India, diverse cultures, religions embellish a broad civilisational canvas. Islam in Indonesia, likewise, has adapted itself to its animist and Hindu past which informs its social texture...

Just one meeting with Wahid acquainted me with a vision of Islam which seemed to be the very antithesis of the faith the establishment across the border in Pakistan is trying to promote - a triple distilled Islam, pure in its fundamentalism, cleansed of all the civilisational colours that the great Indian Muslims (Sufis, poets, musicians) adopted and enriched...

(Source: The Indian Express)

Bobbittisation in Bangladesh

(Islamic teacher) in Amtali, Bangladesh had his male organ chopped off by his third wife to stop him from marrying for a fourth time, the widely circulated daily Ittefaq reported on 11 February, 2000... Police in Amtali arrested Neelima Akhtar, Rahman's third wife... Rahman's three wives, including Akhtar, live with him in the same house. Under Islamic Sharia, a man can keep up to four wives simultaneously but Bangladeshi family laws permit a Muslim male to marry for the second time only if his first wife agrees to share her husband with another woman. Local feminist groups are campaigning for banning bigamy among males in the Muslim majority country.

Case for Bi-national, Secular State in Palestine

Eminent Analyst Edward Said

... To the everlasting credit of the PLO in the years between 1968 and 1982, its emergence made it possible for all Palestinians to identify themselves as belonging to one people, in effect a nation, albeit one in exile and dispossessed. And during the Intifada that sense of proudly belonging to an identity bravely fighting for its own preservation against efforts made to extinguish or deny it spread everywhere... To be a Palestinian in revolt against Israeli occupation soldiers was in effect to give greater depth and meaning to the struggle against racial discrimination. It is surely one of the ironies of history that the Palestinian people's greatest historical enemy – the Zionist movement and its more militant ideologists – was energized precisely by the same idea, that one can strongly assume one's identity as a Jew rather than quietly submit to assimilation as a Polish, Russian, American or British citizen...

Identity by choice is a political commitment to be Palestinian as an active commitment not just to the establishment of a separate state, but to the more significant cause of ending injustice and liberating Palestinians into a new secular identity able to take its place within contemporary history. The pressures against making that choice today are increasing on an hourly basis. One of the principal objectives of the Oslo process ... is a paradoxical one since it implicitly accepts (and then annuls) the notion that Palestinian identity is in principle an identity based on more than narrow nationalist grounds... The very idea of Palestinian identity signifies far more than a simple ethnic nationalism. It means acting against the forces of religious obscurantism, gender discrimination, economic inequality and the like.

... Oslo was designed in part to break the back of his larger notion of identity, to drive Palestinians back into their Gaza and West Bank towns, villages, clans where they could be encircled, confined, cut down to size both by Israel and the US on the one hand and, most lamentably, by their own national authority. That effort and aspect of Oslo has succeeded, but the centre of attention has now shifted to the 4.5 million Palestinians who still remain in exile, and whose persistent stubbornness in expressing their identity by choice is symbolized by the right of return they continue to maintain.

This is not merely a geographical wish or demand. It is at least five things more. It is the right to have one's own abode. It is the right to remain there. It is the right to repatriation. It is the right to compensation and restitution. It is the collective right of association (we want to be Palestinian where we want to be) and of residence. It is the right to coexist on an equal footing with Israeli Jews. Quite clearly the Palestinian Authority symbolizes the defeat and abridgement of most of these rights. The

burden for the rest of us ... is to resist the attempt to cut us and our ideas down merely to matters of birth and actual residence whose final arbiter is Israel. Thus current "international" plans to resettle the vast majority of refugees include sending them to places like Iraq, Canada, the US, even Jordan, as well as pressuring countries that have large Palestinian communities (e.g. Lebanon) into giving Palestinians citizenship and residence where they already reside.

Although official Palestinian rhetoric today insists on the right of return, the Authority's past performances on matters of stated principle does not provide a convincing precedent. Besides, Israel's position since its inception in 1948 has been flatly to deny Palestinians anything like a right of return while insisting on the absolute right of any Jew anywhere both to "return" and to unconditional Israeli citizenship... What we ask for as Palestinians is the right to be citizens and not just numbers in the ultimately losing game being played by the Oslo participants... In a decade there will be demographic parity between Jews and Arabs in historical Palestine. Better that we accommodate to each other sooner rather than later as full members of a bi-national secular state than to go on fighting what has been demeaningly called a shepherd's war between feuding tribes...

(Source: The Greater Kashmir, 31 October, 1999)

Plea for Indo-Pakistan Dialogue

[A Colloquium on "Peace Imperatives to Resume India-Pakistan Dialogue" was organised by the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy in New Delhi on February 1, 2000, attended by Afrasiab Khattak (Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan) and Iftaqar-ul Haq (General Secretary of the Pakistan Chapter of the Forum). It was inaugurated by Nirmala Deshpande, MP and the Keynote address was delivered by Admiral A.L. Ramdas. Other speakers included Justice Rajindar Sachar, Prof. Manorajan Mohanty, Kuldip Nayar, Dr. Syeda S. Hameed and Ved Bhasin. Extracts from the Resolution adopted follow – Editor]

... The Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy ... recognises the dangerous implications of the absence of a dialogue and the state of hostility between our two neighbouring countries on our domestic politics and our civil societies...

We, therefore, urge the governments of India and Pakistan to resume dialogue at the earliest on all matters of concern including Kashmir to ensure peace in the sub-continent. In parallel with the initiation of talks, free exchange of people, goods and information must be allowed to start immediately.