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RSS at 75: Fighting Imaginary Demons In an Intellectual Wasteland

The RSS has come a long way since it was established by Dr. K.S. Hedgewar in Nagpur in 1925.

Today it runs hundreds of thousands of Shakhnas and schools all over the country which brainwash the young and, over a period of time, produce a mindset which is conducive to the propagation of the RSS ideology and its goals and objectives. It has thus successfully indoctrinated generations of Hindu youth, and vitiated the social environment in a manner so thoroughly that the Muslim Indians have been politically marginalized, economically deprived and socially degraded.

Today it runs hundreds of organisations which have a strong presence in every field of national activity with RSS Pracharakas at the helm.

Today, through the VHP, the RSS stands linked with all Hindu sects. It has tried to consolidate the Hindudom, brought thousands of sants and sadhus on a common platform and devised psychologically effective games to influence the Hindu masses on critical issues at critical times through religious appeal.

Today its sympathizers have penetrated the Executive, the Judiciary, the Academe, the Media, the Armed Forces, not to mention the Legislatures. The BJP, its political front, has emerged as the biggest political party, perhaps the only other national party and is running the government at the Centre and in several states. But, apart from the BJP, it has sympathizers and political supporters in practically all political parties.

Today, for the first time the RSS has come to control the Central Government. It knows that with the implicit and explicit, open and secret, direct and indirect support of the Government, the process of Hinduisation can be accelerated. Therefore, the coalition Government must survive as long as it does not crumble under the weight of its internal contradictions. In the meantime, the RSS must take care of its Hindu constituency. It does not want to lose on the roundabout what it gains on the swing. Therefore, the power game is played at different levels. This explains 'differences' between the RSS and the BJP, stage-managed and well-orchestrated as they are, based on understanding among the members of the top coterie which is the final authority and which directs the 'acts' put together by various players. There may be an element of domestic adjustment, internal accommodation but the Karta of the joint family – the Sangh Parivar – is supreme. His authority is unchallenged.

Today, the RSS commands financial support from the wealthy and the rising middle classes. It is not yet the king

but it has certainly become the king maker. The RSS is not a political party and does not engage in electoral politics but it has a view on every political question and does not hesitate to express them. And its opinion carries weight and certainly commands an oracle's authority among its sympathizers and supporters dispersed throughout the polity, economy and society, from top to bottom. Immediately they move into action, if necessary and multiply the impact by all means at their disposal, even by word of mouth. It is not for nothing that the RSS has been called the Rumour Spreading Society.

The RSS has a Hindu centric vision of India. It sees India as the land of the Hindus where non-Hindus live by their grace and at their sufferance. Its objective is to transform the country into the Hindu Rashtra, where the Hindus shall be dominant in every sense of the term. The religious, racial and linguistic minorities shall be absorbed or assimilated into the Hindu fold. The descendants of the converts to other religion shall be 'reconverted' or they may be let off to practise their own 'modes of worship' so long as they call themselves Hindu. Sanskrit shall be the lingua franca of the country. The monuments which mark 'Hindu defeat and humiliation' shall be demolished. History shall be rewritten. The RSS shall thus restore the Golden Age of the Hindus.

In brief, the RSS ideology is divisive and exclusive with elements of obscurantism, revanchism and fascism thrown in based on the concept of 'One People, One Language, One Culture' with no sign of plurality or diversity, dissent or difference, from the standard saffron!

Any one can see the flaws and the contradictions in this ideology. India is a multi-religious country. It is multi-cultural and multi-lingual, it is multi-racial. One may say that it is a multi-national. Our unity lies in tolerance of diversity; it cannot be achieved by imposition of uniformity.

RSS philosophy is also a negation of the basic value-system of the Hindu society. RSS philosophy is creative of social tensions and this decelerates the process of national integration.

The RSS has thus not only the looks but the structure of a secret society. Coupled with its exclusivist and chauvinist ideology, its critics often call it fascist. There is much of abuse in the political lexicon or allege that it was inspired by European Fascism. The RSS has no membership rolls; it does not elect its office-bearers; even the Sarsanghchalak is nominated by his predecessor. It may be, in consultation with the top few. It has a self-assumed

mandate which seeks to guide every aspect of national life and use all possible devices to realise its grand design. All that without a democratic mandate, without any religious authority, without any accountability, even to the tax authorities!

But even the strongest critics of the RSS cannot afford to ignore it. They cannot wish it away. In the foreseeable future, whatever the complexion of the Government, the RSS, the most organized and the biggest non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the country, shall continue to cast its shadow over the policies and priorities of all Governments and even on their programmes and their implementation.

But the RSS is not immune to the winds of change. New avenues of education, new careers based on expanding technology, cultural globalisation, are all cutting into the spread of the Shakhas. Hindu diaspora is recasting Hinduism into another international, if not universal, religion. This takes the bite from the RSS criticism of extra-territorial loyalties of Muslims and Christians because they have their places of pilgrimage outside the country. The same is now true of the Hindu communities abroad living in USA, the UK, the Gulf and in other countries. Are they traitors to the countries of their adoption, if they come to India for pilgrimage and prostrating themselves before the Shankaracharyas?

Similarly, if the RSS objects to Tabligh by the Muslims and proselytisation by the Christians, how can it ignore the activities of hundreds of Hindu godmen, working overtime in the USA and the UK? And swarms of Hindu Swamis propagating the Hindu faith and establishing ashrams and constructing temples in foreign lands?

If the RSS objects to inflow of foreign funds into India even for education and social service, how about the inflow to the coffers of the VHP, for its campaign to demolish masjids and churches and building temples all over the country?

If the RSS believes in the glory of India, a time is bound to come when act of national disgrace, perpetrated in the name of Hinduism will, in the global village today, make the Hindus in India and abroad lower their heads?

The RSS believes in a destiny for India. But by dividing the Indian society, vertically, it is weakening the foundation of unity for building a great country.

The RSS is trying to row its ship against the contemporary currents of Democracy, Secularism, Ethnicity, Multi-culturalism and Social Justice. Therefore, its ship is bound to sink, sooner or later, because with its narrow outlook and fossilized minds, it is simply incapable of coping with the storms of post-modernism.

The RSS is largely silent on social reform, though it has begun to formulate 'dogmas' and standardise, some say

'semitize', Hinduism. But many feel that the RSS really wishes to restore Brahmanism and the authority of the 'dwijas' and the Savarnas.

With its network of organisation, its massive cadre, the RSS could have served as the architect of Hindu Renaissance a sine qua non for the Indian Renaissance. But instead of launching a positive, constructive programme for reforming and upgrading the Hindu society, for inculcating in the Hindu masses, love, respect and friendship for other Indians, the RSS has adopted a negative programme of vilifying the 'others', rewriting history, creating ill-will, distrust and even hatred within the Indian society.

Back in 1925, the RSS was born as a reaction to the Muslim minority ending up with an upper hand in a communal flare-up in Nagpur, presumably to provide muscles to the local Hindus. But conceived in hatred, born in hostility, it has never shed its anti-Muslim thinking. The gradual parting of ways, the Pakistan Movement, the Partition, all left their mark on its mind. So did the communal holocaust. Though claiming to represent the Hindu majority, it developed a 'minority complex' and it fed the Hindu masses on half-truths of history and taught them to 'fear' the violent, fanatic and intolerant Muslims - the historic adversary with pan-Islamic connections. That is why the cap of secularism does not fit, even when it wants to try it for tactical reasons. Indeed, it has never got over its frustration that a Hindu country was declared a secular state and why the Muslim Indians were not thrown across the border, lock, stock and barrel. Hence, every political move by the RSS, is, in the final analysis, based on the zero-sum-game theory: any possible gain for the Muslims is seen as a loss for the Hindus. In the same way, India and Pakistan are seen locked in perpetual struggle and any possible gain for Pakistan is seen as a loss of India. It is this obsession with Muslim Indians and with Pakistan which undermines the great role that the RSS could have played and should play in consolidating the Hindu community, reforming the Hindu society and modernising India.

RSS has come a long way, indeed. But the 'clan' and 'ethos' which could have remoulded the Hindu society got lost, somewhere along the way and it has been fighting imaginary demons in an intellectually barren wasteland, forgetting that never in human history has anything great been achieved under a negative impulse!

To realise its full potential, the RSS needs a dose of the same medicine it has been prescribing for Muslims and Christians - INDIANISATION.

1st November, 2000

(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

President K.R.Narayanan's Speech On Independence Day, 14 August, 2000 (Extract)

There has been a resurgence of old superstitions and outmoded social practices retarding the progress of society along modern lines. Child marriage, for example, was made illegal during the British time under the pressure of enlightened Indian social reformers. But today child marriages are common in some of the States of India and are celebrated openly with impunity, receiving publicity in the sensation-crazy sections of the media.

Our women are still treated as less than human. Day in and day out, we read in the newspapers gruesome stories of dowry deaths of young women in the flower of their youth, because of the insatiable greed of husbands and the in-laws. The law enforcing agencies remain indifferent or ineffective, and the law itself remains awfully inadequate. In fact statistics show that crimes against women have been on the increase. No place is safe for them, not even their own homes. Swami Vivekananda used to say "the land of India is soaked...with the tears of widows". Today it is soaked by the tears of women in general, and even girl children, who are ill-treated and murdered... There are dark clouds of prejudice and callous unconcern hanging over our society with regard to the problem of rape and atrocities on women. Since neither conscience nor common sense is responding to this tragic problem, should not the law-makers rewrite the laws so that a deterrent against such crimes exist in society? ...

An experiment, that is worth taking note of is the campaign for decentralized planning launched in Kerala a few years ago. This, of course, is an old Gandhian idea that is significant in the modern context. This decentralisation and devolution of funds have given economic power to people at the grass-roots level, aroused their enthusiasm for developmental work and enabled them to work together for their own advancement in their respective areas... With the initiative and the innovative capabilities of our grass-roots institutions and of our ordinary people, enhanced through decentralized democracy, it would be possible for India to be an effective player in the globalized world that is emerging.

... In fact the silver linings in the dark clouds of backwardness and deprivation are the people's initiatives which have served as crucible of new ideas and methodologies for nation building. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, had very prophetically said in 1947, "As a matter of fact, if the people will help themselves, then the Government is bound to move and that is what I will call real democracy which is built from below".

(Source: The Indian Currents, 27 August, 2000)

PM Vajpayee's Message On Urs Celebrations

... A large number of religious minded people hold faith in Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti... People of all religions go to the durbar of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz Saheb and this is a symbol of national unity.

"His love for humanity, peace and brotherhood is a message that can be the guiding light for all mankind".

BJP's Report Card Editorial, Indian Express, 4 October, 2000

For A.B. Vajpayee, one year into his second stint, the news should have been like a dream come true. He had everything going for him: triumphs on the foreign policy front; laurels on the liberalisation front; cool cruising with allies in a coalition comprising over two dozen parties; a hegemonic grip over his own party, and glory on the personality front. Yet the dream seems to be turning into a nightmare, the triumphs into tribulations and the cruising ... threatens to turn into a bruising... The party is knee-deep in trouble given the drubbing that it has received in its erstwhile strongholds, the latest of which was the panchayat and municipal election results in Gujarat. Equally disastrous has been its previous performance in local elections in Uttar Pradesh...

... The anti-incumbency phenomenon ... does not explain why the ire with the incumbent surfaces at one time and not another. Performance is the basic yardstick... The BJP has miserably failed to perform wherever in power... With the shadow of assembly elections looming large, panicky senior party leaders in the state are busy calculating caste combinations and permutations. In the process, basic issues like development and governance have been given the short shrift.

For the Congress, the BJP's lacklustre poll performance has come as a shot in the arm... However, they need to remember two lessons: First, it is only in a two-party system that the losses of one party are the gains of another. In a multi-party dispensation, the equation is not so simple... So, while the Congress might gain from the BJP's loss in Gujarat, they are in no position to do so in UP. Second, given bad governance, public discontent is natural but unless the electorate clearly perceives an alternative, they are not ready to switch sides. Racked with fierce factionalism, a rudderless and practically leaderless Congress is today hardly in a position to provide an alternative.

Sunetra Choudhury

Muslims Grieve Alone for a Muslim Soldier!

... When they brought home the body of Capt. Javed Ali Saifi from Kashmir, the entire neighbourhood of Zakir Nagar in South Delhi was out on the streets (in mourning. But) it has been replaced by an unmistakable sense of hurt. And a feeling ... that because Cap. Saifi was a Muslim, that because his neighbourhood is predominantly Muslim, Zakir Nagar had to grieve all alone... Reinforced, perhaps, by typical official callousness.

- For one, the Army declined to give details to the family other than saying that Cap. Saifi, of the 35 Rashtriya Rifles, had been "killed in an operation" in the Valley on August 22.
- There were no reports of the death or the funeral in the mainstream media...
- No Minister, no politician, not even the local MLA Parvez Hashmi came to shed even the token tears.

It was ... the community (has) name a road after Capt. Saifi put up boards in the neighbourhood announcing his martyrdom... (Source: The Indian Express, 24 September, 2000)

Shahabuddin on Repeal of IM (DT) Act Letter to Governor of Assam, 5 Sept., 2000

I am surprised to learn that you have suggested a referendum in the State to decide whether the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act should be repealed.

You have also advised the political parties to raise the question of repeal as the only issue for the coming Assembly elections in Assam. As Governor of the State, it is improper for you to advise the political parties what they should or should not take up in their election campaign or include in their manifestoes.

As for the Act, it is an Act of Parliament and the Parliament is alone competent to amend or repeal it. There is no provision for a referendum in our Constitution. The Act applies to the whole country and as such the Act cannot be repealed at the request of only one State Government or Assembly. How can a Governor suggest an extra-constitutional procedure?

Shahabuddin on Small States Letter to The Statesman, 4 Sept., 2000

Apropos Mr. Soumitro Das' article "Question of Identity" the aspiration of empowerment is implicit in the consciousness of an identifiable collectivity with a territorial base. However, the aspiration is catalysed into a demand and agitation, only if the collectivity faces adverse discrimination and injustice in its own abode.

I agree with Mr. Das that there is a critical size for statehood. But the answer lies in decentralisation of power and devolution of resources right down to the Panchayats and accommodating the resurgent collectivity as a district, a block or a panchayat within a pattern of multi-layered federalise.

The story of Assam tells us that adhocism is no solution. Therefore, we have to have national norms and establish a permanent Commission for Territorial Reorganisation to examine all demands in the light of those norms.

I do not see the formation of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh as the end of the story. Jharkhand faces built-in instability because the Scheduled Tribes form only 27 per cent of the population and they will continue to be objects of politics.

Secondly, major tribes among them have clearly demarcated habitats. Either they would demand regional autonomy and, failing that, separation. In Chhattisgarh, Bastar will also wake up and rise to liberate itself from the shackles of Chhattisgarh.

Every ethnicity, today, all over the world, demands recognition and participation.

Amulya Ganguli US Hymn for a Swayamsevak!

Though understandable because there is a BJP-led coalition in power in India, it is difficult to approve of the chanting of Hindu hymns in the US Congress before PM Vajpayee's address... India is not a Hindu country. It is a country where Hindus are in a majority but it is also a country of Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists ... and many others including the different sects of the main religions. It is also the birthplace of as many as three religions - Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism - a unique heritage... Since the practice of identifying a country, or its Prime Minister, with a religion is a theocratic one and totally antithetical to secularism, which is the creed enshrined in the Indian Constitution, it is odd that a Hindu priest should have been invited for an invocation in the US Congress... If the BJP genuinely wants to shed the appellation, (Hindu nationalist) means that it is beginning to realise that the label is not in keeping with the modern concept of a party representing all communities and not just one religious group. If so, a country should be even more reluctant to be associated with one religion, as the invitation to a Hindu priest by the US Congress suggested.

... As an expedient measure adopted temporarily for tactical reasons, the BJP has kept its Hindutva agenda on hold. But its soul remains with the RSS. Despite its lack of acquaintance with the intricacies of the Indian scene, the US Congress has acknowledged this link almost instinctively.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 25 Sept., 2000)

On the ISI Scare

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 18 Sept., 2000

The casual manner in which the police and others in Government talk nowadays about the ubiquitous ISI connection also tends to spread the impression that Pakistani agents are lurking everywhere and have infiltrated all organisations and localities associated with Muslims. Perhaps the bureaucrats and politicians should show greater restraint ... and refrain from assigning guilt unless it is proved beyond doubt in a court of law so that the ISI bogey is not used indiscriminately to taint individuals and institutions.

SIMI: Inter School G.K. Competition Text of 'Anti-National' Questions

Jehad means:

- to struggle according to Quran
- to demolish Mandir
- to struggle for livelihood
- to struggle for Namaz

When did Hindu terrorists demolish the Babari Masjid?

- 6 December, 1992
- 16 December, 1992
- 6 December, 1990
- 16 December, 1990

CPI(M) Leader Prakash Karat on Vajpayee as Swayamsevak

This ... was a public manifestation of the RSS-VHP combine's work and influence in the USA. Vajpayee was sharing a platform with the VHP leaders for the first time after becoming Prime Minister, and that too abroad... On the stage ... there were some of the leading lights who organized the demolition of the Babari Masjid at Ayodhya in 1996 like Ashok Singhal and Giriraj Kishore of the VHP, some of the sadhus who played a leading role in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, industrialists like B.K. Modi who have been financing the VHP in India, and senior bureaucrats who at one time or the other helped the RSS combine in their plans to project Hindutva...

A strong contingent of sadhus mobilized by the VHP was present at the meeting addressed by Vajpayee. They had gone to New York to attend the World Peace Summit... From India, the VHP had taken over the job of sending a big delegation to the ... meeting on world peace... The Modi and the Hinduja Foundations were among the sponsors of the meeting of world religious leaders.

It was in the presence of this VHP contingent and the international media that Vajpayee made his by now notorious speech where he declared his life-long allegiance to the RSS, and to the goals of Hindutva including the building of the Ram temple at the site where the Babari Masjid stood in Ayodhya.

... For sections of the bought-up press and its editors who were present at the meeting, Vajpayee's plain speaking proved embarrassing. Efforts began soon after to explain away the remarks ... Vajpayee himself issued a statement clarifying that the reference to his being a swayamsevak was meant as a volunteer for the country and not to any organisation (sic)!

But for those who attended the meeting ... the message could not have been clearer. The Prime Minister of India goes on to a platform organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the USA and declares his allegiance to a creed which is inimical to the secular democratic principles of the Indian Constitution.

... The meeting was planned with great care and in close coordination between the VHP leadership, the BJP leadership and the officials of the Prime Minister's office. One of the General Secretaries of the BJP, Narendra Modi, was present on the occasion. The VHP leadership had planned every detail of the meeting in advance. The Prime Minister knew very well where he was going, and whom he was going to address.

The VHP has a strong presence in the USA through its affiliate the VHP of America (VHPA). The VHPA is one of the major fundraisers in the USA for the RSS combine in India. In 1993 alone, the VHPA's income was \$1.06 million. An allied group, the India Development and Relief Fund, raised about \$2 million in the 1990s. The

VHPA network raised substantial funds for the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and alongwith the overseas BJP, finances both the RSS and the BJP.

Not only the VHP but organisations like the Hinduja Foundation are also active in promoting Hindutva in America. For Vajpayee to attend a meeting organised by the VHPA and the overseas BJP would naturally be a matter of priority...

Even when there was a Congress government in office at the Centre, in the higher echelons of bureaucracy and other instruments of the state, there were people who shared the RSS viewpoint. Today when Vajpayee is the Prime Minister of a coalition government, though the BJP is in a minority, as he put it, "We have been able to do a lot". What Vajpayee held out to the Hindutva acolytes in the US, is the goal of capturing power and converting India into a Hindu Rashtra when the BJP gets a "two-thirds majority... The Staten Island meeting is a warning to other parties afflicted by greed for power and opportunism, that their days are numbered if they continue to be on the BJP bandwagon... (Source: The People's Democracy)

CPI: GS A.B. Bardhan On Vajpayee's Dreams

... We, of the Left had never harboured any illusions... We had several occasions to point, that Vajpayee is a 'swayamsevak', that he continues to be so while being a prime minister, that essentially the RSS/VHP/BD are carrying out their particular agenda, that at certain times, as head of the government, he is obliged to tell them not to cross the 'Laxmanrekha'. And that is about all... Vajpayee remarked: "We will create an India of our dreams, if only the people gave us two-third majority".

Who are these 'WE', and whose dreams does he mean by 'Our Dreams'?

Clearly, the 'WE' here refers to the VHP crowd – the Sangh Parivar, and 'Our Dreams' refers to the particular dream of the Parivar...

The India of the 'Parivar's dream' is not the India of 'every Indian's dream'. And it is for realizing the 'Parivar's dream' that Vajpayee wants a 'two-third majority'...

... The Sangh Parivar (and that let us repeat, includes the BJP) dreams of a 'Hindu Rashtra'. That is the essence of their 'Hindutva'. All this requires changing the Constitution... The gentlemen who are in this panel may not go so far as to recommend Hindu Rashtra in so many words. But by raising so many questions about the (Review) Constitution, rather than specifying a few amendments to serve the present purpose, they will help to create the atmosphere for changing it. It is for this a two-third majority is required...

(Source: The New Age, 17-23 Sept., 2000)

Kuldip Nayar on Vajpayee's Hindu Persona

... Liberals cite the example endlessly to convince themselves that Vajpayee is a cut above the RSS Parivar... When his secular instinct asserts itself, (Vajpayee) is heart-warming. But when Hindu nationalism overtakes him, he is disappointing. What is his actual persona? Is he a person who is trying to desaffronise the BJP? Or, is he creating a lot of dust to mislead the intelligentsia? Is he a Dr Jekyll or a Mr Hyde?

... His speeches in the US were aimed at placating the hardliners in India and abroad... RSS ideologue K.N. Govindacharya, who has been edged out of office of the BJP secretary-general, says that Vajpayee is only a mukut (mask). If and when the chips are down, he will be on their side. So is their belief.

Yet, it is difficult to come to such a harsh conclusion because, when L.K. Advani led the Rath Yatra through the northern India, Vajpayee made it a point to leave the country... Asked why he had not gone to Ayodhya with Advani, he said that those who were Ram bhakts had gone to Ayodhya but those who were desh bhakts had gone abroad. He was conscious of his liberal image and wanted to protect it.

Maybe, the two opposite pulls are tearing him apart. It seems he is trying to ride two horses at the same time. When he went to Nagpur to install Laxman, he also visited the RSS headquarters and paid homage to Golwalkar... True, he does not wear the RSS badge on his sleeves. But he is also careful to convey that he is not distant from it...

In matters of ideology, as in leadership, persons have to be unequivocal. Vajpayee lets both the images persist. One pleases one set of people and the other another... He should realise that communalism and secularism are two contradictory ideologies.

... His liberal pronouncements go down well is the centrist sentiments he seeks to strengthen. They represent India's ethos. Till Indira Gandhi came to power, the centrist or grey area was occupied by the Congress party. At times, it appears as if Vajpayee wants the BJP to occupy that territory, which is neither black nor white but reflects pluralism. He must be having that in mind.

... In reply to a question on the mandir, he says that he must get a two-thirds majority to build the India of his dreams... One explanation ... given to me is that the extremists in India can create such a storm over the Hindutva that only a half-way strategy can stall it. He has his own ways to tame the shrew. It is not a secret that the BJP fundamentalists have not been happy with Vajpayee for some time. They would like to pull him down and they are at it...

In the face of the saffron crowd trying to deface India, Vajpayee needs the support of the liberal lobby the most. Why is he trying to alienate it through his pro-Hindutva

remarks? He is not an ideal person for the liberals. But he is the most acceptable... They have no alternative to him at present because the political situation in the country is developing in such a way that Congress president Sonia Gandhi is not emerging as a rival...

The initiative Vajpayee has taken by having Laxman to retrieve the ground, which the prime minister had lost in his bid to placate the hard-liners, is welcome. But this is not enough. He has to save so many fields from getting Hinduised. His priority should be education, which is being saffronised by Human Resources Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi with a vengeance...

The effort Vajpayee has launched to help the BJP cast off its anti-Muslim bias cannot go far if the party remains a member of the RSS Parivar. He should not only distance himself from the RSS but should be seen to be doing so... He should cut off his Parivar connections completely.

The image Vajpayee enjoys, particularly after his visit to the US, should help him to join issue with the extremists in the BJP and the RSS. But will he do so? Seldom has he been decisive... (Source: The Indian Express, 26 September, 2000)

On PM Vajpayee's Participation in VHP Event in New York

CPI(M) Politbureau's Statement, 11 Sept., 2000

...A.B. Vajpayee's attendance at the VHP-sponsored meeting at New York and his speech there has once again revealed the real agenda of the BJP. It has also exposed the hypocrisy of the BJP leadership...The remarks of Vajpayee cannot be brushed away by the non-BJP partners in the NDA. They are dispensable as and when the BJP is in a position to assert itself.

... The way the VHP has been promoted by the BJP-led government ... and the endorsement of its communal platform by the prime minister, is a matter of serious concern for all democratic minded citizens.

(Source: The People's Democracy, 17 September, 2000)

CPI Central Secretariat, 11 Sept., 2000

The Central Secretariat ... strongly deplores the pronouncements of Prime Minister Vajpayee during his stay in New York, completely identifying himself with the positions of RSS, VHP and the other outfits of Sangh Parivar.

... Vajpayee is in USA as Prime Minister of the country on an official visit, not as a Swamisevak. His pronouncement is exactly echoing the Hindutva philosophy which goes against the secular-democratic character of our state and the Constitution.

... The country owes an explanation from other allies of NDA.

(Source: The New Age)

INC: Salman Khurshid's Views

The axing of three Muslim PCC presidents – Sarfaraz Ahmed in Bihar, A.B. Ghani Khan Chowdhury in West Bengal, (me) in UP – and party treasurer Ahmed Patel ... is a perplexing coincidence. But individually taken, there is no commonality of approach.

But having said that, the message to the common Muslims is that justice is not being done. That is unfortunate, because in politics, public perception is crucial... The BJP ... message is different from the Congress: Earlier, they used the same idiom to exclude. We did it to include the Muslims. Now strategically, they are trying to include Muslims, but we are doing so emotionally and conceptually.

(Source: The Times of India, 30 September, 2000)

New Moves; Old Games

Editorial, The Times of India, 4 Oct., 2000

... So far Prime Minister Vajpayee has had a relatively trouble-free run in his second innings, with much of the demands at home being overshadowed by the euphoria of India-US relations and accomplishments abroad. But with the oil crisis looming large, economic uncertainties have been compounded by the political ground too turning slippery. It is not just the M-bomb of the Trinamul Congress ... the biggest blow has been the BJP's stunning rout in the civic polls in Gujarat, the only state where it is in office on its own... Uttar Pradesh, the remarkable showing of the Samajwadi Party can only further unsettle the BJP as it gears up for assembly elections.

In sharp contrast, the fortunes of the Congress appear to be taking a turn for the better... The Congress can derive further satisfaction from the fact that the Trinamul-BJP tussle could be taken as a cue by other coalition partners to flex their muscles and demand their pound of flesh. In Tamil Nadu, where too elections are only months away, the BJP's partners are uneasy with the DMK's captaincy of the NDA in the state... Chandrababu Naidu is bristling that the BJP has four of its own ministers from Andhra Pradesh. How the BJP copes with these multiple pressures while the Congress strives to capitalise on them will have a bearing beyond the health of these two.

On Rise of Communal Forces

... During the last poll, many people said there were no issues in the campaign. But that was wrong. A very big issue on which the country could have been stirred was to prevent communal forces from coming to power. That should have been the battle cry. Was that battle really fought, with that intensity and commitment? I do not know.

- Saifuddin Chowdhury, ex-MP (CPM)

BJP Routed in Gujarat Local Elections Editorial, The Statesman, 6 October, 2000

... A year ago the BJP got 53 per cent votes in Gujarat in the Lok Sabha elections. Now the Congress, a party, which has been in tatters for the last decade ... has swept the local elections in the BJP's citadel. Gujarat is the only state where the BJP has a government without allies and a two-thirds majority to boot. It also has the largest VHP base, prime picking for the Bajrang Dal. For them to lose control of all but one of the 23 district councils and also Rajkot municipality, the home of chief minister Keshubhai Patel which it controlled for the last 25 years, is shocking...

Hardliners insist that the verdict reflects the people's disillusionment with the government's soft line on Hindutva, particularly appeasing minorities and endangering the Hindu vote bank... (This) cannot be the only reason. Chief Minister Patel's term has not been a particularly inspiring one... The anti-establishment vote has proven that rhetoric may be fine opposition, once in power, people want action, and slogans are no substitute.

Caste has also played a rôle. The BJP's rise to power owed a great deal to Vagehela and Modi's wooing of Other Backward Class, a numerically important caste, for the BJP. With Vagehela now in the Congress and Modi shifted to Delhi, the backwards may feel neglected. This has been compounded with the upper castes reasserting themselves in the state organisation, holding all important posts...

Wages of Lethargy

Editorial, The Asian Age, 5 Oct., 2000

The two key states which were instrumental in turning the national politics tide in favour of the Hindutva brigade ... - Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, seem to be now very angry with the way of the Bharatiya Janata Party has performed there... In Gujarat, the BJP has received a resounding defeat ... in the ... polls to local bodies, while in UP ... the BJP is on a steady downhill curve... The BJP central leadership will ignore the message from Gandhinagar only at its own peril; and as far as Lucknow is concerned, a strange lack of decisiveness has completely governed the party's response... The Congress might be in no position yet to capitalise on the BJP's mid-life crisis... The next wake up call could come when the clutch of crucial states go to the polls early next years, and that may well be a rude one...

At the rate at which BJP's graph is going down in UP, BJP will soon mean 'Bhago Janata Pileegi'. The party has turned into a sinking ship...
- Kalyan Singh, former UP Chief Minister

Neerja Chowdhury on Transformation of the BJP into Another Congress

Is the BJP becoming a BCP – Bharatiya Congress Party? Recent events suggest so...

Atal Bihari Vajpayee is positioning it as a right of Centre party. In any case, the party has already abandoned its core issues. Coalition imperatives give it a nice alibi...

The impediment is not just the lack of a majority in the Lok Sabha. Nor is it the arithmetic in the Rajya Sabha, whose character makes a two-third majority impossible for the BJP for the next 10-15 years...

There are two schools of thought in the BJP. One, that India can be ruled only by consensus, and this requires compromise, give and take, flexibility, taking everybody along. This has been the Congress model. Vajpayee, Advani and many partymen subscribe to this view. The second group is still for the politics of ideology and feels it is possible for an ideology-driven, cadre-based party to come to power. It need not get limited to a pressure group, as others would have it believe. Ironically this group to which Govindacharya belongs is in a minority.

Power is changing the "chaal, charitra and chehra" of the BJP, to borrow the words of Govindacharya... For the moment Vajpayee is the symbol of this change. But it is not just the prime minister who is donning the Muslim prayer cap. His nominee Bangaru Laxman is welcoming Muslims into the BJP fold and Advani is trying to assure safety to the Christians. Realisation has dawned on the most hawkish of BJP leaders that it may be possible for the BJP to win an election but it cannot rule India if the minorities are hostile...

Vajpayee is the symbol of this liberalism today because he is at the helm of affairs. But the hard fact is that it would not be possible for the party to make the transition without the support of Advani, or of other leaders of the party. The BJP would have split by now.

The whole process is not going to leave the RSS untouched. The Sangh leadership has already accepted the reality that if the BJP is to be the epicenter of power today, it has to coexist with others and that has its own dynamics. The Sangh had to accept a Vajpayee today; they are all set to accept an Advani tomorrow and it is an Advani cast in the Vajpayee mould...

Govindacharya's latest formulation is more all-encompassing than the RSS thinking has been in the past and it may give an insight into the RSS mindset. He advocates a proper mix of Hindutva, which he describes as "Hinduness and not Hinduism" – he has no objection to it being referred to as "Indianness, provided you don't force your nomenclature on me" – and Antyodaya (national reconstruction based on the upliftment of the last person)... He elaborates Hinduness in five themes representing the country's ethos: respect to all modes of worship;

egalitarian sacredness of the animate and the inanimate; the idea that man is part of nature and not its conqueror, with an eco-friendly development and technology flowing out of it; special qualities of womanhood and a non-material goal of life, which give rise to morality and humanist values.

The "idealism" versus "ideology" streams may clash in the days to come, and may even part company. But the former, the consensus model, will dominate.

At the end of the day, Vajpayee has to run a coalition government in Delhi... Keeping out of the turf of the regional bosses is the (price) that any ruling party has to pay today for ... a coalition at the Centre...

The BJP is becoming a BCP not because Vajpayee is a liberal and Advani wants to succeed him but **because India is a plural society.**

(Source: The Indian Express, 2 October, 2000)

Mushirul Hasan on Primacy of Constitution for National Unity

... The BJP president will have to come to terms with the widespread aversion to his party – an aversion ... shared by many castes, communities and political groupings. If (Laxman) has a special fondness for the Muslims and desires their 'expedient relationship' with his party, he will have to devise ways and means of redressing their grievances. If he wants them to soften their opposition, he will have to airlift the Hindutva ideologues to the Staten Island for rest and recuperation. In short, he will have to accept the primacy of the Constitution as the reference point for nurturing a national perspective.

This brings me to the Congress-led Muslim 'mass contact' campaign of 1937... The campaign petered out not because of countrywide Muslim opposition, but because it was devoid of any social and economic content, and that it offered too little, too late. The secularist, radical rhetoric alarmed vested interests. The Muslim Leaguers perceived a threat to their very existence... Second, the Congress effort was in large part confined to urban areas...

Finally, the strategy fell prey as well to a divided Congress and to opposition from Hindu nationalists that feared the influx of Muslim activists...

Important lessons must be learnt from the 'failure' of the 'mass contact'. One of them is that national unity, grounded on the principles of democracy, secularism, social justice and equity, must be the cardinal political assumption in the nation-building enterprise. **The other is not to stigmatise or essentialise a community, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian, but to help build bridges of fraternity and understanding...**

(Source: The Indian Express, 20 September, 2000)

Imtiaz Ahmad on BJP President Laxman's Overture to Muslims

... When the (BJP) emerged on the centre of the political stage after the advent of what has been described as the Mandalisation of Indian politics, it chose the strategy of creating a consolidated Hindu vote bank. For it to achieve some degree of success in this direction, it was imperative for it to adopt an anti-Muslim, anti-minority stance and advocate the ideology of Hindutva...

One consequence of this political strategy was that the party managed to emerge as the single largest party in Parliament but failed to muster adequate support to form a Government on its own. It ended up leaning on the clutches of a motley crowd of political formations with diverse ideological leanings...

This dilemma for the BJP has been becoming quite prominent as some of the Hindu castes ... particularly the OBCs and the Dalits – whose support it had succeeded in garnering in the name of Hindutva, are slowly getting weaned away from the party. This is already well illustrated by the current political developments in states like Uttar Pradesh... Forced by this situation, the BJP had realised that its chances of success at the hustings, as well as in terms of the legitimacy ... is seriously in jeopardy until it can broaden its political base. Laxman's plea ... clearly reflects that concern.

Whether the BJP can improve upon its record ... has to be assessed in the light of two factors. One, whether the party can launch upon a policy of appeasement to win over the Muslims to its side without risking whatever is left of its Hindu support base. Two, whether the tenuous balance in which the party is placed by the dependence on ... diverse political formations – most of whom enjoy some support among the Muslims and other minority communities – would be seriously disturbed if the party starts cutting into the very support base of those parties...

On both counts, the situation does not look too good for the BJP. If the party starts making overtures to Muslims all too suddenly, it will open itself up to the charge of appeasing the minorities – a charge, till the other day, it was hurling at its political opponents. Also, the party's already eroded support base could be further depleted by hardcore sections of the Hindus – including the RSS leadership and cadres – being pushed away to a yet extreme Right position...

If the BJP leadership genuinely pursues a programme of mobilisation of Muslims and other minorities on its side, the chances are that the party would either split or its traditional linkage with the RSS would be put to severe strain. One can only speculate whether the party is in a position to risk its traditional relationship with the RSS and whether the latter can go so far as to shed its anti-Muslim, anti-minority stance in order to allow the BJP to

broaden its political base. In that case, the very raison d'être for the organisation's existence would be lost.

On the other hand, assuming that the BJP is able to pursue a strategy of winning over the Muslims and other minority communities to its side, this will definitely put the relationship between the BJP and its alliance partners under strain – which in turn may eventually result in the collapse of the Government...

In the event of the collapse of the Government, the allies would again take an anti-BJP stance and the BJP would be hard put to revert to its old anti-Muslim, anti-minority agenda...

... One question still remains. How are the Muslims and other minorities likely to respond to the call given by Laxman? Going by the current sensibilities of the minority communities, it is clear that they are likely to reject Laxman's call as another political slogan... Muslims' ... sense of insecurity ... was a part of their political sensibility. This sensibility has been deeply strengthened during the period the BJP has been at the centre of power. So much so that the average Muslim is beginning to ask whether it is a good thing to be a Muslim in India.

At best, Muslims would like to wait and watch on how the BJP washes its past sins before they commit themselves in any meaningful manner to the party...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 22 September, 2000)

Seema Mustafa

On India's Hindu Identity in US Eyes

... It's interesting how happily the US administration is encouraging the Hindu right wing credentials of the government by organizing Hindu prayers at the US Congress just before it was addressed by the Prime Minister of secular, plural India...

It is a deliberate policy with the US reveling in the art of doublespeak, just as our Prime Minister does. On the one hand the US secretary of state Madeleine Albright releases a report indicting the Indian government for its treatment of the minorities, and the US Congress invites Indian minorities to depose before its Committee on Religious Freedom while on the other, it felicitates Vajpayee with the Vedas.

Such is the way of the US. After all, even in Pakistan, terrorism was initially nurtured and cultivated by the US before it became an inherent part of that country's polity. As it would have, given the fact that Pakistan had been born on the basis of a separate religious identity. And it is no coincidence that after 50 years of keeping a long distance from India, the US now moves in to forge new links only after a group committed to a theocratic state comes to power in Delhi... (Source: The Asian Age, 16 Sept., 2000)

Amulya Ganguli on BJP Supping with the 'Demon'

Bal Thackeray has every reason to be upset. After all, the hype about Ramjanmabhoomi, the rath yatra and subsequent riots, masjid demolition and subsequent riots, the targeting of more mosques for demolition, the 'reawakening' of Hindus after a thousand years of slavery, what does the BJP do but to reinvent the wheel of 'pseudo-secularism' to woo the Muslims.

... Will the Muslims no longer be regarded as the children of Babur who must atone for the sins of their fore-fathers? Will the history books be re-written by Murli Manohar Joshi to erase the saffron slant? Will the National Commission of Women produce fresh 'studies' saying that the subjugation of women did not after all begin with the Muslim invasion? Will the Khans continue to reign unchallenged in Bollywood? ...

... The BJP suddenly realised that its share of vote was stagnating. Earlier, RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan had acknowledged that attendance at the organisation's shakhas was falling. Clearly, at both the political and organisational levels, something was going wrong...

... The BJP ... is part of a Parivar. Not only that, it isn't even the head of the Parivar. The head is the RSS. Unless the BJP wants to break with the RSS, it cannot follow a policy which is diametrically opposed to what is favoured by the RSS. True, it can influence the RSS to moderate, even change, its stance. Or at least not to oppose the BJP too vociferously for a time. But the two following different lines and yet remaining in the same Parivar is out of the question.

The reason is that the RSS world-view has no place for Muslims and other minorities. As Golwalkar pointed out with disarming candour, the Muslim is Internal Enemy No. 1 and the Christian is Internal Enemy No. 2. The feverish rewriting of history which Murli Manohar Joshi has undertaken is based on this premise. He wants to change the standard historical view which has been treating the Muslim invasion of India on a par with other invasions, including that of Aryans, as a part of worldwide migrations.

It wasn't seen by historians and sociologists as a disaster but as an event which initiated the process of synthesis of various cultures and produced a rich heritage. The emphasis on assimilation was deliberate, for the objective was to encourage all the communities - invaders and natives - to bury the past and build a common future.

The RSS wants, however, to focus only on the dissonance of the past and see it as a conflict which will not end till the Internal Enemies are defeated and Hindu rashtra is established. If the BJP went merrily along with this view, it is not only because the party subscribes to it, but also because it believed that the strong communal

feelings generated by its championing of the Hindu cause will obliterate the social, political and other differences among the Hindus and bring them under the saffron banner.

But it read the Indian mind wrong. Not all Indians want to continue fighting the battles of the old against the 'children of Babur'. Nor does the devotion of the Hindus to their faith mean that they regard other religions with disfavour and approve of the intimidation of their followers. And, above all, the political purpose of the saffron campaign has been exposed. The realisation has also dawned that, for all their sanctimonious pretences, the BJP stalwarts are really no different from the other politicians and are probably a lot worse.

Indeed, the BJP's latest ploy is typical of grasping politicians with nothing on their minds but power. Having realised that an overall Hindu unity is not possible, they have decided to reach out to the Muslims in the same manner in which they earlier spoke of starting a process of 'social engineering' by stitching together the votes of the upper and lower castes. But voters cannot be gathered like sheep in a pen. While herding some in, others may escape. While the intermediate castes are parting company with the BJP, its latest move may cause consternation among the party's upper caste supporters as well.

It is difficult to understand why the BJP made such an unthinking move, for it will probably hurt the party more than help it. While the minorities are unlikely to be fooled, given the seven decades of propaganda against them by the RSS, the saffron camp's own supporters will be confused and alienated.

Not only Thackeray, but a host of others — Ashok Singhal, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, et al — will shudder at the idea of supping with a community whose disinclination to sing Vande Mataram made the VHP call for its disenfranchisement.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 18 September, 2000)

H. Hashim Kidwai On BJP's Secret Agenda

... Khushwant Singh ... has rightly pointed out that ... training pandits to perform religious rituals must never be the function of a secular Government.

Justice demands that if there are courses in colleges to teach Hindu rituals, similar courses for teaching Muslim, Christian, Sikh Buddhist and Parsi rituals should also be put in place in these institutions.

... This is another instance of the BJP implementing its secret agenda of saffronising education.

(Source: The Pioneer, 31 August, 2000)

Devdutt on Change of Course by the BJP

The ... presidential address of Bangaru Laxman is primarily a package of programmes. It is a crisis management blueprint, reinventing BJP to overcome (foreseeable) hurdles in (coming) assembly elections...

This is not a novel move... In the past the RSS has resorted to the (same) technique of re-investing its political front (BJS upto 1979 and BJP thereafter) several times in order to either ensure its own survival or to achieve its political ambitions...

As in the past ... RSS and BJP refuse to review their ideology of Hindutva in response to changed circumstances... But the BJP ...tries to deal with its inherent crisis mechanically, using its time-worked method, viz. Re-investing itself and its image. The proposed package of re-inventing BJP has five main items: (1) re-invent the name and identity of the party; (2) re-invent the mindset of crores of 'Hindu' voters and lakhs of workers; (3) re-invent the socio-economic base of the party; (4) re-invent power-equations within the party; (5) re-invent the popular image of the party.

First (let us) take Bangaru Laxman's recent statement on Ram temple. He described demolition of Babari Masjid in 1992 as the 'Ayodhya tragedy'. Describing demolition as unfortunate he promised penal action against those responsible for it.

But what the BJP has been saying all these past ten years is entirely opposite of this. In the BJP's white paper on Ayodhya it has been declared:

"Ayodhya movement is a watershed in Indian history. It has proudly influenced the political destiny of India" (p.7).

Further, the BJP white paper justifies the demolition of the Babari Mosque without demure and without an iota of regret and says:

"The anger which had been welling up across the country exploded on December 6. the Karsevaks pulled down the structure. The Karsevaks did not just erase a symbol of subjugation. They did not just begin building symbol of resurgence. It was liberation". (p.2)

It does not stop there. It declared the BJP firmly believes construction of Ram Mandir at Janamsthal is a symbol of the vindication of our cultural heritage. The party is committed to build Ram Mandir. (Election Manifesto, 1991).

Take the second example of the blatant double-speak. It relates to the use of epithet 'Hindu' with the name of BJP. The entire history of BJP, BJS and RSS is a record of their commitment to 'Hindutva and Hinduism perceived as by them... They have been exhorting the people to proclaim 'Garva se Kaho hum Hindu hain' (say with pride that we are Hindus) but note what Bangaru Laxman said at a foreign correspondents meet after he became the

President of the party:

"Please do not label us Hindu nationalist or right wing party' rightwing, lift wing have no meaning or relevance in today's political and economic environment. Since these labels will create pre-conceived notions about our party in our audience". He clarified "BJP was a nationalist party not a Hindu organization". Our vision embraces every religious community, linguistic and ethnic community in our vast and diverse nation.

... Asked how he would reorient the decades old mindset of the cadres saturated with Hindutva ideology, he merely said: I made an appeal in my concluding speech that the Chennai declaration should be taken to the grass-roots level workers and put before them". Is it enough to make an appeal without reviewing the basic ideology?

Another challenge before BJP is its anti-Muslim or anti-minorities image during past five decades in general and since the demolition of Babari Masjid. BJP has not changed its political philosophy according to which all inhabitants of India are 'Hindus' the BJP criteria of a community to be considered 'patriot' or nationalist is its commitment to the entire legacy of India since the Vedic age. RSS wants every citizen of India to define himself as a 'Hindu' who believes India to be its 'Punya Bhoomi, pitri bhoomi and matri bhoomi'. RSS and BJP will not change this hegemonistic homogenizing ideology.

But it adopts a mechanical programme of 're-invent' its basis of electoral benefits... it is also treating Muslims as a 'vote bank'. This is a part of BJP plans to expand its socio-economic base not by changing its political philosophy, but by re-inventing itself and projecting its image as a pro-Muslim party.

There is no dearth of evidence to prove that political parties are prone to changing their policies and programmes drastically for the sake of political power... But ... Laxman has even beaten his own predecessors in practicing the science and art of 're-inventing'...

Bharatiya Jansangh survived on the margins of mainstream politics for a quarter century. It seized the favourable opportunity created by the JP Movement against the Emergency in seventies. It deconstructed one facet of its existence, political and resorted to political euthanasia, became part of the Janata Party (1977-1979) but retained its loyalty to RSS... In 1979 it quit Janata Party and in 1980 BJS re-invented itself as ABJP on the basis of Gandhian Socialism in Mumbai. In late eighties it re-invented itself as a Hindutva party on the basis of ...anti-Babari Masjid Movement and consolidated its Hindu vote, again in early nineties. It again re-invented itself as a "party with a difference". Can BJP without abandoning its Hindutva ideology extend its lease of life

(Contd. on Page 493)

Suhit Sen on Metamorphosis and Evolution of BJP into Congress?

... The BJP's rise to power was powered by sectarian mobilisation based on a notion of cultural nationalism. At the heart of this ideological construct is an equation of Indianness and Hindutva. There are two aspects to the BJP's fundamental ideological position. On the one hand, the party says that all Indians, whatever religion they practise, are culturally Hindu... It is implied that Hindu culture is constituted by a range of social and cultural practices embracing cuisine, dress, ritual practice, language which have roots in India's pre-Islamic Brahmanical past. It is this cultural belonging or identity that gives all Indians a distinct national identity.

On the other hand, the BJP's Hindutva ideology excommunicates from the domain of nationalism the space for belonging to alien cultures. This is the exclusionary aspect of BJP's majoritarian ideology. It is just about all right to be Muslim or Christian as long as religious practice is unconditionally subjected to Brahmanical social and cultural practice. The cultural caveat that qualifies the freedom of faith is larger than the right itself.

The majoritarian claims of Hindu culture also underpin conceptions of politics and state. Implicit in the Hindutva ideology ... is the claim ... to be a citizen one has to be Indian, and to be Indian one has to be culturally Hindu. Moreover, the state itself is implicated in the cultural construction of the nation. From one vantage, this means, explicitly, that it is the duty of the state to reconstruct, legitimise and propagate Hindu culture as the basis of nationhood and citizenship. From another, this means more fundamentally that the state or the nation-state is rooted in that Hindu culture which gives the nation its identity. So much for pluralism cultural, social or ideological.

... The politics of Hindutva is by far less sophisticated. From the shilanyas, through Advani's rath yatra to the destruction of the Babari Masjid, the pursuit of Hindutva politics has thrived not so much on notions of Hindu cultural and social practice, however fictional their provenance, but on the intimidation of the minorities by the brute force of popular mobilisation abetted, whenever possible, by the apparatus of the state. It would be tempting to dismiss majoritarian assertion as the aberration of the Hindu Right the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, principally. But there can hardly be any denying that the BJP's rise to power was complicity with the politics of militant majoritarianism...

... While the BJP, as a party, has functionally respected the (NDA) government's autonomy, the same cannot be said of the other members of the Sangh Parivar... The VHP has also tested the Government with its repeated assaults on the Christians ... (which) seem to be a ploy designed more to test the government's resolve to stick to a secular agenda at the top of which, indubitably,

the protection of minorities must figure. And in this respect, it must be said the NDA government has not covered itself in glory.

Given the foregoing, Laxman's call for the liberalisation, indeed secularisation, of his party must be greeted with skepticism. There is no call to assume that the Sangh Parivar or the hardliners within the BJP will meekly acquiesce to the abandonment of the party's core agendas... It is difficult to imagine that cadres in the Hindi heartland who have built the party on the basis of an avowed majoritarian agenda will suddenly jettison it...

Thus, while it is tempting to see the BJP evolving into a functional version of the ... Congress, this prognosis seems at the moment to be more than a trifle far-fetched.

(Source: The Pioneer, 16 September, 2000)

Minorities Council: Condemns Bal Thackeray's Threat of Blood Bath, 24 July, 2000

1. We express deep concern over the fact that none of (those responsible for) the killing of the Sikhs in 1984, for the demolition of the Babari Masjid and the widespread riots in its wake in 1992-93 has been punished.
2. We hold the view that impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of violence against minorities in the country is one major source of its recurrence...
3. The on-going hate campaign and violence ... derives strength from this lack of impartial law-enforcement and punishment of the guilty. ...
4. We condemn ... the threat of blood bath worse than 1992-93 throughout the country held out by Bal Thackeray and his followers. The Government of Maharashtra must bring to book all those who are terrorizing minorities by such threats.

V.R. Krishna Iyer	Hosbet Suresh	A.A. Engineer
Amrit Singh	Iqbal A. Ansari	R.M. Pal
Joseph Ghatia	Mukundan Menon	Hasan Mansur
Harsh Inder Singh	Anna Pinto	and 20 others

(Contd. from Page 492)

by re-inventing on image (of) a modern secular all-inclusive party? ... For how long ...? Can re-inventing tricks give BJP a sustainable support base?

This proclivity of the BJP to "re-invent" its image every time it faces an existential crisis inherent in its political culture which is rooted in Hindutva First. If you cannot change the objective reality change the prescription of the objective reality and re-invent it... Second, soul is immortal (and) has to go through a series of cycles of birth and re-birth before it achieves Mukti from this cycle.

Will BJP's soul of Hindutva go through the series of such exercises ... till it achieves Mukti, viz sustainable absolute majority in Lok Sabha?

(Source: The Young Indian, 9-15 September, 2000)

Views of Ahmad Bukhari on Installation As Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi

I will convene a meeting of Muslim leaders in November to discuss the formation of a political party to represent the community.

I shall like my father continue to serve the Muslim community by giving them strength, inspiration and courage. The atmosphere in India today is full of hatred and viciousness and the Muslims are the direct victims of it.

There is no unity among Muslims and this is used by all political parties for their own gains. I want to tell Muslims not to be carried away by false promises made by any political party that takes them for a ride. They should take away these crutches and support systems which do not do anything for them. I will tell the Muslim community that we should become a power that could defeat a political party which does not realize our potential as a community. I will create awareness among Muslims so that they can realize their potential and political strength to change the course of political history. There are 140 million Muslims in the country but what is the government doing for them? There is no education or employment for us. The government has to give us reservations in education which will not only empower us but will also strengthen the country... BJP (has made) only verbal promises. They are not doing anything to make the Muslims forget the past. We gave them a chance in 1977 and 1989, but they never did anything for us. Now they are remembering us again as they find that they are getting weak.

(Source: The Asian Age, 16 October, 2000)

On Roots of Secularism

Shahabuddin to The Hindu, 29 Sept., 2000

Apropos Mr. J.A. Naik's article on Kashmir (26 September, 2000), I am shocked by his presumptuous categorization of Muslim Indians as a hostage for the good behaviour of the Muslim Kashmiris. The historic moment for forcing an exchange of population in more than 50 years behind us and whatever may or may not happen in Jammu & Kashmir, no sane person can even think of liquidating or forcing out 120 million Muslim Indians whose rights flow from the Constitution of India and not flow from the Instrument of Accession, signed by the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir and endorsed by Sheikh Abdullah.

No civilized State today can deliberately violate the international Declarations and Conventions and Covenants relating to the minorities.

It is also absurd to attribute even a whisper of separatism to Muslim-majority districts in other States. The logic of the secession of Jammu & Kashmir may apply to Punjab and the N.E. But the historical and demographic circumstances are totally different. Above all, these states are not claimed by any neighbouring State.

Mr. Naik should show greater faith in the strength of the roots of our secular order at the grass-roots level.

Gurmukh Singh On Muslim Political Platform

The (Muslim) community today has no political platform at the national level to voice its opinions and grievances. Some organisations do have pocketed of influence in different parts of the country; the Jamaat-e-Islami in UP, the Milli Council in Rajasthan and UP, the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala and the Ittehadul Muslimeen in A.P.

This vacuum has come in handy for the Congress, the Leftists and Mandalites who have been able to cash in on the community's illiteracy, ignorance and alienation...

The Sikhs have the benefit of a political platform – the Akali Dal by virtue of their being concentrated in Punjab – and the Christians have the benefit of high education standards. But the Muslim community is neither concentrated in one particular area nor is it substantially literate. Further, the Muslims have virtually no middle class – which is the traditional breeding ground for politicians and revolutionaries... In terms of population, barring Kashmir, there are only four (sic) Muslim majority districts in the country, including Moradabad in UP and Malappuram in Kerala.

In these localized communities, the mullahs still hold the illiterate in their grip. Because of this, the mullahs have played a key role in influencing the Muslim policy adopted by successive governments at the Centre. In a way, they have become the route for various political parties to reach the Muslim masses...

What is the Muslim community's lot after years of the so-called appeasement policy? Its literacy rate of 42% is much below the national average of 58%. Among Muslim women, the literacy rate is just 11% as against the national average of 39%. Only four per cent of Muslim students reach the high school stage and 2.9% the graduation level... An enlightened national Muslim leadership should provide the platform to formulate a progressive agenda which integrates Muslim into the national mainstream, highlights their contribution and sidelines the extremist elements...

(Source: The Times of India, 9 September, 2000)

M.J. Akbar on P.V. Narasimha Rao's Purchase of Muslim Congressmen

... Both Babari and the bribery were recognised immediately as scandals, and there was commotion in Parliament and anger in the press; but the Congress party was immune and indifferent to either betrayal or bribery. There was not even a hint of protest inside. The Congress Muslim ministers were the worst; they queued up for rewards from Rao, who handed them out feverishly as he sought to save his skin and chair. The Ghulams and the Salmans are still hovering around at the top of the Congress pole, this time around Sonia Gandhi, now blaming Rao for having lost the Muslim vote. The Ghulams lost the vote, not Rao. But once Rao had purchased the Muslims in his party with promotions, and calmed others with moral pretensions, he knew he was safe...

(Source: The Asian Age, 1 October, 2000)

Badri Raina on Status of Muslim Indians

(Some of) us after all the water that has flowed down the Gomti since the demolition of the Babari mosque, are disposed to give the BJP the benefit of the doubt. Thus a new political discourse about the party seems under way as the new president, Bangaru Laxman, puts across his call to Muslims... PM Vajpayee, has been inviting us to believe that the BJP is the BJP and the Parivar-others are just that - the others. Except that, the small matter that 'cultural nationalism' is common to the BJP and the expedient 'others' is acknowledged by one and all...

Unfortunately for Laxman, his call is barely out when the National Minorities Commission in a unanimous report holds the Bajrang Dal and the VHP squarely responsible for the latest communal killings in Surat... With the inauguration by Laxman of a new political season of camaraderie with the Muslims, some governmental condemnation would be forthcoming. But no. Over the last decade, even the governmental BJP, not to speak of the organisational set-up, is struck with deathly silence when the naughty 'others' behave to pattern...

At any rate, the coup de grace to Laxman's ... call to the 15 or so per cent Muslim populace comes finally from no less a person than the so-called 'Nehruvian' Vajpayee himself. Prior to leaving for the United States, Vajpayee had paid obeisance to his "soul-bhumi" at Nagpur, even as a tactical visit was made there to Ambedkar's deekshasthal. But at Staten Island, the full-fledged saffron cat came gleefully out of the prime ministerial bag. Honestly enough, with the verve of spontaneity, at the swarmingly Hindutva jamboree awash with sadhus, saints and Hindutva rashtravadi perorations, the Prime Minister acknowledged that he is swayamsevak first and Pradhan Mantri after, and, god-willing, a two-thirds majority in Parliament in the days to come would see the implementation of the full Hindutva agenda. Saffron knight in VHP armour - thus spare our Prime Minister on foreign soil...

There is, indeed, good reason why the VHP calls itself the 'Vishwa' Hindu Parishad...

What is the vision of the VHP? I cite from the September 1983 issue of the VHP journal, Vishwa Hindu. We are told that Jerusalem is indeed 'Yedushalyam,' that is 'the shrine of the Lord of Yadus, i.e. Krishna.' Further, "let everybody know that the Dome of the Rock and the nearby Al Aqsa though currently being misused as mosque are ancient Krishna temples." As to the claims of the Great Britain, we are instructed that St. Paul's Cathedral in London in 'origin' was 'Gopal (Krishna) Mandir'; at its foot is a 'Statue of Lord Shiva with the trident,' and inside its most dominant feature is the 'Sudarshan Chakra of Lord Krishna.' Come to Europe proper and we learn that the Notre Dame Church was 'originally the temple of the Mother Goddess, Devi Bhagvati, Parvati, Bhawani Chandi alias Durga.' Indeed, Paris itself was 'Parameshwariuni'

which the Romans distorted to 'Parisorium' and which, by impure declension, became Paris. Yes, what you call river Seine is the distorted name of 'Sindhu.' Most of all, did Laxman know when he gave his call to the Indian Muslims that the Kaaba in Mecca was a 'gigantic Vishnu temple'? ... Finally, Bill Clinton and any future American President may note that 'in pre-Christian times, all people in the entire world were Hindus'! And the U.N. chief, Kofi Annan, as well ought to take all that in, since the VHP is currently an applicant with the United Nations Economic and Social Council for ECOSOC consultative status, stating it is an NGO 'located in New Delhi that works for the total welfare of humanity.' To this organisation our Prime Minister gave his blessings at Staten Island.

... J. P. Mathur, now dethroned, insists in a television appearance that the BJP retains its agenda which after all is its authentic 'pehchaan.' One wonders how poor Mr. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi receives the new Laxman message, given that, after the recent reshuffle, he remains where he was. And when did any one last hear of Sikander Bakht?

Congressisation? ... The party cannot Congressise itself so long as its ideological/cultural apparatus continues willy-nilly to be drawn from that Goliath of extra-constitutional authority - more enormous than the lamented Sanjay Gandhi - called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Whatever the sins of the Congress ... it cannot be said the party has at any stage been an ideologue of cultural fascism. Whereas P. V. Narasimha Rao's somnambulant complicity in the Babari episode was indeed a clinching event for the Muslims to turn away from the Congress, it was not the sole reason. It was an event which, so to speak, climaxed their seething perception that whereas Congress regimes might have provided physical security, the party never did anything to make them equal partners in the labours and fruits of nation-building...

Despite, therefore, the 'appeasement' package announced by M. Venkaiah Naidu - that the BJP will promote Urdu, facilitate the Haj and find more Muslim candidates if the Muslims 'come closer' - it is not likely that the new Laxman gesture will fool many of them. Indeed, one expects that in any election to come, the Muslims will not hesitate to vote the Congress if in any constituency they perceive its candidate to be the best placed to defeat the BJP. The Sangh Parivar needs to realise that till the time an explicit repudiation of the Savarkar thesis that such inhabitants whose punyabhooni lies outside the territories of Bharat can never be trusted enough to be 'loyal' to pitrabhooni is forthcoming, the Muslims will remain skeptical with good cause.

... Now that the BJP-led Centre draws closer to the Israelis and the Americans, the best lesson may be learnt

(Contd. on Page 510)

On Secular State for a Religious People Shahabuddin to Indian Express, 13 Oct., 2000

In his article "Mutual Respect and Esteem" (IE, 12 October, 2000), T.V.R. Shenoy has articulated his own concept of 'Hindu Secularism'.

He is right in stating that the concept of secularism has become second cousin to plasticine in some Indian hands, including, if I may add, his own. In India, it is out of place and unrealistic to use the word 'secular' except to define the character of the State we are trying to build in our country, which is multi-religious.

Our people are highly religious. The secular state does not interfere with their religiosity – personal or collective, and the state does not align itself with any particular religion and does not lean towards one or the other, at the inter-face, particularly in situations of conflict. Thus the Indian State is secular; the Indian society is not.

Every religion has its own doctrines. Some are more dogmatic than the others. Some are closed shops; some are expansive; some are local, some are universal. We cannot and should not impose the ethos of one religion over all others or address them as inferior because they have a religious philosophy or spiritual approach of their own different from that of Hinduism. We cannot ask other religions to remould themselves in the Hindu fashion.

Dominic Emmanuel On Gandhi's Secularism

... These days Christians and Muslims are being challenged to prove their patriotism by ideologues who have inherited the ideology of those fanatics who allegedly plotted to kill the father of the nation and who refuse to unfurl the tricolour on Independence Day at their headquarters...

For Gandhi, every human being was a child of God, regardless of which caste or religion he or she belonged to. He could never accept the thesis that India belonged only to Hindus and that it must become a country of "one people, one culture and one religion". He vehemently opposed the idea of a monoculture or the Hitlerian purity of race. "In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor has it ever been so in India... If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dreamland."

Gandhi was consistent in his opposition to bigotry. "It has been my experience that I am always right from my point of view and often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge prevents me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics... It is this doctrine of manyness of reality that has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his." ... One wonders whether if another Gandhi is born on the Indian soil today, would he be at all welcomed?

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 2 October, 2000)

G. P. Sharma

On Rewarding Hindu Fundamentalism

... Today, religiosity is treated as a virtue that can be bartered for instant political favour and the distinction between just being religious and overtly religious can make a difference to one's political fortunes. No wonder religious enthusiasts, especially belonging to (the Hindu) community, are trying to occupy every bit of the social space at the behest of their political bosses. National symbols are being appropriated to communicate a political message couched in religious idiom. The mythical past is being reinvented to serve the cause of politics as well as religion. Various cultural festivals have acquired a new meaning in the changed political context. The scale and manner of their celebration is a kind of political statement. The most disturbing trends, however, are the indiscriminate construction of places of worship ... and the growing incidence of attacks on Christian missions. Hence, doubtless, religion is being politicised on a scale never before seen... Such proximity between state and religion raises serious doubts about the secular and plural character of the Indian state...

Even during British rule ... the colonial state in its enlightened self-interest never tried to tinker with religion... This did not prevent the British from making use of its divisive power. They quite successfully turned the pre-colonial communitarian divide into a communal one through communal construction of India's past...

However, the colonial state's official agenda never included the sponsorship of any particular religion... Unlike today, when Parliament has the presence of several saffron-clad personalities, there was no such organic link between the (State and the missionaries) and at no point of time did the missionaries ever try to seek nor did the colonial state try to provide political patronage...

In today's context when religious fervour is at its worst, it is imperative that the state neither cultivates nor gives in to any kind of religious fundamentalism. But, it is becoming increasingly benign toward followers of a particular religious faith so much so that it is willing to cover up their acts of omission and commission. The demolition of the Babari Masjid stands out as a growing liaison between state and religion. Today the studied silence of the Indian state on several disturbing incidents involving the (Hindus) has emboldened its followers to commit all sorts of excesses in the name of religion just to please their political patrons. This has not only put the minorities on the defensive but created a scare amongst them and lent credibility to the sectarian argument that with the rise in Hindu fundamentalism there is no place for minorities in India... As long as religiosity is rewarded politically, brutal incidents like the Staines' murder will be repeated. (Source: The Hindu, 28 September, 2000)
[The writer teaches history at the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi]

Bharat Bhushan on RSS-BJP Equation

It is 75 years to the day, (on) the Vijayadashmi of 1925 ... Hedgewar founded the RSS in Nagpur, almost as a secret society to promote Hindu unity and militancy. Despite the ups and down that the RSS has seen - including being banned thrice - it has emerged as the major para-political force in Indian politics.

Today, its offspring, the BJP seems firmly ... in power. The media is friendly and reports on its activities avidly and seriously. The Indian State today does not oppose the Hindutva ideology. Indeed, it actively furthers it. Such is the aura of the RSS today that the Prime Minister of India who went to the US as the representative of the Indian bourgeoisie, returned as a proud RSS-swayamsevak (volunteer). These momentous changes speak volumes for the influence that the RSS enjoys today in Indian society and polity. Yet, the RSS is in turmoil. It is changing (forming) an identity crisis...

The RSS today is faced with three major developments: declining attendance in its shakhas, a growing mismatch between the number of trained swayamsevaks and those joining its front organisations without proper ideological grounding, and its relationship with the BJP.

The daily shakha has played the most important role in the growth of the RSS - for it is here that young minds, boys in the age-group of 12 to 15 years, are indoctrinated with the Hindutva ideology. Although the RSS estimates that it runs about 45,000 shakhas across the country, the fact is that, whether they are held in the morning or in the evening, the attendance at these daily gatherings has been falling over time.

One of the reasons for this is that the younger generation, which the RSS hopes to target, is more confident today... is not scared of being swamped by Western culture and mores... is consumerist to the core...

... Today's youngsters do not need the psychological security of an obscurantist cult. Organisations like the RSS, therefore, have an increasingly diminishing appeal...

There are also attractive alternatives vying for their spare time... There is the ... cable television in both rural and urban areas... They are more interested in 'cooler' activities like hanging-out, shopping, listening to music and, most importantly, in career advancement... While none of them would deny their Indianness, their predominant dream is to earn a living in the US.

Even the relatively older members of the RSS shakhas have to deal with competing demands... Middle class incomes are going up, they are not in pace with the availability of modern conveniences or the desire to keep up with the Joneses... The middle classes psychologically, despite higher incomes, feel that their purchasing power is

shrinking.

The pressure to earn more is evident in extended working hours, shops and establishments remaining open longer and the salaried classes being always on the lookout for avenues to augment their income. The prime recruiting ground of the RSS ... is thus contracting.

Simultaneously, some of its front organisations have shown spectacular growth. Among these are Vidya Bharati which runs schools and colleges, Bajrang Dal, VHP, Hindu Munnani in southern India, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, working in the tribal areas. This rapid expansion is a source of worry ... because there is now a disproportion between the shakha-trained or the 'trustworthy' membership and those who 'float' into these front organisations...

The closer ... interface of the RSS with political processes is also recoiling on it. From being happy with an avirodhi satta - a State that is not opposed to it and leaves it to pursue its Hindutva agenda - the RSS today seeks sahayak satta or an enabling State. A State that would help extend the influence of the Hindutva ideology to all fields of social activity, especially those that mould society intellectually and culturally.

This is precisely where the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance Government has helped most - through appointments to key positions in universities, educational institutions, research funding bodies and cultural organisations; by extending patronage to organisations and individuals in the field of media and cultural production; and equally, by denying or withdrawing State patronage from those opposed to its ideological endeavour and effectively marginalising and de-legitimising them.

However, the acceptance of the BJP as a party that can govern has not been an unmitigated blessing for the RSS. Because it is the RSS which primarily rallies the Hindu vote bank behind the BJP, its functionaries play a determining role in selecting BJP candidates for elections to legislatures... The intervention of the head of the RSS himself in deciding which BJP minister in the Vajpayee Government should get which portfolio (is) clear...

Such para-political power may have less effect on someone like Sudarshan than on RSS functionaries lower down the hierarchy... The span of the electoral process now encompasses even village panchayats... The RSS functionaries must select the BJP candidates and ensure their victory and yet keep the faith, as it were, by themselves abjuring political office and its perks.

In such a situation, legislative power rather than the ... Hindutva agenda would become more attractive to the

(Contd. on Page 498)

C.R. Irani on RSS's Call for Indianisation of Islam and Christianity

The RSS, ion the person of (its) head ... K.S. Sudarshan has finally gone over the top ... further than any other sarsanghchhalak has gone before and fuelled all the reservations and suspicions that the organisation has attracted in the past. He calls upon Christians to prove their patriotism and in the same breath complains that over the centuries new churches are formed over ideological disputes... Why should Protestants and Catholics, Baptists and Mormons worry Sudarshan? There is also another obvious fallacy in his formulation. If Christian denominations say their prayers in Latin, they are foreign and must instantly Indianise ... if they perform their mass and other prayers in Indian languages, they are interfering with tribals and other Hindus and forcing them to convert. Make up your mind, Sudarshan! Then the man has the gall to advise Christians how exactly they must refashion themselves. Follow the model of the Orthodox Syrian Church and Marthoma Church in Kerala, pontificates the sarsanghchhalak. Will you please spot Syria on the map of India, Sudarshan? ...

Sudarshan ... lists some offences like Bible burning in Kerala and Gujarat, intimidating American missionaries in Allahabad, attacks on nuns in Orissa. His answer is complete, breathtaking and wrong – they actually did not take place. Like, according to Swami Vamdev of the VHP, the Babari Masjid was not demolished – it fell down by itself!

The worst is to come ... Sudarshan (is) complete Indianisation of Islam. Muslims should find their Mecca, Medina and the Dome of the Rock, all within India! Is that what Sudarshan would have? ... Sudarshan is perhaps impelled by a deeply ingrained suspicion of the Indian Muslim community...

There is another aspect. I have often argued that a civilized and secular society must have a common civil code relating to births, inheritance, marriage, divorce, contracts and so forth. But you cannot do that by force or by coercion and certainly not while you demolish their places of worship, question their patriotism and keep them from moving out of the ghettos... Why do you want to sow the seeds of suspicion, hatred and violence? Why do you want to destroy the wonderful mosaic that is India?

And finally, if you harbour such feelings towards Muslims why do you fight so hard to keep Kashmiri Muslims in India? ...

It has taken centuries to build the reputation for tolerance and civilized conduct of the Indian nation.

Try to recall the glory that was once ours and can be again.

(Source: The Statesman, 9 October, 2000)

On RSS Idea of Swadeshi Church Editorial, Indian Express, 11 Oct., 2000

... RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan ... asked Christians to free themselves from the 'clutches' of foreign churches to set up a 'Swadeshi church'... The central problem of narrow-minded nationalists is that they do not understand the universality of religion and diversity of cultures. While nation states and nationalism are hardly a few centuries old, most religions and cultures pre-date even the last millennia... If Sudarshan could have seen the logical outcome of his argument he would have realized that it is like a leader of the moral majority (in USA) lecturing to Hindus of Indian (origin): 'free yourself from the clutches of foreign temples by setting up Uncle Sam-style mandir'. Sounds not only ridiculous, but downright stupid, doesn't it? Sudarshan should have known better before making such an insensitive statement... Some BJP leaders have gone ahead and defended him... It is precisely this pro-minority, anti-minority signals emanating from different sections of the Sangh Parivar which make most people doubt the very intensions of its leadership and the very purpose of its various organisations.

... While religion and culture, the Sangh Parivar leaders must realise, are in the private domain, politics is in the public domain. And politicians ... have obviously no business interfering in the private domain.

(Contd. from Page 497)

RSS workers. As it is, it is the political leadership of the BJP today, which enjoys greater national and international stature than the RSS-leadership. **As the balance of power in the RSS-family of organisations shifts in favour of the BJP, the RSS is faced with what might be called the 'BJP-isation' of its cadres.** And it is by no means clear that it knows how to tackle this phenomenon.

The RSS is also realising the limits of popular democratic politics in pushing through a sectarian agenda. This problem is accentuated in the era of coalitions. That is why the BJP cannot push (RSS's) unadulterated agenda... The RSS is often at pains to emphasise that the BJP is not its political wing. The significance of such an assertion lies in the fact that should the RSS find that the BJP is not the most appropriate and effective vehicle for implementing its agenda, it may either ... diversify its support to other parties — supporting one in a particular region and another elsewhere — or launch another political party. However, all this would depend on whether the RSS leadership decides to embrace ... and the inclusiveness of democratic politics, or whether it shuns it — becoming more inward looking and more obsessed with unitary control. (Source: The Hindustan Times, Oct. 2000)

Prafull Goradia On RSS-BJP Relationship

... Appreciating the culture of the Sangh Parivar, (is possible only) by understanding the values upon which it flourishes. It is a unique culture. In any case, it should not be measured with the yardstick of the Congress, which, as the grand old party, dominated Indian politics till recently. For that matter, the yardstick of any other political culture would also fail to measure the Sangh Parivar. In fact, the Parivar is not all politics.

Politics is only one of its activities. This is one reason why the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) did not participate in politics. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was reported to have proposed to Guru Golwalkar at 26, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta in 1951 that the RSS should also function like a political party. Gurujī's answer was that he would nominate two pracharaks per state to form the initial backbone of a political party. Its formation, however, should be independent of the RSS and its leadership would be the responsibility of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. The RSS would continue to pursue only the socio-cultural objectives.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) pursues its own religio-cultural pursuits whereas the Bajrang Dal organises the youth, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad the students whereas the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh the workers, and so on.

The second outstanding characteristic of the Parivar is the sublimation of the ego in the causes that a typical member of the Parivar thinks of the cause first, the organisation second and himself much later. Above the specific cause is the supreme consideration of the country. In other words, no cause is espoused unless it is in tandem with national interests.

When I say ego I mean also the collective ego of the organisation, which is quite prepared to take a step back if that serves the nation better. For instance, the suspension of the three issue; namely, the temple at Ayodhya, Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and the common civil code during the period of the National Democratic Alliance is an example of a step back by the Sangh Parivar for the sake of the nation. Today, the country needs a stable progressive Government, which is not possible to form without a coalition. The partners in Government have their own agenda, which may or may not include these three issues.

It is also necessary to understand the relationship between the RSS and the BJP. It is that between a parent and a self-reliant adult son. They share a filial affection. They respect each other. They help each other. But that does not mean that they agree on every subject and issue. If they did agree on everything, they would both not be intelligent adults. Their priorities, in the nature of things, are different. The mission of one is socio-cultural whereas the purpose of the other is to contest elections, to win votes and to try form and run governments wherever possible...

(Source: The Pioneer, 17 September, 2000)

Amulya Ganguli On Nazi Inspiration Behind Hindutva

... Racism remains a potent factor, lying dormant within communities but flaring up at times to spark off a civil war. All countries will have to beware of such eruptions unless they want to meet the fate of Sri Lanka. The essence of such vicious policies directed against a section of the population is summed up by Hitler's comment, "To us state and race are one."

It is a thesis which is shared by all xenophobes. Had Speight been an educated person, he could have buttressed his own case by citing Savarkar's thesis on Indian nationhood. Just as Haider wants Austria to be only for Austrians and Speight wants Fiji only for ethnic Melanesians by reducing all other racial groups to the status of second class citizens, Savarkar's view was that India was the homeland of only Hindus since it was both a *punyabhu* (holy land) and *pitribhu* (fatherland) for them. For the Muslims and Christians, it may be a *pitribhu* but not a *punyabhu* for their holy places are elsewhere — in Mecca or Rome.

This identification of race with state, as Hitler said, is the driving force behind the Sangh Parivar's Hindu Rashtra. If the Parivar is unable to implement its plans, it is because of the fortunate accident of the Indian independence movement having been led by such uniquely liberal-minded personalities like Gandhi and Nehru. It is because they and their equally broad-minded contemporaries regarded Indian nationhood as the melting pot of various racial, religious and linguistic groups, with the country belonging to all and not only to Hindus, that the Indian Constitution evolved as a document endorsing Indian pluralism.

It is the country's multicultural tradition which is the bulwark against the Sangh Parivar's sectarianism. But it has to be remembered that the latter's recent gains, evident in the BJP moving within a few years from the political periphery to the centre stage, suggest that divisive ideals have the capacity to influence sections of the population.

... It will not do to forget that the subcontinent has experienced two partitions as a result of religious and linguistic sentiments and, therefore, cannot be complacent about campaigns casting aspersions on the patriotism of different groups simply because their religions are different from the one followed by the majority.

The need for caution is all the greater because India is the only democracy in the midst of totalitarian countries like China in the north, Myanmar and Bangladesh in the east and Pakistan in the west. Sri Lanka, the other democracy, is suffering from the consequences of the majoritarian policies of the Sinhalese directed against the Tamils. Pakistan, Bangladesh and other Muslim countries are also totalitarian in the sense that the minorities there are second class citizens... It is the invidious distinction between citizens on the grounds of race and religion favoured by the xenophobes which undermines a country's democratic system and prepares the ground for civil strife. India's deep democratic roots preclude such a possibility. But one cannot be too careful.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 7 August, 2000)

BMMCC Convener Shahabuddin's Correspondence with RSS Chief Sudarshan III - Sudarshan's Response to Shahabuddin's Letter, 22 September, 2000

This is in reference to your letter of August 11, 2000 in response to my letter of 7th August, 2000. I have been mostly away and thus the delay in replying to your letter. Kindly excuse me for the same. I would like to briefly reply to your letter, without any desire or intension of debate or discussion with you.

First of all let me say that I have been at a loss to understand your position vis-à-vis the Muslim community. Over the last two decades many self-proclaimed leaders have been speaking in different voices and claiming to be representatives of Muslims. The very fact that even in the context of Rama Janmabhoomi case there have been so many committees like "Save Babari Masjid Committee", "Babari Masjid Coordination Committee" and "Babari Masjid Action Committee" that one is at a loss to understand as to who is speaking for whom. As you are aware, the members of all the Committees are different people with different shades of opinions. You are further aware that the "Babari Masjid Action Committee" did not include your name to participate in Government of India initiated rounds of talks between Babari Masjid Action Committee and Vishwa Hindu Parishad held in 1990-91 and 1992. in view of this, may I suggest that it will be helpful if Muslim leaders, intelligentsia and laity could select a group of leaders who could enjoy the confidence of the Muslim community and talk on its behalf? As it is, it is difficult to decide as to whom to talk to and who enjoys the confidence of the Muslim community.

Considerable problems have been created by your constantly changing positions regarding the Janmabhoomi issue. At the initial stages you declared that in Islam the building of a mosque on the forcibly acquired land is strictly prohibited, what to say about the land acquired after the demolition of a temple (or a place of worship). You categorically stated that if it was proved that the mosque was built on the place where once stood a temple you would not only give the land to your Hindu brethren but you yourself would demolish the structure known as Babari Masjid. Taking your words seriously the scholars started citing evidences from many records which include Gazetteers, settlement reports, travelers accounts etc. Faced with such records proving the demolition, you started saying that those were "British documents" which were unreliable and fabricated. You demanded that evidences from other than British sources should be provided.

On your demand for evidence from "other than British sources" scholars provided you with sources from the Muslim period itself and that too mainly Muslim testimony.

Faced with such evidences you once again did a volte-face and started demanding archaeological evidences of birth of Lord Rama on the exact spot where the masjid stood. This was done by you with total disregard and disrespect to the beliefs and sentiments of your Hindu brethren. You also did not show any respect to the faith of any other religion, but forwarded the same argument of "matter of faith" when it came to Islam – be it a question about revelations, a questioning about Quran being inscribed on gold bricks and kept in heaven, or a question about winged horse descending from sky at Al Aqsa to take the Prophet to heaven.

It is this attitude of yours that lead to the catastrophe of 6th December 1992. but as it is said, all the dark clouds have silver linings, so also the events of 6th December 1992. the discovery of a large number of architectural pieces of temple structures from the walls of the disputed structure showed that after the demolition of the temple its material was used for building the mosque in question. Besides the architectural pieces, also came out a 20-line Sanskrit inscription, which belonged to the period of Govind Chandra Gahadwal, who ruled from AD 1114 to 1154.

The inscription mentions about the temple on Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya Nagari in Saket miandal. The inscription establishes the fact that there once stood a temple dedicated to Vishnu-Hari, the humbler of the pride of Bali and the slayer of the ten-headed Ravana. Does this leave anyone in doubt about the identity of Vishnu-Hari? Nothing can be more reliable, concrete and solid evidence on the matters you had been demanding proof of. The providential discovery of the architectural pieces and inscription from the debris of the disputed structure proves beyond doubt that the demolition of the temple and the construction of the mosque were simultaneous.

It is totally amazing that instead of accepting such incontrovertible evidence that you had been insisting so far, you got back to your old game of changing your stand. You raised the question of authenticity of the archaeological inscription, a subject about which, I am afraid, you cannot claim to be a specialist. The large inscription has been fully deciphered by experts and there remains no doubt either about the authenticity of the inscription or the fact that there once stood a temple which was demolished to build the said mosque.

I have been trying to understand the various stands taken by you from time to time. Looking at the entire range of events, the only conclusion one can arrive at is that you were never interested in solving the problem. You treated the problem as a plank for some other ulterior

purpose. Your real motive and total disinterest in solving the problem gets further confirmed from the letter you wrote to Mr. Anjum Qadar, President, All India Shia Conference. Your letter dated 04.07.1987 reads

"Even if a shift is permissible under some school of fiqh there is no reason at all to opt for a shift. In fact one shift would open a Pandora's box. Please do not pursue this line. I remain absolutely and totally opposed to this idea of shift proposed by RSS which you appear inclined to accept. Please reconsider".

Do I need to write more about the sincerity of your efforts made towards finding a solution?

On my part I have always looked at Ram Jannabhoomi movement not as an attack on the pride and identity of the present and future generations of Indian Muslims; rather as a positive effort to induce them to disassociate themselves from the medieval mentality, religious intolerance, bigotry and vandalism and help promote National integration and harmony. While adhering devoutly to their Islamic form of worship, they,

as sons of the soil, should also take pride in their pre-Islamic past and cultural heritage as was suggested by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in his convocation address in the Aligarh Muslim University on January 4, 1948, in which he had said

"How do you feel about our past? Do you feel that you are also sharers in it and inheritors of it, and therefore, proud of something that belongs to you as much as to me? Or do you feel alien to it and pass it by without understanding it or feeling that strange thrill which comes from the realisation that we are trustees and inheritors of this vast treasure? ... You are a Muslim and I am a Hindu. We may adhere to different religious faiths or even to none; but that does not take away from us that cultural inheritance that is yours as well as mine".

If from whatever has been stated from above, I reach a conclusion that you seem to be using the issue for furthering your separatist agenda under the cover of modern political jargon, shall I lie off the mark?

IV - Shahabuddin's Reply, 3 October, 2000

I am surprised by the tone and contents of your letter of 22 September, 2000 in which instead of carrying your proposal of out-of-court settlement any further, you have questioned my legitimacy as your interlocutor. Indeed nothing has changed since you wrote to me in September. What has changed is your will for a harmonious resolution. I do not know why.

Let me place on record that the Muslim leadership and the Babari Masjid Movement have been committed to the judicial process and continue to be so and for that reason we have been requesting successive Governments to arrange day-to-day hearings of the title suit. It is you who had suggested an out-of-court settlement which led to our exchange.

Regarding the origin of the Babari Masjid Movement, let me enlighten you that the apex forum of the Muslim community, the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, had been instrumental in forming the Babari Masjid Movement Coordination Committee (BMMCC) in December, 1986. The BMMCC unfortunately split in October, 1988 on the question of withdrawal of Ayodhya March. Thus was born the All India Babari Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC). However, the two Committees have been working in close coordination with each other, particularly on the legal front.

It is the BMMCC which had refused the offer of the Government of India to participate in the talks with the VHP. It had thus opted out because it anticipated that nothing will come out of these talks, and nothing did. After the Demolition, the All India Muslim Personal Law

Board (AIMPLB) has constituted the Babari Masjid Committee (BMC) for pursuing the legal cases as well as for conducting any negotiation with the Government of India. That BMC includes all the leading members of the BMMCC and the AIBMAC. For your information the President of the Board, now, is Qazi[†] Mujahidul Islam Qasmi and the Convener of the BMC is Mr. Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait, former MP (who is also a member of the BMMCC). I am also a Member. So is Mr. S.S. Owaisi, President of the AIBMAC.

I do not see any contradiction in my view. I have taken a consistent public position since 1986. Let me sum it up. Your moral, as distinct from legal, case is based on 2 assumptions: First, a temple commemorating the birth-site of Shri Ram Chandraji stood in Ayodhya in 1528 and, second, this standing temple was demolished by Babar, or on his orders, to build a Masjid in its place. Since you claim the site of a 500 year old Masjid, you have to produce legally conclusive evidence on both the points. To be acceptable such evidence should be documentary and as close to 1528 as possible. This is what I mean by **contemporary evidence of the existence and demolition of the supposed Mandir**. Any literary evidence of a later vintage, whether of Muslim, British or Hindu origin, is irrelevant. Any historical or archaeological evidence whose relevance or authenticity is challenged by eminent historians and archaeologists is obviously unacceptable. The Sangh School of historians and archaeologists has failed to satisfy the other historians and archaeologists on the 'evidence' they muster, even

though you may deem it conclusive in your favour! Eminent archaeologists have questioned the relevance of the so-called architectural elements and the authenticity of the rather too well-preserved inscription plate. Firstly, they do not add up to a magnificent temple. Secondly, the plate on which you rely appears to have been manufactured and planted on the site during the unlawful excavation in the disputed area and the subsequent demolition. In any case their evidentiary value is yet to be determined by the judicial authorities.

The existence of the Masjid on the site since 1528 is a fact as is its Demolition by the Hindutva-inspired hordes in 1992. On your side, the Hindu belief in the historicity and status of Shri Ram Chandrajī as an Avtar is a matter of faith. Even if against all geological evidence you believe that Ayodhya is the Ayodhya of Dasrath, it is a question of faith. But whether a commemorative temple existed on the site to mark his birthsite and that whether it was demolished in 1528 are both questions of fact. As I stated above, the burden of proof is on the claimant who claims the Masjid site.

I ignore what you attribute to Muslims as articles of faith because they are not. The Muslims believe in one God, Mohammad as His last Prophet and the Holy Quran as His Last Book. Yes, Muslims believe in the fact of Meraj as it is mentioned in the Holy Quran.

My letter to late Anjum Quader which you have quoted as to be read in context of the letter to which it is a reply. If I recall correctly, he had indicated that under some school of Muslim jurisprudence, a Masjid may be torn down and the building material, used to build a Masjid elsewhere, when the Muslim community deserts the place, or, a Masjid site may be used for a public purpose. Please try to understand that the School of Fiqh which 90% of the Muslim Indians accept is the Hanafi School and that School clearly lays down that a Masjid site, once consecrated cannot be bought, sold, gifted, or exchanged. Secondly, construction of a temple is a denominational, not a public purpose. Thirdly, a State, which is democratic and secular, simply cannot usurp the site of a place of worship of one religious group to hand it over to another to build its own place of worship!

It is not important how you look at the unlawful occupation and subsequent Demolition of the Masjid in the name of Ram. Many Ram Bhaktas do not look at it the same way. But I am convinced that national integration and harmony cannot be promoted by such acts of bigotry and violence. These will only reinforce mutual antipathy, widen the gap and raise the wall higher.

You have quoted Jawaharlal Nehru, as if he shared your views of Cultural Nationalism! He did not. He knew that Indian culture is a flowing river and many streams

have contributed to it. There cannot be an arbitrary cut-off point in this mighty flow from the past to the present, to the future. We share a common past and we must learn to live with it. We must not disown any element of our cultural heritage and cooperate in building what has been called the composite culture.

Yes, you are a Hindu Indian and I am a Muslim Indian and both of us have an equal right to adhere to our faith. But you do not have the right, nor have I, to demolish a place of worship on the basis of unproven assumptions, in a blatant assertion of majoritarian ego.

I would not be mistaken to think that you have no real desire for any meaningful negotiation, for settling the Ayodhya dispute. You only pay lip service to the rule of law and to the need for communal harmony but you really wish to terrorise the Muslims into submission to your unlawful dictates:

Masjid Site Survives Demolition

Shahabuddin's Letter to Statesman, 29 Sept., 2000

While we appreciate your editorial: "Temple is Coming" (27 September, 2000) and your timely warning to the Union Government to take note of the VHP's postures before it is too late, we would like to clarify that all national level Muslim organisations – All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, All India Milli Council, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind and All India Muslim Personal Law Board as well as the Babari Masjid Movement Coordination Committee and the All India Babari Masjid Action Committee have reaffirmed on numerous occasions that the Masjid site survives the demolition of the Masjid structure and that it is out of respect for the law of the land that they have not demanded or agitated for immediate restoration of the Masjid site or the reconstruction of the Masjid itself, that they are pursuing the title suit being heard by the Special Bench of the Allahabad High Court and that they shall accept the final judicial verdict.

However, if the VHP begins any construction on the disputed site and the Union and the State Governments watch the rape of law with the folded hands, the faith of the community in the Constitution shall receive a mortal blow and in that situation, the Muslim community will not remain a silent spectator.

Secondly, the issue before the Special Bench is not whether just a temple existed on the site at any time but whether a temple commemorating the birth-site of Ram Chandrajī stood in 1528 and was demolished to build the Babari Masjid thereon. But the more important issue is whether the Muslim community was in possession of the Babari Masjid on 21-22 December, 1949 night, before the idols were unlawfully introduced thereon

Shahabuddin Welcomes BJP Statement

Letter to Sunil Shastri, 12 October, 2000

I have read with appreciation your statement that the BJP shall respect the decision of the Supreme Court on the Babari Masjid Question and that the announcement of a date for the construction of the proposed Mandir in Ayodhya on Babari Masjid site shall constitute contempt of court.

First, to point out an inaccuracy, the title suit is not being heard by the Supreme Court but by the Special Bench of the Allahabad High Court and the Supreme Court shall allocate land for the construction of the proposed temple in the light of the decision of the High Court on the question of title.

Second, the Babari Masjid Movement Coordination Committee requests your party, as the leader of the coalition at the Centre and in UP, ask those Governments stop the VHP from continuously indulging in denigration of the Supreme Court, defiance of the Rule of Law and disrespect to the Constitution and from threatening to take the law in its own hands and inciting the masses.

The BJP, as a member of the Sangh Parivar, should also ask the RSS to put a brake on the VHP.

BJP Government and the Ram Mandir Editorial, The New Age

... Not only the preparation for ... construction ... are on but the VHP leadership is taking very strident and aggressive positions... Recently newspapers have carried reports that heavy cranes have been transported to Ayodhya to start the construction work...

VHP leader Onkar Bhave recently announced "We will rake up the issue in such a big way that a situation is created where the government will be compelled to allow the construction of the temple in Ayodhya." Tagodia has claimed that once the conclave of sadhus and sants in January at Allahabad decide the schedule for construction, nothing would stop VHP from constructing the temple.

Government's response to all these aggressive statements is that it will intervene only if construction activities create any law and order problem. This is a deceitful statement...

What happened in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 was not just demolition of a five hundred year old mosque... By mobocracy, the hoodlums of Sangh Parivar betrayed their utter contempt for the rule of law.

Once again they are adopting the same strategy, which may plunge the country into a communal holocaust. The threat is too grave and can be ignored at nation's peril...

*With Best
Compliments*

from

**KALEEM
KAWAJA**

**THE ASSOCIATION
OF INDIAN
MUSLIMS OF
AMERICA**

**THE ORGANIZATION
FOR UNIVERSAL
COMMUNAL
HARMONY**

**WASHINGTON D.C.
U.S.A.**

Kashmiri Leader Ghulam Nabi Fai's Seven Points for Restoration of Peace in Kashmir

The topic, "Kashmir: Is there a chance for Peace?" is the most urgent and the most important not only because it concerns the ... people of Kashmir but because it touches the lives and future of more than 1 billion people of South Asia that is home to one fifth of the total human race.

The dispute over Kashmir is not insoluble through peaceful procedures. It appears to be so only because the obduracy of one of the parties – India – is encouraged by the apathy of the world outside...

I ... propose seven points to be considered by all parties to the dispute Governments of Pakistan and India and the Kashmir leadership (All Parties Hurriyat Conference), if peace needs to be restored in Kashmir.

- The Kashmir dispute must not be ... solved militarily. The presence of over 700,000 Indian military and paramilitary forces has made the life of an ordinary Kashmiri like hell. There can be no progress in talks if they are not accompanied by practical measures to restore an environment of non-violence in Indian Occupied Kashmir... All military activities must come to an end.
- There cannot be and should not be any conditions from any party, other than commitment to negotiations. Conditions like the talks within the Indian Constitution will never let launch a peace process.
- All parties to the dispute must get seriously engaged in search of a final settlement. The talks can only be useful if they reflect a sense of urgency and prepare the ground for an earnest effort to frame a step-by-step plan of settlement. Mere continuance of talks – and that too, at a leisurely pace – will, in no way defuse the situation...
- The neutral outside mediation has to be considered. Since bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan have proven sterile for over half a century... Third party mediation and intervention is absolutely essential to resolve the conflict and save the entire region from a nuclear holocaust. The United States and the United Nations (or) alternatively, a person of international standing like ... Nelson Mandela could be appointed either by the US or by the UN as a mediator to facilitate the negotiations...
- We do not need to invoke principles because, principles can easily be twisted and they can lend themselves to various interpretations. But the principles that are involved in the Kashmir dispute shall remain the guiding force in any final settlement. **It is the inherent right of the people of all zones of Kashmir to decide their future according to their own will and that it is impossible to ascertain the will of the people of Kashmir except through a fair and impartial plebiscite,**

free from any condition of coercion, intimidation or compulsion.

- Since we are concerned at this time with setting a stage for settlement rather than the shape the settlement will take, ... it is both untimely and harmful to indulge in, or encourage, controversies about the most desirable solution... Raising of quasi-legal or pseudo-legal questions during the preparatory phase about the final settlement ... only serves to befog the issue and to convey the wrong impression that the dispute is too complex to be resolved...
- Last and perhaps the deciding factor is that the peace will not come to Kashmir without justice and justice shall not prevail without sacrifices.

Each party to the dispute will have to be ready to make some concessions and compromises to find a lasting solution of the long awaited tragic dispute.

What can the international community do to advance the peace enterprise... The international community needs to understand that the solution to the sufferings and pain in Kashmir is both urgent and vital...

(Source: The Greater Kashmir, 18 September, 2000)

The K-Word Bind Editorial, Indian Express, 18 Sept., 2000

... Why are Indians so afraid of the K-word being mentioned in international fora? Ditto for that related I-word, internationalisation. These fears could have been rationally explained in the mid-nineties – for example, when Clinton himself famously clubbed Bosnia and Kashmir – when residual Cold War distrust and a still robust US-Pak strategic engagement evoked fears of borders being redrawn. But post-Kargil, they make little sense. In fact, it can be argued that internationalisation would be in India's interest.

Post-Lahore it is clear that even the grandest and most accommodating of gestures by New Delhi will not elicit from Islamabad matching sincerity; hence other spheres of influence have to be tapped if Pakistan is to be persuaded to give up its ever increasing support to cross-border terrorism. Significantly, with last summer's 50-day war rendering Kashmir almost synonymous with nuclear flashpoint, the international mainstream is incredibly wary of any attempt to redraw borders in South Asia. Take, for instance, the first component of Clinton's four-R recipe for a more peaceful and tranquil subcontinent: respect for the Line of Control.

It is against this backdrop that the success of the Vajpayee visit in addressing the Pakistan-sponsored violence in Kashmir and other parts of India must be measured... India and the US are also to convene a meeting in New Delhi to discuss ways and means to counter terrorism... □

Rajmohan Gandhi on Understanding Kashmir Problem

(To) refresh our understanding of the problems signified by Kashmir. Let me ask a few questions...

* Is the status quo acceptable? The question is not about long-established line of control becoming permanent borders, which many in India and some in Pakistan might accept.

The status quo here means life as it is currently lived in Kashmir... To any normal person, this status quo is unacceptable.

* Is better governance the way out? To some in India, better governance in Kashmir means handing over the state, or the Valley, to army rule. Others see it in terms of a clean, development-oriented administration, with or without 'autonomy'.... Provide (it) back (it) up with firm security measures, and the militants will be isolated. Will better governance isolate the militants and drain Azadi of its appeal? It might. Will it restrain the Pakistanis who back, or enter as, the militants? Probably not. But the hard fact is that New Delhi is not capable of providing better governance in Kashmir...

* Do Kashmiris have a genuine grievance? This is a question that India's citizens and rulers prefer not to face. From time to time some things are acknowledged. Yes, some elections in J&K were rigged; yes, New Delhi has at times foisted pliable Governments in Srinagar; yes, corruption has estranged Kashmiris. But there is no admission of, let alone discussion about, the Kashmiris' deepest grievance, which is that their inclusion in India in 1947 was the Maharaja's decision, not their choice... In Kashmir, New Delhi went back on early commitments it gave (not just to the UN but also to the people of Kashmir) that the state's future would be for its people to decide.

The hurt caused by the denial of their right to choose their future and the non-fulfillment of New Delhi's solemn word might have been healed by a just, sensitive and imaginative administration in J&K. But this could not be provided, and we have seen that it remains a distant dream. It follows that the Kashmiris have had, and continue to nurse, a real and deep grievance.

There are other facts too about Kashmir: the expulsion of the Pandits ... the heartless killing of many cornered Hindus and Sikhs in the Valley and in Muslim-majority parts of Jammu... Forgotten or remembered, facts are facts, and Kashmir-related grievances are not the monopoly of the Valley's Muslims.

* Are Kashmir's Muslims united? The reference here is not to the varied ethnicities, sects and languages among the Muslims of Indian Kashmir, not to mention the Muslims of Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Gilgit and Baltistan in Pakistani Kashmir...

... There is no evidence to suggest that Kashmir's Muslims have incorporated, in their political life, the ingredients of unity. The Hizbullah, the numerous constituents of Hurriyat and Farooq Abdullah's

National Conference may be the main players among the Muslims of Indian Kashmir, but they are not the only ones...

The Kashmiri militants, whether based in the Valley or in Pakistan, do not seem to be aware that if the dream of an independent Islamic Kashmir were ever to come true, it could be followed by the nightmare of an Afghanistan in the Valley.

* Do Indians have grievances in relation to Kashmir? ... Some of India's deepest feelings are in fact locked into the India-Pakistan-Kashmir relationship.

These feelings are not about cross-border terrorism. That in the Forties, a majority of the Muslims of the subcontinent subscribed to the two-nation theory is a deeper grievance, which sits on an even deeper grievance. That grievance, from the Hindu angle the most basic of all in the India-Pakistan and Hindu-Muslim relationships (the two are different yet overlapping), has to do with the violence over time to Hindu sentiments.

It is not just that the Hindu memory retains images of past desecrations. Every time a modern and zealous Muslim, whether Pakistani, Kashmiri or Indian, speaks arrogantly or superficially in relation to Hindus and Hinduism, the old Hindu grievance is given new life...

* If all these things are true, if the above answers have a basis, is there anything that an individual can do? The answer depends on who the individual is. A Kashmiri militant can ask himself or herself whether, given the Indian sentiment, violence or non-violence is the more intelligent way, and whether, even for restoring trust within militant ranks, a frank non-violent strategy is not more likely to work.

A Pakistani can ask himself or herself whether there is a step that might touch the heart of Indians and influence the Indian position? Pakistanis know well that Indian political realities will not allow an Indian Prime Minister to modify New Delhi's Kashmir policy. **Only a change in the subcontinent's political climate can permit it.** Such changes are rare but not unknown to history...

(Gandhi) failed to prevent Partition. That failure, for which he paid with his life, should not blind us to an interesting fact. From August 1947, when India and Pakistan came into being, to January 30, 1948, when he was killed, Gandhi thought, spoke and acted as if he belonged to both nations, to the subcontinent as a whole. He thought of Pakistanis too as "my people".

Whosoever reflects on Kashmir and on the Indo-Pak scene, whether it is Vajpayee, Advani or Musharraf, a leader of one of J&K's numerous groups or an 'ordinary' citizen of India or Pakistan, the reflection may be aided by recalling the examples of Gandhi and the faces of the children and women of today's Kashmir — their misery rather than their identity.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 25 September, 2000)

Amitabh Mattoo On Trifurcation Proposal

... There is a dangerous new tendency, backed by powerful forces, that is demanding a trifurcation of the main regions of the state ... into separate administrative units. Posing as an imaginative solution, this demand, if conceded, could lead to violent social disruptions in the state and create a communal polarisation that would not just irretrievably destroy the cultural and social fabric of the state, but have dire consequences for communal relations in the rest of India...

The most important (fact) is the widespread feeling within Jammu and Leh of deprivation as well as political and economic discrimination by politicians from Kashmir. While this feeling of deprivation may have some grounds, it is being exploited by sectarian political groups... They argue that separation from Kashmir will ensure better governance, more economic opportunities and a greater share of political power for Jammu and Leh besides helping them to distance themselves from the militancy. In its most extreme form, ideologues of this demand suggest that it is in the national interest to limit the area of operations of the security forces.

This logic is dangerous for at least four reasons. First, trifurcation will destroy the composite identity of the state, which has existed as one unit since 1846, and send a dangerous message to the whole nation... Second, it will most probably lead to a transfer of Muslims from various parts of Jammu and also Doda Rajouri and Poonch, assuming that the whole province is made into a separate state. Finally, it will lead to such deep communal polarisation that bloody communal riots will inevitably follow.

Two factors have fuelled these regional tensions. First is the Regional Autonomy Committee (RAC) report released by the state government in April 1999 (which) recommends the reconstitution of Jammu and Kashmir's existing provinces into eight new ones. The most controversial part of the recommendations is the manner in which Jammu province is sought to be broken up along communal lines. All Muslim majority areas are sought to be detached from Jammu ostensibly because they share a different ethno-linguistic character...

The second is the controversial Kashmir Study Group Report, *Kashmir: A Way Forward*, released in February 2000... Pains-taking in its details, the report suggests, as one of its plans, the creation of a hypothetical Kashmiri state, sovereign but without an international personality, which includes not only the Kashmir Valley, but also Doda and potentially Gool Gulab Garh tahsil of Udhampur as well as Poonch and Rajouri (all within Jammu) and even Kargil. While the report argues that areas outside the Valley have been included because these areas are imbued with the cultural traditions of Kashmir, it is no coincidence that all parts included are Muslim majority areas...

Regional harmony ... cannot be ensured through partitions, but through a decentralisation and devolution of financial and economic power that will treat the panchayat as the primary unit of governance...

(Also) the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley is

Khushwant Singh On Autonomy Proposal

The essence of democracy is to accommodate different people's views as far as possible provided they do not hurt other people or interests of the country as a whole. It is clear as daylight that people of Kashmir are not one people but three divided by religion and language and have three distinct opinions about their future. Ladakhis are predominantly Buddhist and want Union Territory status; people of Jammu are predominantly Hindu and do not wish to change their existing relationship with the rest of the country; people of the Valley are predominantly Muslim and want more autonomy to run their own affairs.

We cannot reconcile these three disparate views if we treat Jammu, the Valley and Ladakh as one unit. If Farooq Abdullah and his National Conference want more autonomy, they cannot ride roughshod over the views of Ladakhis and Jammuites who do not want it.

Most states have been demanding more autonomy for a long time, much before the demand of Kashmir became strident. As soon as Dr. Abdullah had a resolution passed in its favour by the Kashmir Assembly, Akalis in Punjab began to clamour for it and Subhas Ghising revived the call for a separate, autonomous Gorkhaland. Undoubtedly, similar demands will erupt in different parts of the country.

The Central Government should have been prepared for this development. Its thinking on the subject has been very confused and often contradictory. At one time when Farooq raised the issue, ex-Prime Minister Narasimha Rao responded with great generosity. "Sky is the limit", he proclaimed. But no sooner Kashmiris spelt out what they wanted, the Central Government cried "foul" and vetoed their move. It is wrong in thinking that giving more autonomy to the states will lead to disintegration of the country. On the contrary, a truly federal government will strengthen the country's unity. This has been fully established by the experience of Canada, the United States and Australia.

I am also convinced that there can be no final solution of the Kashmir problem without the cooperation of Pakistan. Far too much innocent blood has been shed in this senseless conflict and much bad blood created between the two countries. We must break out of the vicious circle of accusation and counter-accusation and help set up government in the Valley which will ensure rehabilitation and safety of life and property of non-Muslim minorities. It should have power to negotiate terms with Pakistan by which Pakistani trade and bona fide tourists can enter the Valley. The only Indian who is strong enough to head such a state is Farooq Abdullah. He is not only India's best bet but also the only bet. I think he will also be acceptable to Pakistan.

(Source: *The Nation and the World*, 1 September, 2000)

crucial for the revitalisation of the traditions of pluralism and communal harmony...

(Source: *The Times of India*, 6 October, 2000)

[The author is chairperson, Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, JNU]

Harish Khare on Stalemate in Kashmir

... The landscape of violence remains entirely familiar, entirely comprehensible; yet there is that tiredness with guns and vendors of violence...

(One can) see the reality of the Kashmiri people's hunger for normality and for rebuilding their devastated economy, and for rediscovering the lost social harmony. Civil society seems increasingly anxious to get on with the job of peaceful reconstruction.

The markets are bursting at the seams... There is a construction boom. The buildings ... torched in the early 1990s ... have been converted into jazzy shopping arcades, the new monuments to middle class yearnings. For the less well-placed, pirated cassettes of Bombay films are available with the vendors at Lal Chowk, the heart of downtown Srinagar... The marriage season is on and throughout the Valley elaborate wazvaans (formal Kashmiri dinners) are being hosted...

There are other signs of normality too. An Urdu mushaira took place in Srinagar after a gap of 14 years. An all-India police football tournament was organised in Srinagar and, according to one local newspaper, about 20,000 people attended the final. Banks have relaxed loaning norms; a lok adalat in Bandipora settled 49 civil and criminal cases in a day; the district administration in Srinagar advertises in newspapers the days of "public hearing" of grievances... Today, (there are) flooded with demands for ration shops, water connections, sewage, and other civic amenities"...

Amid these outbreaks of normality, violence remains unabated. Unsentimental strategists continue to plan and execute violence with clinical detachment. There seems to be an unending supply of militant cadres, young and impressionable, only too eager to be tutored in the art of bomb-making and planting IEDs, trained to handle all the accoutrements of a terrorist. On the other hand, up at the army brigade headquarters, excited colonels and excitable majors plan on how to hunt, trap and kill these practitioners of violence; the "agencies" on both sides of the LoC are busy bribing and counter-bribing the "guides" who chaperone clutches of "boys" safely across to the nearest bus stop in the Valley. The thoroughly brutalised brass on both sides keep on experimenting with young lives. The people of Kashmir, in whose name every antagonist pretends to be shedding blood, are thoroughly tired of this ritualised violence.

While the "boys" and uniformed men and officers continue to lose their lives, the political crowd merrily keeps on trying to encash these deaths. Individually each of the "movement" leaders would want to maximise his leverage and position in any peace initiative; but collectively the Hurriyat Conference remains a divided house, and can agree only on sabotaging the peace...

Farooq Abdullah and his National Conference crowd would publicly welcome the peace process, but privately resent New Delhi trying to talk to those officially branded

terrorists, that too at the expense of "Farooq Saheb", who had stood by India in good times and bad.

The Congress(I) remains defunct as ever... Among the non-Hurriyat voices, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his intrepid daughter, Mehbooba Mufti, continue to keep up the democratic discourse. For now, there is an elaborate stalemate. Unless the "outsiders" somehow intervene to unhinge this structured stalemate, there is no respite from clinical, uninvolved violence... Even the die-hard pro-Pakistan Geelani cannot be delighted about the latest ISI stratagem of putting the Islamabad-based, newly-devised Kashmir Jihad Committee, with Qazi Hussain of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami as the final word in "policy", leaving only operational autonomy to the Hizbul Mujahideen. The 12-member Kashmir Jihad Committee, formed on September 1 at Mansora (in POK), is a device to virtually dry up the Hizb's political options.

... The Vajpayee Government is unable to think its way out of the stalemate; it neither has the political leeway nor the imagination to put its past behind it and to strike a bold compromise. That puts the onus on the Kashmiris themselves to see how best to salvage their lives and inner space from the encroachments made by the security forces and the (boys).

(Source: The Hindu, 1 October, 2000)

The 'K' Factor

Editorial, Hindsutan Times, 15 Sept., 2000

... It is possible that India's case for refusing to talk to Pakistan on this 'central' subject is not as widely appreciated as New Delhi would like. This is undoubtedly the reason why the 'K' word keeps cropping up from time to time. Yet, India has a perfectly valid argument to explain its reluctance... As long as the jihadis call the shots in Islamabad ... there is little chance of a forward movement in Indo-Pakistani relations, even if this is what the US wants.

Extract from Joint Letter of 21 US Congressmen

... "The current Indian rulers and their private Hindu armies have massacred, murdered, tortured, bombed, raped, kidnapped, terrorized, beaten and burned innocent Christians in India... "India has also committed similar acts of terrorism against its Sikh and Muslim minorities, among others... India has killed more than 70,000 Kashmiri Muslims and destroyed the most revered mosques in Kashmir. Tens of thousands of Sikhs, Kashmiris, Christians and others are being held as political prisoners". "Mr. President, American cannot just watch these atrocities happen. We call on you to declare India a terrorist nation. We further urge an end to US aid to India until human rights are enjoyed by all people there. And we ask the United States to support self-determination for all the peoples and nations of the sub-continent. Let the light of freedom shine everywhere in South Asia."

(Source: The Muslim Observer, 7-31 July, 2000)

Muslim Women's Forum's Memorandum to President of India, 31 August, 2000

... The National Commission for Women's public hearings of Muslim women, held throughout the country in 1998-99, have revealed that, by and large, these women receive very little relief under the 1986 Act...

This survey has reflected several lacunae/gaps in the 1986 Act which throw up three vital questions for consideration:

- i) ... The amount and duration of maintenance payable to a divorced wife;
- ii) Maintenance for children until attainment of majority or only for two years afterbirth, as provided in the 1986 Act;
- iii) Burden of maintenance left to the relatives and the Wakf Boards.

... The Muslim Women's Forum met at New Delhi on 23 August, 2000 to deliberate upon the issues concerning Muslim women... The Forum resolved that it was time that these women spoke about matters that concerned their lives. The Forum decided to act as a pressure group of individuals, across the country, to give Muslim women a voice. It further resolved that it would not be willing to accept anything less than what has truly been given to Muslim women in their religion...

Upon such deliberations, the Forum resolved to appeal to you with an earnest request to intervene and cause your government to bring a legislation in Parliament to extend to Muslim women all such rights and entitlements that are their legitimate due **in line with the true Quranic injunctions and constitutional guarantees...**

Neelofar Saeed Akhtar, Advocate On Reform of Personal Law

There is a need of:

1. Codification of Islamic Law by legal experts, religious scholars and Ulama.
2. Setting up of Shari'ah courts/Muslim Matrimonial Courts where legal and religious experts and scholars having deep knowledge in Islamic law be appointed as Judges. (For example, Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court or District Matrimonial Court) and which be recognized and given statutory authority.
3. Establishment of an Arbitration Council with statutory powers to deal with matrimonial matters. Such council should have at least one religious scholar and one legal expert.
4. Bar to second marriage by the husband without the permission/intervention of the Arbitration Council.
5. Introduction of a model Nikahanama by authorised institutions, boards or councils, in which providing for delegation of divorce, arbitration in matrimonial disputes and bar on triple talaq.

(Paper presented to I.F.W.L. Conference, Bangalore, 28-20 Dec., 1999)

Madras High Court

On Registration of Muslim Marriage

M. Jainoon, Appellant v. M. Ammanulla Khan and others, Respondents.

K.P. SIVASUBRAMANIAM, J.

Muslim Law – Customs – Muslims in particular area establishing and developing practice of registering a marriage – Such practice assumes character of a customary right giving rise to enforceable legal right...

It is true that Muslim Law does not require registration of marriages. But it is one thing to say that the Personal Law does not require registration and another thing to say that Muslims belonging to a particular place have adopted a custom of registering the marriages in a Pallivasal or Jamath. It cannot be contended that the Personal Law prohibits registration of marriages. The Personal Law merely lays down that registration was not required for a valid marriage... Registration by Jamath, in course of time, develops into a custom, a valid custom which is not violative of the Personal Law... The practice of registration of marriages ... certainly ripens into a customary right... It (is) not a mere contractual right. Therefore, it cannot be said that there is neither a civil nor a legal right which can be enforced...

(Source: AIR 2000 Madras 381)

Raashid Paul

On Inheritance Rights of Muslim Women

(In) Kashmir (Muslim) women are discriminated when it comes to the grant of inheritance rights as per the Islamic Shariat. According to a recent research conducted by the Sociology Department of Kashmir University, "like in other areas of life, women in Kashmir are facing severe discrimination (in) inheritance rights... The discrimination is an age old practice in Kashmir and the (survey indicates) the degree of continuity in this traditional practice..."

(Source: The Greater Kashmir, 8 September, 2000)

M. Saleem Pandit

On Rights to 'Citizenship' of Kashmir

... If (a Kashmiri woman) marries a non-Kashmiri, she forfeits her "citizenship" and the right to inheritance. However,... if a Kashmiri man marries a non-Kashmiri, the bride is automatically granted "citizenship".

A legacy of the past, this policy, patently gender-biased, was practised by the Dogra rulers for over 100 years and accepted under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution at the time of the state's accession to India. The law is part of the J&K Constitution under Section 6.

Besides being disinherited and losing state citizenship, a Kashmiri girl marrying a non-local also loses out on another count: she cannot buy property in J&K... The law has spawned a thriving racket. Fake certificates can be had for a price... Incongruent and politically incorrect though it may be in these days of gender equality... Kashmiris seem to endorse disinheritance of girls marrying outside.

(Source: The Times of Indian, 1 October, 2000)

Supreme Court On Wakf Alal Aulad

Sajjadanashin Sayed Md. B.E. Edr. (D) by L.Rs.,
Appellants v. Musa Dadabhai Ummer and others,
Respondents.

M. JAGANNADHA RAO AND R.C. LAHOTI, JJ.

... While the law of public Wakfs as it stood in 1928 did not take within its meaning a Wakf where the founder of the Wakf could spend the income for the maintenance of himself and his family members after expending for the purposes of Wakf, the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950 widened the definition of public Wakf even to situations where under the grant the founder could expend the income for the maintenance of himself and his family members.

The definition of Wakf in Section 2(19) of the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950 covered a permanent dedication by a person professing Islam not only for the purposes which Islamic law considered as 'religious' and 'charitable' but also which it considered as 'pious' such as where provision was made for the benefit of the members of the settler's family or of the founder and his family members, who were poor. Section 2(19) covered even a Wakf such as the one described in Section 3 of the Mussalman Wakf Validating Act, 1913 under which any benefit was claimable by the founder, his family, children and descendants – provided that the ultimate benefit in such cases expressly or impliedly was reserved for the poor or for any other purpose recognised by the Muslim Law as religious, pious or charitable purpose of a permanent character. Section 9 of the Bombay Act included charitable purposes also.

(Source: AIR 2000 Supreme Court 1238)

Bombay High Court on Injunction Against District Wakf Officer

District Wakf Officer, Nanded, Petitioner v.
Jeelanikhan Roshankhan and another, Respondents.

V.K. BARDE, J.

Wakf Act (29 of 1954), Section 56 – Suit for injunction against District Wakf Officer – Notice under Section 56 not served on Wakf Board – Suit not filed against Board nor any allegation made against board – Suit filed against Officers of Board in personal capacity who were causing obstruction to lawful possession of Wakf property by plaintiff taken on lease from Board... Notice under Section 56 to Board not necessary – Suit maintainable.

(Source: AIR 2000 Bombay 340)



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On Destabilisation of the University

IUML President Banatwalla to HM, 12 Sept, 00

... There are well-founded apprehensions that the Aligarh Muslim University is being continuously defamed and maligned by certain anti-minority mischievous elements... There is a systematized campaign to tarnish the fair image of the University by blowing the events out of proportion, leveling baseless allegations and presenting the University in negative terms...

Unfortunately, thoughtless actions of our law-enforcing agencies, too, encourage these ... elements in promoting bias against the University...

There is considerable unrest and agitation in the University campus. The AMU Staff Association has also come out against the highhandedness of the concerned government departments. Despite high sentiments, discipline is being well maintained ... to protect the academic atmosphere.

... I urge upon to kindly intervene in the matter, meet the students, staff and the University authorities, ensure that due justice is done and frustrate the attempts to destabilize the University through baseless, malicious propaganda (and take) strict action ... against the governmental agencies who have acted in the face of and in violation of all healthy norms of procedure (and stop the) harassment of students.

AMU's Image

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 18 Sept., 2000

Just as it will be absurd to believe that the Banaras Hindu University is a bastion of patriotism, similarly it will be fatuous to suggest that the Aligarh Muslim University is a den of subversion. Yet, it is undeniable that the political thrust of some of the recent majoritarian campaigns, especially in the Hindi belt ... has endowed the AMU with an image which its students and teachers may consider unfair. Unfortunately, some recent events have tended to substantiate this troublesome reputation (and) have partly confirmed misgivings about the university's functioning.

That there will be few rotten apples in an institution comprising thousands of students is obvious. Equally obvious is the enormous difficulty faced by the authorities in keeping a watch on unsavoury activities.

... It will not be besides the point to say that those in charge of institutions whose reputation, for whatever reason, is facing a threat should be specially careful to redeem its honour...

(Contd. from Page 495)

from the case of Jewish-American citizens. After all, their punyabhooni also lies way outside the borders of USA, yet over time Christian Americans did not only learn to get over old ... acrimonies; Jewish Americans have for long decades now been at the heart of some of the most

Akshaya Mukul

On Saffron Hate for AMU

Hatred comes easily to the saffron youth brigade of this city. It seems they have been trained to hate – a hate that gnaws at them like the hunger of an animal waiting to be fed. Barely into their teens, they are part of the Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM) (as RSS outfit), Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena and Vishwa Hindu Parishad. And the ongoing controversy at AMU has given them an opportunity to add fuel to an already volatile situation.

Though there is nothing new in their demands – remove AMU's minority status, downsize it, closely monitor the movements of its teachers and students, allow police to arrest anyone from campus at will and, if need be, close it forever – what is alarming is the prescription suggested by them. Dinesh Mishra, head of Hindu Jagran Manch, Aligarh, says, "Anyone from AMU even suspected to be involved in anti-national activities should either be killed through encounters or be hanged".

Though these organisations had no role to play in AMU's problem this time, they now want to make the most of it. And the obvious thing to do is to spread rumours. For instance, when Intelligence Bureau's Rajan Sharma was manhandled by students in the campus, the HJM spread a rumour that Sharma is on his deathbed. The few scratch marks on his back were intentionally read as 'Allah-o-Akbar' and soon the entire city knew of it. By the time it was denied by Aligarh district magistrate Deo Dutt, passions were running high.

Similarly, the HJM came up with a press release saying that Mobin Ahmad's diary had the phone number of Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin. Soon Aligarh was talking about a grand conspiracy being hatched against Hindus in far-flung Islamabad. On checking, it was found that the Salahuddin in Mobin's diary was actually the former chief of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), who now resides in Dubai.

But all this would not have been possible without the local media, which willingly highlights these rumours. And the administration rarely reacts to their canards. In fact, as Priyavrat Mishra, a functionary of the Bajrang Dal, points out, a few senior officials have privately encouraged them to mount the offensive.

... Dinesh Mishra doesn't rule out communal riots if the "situation aggravates further". The Hindu Jagran Manch has publicly declared that if the 12 AMU students named in the FIR for attacking Rajan Sharma are not handed over to the police by the university administration, the task should be given to them...

(Source: The Times of India, 17 September, 2000)

outstanding achievements of American society. The Indian Muslims have an even better claim historically. They would like to see that recognised.

(Source: The Hindu, 2 October, 2000)

[The writer teaches English Literature at Delhi University]

Palash Kumar on Provocative Moves against the AMU

... Life on the campus and in the city appears normal but the fear is deep-rooted. The students keep to their hostel rooms or classrooms and at night, they take turns to keep vigil. It all began with the arrest of students Mobin and Maroof on September 3. While Maroof was arrested in Agra, Mobin was picked up in what the police call a "sting" operation. Around 6 p.m. Mobin, a student of the Unani College, was crossing Anoopshahr Road across his hostel, Habib Hall, when he was dragged into a Tata Sumo and taken away. Police say he was carrying half-a-kilo of RDX. The students vehemently dispute this. "RDX is not a packet of biscuit that you had carry in your pocket", they say...

When local dailies flashed headlines like 'ISI racket busted in AMU'... 'Terrorists nabbed on AMU campus'... 'AMU becoming hub of terrorist activities', the mood changed.

"There are 38 per cent non-Muslims in this university and you say there is an ISI camp running (on) the campus. During the World Cup after India beat Pakistan in the quarterfinals, the campus was surrounded by the RAF at night. They expected a riot. They came inside and found us dancing and celebrating... Why is our loyalty to India always put on test? One Mobin is caught and the entire university is branded a terrorist camp?" (asks a Muslim student)...

The saga did not end with the arrest of Mobin and Maroof. On September 5 morning, an Intelligence Bureau officer, Rajan Sharma, entered Habib Hall on the campus, walked into a room reading a newspaper. He was on a mission to gather details... But it turned out to be a nightmare Sharma will not forget.

Some students spotted him and asked him who he was. When he evaded a straight answer, he was roughed up. Police said they kept Sharma in a room for five hours, broke his jaw and hit him with a hard object on his back.

The students, whose numbers swelled by then, also extracted a written confession from (him), saying that Sharma was innocent and the RDX was planted by the police.

The students ... eventually ... agreed to release him at a press conference... At the press conference in which the BJP and BSP were present, Sharma repeated his version. Here too Sharma, with a broken jaw, address a press conference within hours of the incident, the students say. The police are silent on this.

On the following day, the local media was full of raving about the incident. Some even said that the students drilled "Allah-o-Akbar" on Sharma's back. Other reports said Sharma's confession contained the word "Allah". Both the district and the university denied the news reports but the police are silent on this.

On September 12, the police demanded that the university identify 12 students involved in the incident. The university said that 12 students had long been expelled by the university and the other two had actually helped Sharma,

a fact admitted by the DM. The remaining four were promptly suspended by the university and have been declared absconders...

By now, tempers were soaring among the students. They formed a Struggle Committee but decided to protest peacefully without disrupting classes.

On September 7, around 15,000 students took out a silent poster demonstration, each one was carrying a poster. They squatted on both sides of the University Road and listened to speeches by C.M. Ibrahim and others... The demonstration ended with the students burning the Pakistani flag and an effigy of the ISI...

The students, however, refused to let the issue be politicized. Subsequent protests were minus political leaders... Some of the hand-made posters at the rally reflect the plight of the minority community, always looking to displaying their loyalties: 'Neither Fascist nor Communal but only Secular'... 'Stop Mental and Physical Torture'... 'We are Indians'... 'We are Not ISI Agents'...

The police asked for a closure of the university and a thorough search. The executive council of the university turned down both the proposals and instead offered a specific search. For three days, policemen in plain clothes entered the campus and conducted the search in some of the rooms, but found nothing. One significant point during the whole episode was that all the while there was nearly 80 per cent attendance in all departments.

The story is over but the pangs of pain still remain among the students. Embittered by the insinuations and discrimination, some of them have now begun openly defending Mobin...

(Source: The Week, 1 October, 2000)

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Shahabuddin on Educational Rights of Minorities

Reply to the Letter to S. Vasantha on 12 September, 2000

Please refer to your letter of 26 August, 2000 received today regarding the right of the minorities to establish educational institutions of their choice. The question you have raised is not new. This aspect was debated in the Constituent Assembly. Also, this is one of the issues now pending before the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

However, many minorities anywhere in the world, even in the USA, enjoy the right to open a general educational institution for their children: first, to supplement the educational facility available otherwise; secondly, to educate its children in the proper cultural environment, and thirdly, to provide religious instruction for that purpose.

No Muslim educational institution has the authority to reduce the entry requirements for its candidates. This concession is not available to any Muslim or OBC's. It is only available to SC/ST.

All Minority educational institutions are subject to the same academic, administrative and legal requirements as the government institutions or the institutions established by any other community. So if a particular management misbehaves, it is for the law to take its course. It is for public-spirited citizens like you to report any misdemeanor to the Government and the university concerned.

The members of the minority communities are as much Indian as the members of the majority community. Even Hindus are not just Hindus, they are also Tamils, Telugus, Punjabis, Marathis etc., they are also Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas, Yadavs etc. So, all of us apart from being Indian have other identities. All the multiple identities can co-exist harmoniously.

As for the National Urdu University in Hyderabad, the object is to promote Urdu as a vehicle of higher learning. This is a legitimate aspiration of the Urdu-speaking people. Apart from Hindi, Urdu is the only pan-Indian national language; the official language of the J&K and the second official language in Bihar, AP and Delhi but unlike other MIL's, it has a homeland State. So the NUU is to save the Urdu community as a whole. Urdu in any case, is not a foreign language or even the language only of Muslims. I do not think the NUU has any plan to establish technical or professional faculties. At the present, it is struggling with the basic courses for the undergraduate level.

I appreciate your sympathy for the Muslim youth. I would suggest that given the educational and economic backwardness of the Muslim community as a whole, you should press the government to declare it s 'Backward Class' and give it a proportionate quota in higher education and in at least public employment. I assure you

that if there is reservation for Muslims in all government institutions, the demand for Muslim educational institutions will go down, except for purely religious instruction, as you desire.

Incidentally, I would personally like the ambit of Article 29 and 30 to be expanded to included all communities, majority or minority. And please remember, even the Hindu community is a minority in some states and in other states at some lower levels.

Prof. Zahoor Mohammad Khan On Remedial Parameters for Muslim Uplift

...The paradox of their increasing participation and constantly downward curve in areas of development can be resolved only through remedial action plan, prepared and executed by the Indian Muslim as a community.

The starting point of this action plan is to comprehend the nature, dynamics and parameters of national development in all sectors and to create infrastructure and linkages with different agents development... There has to be a committed effort to set up NGOs for preparing blueprints in different spheres ...on priority basis... These NGOs must develop their own information resources and permanent think tanks to continue with their work...

One encouraging development is the emergence of professional elite from local to international level. These levels have to be interlinked in a meaningful fashion.... There should be a chain of modern financial institutions to guide and help Muslim artisans and workmen to be engaged in up-coming industries and trade.

There has to be identification and constant articulation of emerging Muslim elite in India that must forge meaningful ties with lower strata of society... Confidence-building measures should be initiated at all levels... Opportunities provided by Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia and Jamia Hamdard ... must be utilized to maximum extent... There should be a chain on counseling and career guidance centers.

... Secularism and democracy ... are actually conditions for survival of Muslims and other minorities in India. Muslims should come forward and launch democratic struggle to save democracy in India. Another important area is to provide justice to scores of marginalized non-Muslim sections of Indian society. The Dalits, backwards, scheduled castes etc. constitute the majority and most of them have started looking to Muslims to come closer to them and evolve common strategy...

... Madarasas ... may be ... revived to act as important centers for community work. These institutions should be modernized...

Kerala High Court

On Economic Criteria for Reservation

P.A. Haridasan, Petitioner v. State of Kerala and others, Respondents.

DR. AR. LAKSHMANAN AND S. SANKARASUBBAN, JJ.

Constitution of India, Articles 14, 16(4) – Appointment – Caste benefit – Economic criteria is not guiding principle for denying benefit if candidate actually belongs to that caste.

The economic criterion is not the guiding principle to deny a person the benefit of Scheduled Caste if he actually belongs to that caste.

The question of caste depends upon the caste in which the person is born. Unless there is evidence to show that a person has given up the membership of a caste and joins some other caste, he should be deemed to be a caste in which he is born. The crucial point is to ascertain the caste at the time of birth...

(Source: AIR 2000 Kerala 313)

Reservation for Women Should

Follow Universal Reservation

Shahabuddin to The Hindu, 12 Oct., 2000

Madhu Kishwar (Representing Women, 12 October, 2000) finally lets the cat out of the bag by seeking legitimization of the idea that women form a social group through reservation in the legislatures. The fact is that women do not form a social group or a community, or a caste, or a class and that they form inseparable and essential parts of as many social groups as distinguishable in human society. Granted they have some common interests, so have many, cutting across barriers of religion, caste, class, but in history there has been no human society, even the most economically and socially homogenous, which had two groups of men and women facing each other!

It is irrelevant to speak of special quotas for every definable category. For a legislature, only the question of representation of all definable social groups is relevant and since 50% of each social group consists of women, there is a case for the representation of women in each group. Whatever the pattern of representation, all women members of legislature – whatever their group or party – are likely to bond together on all matter of common interest, as they do even now, e.g. on the question of reservation for women.

Broadly speaking, equitable representation of all social groups in legislation should be ensured by reservation or by proportional representation and nomination by parties but in Indian condition, given the wide disparities among various social groups, no better placed group should be permitted to take advantage of gender to augment its ranks.

Reservation Until Retirement Against Justice

Editorial, Indian Express, 24 August, 2000

Reservation is a holy cow in this country... It will not be a surprise if the demand made by the Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST) to extend reservation to the judiciary and the armed forces is lapped up by all the parties... (Under recent) amendment ... an SC/ST employee, who enters service on the basis of relaxation in qualification, will continue to get such benefits till he reaches, perhaps, the pinnacle of the service. It is not only against natural justice but also against principles of competition, merit and bureaucratic harmony.

... If relaxation in the qualifying marks for promotion can be granted to SC/ST categories, there is no reason why the backward classes should be left out...

... Nobody pays any heed to the fact that reservation was envisaged by the Constitution as a temporary measure. It's also not insignificant that no caste or group which has benefited from reservation for the last 50 years has stood up to say that reservation has improved its lot and has put it on a level-playing field. Worse, the prospect of the Mandal report being cited to demand reservations now in the private sector as well is too real to be scoffed at.

Shahabuddin's Response

Letter to The Indian Express, 28 August, 2000

Apropos your editorial on the Reservation Policy, I endorse your criticism of the various modalities but I feel that in a state of our dimension and variety and so many vertical and horizontal foci of power and governance, it would be impossible to satisfy all identifiable groups without adopting a universal policy of reservation at all levels for all times – based, of course, on common norms of population and degree of backwardness. Such a policy would have an inbuilt provision of self-limitation, because the degree of backwardness should be measurable and, measured every ten years, the quota will have to be accordingly adjusted. My vision is of an expanding pool of merit and at the same time promoting the aspiration of all groups.

The cry for 'merit' is a cry for the status quo which serves those who are in and who have the power to let in those who are out, grudgingly as an act of grace and not of right.

Let the State's highest priority be to provide universal education as promised in the Constitution. In 5 years, it will throw up the meritorious from all groups.

Such a planned approach will give us both Social Justice and Social Harmony.

National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation, Annual Report, 1998-99 (Extracts)

Corporate Profile

The Corporation was incorporated as a Government company on 30th September, 1994 under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 to promote economic and developmental activities for the "backward Sections" amongst minorities. The Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis have been notified as the national minorities. Preference is given to occupational groups and women. The Corporation extends concessional finance primarily for self-employment schemes. The company in general operates within the framework of guidelines provided by Government of India. At present, loans are being given to members of minorities are notified by the Central Government, whose annual family income is below double the poverty line.

It has been implementing its programmes through State Channelising Agencies (SCA), nominated by respective State Governments against Government Guarantee and has recently adopted, as a parallel strategy, scheme of Micro-financing through reputed NGO's also.

Financial Results/Highlights

During the year under review, excess of income over expenditure has gone up to Rs.6.87 crores and the Reserves and Surplus have increased from Rs.16.69 crores to Rs.23.55 crores registering a growth of 41.10%

(Rs. in Lacs)
As on 31.3.1999

Sources of Funds

Share Capital	14912.24
Share Application Money (pending Allotment)	3200.00
Reserves and Surplus	2354.89
Total	20467.13

The Government of India/States have released Rs.149.1224 crores as share capital contribution since inception... Funds not immediately disbursed for implementation of schemes/projects were invested by the Corporation during short periods keeping in view the guidelines issued by DPE. The interest earned from short-term deposits for 1998-99 was Rs.283.96 lakhs.

Share Capital

The authorized share capital of the Corporation is Rs.500 crores. The contribution earmarked for Central Government has been enhanced upto 60% (from 25%), 26% has been earmarked for State Government/U.T. and 14% for like-minded organisations... Central Government and State Governments have contributed till date 52.33% and 20.86% of their respective shares...

Contributions have been received for the first time from Madhya Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Sanction/Disbursement of Loans

During 1998-99 the Corporation has sanctioned Rs.61.42 crores to 17 SCA's. The cumulative sanction of loan till 31.3.99 was Rs.255.31 crores.

The Corporation disbursed Rs.59.39 crores to 20 SCAs covering over 14000 beneficiaries during 1998-99

... under Micro Financing Scheme... Till July, 1999 the Corporation had received a total of 177 proposals from NGOs... 38 proposals, constituting 19 proposals for Micro Credit (Rs.84.66 lakhs), 15 proposals for Interest Free loan (Rs.20.78 lakhs), 4 proposals for Grant-in-aid (Rs.5.42 lakhs) have been sanctioned. 34 proposals have been disbursed (17 Micro Credit - Rs.57.40 lakhs), (13 Interest Free Loan Rs.10.64 lakhs), (4 Grant-in-Aid - Rs.2.73 lakhs).

Repayments

The Corporation was required to recover an amount of Rs.40.71 crores from 27 SCAs on cumulative basis as on 31.3.1999. out of this, an amount of Rs.35.33 crores has been recovered contributing to a recovery of about 86.80%. The rate of recovery was 64.56% in 1997-98.

In respect of NGOs, Rs.3.49 lakhs have been recovered from 7 NGOs against the outstanding amount of Rs.3.89 lakhs from 9 NGOs...

Recoveries from Beneficiaries

... The Corporation has been advising the SCAs to recruit recovery agents on commission basis who may be ex-servicemen, retired and pensionable government servants, genuine NGOs etc... To facilitate matters, the Corporation is even providing financial support for the purpose under its 1% additional interest margin scheme.

Scheme of Financing

The Corporation is operating three loan schemes viz. Term Loan, Margin Money Loan and Micro Financing Scheme.

Under the Term Loan Scheme, project costing upto Rs.5 lakhs are considered to cover upto 85% of the project cost subject to a maximum of Rs.4,25,000. Interest for loan upto Rs.1 lakh shall be charged @4.5% p.a. with a rebate of 0.5% on timely repayment... For loan above Rs.1 lakh interest shall be charged @ 7.5% p.a. with a rebate of 0.5% p.a. on timely repayment...

The Corporation has also taken the initiative to finance skill development training and technology upgradation of skilled minorities and its marketing...

Among the targeted beneficiaries ... are craftpersons... They need support in marketing channels. Therefore, a beginning is being made by the Corporation to provide such support ... by way of grant ... to a voluntary organisation (to) organize an exhibition-cum-sale in Bangalore... With gathering of experience more such steps would be taken...

Revised Lending Policy

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has come out with a Revised Lending Policy to be implemented from 1.4.1999...

Human Resources: The Corporation has manpower strength of 31 as at 31st March, 1999 out of which 10 belong to SC, 1 belong to ST and 4 belong to OBC...

The post of Chairman (remained vacant) after the expiry of the tenure of Mohd. Hidayatullah Khan...

All India Council of Muslim Economic Upliftment – A Note

AICMEU's Baitul Mal Cooperative Credit Society Ltd.

Capital/Deposit/Loans	As on 31.3.2000
Share Capital	1569030.00
Total Deposits	9544031.97
Total Outstanding Loans	9294682.21

Employment Information and Vocational Guidance

Year	No. of Candidates Registered	No. of Vacancies Registered	Frequency of Candidates sent for Interview	No. of Candidates Secured Jobs
1999	792	391	1279	337

Scholarship

Year	Medical	Engineering	Regular	Continuing	Drop outs	Passed
1999	5	7	12	12	0	0

General Education

... The AICMEU has adopted the J.R. Municipal Secondary School No. 2... After adoption ... not only the number of students has increased from 312 in 1997 to 436 in 1999, but for last two years the School has also got the pride to secure the best result in S.S.C. exams (1998 and 1999) among all 56 Municipal Schools (of all mediums) of Mumbai.

... AICMEU has set up a model of educational institution in a remote village of Gonda, one of the most backward district of northern India. This is a primary school having seven teachers to impart modern, technical and moral education to almost 181 poor rural students... The school is also running tailoring classes to train the girl students.

... The AICMEU has established Technical Institute and Polytechnic ... at different places...

... AICMEU's Technical Institute Cheeta Camp ... has got 89% result in N.C.V.T. trade test Examination, 1999 (and trained 86 students ... in the trades of Air Conditioning/Refrigeration and Electrician and 55 in Tailoring courses.

... Women Polytechnic at Makanpur ... started in June, 1999 ... has trained 7 girls in embroidery work (4 have got job in a factory at Jaipur (and is training) 39 students (at present)...

Centralised Zakat System

... AICMEU's ...Baitul Zakat established in 1990... AICMEU's baitul Zakat tried to educate the zakat payers about the need and importance of centralized zakat system through Imams of 117 local Masjids distributing of 2000 copies of literature...

	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount
Total	160	4,36,309

Medical Services

To meet the basic health education and medical needs

of the poor, particularly Muslims in slums, AICMEU has formed a trust in the name of AICMEU's founder Chairman late Mohammed Yusuf Patel... The team of Medicos and social workers (since) February, 1998, this Trust has organised the ten medical camps and benefitted 5003 persons and established charitable dispensaries at Govandi and Juhu Gali, Andheri.

The experimental dispensary at Juhu Gali, Andheri (has been) closed down. Nevertheless 2335 patients were treated. The AICMEU is compiling a Directory of Medical Service...

Miscellaneous Services

The AICMEU is revising the Director of Islamic Banks in India... Scholarship Guide for Students is also under revision...

It is proposed to collect the addresses of all Urdu medium educational institutions of Maharashtra and publish it in form of a Director...

Muslim Indian Success Story in Bahrain

With the dream ...of starting a trade, Ahmed Ali Dadabhai set sail for Bahrain in 1935, leaving behind the drudgery of farming in Bombay. The villagers from Rajasthan could barely afford to pay for his journey, but by the time he died in 1996 ... the business he had started by selling snacks at a roadside stall had grown into a multi-million-dollar construction and tourism enterprise.

Run by his three sons and grandson, the Dadabhai Group today boasts of being one of Bahrain's biggest business groups. It does not publish profit or turnover figures, but claims it employees around 900 workers...

Dadabhai started off by selling samosas from a stall on capital Manama's main Sheikh Abdullah Road. Two of his sons dropped out of school and joined him.

Qutub Dadabhai, Ahmed Ali's grandson and the company's director, studied marketing in the United States before joining his father's business (of) importing toys from China and (retailing) them...

"In 1978, my father Abbas Dadabhai and his brother Mohammed opened a construction company... Both were school dropouts as my grandfather could not pay their fees".

"They also opened a travel agency, and in 1990 we built the Baisan International Hotel in Bahrain. Since then, the business has grown", Qutub said.

The Dadabhai Group, which owns two hotels, a resort and several other construction and tourism firms, has spent \$2.2 million to set up an institute to train Bahrainis in hotel management and catering. The group ... is ... building a 73-villa resort at a cost of around \$10 million jointly with a UK-based businessman.

(Source: The Indian Express, 14 September, 2000)

Anosh Malekar

On Demons' Dance in Dariapur

The demons continue to haunt Dariapur. For over five hours on September 17, the riot-prone area within the walled city of Ahmedabad witnessed an orgy of killing, looting and arson. Polling for the municipal elections was reduced to a bloodbath as police firing and random stabbing left 8 dead and more than 40 injured.

Confusion reigned supreme over whether the violence was poll-related or communal... The victims, three of whom died on the spot, were all young. One of them ... was a Congress Seva Dal office-bearer and another ... a close relative of a former BJP corporator...

This is a way confirmed the police version that violence broke out following a scuffle between rival political camps. According to Police Commissioner ... some political workers caught a rival partyman indulging in bogus voting and stabbed him. This led to more violence. Dariapur has always been a communal sensitive area. Add to this its reputation for being the hub of anti-socials and bootleggers. Nonetheless, with many eyewitnesses terming the firming "unprovoked", the role of the police is under scrutiny.

The state government, which has announced a compensation of Rs.2 lakh to the families of the victims, has ordered a judicial inquiry. "It is both communal and poll-related, so an inquiry has been ordered", said Minister of State for Home Haren Pandya.

The Congress leadership, meanwhile, is demanding Pandya's resignation for the failure of the police to contain the situation... Senior police officers admitted in private that effective deployment of the police and para-military forces could have helped avoid the killings and arson...

Following the violence, polling was suspended and curfew clamped. However, after September 18 passed peacefully, curfew was relaxed... Union Ministers Manohar Joshi and Suresh Prabha, both Shiv Sena members ... conveyed Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray's "unhappiness over the killing of Hindus" even though half the victims were Muslims. Joshi blamed BJP president Bangaru Laxman's overtures to Muslims for the rise in such violence... Meanwhile, an uneasy calm prevails in the narrow bylanes of Dariapur. (Source: The Week, 1 Oct., 2000)

Not Just 'Minorityism'

Editorial, Hindustan Times, 21 Aug., 2000

The assurance given by L.K. Advani about 'stern action' against those found guilty of instigating attacks on Christians will carry conviction only when the strident propaganda against the community by the BJP's own fraternal outfits comes to an end. There is little doubt that the intense, and quite unprecedented, campaign conducted by these organisations for a year or so has created an atmosphere of suspicion and hate, leading to the acts of intimidation, assault and murder. Unless they are compelled to put an end to their vicious propaganda, no positive results can be expected. It is a matter of record that the victimisation of the Christians has gone up markedly since the BJP's assumption of power... The coincidence could not have been accidental. →

Manoj Mitta

On Fresh Inquiry in 1984 Massacres

It's an inquiry being held for the second time and into an event that took place 16 years ago, but Justice Nanavati Commission has been flooded with over 10,000 affidavits.

The Commission, probing the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and other places in 1984 following Indira Gandhi's assassination, will hold its first hearing tomorrow at the Vigyan Bhawan annexe.

The Centre appointed the Commission four months ago in an unprecedented move as the previous inquiry, conducted by Justice Ranganath Misra in 1985-86, was widely alleged to have "whitewashed" the role of the then Rajiv Gandhi administration and Congress leaders in the carnage.

Another reason for the appointment of the Nanavati Commission has been the following dichotomy: **While the official toll of the three-day massacre in Delhi is as high as 2,733, the number of persons actually serving sentence for murder is only six.**

... The Commission ... will be recording evidence of the carnage in public... The Misra Commission ... conducted all its proceedings in camera. Out of the 10,000-odd affidavits received by the Nanavati Commission, about 3,500 are those that had been filed before the Misra Commission. And among the fresh affidavits, about 3,000 are nothing more than claims for compensation from the victims... There are at least 3,000 that give detailed evidence of how the massacre took place, and who the culprits were. Some of the new affidavits have come from a range of prominent personalities, including Khushwant Singh, Jaya Jaitly, Madan Lal Khurana, Madhu Kishwar, Lt Gen J.S. Aurora, Patwant Singh, Justice R.S. Narula and Swami Agnivesh. These people have for the first time put on record what they had already said in public speeches or published works...

(Source: The Indian Express, 3 October, 2000)

Demons of Bhagalpur Still at Large Shahabuddin to Indian Express, 13 Oct., 00

Your excellent editorial "Varsity of Violence" (12 October, 2000) suffers from some inaccuracies. Even in 1992, there was post-demolition communal violence in Bihar: though in a lower key, it did affect several towns and districts. Between 1992 and 2000, there have been several communal riots, in Biharsharif itself and a major one in Sitamarhi, 1993. And there have any number of killings of Muslims in the rural areas of Gaya, Chatra and Palamau which were attributed to MCC but were largely inspired by communal factors.

So it is not correct to put up Laloo Government on a pedestal and then to shoot it down in the present context. The demon of Bhagalpur is still at large because not even one person has been hanged for the killing of nearly 1300!

It is common knowledge that the situation is particularly grim in Gujarat where the Home Minister's party enjoys a majority. If the Centre is serious about restoring confidence among the Christians and other minorities, Gujarat is the state on which it should

(Contd. on Page 519)

Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice by Geoffrey Robertson Review by A.G. Noorani

“The protection of the fundamental human rights is the concern of each sovereign state and is a matter which is essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of member states of the United Nations”. This locus classicus on human rights was delivered by India’s Permanent Mission at the United Nations in reply to charges of violations of human rights levelled by the International League for Human Rights. That was during the high noon of the dictatorship ...the “emergency”, which Indira Gandhi had imposed on the nation on June 25, 1975...

No Indian government since 1975 has been bold enough to assert openly its immunity from international accountability. But, the mindset persists. For years India has doggedly rejected requests by three respected UN overseers on human rights for permission to visit India – the Special Rapporteur on Torture; the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions; and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Their reports to the UN Human Rights Commission every year contain references to India which are all the more telling for the measured prose.

... India has refused to sign (several UN) Conventions or ratify (them)... The Convention Against Torture signed ... in October 1997 ... awaits India’s ratification...

... For over a decade Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have not only been refused permission to visit Punjab and Kashmir; they have been accused of lack of integrity and independence as well...

Our civil libertarians and the reports they produce are, for the most part, long on rhetoric and short on researched documentation and rigorous analysis. Not a few let their preferences colour their judgement. It is a marked feature of Robertson’s approach that while he lauds the work of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Hague Tribunal, he is unrelenting in his criticisms of the procedural flaws, structural defects and even prejudices which marred their performance.

Until but a few decades ago ... the states-wise as the “subject” of the law and individuals, its “objects”. Now the individual is very much a “subject”. He has rights; not least, against his own state. He is also bound by the law. There is an established corpus of international human rights law of which international humanitarian law is a vital part. This work covers a wide range; ... history of international recognition of human rights; the conflict during the Cold War between realpolitik and human rights, the rights which have won recognition in times of peace as well as in war; progress in the struggle for international accountability; erosion of the doctrine of sovereign immunity for international crimes; the perils of grant of amnesty to wrongdoers; the Balkan Trials before the

Hague Tribunal; the International Criminal Court set up under the Rome Statute in 1998, and the ... significance of the Pinochet case. There is a mass of information, documented and written in a lucid style, on each ... topic...

The central thesis of this work is that only those human rights are worth the name which are enforceable against their violators. **“A rule is one of law not because it has been laid down with clarity in a treaty or textbook, but because there is at least a slim prospect that someday, someone will be arrested for its breach”**. The author adds: “This is why it has been the great achievement of international law, at the close of the 20th century, to lift the veil of sovereign statehood far enough to make individuals responsible for the crimes against humanity committed by the states they formerly commanded, while at the same time developing a rule that those states have a continuing duty to prosecute and punish them, failing which another state or the international community may bring them to justice”, an allusion to the Pinochet case and the Balkan Trials.

Advocates of cultural relativism in the Third World receive the same treatment as the hypocrites in the West, especially the US...

“Human rights standards are becoming rules of international law because a campaigning mass movement is putting pressure on democratic governments to practise what they preach when they ratify treaties which embody these standards. National courts, too, are finding ways to hold governments to these same standards. The results can be surprising and unsettling for politicians and diplomats, emerging from a world in which sovereign promises need never be kept to a future where breaches can have inconvenient legal consequences...”

India comes in for particular notice, in an appropriate context. On July 17, 1998 in Rome, 120 nations voted to adopt a statute creating an International Criminal Court. Twenty-one nations abstained, only seven were opposed. These included the United States, China, Israel and India... An extract from a publication of the U.N. Department of Public Information records this saga of Indo-U.S. collaboration in an ignoble venture. The Statute and the Final Act were put forward as a “package” for adoption. It was the product of prolonged delineations and judicious compromises. “India and the United States tried to amend the package” (read: “unravel it and secure its defeat”).

“In each case, a ‘no-action motion’ – a procedural device for not considering these amendments – was adopted by an overwhelming majority”. The motion “to stop the Indian amendment” was adopted by 114 to 16, with 20 abstentions; the U.S. won by 113 to 17, with 25 abstentions. The entire package was adopted by 120 votes

in favour; seven against and 21 abstentions... We are a great power capable of flouting the world as only a great power can, for example the US.

The author notes: "... India having led the opposition to the creation of a court at the preparatory sessions, now demanded an extension of the Court's judgement to punish the users of nuclear weapons. This was a hypocritical attempt to deflect criticism over its nuclear test the previous month, and the defeat of the proposal provided India with a pretext to condemn the whole enterprise as an exercise in 'European neo-colonialism'. These puerile posturings ... were irresponsible enough, but the gold medal for hypocrisy was won by Israel, a state founded by victims of the worst crime against humanity, in whose memory (and, perhaps, for whose future benefit) the movement to create the Court had been inspired. The Netanyahu government voted against it, as a petulant protest after the Conference agreed to make forced settlement of occupied territory a war crime"...

Evidently, he is unaware of India's distinctive contribution to the repertoire of state crime – "encounters", extra-judicial killings by the police and the para-military. "Of all such crimes, the most evil and most poignant of modern examples is causing a "disappearance" – a process by which a citizen who is suspected of harbouring subversive sentiments is kidnapped, detained and tortured for some time before being finally killed, all within a secret police or military operation which is utterly unlawful but nonetheless agreed in outline by the government.

The crucial test is accountability to the law. Prosecution is not a "revenge" but a duty. Amnesty to the perpetrator of the unforgivable ("crimes against humanity") is a betrayal...

However, the states which drew up the Rome Statute took care to tie it securely to the apron strings of the U.N. Security Council. Its jurisdiction extends to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression; the last is subject to an agreed definition of aggression. Its draftsmen diluted the Statute in order to secure the United States' adherence...

The struggle for global justice is unstoppable. Information technology will promote greater awareness of the wrongs committed with impunity". "At the close of the twentieth century, the dominant motive in world affairs is the quest – almost the thirst – for justice.

Indian civil libertarians will be guilty of a grave moral betrayal if they allow misconceived notions of state sovereignty, dressed in the beguiling cloak of nationalism, to inhibit them from joining in that march for justice. It is certain to be one of the dominant trends of the millennium the world over.

(Source: The Frontline, 21 July, 2000)

Supreme Court

On Right of Prisoner to Life

State of Andhra Pradesh, Appellant v. Challa Ramkrishna Reddy and Others, Respondents.

S. SAGHIR AHMAD AND D.P. WADHWA, JJ.

Constitution of India, Article 21 – Right to life – Prisoner, be a convict or undertrial or detenu – Continue to enjoy all fundamental rights including right to life.

Right to life is one of the basic human rights. It is guaranteed to every person by Article 21 of the Constitution and not even the State has the authority to violate that Right. A prisoner, be he a convict or under-trial or a detenu, does not cease to be a human being. Even when lodged in the jail, he continues to enjoy all his Fundamental Rights including the Right to Life guaranteed to him under the Constitution. On being convicted of crime and deprived of their liberty in accordance with the procedure established by law, prisoners still retain the residue of constitutional rights.

Thus, the Fundamental Rights, which also include basic human rights, continue to be available to a prisoner and those rights cannot be defeated by pleading the old and archaic defence of immunity in respect of sovereign acts which has been rejected several times by the Supreme Court.

(Source: AIR 2000 Supreme Court 2083)

Soli Sorabjee

On UK's Human Rights Act

The Human Rights Act, which comes into force on October 2, 2000, marks a sea change in traditional British thinking. It reflects the will to give civil and political rights special legal protection although not as strong as in countries where the courts can strike down legislation, which is inconsistent with fundamental rights.

The higher courts in the United Kingdom can only make a declaration of incompatibility of the legislation with the guaranteed rights. Thereupon a minister is expected to initiate remedial action by amending the legislation.

Section 6 of the Act provides that **it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way, which is incompatible with a Convention right.** Public authority is defined to include "any person certain of whose functions are functions of a public nature". And to make matters better, or worse, it is provided that **in relation to a particular act, a person is not a public authority if the nature of the act is private.**

... Hopefully, the courts in the UK will ensure effective protection of human rights.

(Source: The Times of India, 1 October, 2000)

Indian Haj Goodwill Delegation for Haj, 2000

Report of S. Shahnawaz Husain, Leader of Delegation to PM (Extracts)

... Most of the delegates reached Jeddah on 8th March, 2000 together with their spouses and/or other relatives. A few members joined the delegation a few days later. One member had arrived earlier...

The Delegation proceeded for Haj on 14th March in the morning and successfully completed all the rituals by 18th March, 2000. After this, on 19th March, 2000, the delegation proceeded to Madinah and after completion of the forty prayers, returned to India via Jeddah on 28th March, 2000.

During my stay in the Kingdom, I had the honour of calling on the Governor of Madinah, the Haj Minister and the Imam of Makkah... A few delegates were hosted a dinner by the leader of the Iranian delegation... I attended the dinner hosted by King Fahd...

... The Haj Committee, Mumbai, and the State Haj Committees should be directed to continue the training courses and to ensure that every intending pilgrim is benefited from such programme...

... All Indian pilgrims be accommodated in new buildings only and these buildings should be categorised in two types based on the sole criterion of the distance from Haram Sharif. The difference in rent in these two types should be only on the basis of distance from Haram Sharif... One single agency/committee be constituted that would look into the entire gamut regarding selection of buildings for Indian pilgrims during Haj...

Consul General of India in Jeddah alongwith representatives from Central Haj Committee should conduct the exercise of selection of buildings for Indian pilgrims under the overall guidelines from Ministry of External Affairs i.e. Joint Secretary, Incharge, Haj, MEA... During the Haj period a Cell comprising of senior responsible officials from CGI office and representatives from Central Haj Committee be made operational during the entire Haj period that would under his overall supervision exclusively deal with the various grievances of Indian pilgrims as regards the buildings selected for accommodating them...

... Instead of bank drafts, each pilgrim be permitted to collect his foreign exchange in cash in India itself either in US dollars or Saudi Riyals...

... The Indian Haj Goodwill Delegation should not consist of more than eleven members... Haj Committee members have practically no role during the Haj; on the other hand, they should be in India to handle the returning flights and interact with next-of-kin in case there is a tragedy...

... Khuddams ... may be stopped or ... instructed strictly to serve the Haj pilgrims.

... Fifty per cent deputationists of the previous years be repeated. It should also be ensured that no deputationist is deputed to Saudi Arabia ... for more than two years...

Officials working for more than 3 years should not be allowed to continue.

... Air India fare for one pilgrim was Rs.31,200/- (Rs.12,600/- paid by the Hajis and Rs.18,600/- paid by the Government of India to the Air India as subsidy... Air India has not provided the facilities as per the IATA rules to the passengers... Pilgrims were dumped for more than 72 hours and they were not even served tea, coffee, and snacks at Jeddah.

... Headquarters of Central Haj Committee may be shifted to ... New Delhi to avoid any unnecessary shunting from Delhi to Mumbai and vice-versa... An Advisory Board may be constituted to look into all the aspects of Haj affairs.

(Contd. from Page 516)

concentrate...

... It is too simplistic to dismiss the ... assaults, especially in northern India, as non-communal in nature... It is even worse to accuse those expressing concern of 'minorityism', as Advani has done, for it suggests that they are exaggerating these incidents to garner votes. By the same token, the BJP is guilty of an offence worse than 'majorityism', for by deliberately trying to play down these incidents, it is in effect turning a blind eye towards those responsible for the crimes...

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(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

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Signature of Publisher

Communal and Political Asymmetry, Lack of Foresight, Cause of Partition

Shahabuddin's Comments on Prof. Rajeev Bhargava's Article on History, Nation and Community

I have been enlightened by Prof. Rajeev Bhargava's article on History, Nation and Community in the Economic and Political Weekly, 22 January, 2000 is essentially an attempt to explain what went wrong with our Freedom Movement so that Independence was burdened with Partition. In his own words:

"Political parties failed the two communities... The failure of political imagination was due first to the conception of nation and community shared by both parties and that assumed the necessity of thick commonalty for nationhood. Second, because this conception was influenced by and laden with specific emotions. Finally, because even political expediency was affected by the mechanism of wish fulfillment".

He argues that failure to achieve the objective of living within a single unified state is to be explained not just by economic and religious causes but by a lack of political imagination shaped as it was by distinct conceptions of nation and community, as by differing emotions.

Broadly I endorse his analysis with the difference that I see an inbuilt asymmetry in the pre-independence discourse: the Congress was torn between its genuine and legitimate aspirations to speak for the multi-religious India and the majoritarian pressures on it which identified the Nation with the Hindu community, which, in the fullness of time, would assimilate other religions, within the framework of a democratic nation-state. I wonder if this projection was cynical or hypocritical but the apprehensions of cultural submergence and religious assimilation generated in the Muslim mind, right from the beginning of the century, in stages redefined their notion of the term 'community', stage by stage, into an entity approximating a 'nation'. That is what led finally to the tragedy of the Partition which merely internationalised the communal question, without solving it.

With hindsight, it appears to be strange that the leadership of the two communities, whether speaking from the Congress or the League platform, did not see this inevitable direction of the drift and make timely course corrections in terms of reciprocal, convincing and acceptable safeguards for Hindu minorities in Muslim majority provinces and Muslim minorities in Hindu-majority provinces and a federal structure which would vest residual powers in the provinces rather than in the Centre.

I may add that both Hindu and Muslim leaders appear to have been driven by 'self-interest' oblivious of the end-game which would develop a dynamics of its own like a

Greek Tragedy. To be fair, however, one must concede that while the Hindu leadership was denying the Muslim community their legitimate due, the Muslim leadership was asking for more than their due. One wishes that the Congress leaders – people like Gandhi, Nehru and Bose – kept above the Hindu-Muslim (League-Mahasabha) discourse so that they could act as a just and impartial arbitrator.

The Parting of Ways

Jinnah's Historic Letter to Gandhi, 1920

I thank you for your kind suggestion offering me to take my share 'in the new life that has opened up before the country'. If by 'new life' you mean your methods and your programme, I am afraid I cannot accept them; for I am fully convinced that it must lead to disaster. But the actual new life that has opened up before the country is that we are faced with a government that pays no heed to the grievances, feelings and sentiments of the people; that our own countrymen are divided; the Moderate Party is still going wrong; that your methods have already caused split and division in almost every institution that you have approached hitherto, and in the public life of the country not only amongst Hindus and Muslims but between Hindus and Hindus and Muslims and Muslims and even between fathers and sons. People generally are desperate all over the country and your extreme programme has for the moment struck the imagination mostly of the inexperienced youth and the ignorant and the illiterate. All this means complete disorganisation and chaos. What the consequences of this may be, I shudder to contemplate; but I, for one, am convinced that the present policy of the government is the primary cause of it all and unless that cause is removed, the effects must continue. I have no voice or power to remove the cause; but at the same time I do not wish my countrymen to be dragged to the brink of a precipice in order to be shattered. The only way for the Nationalists is to unite and work for a programme which is universally acceptable for the early attainment of complete responsible government. Such a programme cannot be dictated by any single individual, but must have the approval and support of all the prominent Nationalist leaders in the country; and to achieve this end I am sure my colleagues and myself shall continue to work.

MQM Leader Altaf Husain's Views

On Partition and Two-Nation Theory

... In 1951, the Pakistani borders were closed for the Muslims of India under the pretext that Pakistan cannot bear the burden of all of them. Now the question arises that as to why this fact was not disclosed before the creation of Pakistan... By closing the Pakistani borders for the Muslims of India, the rulers have themselves negated the two-nation theory.

The formation of nation on the basis of religion is fundamentally wrong. If religion was the foundation of nationhood, then more than 45 Muslim nations would not have been the members of the United Nations as separate and independent "sovereign states".

The slogan of two-nation theory was raised to deceive the Muslims of the Sub-continent. It was preached at that time that Hindus are a separate nation having their own religion, culture and social values, which are different from those of the Muslims. Hence, the Muslims cannot live together with the Hindus. Furthermore, it was preached that as the Hindus are in majority, after the withdrawal of the British, the Hindus would dominate. Therefore, the Muslims need a separate homeland where they could freely live according to their religion, culture and social values...

Ironically the two-nation theory has rendered the patriotism of the Muslims of the Sub-continent doubtful. The Muslims of India are considered as Pakistani agents and Muslims who migrated to Pakistan are considered as Indian agents. It is propagated that since the relatives of Mohajirs live in India, therefore under this cover, the agents of RAW come to Pakistan. Similarly, Mohajirs going to visit their relatives in India are (suspected). The patriotism of Mohajirs as a nation has become doubtful... The two-nation theory has rendered the Muslims of the Muslim minority province of the undivided India destitute. *Na Khuda hi mila na wisal-e-sanam - Na idhar ke rahe na udhar ke rahe.*

I am ready even today to accept the two-nation theory with open-heart on the condition that the 'champions' of the two-nation theory and its custodians reopen the borders of Pakistan for the Muslims of India without any further delay and allow the stranded Pakistanis (in Dhaka) to return to Pakistan... If they ... cannot succeed in opening up the border for the Muslims of India and bringing the Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh back to Pakistan then it is their moral duty ... that they should accept the two-nation theory as biggest fraud played upon the Muslims of India.

(Source: The Young India, 26 August - 1 September, 2000)

On Partition and Future of Pakistan

The division of the Indian sub-continent was the biggest blunder in the history of mankind...

"The Titanic of the Islamic *ummah* (community) is now sinking". "It's time for everyone to play their role." "Do you know the sinking process of the Titanic? Did you see that film? The Titanic did not sink suddenly. It sank slowly. They shot off distress flares. But nobody came. In the end it sank. And this is not a film, it is a fact."

... There are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan. "So far, I have been writing to Pakistan leaders. My next letter will be to Indian Muslims. I will tell them what is happening to us in Pakistan..."

"We did not want to hear the truth in 1971 and Pakistan broke. Now if you want to treat us like slaves, a time will come when we will get independence, and you will be without slaves." ...

"None of us wants to dismember Pakistan; we want to strengthen Pakistan and make a prosperous Pakistan. But there cannot be a Pakistan where Punjabis are considered faithful and Sindhis, Mohajirs, Baluchis and Pakhtoons are considered traitors."

"If Pakistan breaks, then it is not Sindhis, Baluchis and Pakhtoons who will be the losers; the loser will be Punjab." ...

(Source: The Times of India, 19 September, 2000)

Saeed Naqvi

On Ethnic Upsurge in Pakistan

In London's Acton Town Hall ... on September 17. For the first time, leaders of the Mohajirs, Sindhis, Baluchis and Pakhtoons came together on the same platform to declare the death of the Two-nation theory... (It demanded) full provincial autonomy to the minority provinces and involving them in every national endeavour, including the formulation of foreign policy, which would dictate friendship with all neighbours, including India...

The consequences of how the Indian establishment responds to Acton will be more far reaching than most people have begun to realise. What Acton is demanding of India is a fundamental shift in policy towards Pakistan or, at least, a total reappraisal — assuming, of course, that those who congregated at Acton are long distance runners...

... Hostility to India is a project in perpetuity for the ISI, the Pakistan army and the Punjabi ruling elite. It is simplistic to conclude that a pampered army needs an image to keep itself in power. That is only partially true. After the independence of Bangladesh ... Pakistan's ruling elite finds itself bereft of a cohesive ideology to justify the Islamic state. In this situation the manufacture of a double-

(Contd. on Page 522)

Asma Jahangir on Pakistan's Loss of Credibility

The Chief Executive of Pakistan arrived like an empty vessel at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York. His noise made little sense to the international community, who yawned at his offer for peace and a no-war pact to India.

A leader, who claims he has little control over militants in his country and "spiritually" supports the strategy of jihad, is not likely to be taken seriously, especially as he does not officially head the jihadis, who are central to the tensions between the two countries – India and Pakistan.

Our Chief Executive sounded more like a deposed Maharaja of Kashmir, rather than an interim military ruler of Pakistan, who had vowed to restore "pure and true" democracy to the country – a promise made by very man on horseback.

The government's commitment to raise the issue of violations of human rights in Indian held Kashmir is laudable. They must continue to do so, but in a sincere and coherent manner. A Government which has banned political activities and refuses to hold general elections in its own country can hardly be expected to champion the cause of human rights of the people of Kashmir...

Elections are regularly rigged in Azad Kashmir and the people denied basic rights. All this is glossed over in the name of security. Every decent person, Pakistani or otherwise, feels disturbed by consistent violations of human rights in Kashmir. Similarly, they are equally concerned at the oppression in Afghanistan. If human rights are central to our foreign policy, then the government of Pakistan ought, at least, to cold-shoulder its Taliban friends.

The hypocrisy of our foreign policy is apparent to everyone, except our military leaders and their civilian sycophants. The Indian security forces should and must, at all costs, be brought to justice for rape and extra-judicial killings in Kashmir. At the same time, so should those in Pakistan who killed and raped their own citizens in East Pakistan. We cannot exonerate either.

Solving the Kashmir problem is not easy. It is complex and best left to political leaders. No interim government, without a public mandate, can hope to do much about it. It may well complicate matters... Pakistan's insistence on plebiscite is not supported by many Kashmiri groups. They want independence, rather than a choice between the devil and the deep sea. No one will buy plebiscite, perhaps not even the people of Azad Kashmir.

If independence is the next best choice, then Pakistan's leadership has to be prepared to let go of Azad Kashmir and perhaps the Northern Areas too. Many hope

that an independent Kashmir will remain under our control. Perhaps so, but only if we are able to offer them prosperity and well-being... More optimistic analysts insist that Pakistan is on the verge of getting the Valley. Any such move in the presence of militants and Indian security forces will only end in bloodshed and a constant proxy war.

The only route to solving the Kashmir issue is through a series of negotiations – but they cannot start until violence decreases in Kashmir. The recent cease-fire was a positive development but short-lived. Whether it is a sustainable cease-fire or a series of talks, they can only be negotiated by a civilian elected government. The military rulers, as we have witnessed, have lost credibility both at home and abroad. The message from the UN Summit was clear: "Get off your high horse and be relevant". Let us hope it has sunk somewhere.

(Source: The Dawn)

(Courtesy: The Asian Age, 12 October, 2000)

Death Sentence for a Pseudo Prophet

A Pakistani court has sentenced a 60-year-old man Yousaf Ali to death for blasphemy after he claimed to be a prophet of God... Lahore Sessions Judge Mian Mohammad Jehangir also sentenced (him) to a total of 35 years' hard labour and a fine of Rs.2,00,000...

... Pakistan's anti-blasphemy law regards any claim of prophethood after Mohammad as a blasphemy to be punished by death

(Source: The Indian Express, 7 August, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 521)

and triple-distilled Islam, disengaged from the civilisational pull of the subcontinent, Arabised and distinct, is the extremists prescription for cohesion...

... For New Delhi, even in response to Pakistan's worst behaviour, a stable Pakistan has always been an article of faith, not for decorative reasons but in India's own national interest.

Now comes this call from Acton. Are these progressive impulses worthy of India's support even though they threaten Pakistan's stability? ... A soft belt around Punjab would come in handy for retaliation against Pakistani mischief in Kashmir. But this short-sighted view is unlikely to have many takers... It is India's restraint in every situation, including Kargil (that led to) Pakistan's diplomatic isolation... Then what must New Delhi do?

Nothing... In fact the hope must be to see Acton as the pressure point to democratise Pakistan, dismantle its feudal, fundamentalist edifices.

(Source: The Indian Express, 6 October, 2000)

AIMMM on Intervention in Chechnya Shahabuddin's Letter to Russian President Putin, 3 October, 2000

The All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM) welcomes you to our country as the distinguished representative of a tried and trusted friend.

As the apex forum of the Muslim community of India, the AIMMM respectfully submits the following for your kind consideration: -

Under the Treaty of 1994, the Government of the Russian Federation had recognized the sovereign status of the Republic of Chechnya and agreed to a time table for its attainment of complete independence, if the people so desired. This accord had been internationally welcomed as a signal of peace in this war-ravaged region. The invasion of Chechnya by the armed forces of the Federation in 1999 is a violation of the Treaty.

The Chechens have been struggling for independence since the beginning of the 19th century and have never accepted foreign subjugation. They are not going to accept defeat and have repeatedly demonstrated not only valour and spirit of sacrifice but great reserves of resilience in the most adverse circumstances. The Chechens cannot be vanquished by force.

International observers and even inter-governmental organisations have criticized the massive violation of human rights and the brutalities inherent in the 'scorched earth' strategy adopted by the Russian forces. The unequal battle has not brought glory to the Russian arms or raised the prestige of your great nation in the world.

Your Excellency is rebuilding Russia as a major pole of the New World Order based on principles which do not accord with the Russian military thrust in Chechnya and its objectives.

In the name of humanity, the AIMMM requests you to withdraw your armed forces from Chechnya, resume the implementation of the 1994 Treaty and build the foundation of a durable and honourable peace and mutually beneficial ties of economic cooperation.

The AIMMM takes this opportunity to wish you every success in your endeavours as the President of the Russian Federation and peace, happiness and prosperity to the friendly Russian people.

Bishkek Summit Statement Joint Statement Central Asian Leaders 20 August, 2000

We, participants of the Bishkek Summit, having discussed the situation in Central Asia caused by the actions of international terrorist units, express our profound anxiety on expanding of the scale of their military actions, which in our view could be unanimously

AIMMM on Israel's War against Palestine Shahabuddin to PM Vajpayee, 3 Oct., 00

The AIMMM is deeply agonized by the violence let loose against the Palestinian youth by the Israeli authorities in Jerusalem and the cities of the West Bank. By 1 October, 23 youth had fallen to Israeli bullets and hundreds were reported injured. According to reliable reports, the violence was sparked by the visit of Israeli Opposition Leader Ariel Sharon to the holy site of Masjid Al-Aqsa.

President Yasser Arafat has called for the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Masjid Al-Aqsa campus and stop to firing on the protesting youth in the Palestinian towns. He has also appealed to all who believe in the peace process to ask the Israeli Government to stop the blood bath. It has also been reported that the PLO has asked for UN intervention.

On behalf of the AIMMM, I request you to condemn the Israeli violence against the people of Palestine and to referred positively to the call of President Arafat, in order to save the peace progress from grinding to a halt.

Shahabuddin to FM Jaswant Singh, 13 Oct., 00

With Israel's attack on Arab-held territories in Palestine, the situation in Palestine has escalated to the point where the peace process has been virtually abandoned and there may be a full-scale war.

Since 28 September, Israeli forces have been firing on Palestinian demonstrators. Out of 97 persons who have lost their life, almost 90 are Palestinian. Had the Non-Aligned Group taken notice of the situation, perhaps Israel would have acted with restraint.

As a longstanding support of the Palestinian cause, we cannot remain a spectator nor adopt the posture of evenhandedness, even though our growing relation with Israel may stand in the way of our taking a forthright stand.

However, the least we can do is to condemn the killings of civilians and the air attack on Ramallah and then to call for cease-fire and revival of the peace process in a time-bound manner.

called as naked acts of aggression, terrorism and extremism.

The fact that actions of international terrorists are becoming permanent and chronic, proves their very purpose to destroy stability and security in Central Asia, as well as destabilize the regional and international situation on the long-term basis...

... We recognize that terrorist and bandit actions in Central Asia, Chechnya as well as military and political opposition in Afghanistan are links of the same chain...

The leaders of the States Members of the Agreement
(Contd. on Page 524)

UN Millennium Summit: Declaration (Extracts)

New York, 6-8 September, 2000

... We rededicate ourselves to support all efforts to uphold ... the right to self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation, non-interference in the internal affairs of States; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; respect for equal rights of all without distinction to race, sex, language or religion...

We consider certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These include:

- **Freedom:** Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.
- **Equality:** No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development...
- **Tolerance:** Human beings must respect each other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A Culture of Peace and Dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted...

We resolve, therefore:

- To strengthen respect for the rule of law, in international as in national affairs...
- To ensure the implementation, by States Parties, of treaties ... of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and call upon all States to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- To take concerted action against international terrorism, and to accede as soon as possible to all the relevant international conventions...

We resolve further:

- ... To ensure that, by the same date, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.

We also resolve:

- To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women...

Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance

We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all

respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.

We resolve, therefore:

- To fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- To strive for the full protection and promotion in all our countries of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.
- To strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, **including minority rights.**
- ... To promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies.
- To work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries...

Protecting the Vulnerable

We will spare no effort to ensure that children and all civilian populations who suffer disproportionately the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies are given every assistance and protection, so that they can resume normal life as soon as possible.

We resolve, therefore:

- ... To help all ... displaced persons to return voluntarily to their homes, in safety and dignity, and to be smoothly reintegrated into their societies.

We resolve, therefore:

- ... To strengthen the International Court of Justice, in order to ensure justice and the rule of law in international affairs. □

(Contd. from Page 523)

on Joint Action against Terrorism, Political and Religious Extremism, Transnational Organised Crime and other Threat to Stability and Security of the Parties, signed on April 21, 2000, have underlined the necessity of strict and rigorous observance of all obligations undertaken by the parties within this Agreement.

... We address once again the UN's Security Council, OSCE, OIC and to all countries of the world not only to condemn international terrorism and extremism, but also to move from declarations to co-ordinated and practical measures for eradication of this global threat.

The members of the Agreement ... have proposed to the leadership of the Russian Federation to join this Agreement. □

Parakram Rautela On Bride Burning

Why do we burn our bahu? Deep down, do we think it is allowed? After all, we did practise Sati (with societal sanction) at one point of time and every now and then, still do they even glorified it at Mohaba in Uttar Pradesh last year...

What is truly frightening is that industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation progress, in other words have only been accompanied by an increase in numbers. In 1983 there were 427 cases of bride-burning that number went up to 6917 in 1998. The easy way out, saying the number of reported cases have gone up is just that the easy way out... The widening economic gap, the increase in consumerism, rising levels of unemployment, alcoholism have all added to the numbers. Moreover, states like Assam and Kerala where the system of dowry was unheard of, have begun to be hit by the evil. The wheels of justice in India turn especially slowly and legislation by itself has proved to be ineffective but legislation coupled with a show of force are helping set things right.

(Source: The Pioneer, 1 October, 2000)

Soroor Ahmed On Mahayagya to Exorcise Ghosts

After yagya it is a mahayagya. Haunted by the ghosts of the passengers who died in the Alliance Air Boeing crash on July 17 some residents of the Gardanibagh locality near Patna airport have organized a (mahayagya) near the crash site, between 11-18 September, 2000.

The yagya organized immediately after the crash had failed to exorcise the bhoots (ghosts)...

This time high priests from Benaras have come to perform this ritual and 31 pitchers of Ganga jal (water) would be scattered all over the area...

... A large number of people firmly believe that the dead souls need peace (otherwise) food will continue to disappear from their fridges and shrill voices would be heard during the late hours.

Incidentally, one of the organizers is none else than a policeman, the security guard of Subhash Yadav, MLC, brother of Chief Minister Rabri Devi...

Hindu Victory in USA

We understand from communications from those practicing the Hindu religion that the portrayal of the goddess on the shoes is offensive to Hindus... Fortune Dynamic has discontinued the manufacture of this style... Fortune Dynamic did not intend to disparage the Hindu religion or to offend those practicing the Hindu religion...

Subhash Razdan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NFIA... "We accept their regrets and their sincerity to promptly discontinue this controversial shoe style.

(Source: The Organiser)

Hindu Boys in a Bihar Madarsa A Report in The Times of India

On an annual visit to a local *madarsa* in the backwaters of Bihar, the *maulana* from UP was surprised to see two Hindu boys, aged three and five, attired in a *topi*, (cap) reading Urdu... "When he learnt their names, he wanted to meet me," exults their grandfather Vidya Bhusan Singh, currently general secretary of the state unit of the Samajwadi Party.

A strange lesson for the Maulana, yes. But for Singh, there seems to be nothing amiss in his decision. The ex-MLA has been sending his two grandsons to the local *madarsa* instead of the village primary school in Gopalganj district for a long time now.

Initially, there was a hue and cry in the Rajput community from which he hails in Meera Tola-Khetapur village of Gopalganj's Baikunthpur block. "We had to face relentless taunts from the villagers. They even said we were converting to Islam," the ex-MLA told.

But that was then. Today, Singh's experiment has borne fruit and there has been a sea change in the attitude of the villagers. "Today, about 70 children belonging to the Hindu community study in the same *madarsa* which has a total strength of about 400. The Head *Maulvi* did not object to Hindu children studying in the *madarsa*," he said.

But why did he send his grandsons to the *madarsa* for primary education? Only because the village government primary school was virtually defunct, Singh pointed out. "The primary school has two teachers. Each draws a fat salary of over Rs 10,000 per month. But the two are always absent... Singh does not think that sending his grandsons to the *madarsa* intrudes on his religion.

"On the contrary, they will have a better perception of their own and other's religion," he stressed pointing out that the *madarsa* in his village must be the only one in the state in which so many Hindu children study.

Interestingly, this has been a learning experience for the grandfather too. "I have tried to learn the Urdu script from my grandsons..." he said.

(Source: The Times of India, 12 September, 2000)

Sanat K. Chakraborty on Polygyny and Child Marriage in Arunachal Pradesh

... The Arunachal Government has admitted that the incidents of polygyny, child and forced marriages have assumed an alarming proportion in Arunachal Pradesh.

... A section of educated, rich and powerful seemed to have perpetuated them as "status symbol", even as these practices were adversely affecting the tribal society and its human development... Takam Sanjay ... the Minister of Information and Public Relations ... was ... candid to

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Sailesh Gaikwad On Abandoning Television

Television corrupts, and corrupts completely. So believes the Imam of a local mosque. Unshakeable in his belief, he orders (sic) that residents sell their television sets or snap cable and satellite connections. The 400 families grumble but follow the order. (This) happens in Talaja village, a predominantly Muslim area about 50 kms from Mumbai... What's more, the villagers reportedly paid the cable operators Rs. 60,000 as compensation.

It began a fortnight back, when the Imam noticed that the attendance for the daily namaz – especially youth – was on the decline (as they) preferred to stay at home and watch television programmes... Enquiries also revealed that the youngsters, both boys and girls, were spending hours watching sitcoms and Bollywood flicks... Convinced that the television with countless channels was “spoiling the youth” and was a culprit they needed to attack immediately...

...About 400 families... sold their sets to the workers in the Talaja MIDC area or the nearby villages... Some preferred to snap off the cable connection...

The local police confirmed the turn of events in the village but said that nobody had come forward to register a complaint... The Imam ... denied that he had issued any ‘fatwa’. The villagers had decided to stop watching and exposing their children to the ‘dirty programmes’ ... voluntarily... (Source: The Indian Express, 3 October, 2000)

Venu Abraham On Kamala Das in Muslim Society

It has been eight months since poetess Kamala Das became Kamala Suraiya renouncing Hinduism in favour of Islam. In those heady days immediately after her conversion, she was not only the toast of Kerala's Muslim world, but flush with the excitement of her impending wedding to a middle-aged Indian Union Muslim League leader.

The wedding remained a pipe dream. And, despite the initial euphoria with which Muslim social, cultural and political organisations greeted Suraiya, it was soon apparent to them that for Suraiya donning the burkha did not imply the surrender of her high-spirited nature to be remoulded according to Islam's moral tenets...

Today, although Suraiya stands practically excommunicated from Kerala's Islamic fraternity, she is unperturbed... “Kamala Suraiya has only a changed name”, says Prof. Hameed Chennamangaloor, a prominent progressive Muslim intellectual in Kozhikkode. “She cannot change her real self which is still Kamala Das, and the fellow travelers of her new religion cannot accept her real self”. Suraiya is all too aware of the criticism...

(Source: The Week, 24 September, 2000)

M.V.R. Rao On Travails of Change of Faith

... After O.P. Verma and his family voluntarily converted to Islam, they have been on the run, trying to escape irate relatives and the wrath of both the communities.

Verma who worked as a cycle mechanic in Rasoolpur Dhaulri, recently declared himself as Ibadur Rahman. He named his wife of 25 years, Rajeshwari as Summaiyya, his daughter Asha (18) became Ayesha and Bimal, Sajida. When news of the conversion broke out in the village last week, it sent out shock waves... Verma's brother-in-law Tej Prakash Verma, who works with the State Electricity Board, accused the other community of luring his sister's family to change her faith... He has not lodged a formal FIR, but he says he has given a complaint to the area police where he has accused three persons of holding the couple in their custody.

The relatives say a local homeopathic doctor, Asif (said to be a Brahmin convert) who was a frequent visitor to the couple's household; acted as the catalyst... Members of the Muslim community allege that after their conversion, the relatives threw them out in the middle of the night. The family has reportedly been given shelter in a Muslim-dominated village... (It is said) that Om Prakash had been practicing Islamic rituals for the past 17-18 years... He got a certificate of conversion only recently, says Senior Superintendent of Police R.P. Singh. It's no forcible conversion, he clarified...

Predictably, the situation has got politicized, with local units of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad demanding that the community produce the family to ascertain whether they were forcibly converted. “If he had problems marrying off his daughters, we are even prepared to raise Rs. one or two lakhs”, says VHP Meerut Mahanagar chief, Krishan Johri... The VHP has threatened to launch an agitation... The villagers too are gearing up for a showdown... Hindu-dominated villages held their panchayat in Dolcha on 18 August, which was attended by representatives of 40 villages, claims Balbir Singh. Following this, Muslims held their own panchayat... DM A.K. Awasthi has ordered a magisterial probe.

(Source: The Indian Express, 20 August, 2000)

(Contd. from Page 525)

admit that the State Government did not have yet any clear idea how to deal with these social scourges...

These customary practices are so widespread among various tribes in Arunachal Pradesh that “no political party dares to talk about these during the various elections, considering the electoral fall out. No party will say that they will bring in legislations to eliminate these social ills...

(Source: The Pioneer, 3 October, 2000)

Chronology of the Month

(16 September – 15 October, 2000)

NATIONAL POLITICS

NDA: *To mark first anniversary, government dishes out 'comprehensive' but unimpressive list of achievements (13 Oct).

*Sushma Swaraj and Venkaiah Naidu taken in Cabinet (30 Sept).

*TC leader Mamata Banerjee resigns and then rolls back resignation (6 Oct).

BJP: *President Laxman launches his pro-Muslim line with mass rally at Kanpur but with poor Muslim attendance (15 Sept). BJP UP fails to establish links with UP Madarsas and Ulema. PM Vajpayee repeats Nagpur call at National Executive (1 Oct). RSS Chief Sudarshan endorses new line (7 Oct). Laxman wrestles with Thackeray (15 Oct).

*BJP makes poor show in Gujarat municipal elections.

RSS: *Takes Vajpayee's clarification in its stride and reaffirms his status as Swayamsevak (18 Sept).

*Observes 75th anniversary at Nagpur (7 Oct).

*Holds major rally in Agra. Advani attends. Concluding Session with CSIR, DG Mashelkar (15 Oct). RSS leaders criticize policies and support Government.

*In various statements Sudarshan calls for Indian initiative to dismember Pakistan and for 'Indianisation' of Catholic Church and Hinduisation of Muslims which all evoke strong reaction (2 Oct). Draws flank from Muslims and Christian organisations as well as mass media (11 Oct).

VHP: *Demands ban on Tablighi Jamaat, Jamaat-e-Islami and SIMI (16 Sept). SIMI dares Government to ban it.

*Decides to mobilise cadre to deal with ISI threat (16 Sept).

*Threatens to withdraw support to BJP if temple construction obstructed (4 Oct).

Congress: *UDF stages comeback in Kerala and Gujarat municipal polls.

*Salman Khurshid removed from UP Congress presidentship (19 Sept).

*Congress joins AIADMK and CPM at secular rally in Chennai (23 Sept).

CPM: *Derecognised as national party by E.C. (30 Sept).

*Expels Saifuddin Chowdhury, ex-MP (3 Oct).

Other Parties: *Samajwadi Party cautions Muslims against BJP's design (17 Sept), calls on NDA allies to snap ties (29 Sept). Criticises RSS demand for Indianisation of Church (12 Oct).

*Nationalist Congress Party declares BJP untouchable (3 Oct).

Corruption: *Ex-PM P.V. Narasimha Rao and ex-HM Buta Singh convicted in JMM bribery case (29 Sept) awarded 3 years R.I. (12 Oct) but allowed bail.

*CBI files FIR against Hindjuas in Bofors Case.

*AIADMK leader Jaya Lalitha sentenced to 3 years R.I. in Tansi Case.

*CVF Vittal prescribes 9 point formula against political corruption (25 Sept).

Human Rights: *NHRC notes rise in custodial deaths, particularly in UP (9 Oct).

*Awards compensation for hospital's negligence (24 Sept).

Small States: *Movement to separate Vindhya Pradesh from MP launched (17 Sept).

*Campaign for separation of western UP (Harit Pradesh), Eastern UP (Purvanchal) and Bundelkhand intensified with mass rallies.

Conversion: *US Ambassador Celeste calls on Laxman to seek clarification of RSS charge against foreign missionaries (11 Oct).

Infiltration: *AASU demands repeal of IM (DT) Act (29 Sept).

*338 Bangladeshis reportedly detained in Delhi, pending deportation (7 Oct).

Foreign Affairs: *India and USA reach higher level of understanding and cooperation (16 Sept).

*President Putin of USSR visits India (2 Oct). Signs agreement on strategic cooperation.

*India maintains silence at Israel's attacks on Palestinians.

KASHMIR QUESTION

Political Development: *RSS intensifies trifurcation campaign (6 Oct).

*Advani rejects tripartite talks (16 Sept); Vajpayee asks Pakistan to stop dreaming of Kashmir (17 Sept).

*Farooq Abdullah links Muslims' future in India with Kashmir (20 Oct), reiterates internationalization of LoC.

*Differences within Hurriyat and in Kashmir lobby abroad surface (20 Sept).

*A.G. Lone holds Convention of J&K People's Conference (8 Oct). Al Barq, militant wing, separates.

Administration: *International Golf Course Project in Srinagar completed at cost of 18 crores (6 Oct).

Atrocities: *Army Captain dismissed for rape (4 Oct).

*Jawans fire at Patan Market and kill IG's driver (17 Sept).

Census: *Militants oppose Census; operations come to halt in Valley (17 Sept).

Foreign Reaction – Russia: *Putin compares Kashmir with Chechenya; assures India of full support; proposes bilateral settlement but endorses Indian line (5 Oct).

EU: *4 senior diplomats visit Kashmir and call on Hurriyat leaders (25 Sept).

USA: *Joint Statement on PM's visit endorses Indian line

(16 Sept).

France: *Acknowledges links between terrorists and Pakistan Army (5 Oct).

BABARI MASJID QUESTION

CBI Case: *Special Judge postpones hearing for framing of charges to 15 Nov. (16 Sept)

Liberhan Commission: *Kalyan Singh moves SC for transfer to Delhi H.C. of writ against Commission's notice (4 Oct).

RSS: *Leaders agree to wait for 'Central Government's nod' (13 Oct). Threatens Government with 'consequences' for opposing construction (14 Oct).

*Sudarshan exchanges another letter with Shahabuddin (See Text).

VHP: *Scales down Mandir Model Yatra to Ayodhya (20 Sept).

*Threatens Central and State Governments if they impede construction (5 Oct).

BJP: *Laxman denies Mandir as poll issue in UP (17 Sept).

*UP President Kalraj Mishra does not rule out possibility (20 Sept). Dismisses VHP threat (4 Oct).

*GS Katiyar reaffirms Mandir still on agenda (23 Sept). But wants out-of-court settlement.

*GS Anil Shastri commits BJP to accept judicial verdict (10 Oct). BMMCC Convener Shahabuddin writes to Shastri.

*Advani performs Pooja at Sarnath to mark 10th anniversary of Ram Rath Yatra (25 Sept).

Congress: *Demands explanation from Government on VHP's construction plan (11 Oct).

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN

Jama Masjid: *Abdullah Bukhari appoints son Ahmad Bukhari as Imam of Jama Masjid; ignores Wakf Board, installation attended by Delhi CM and leaders of many political parties (14 Oct).

Communal Riots: *Communal riots in Mau (UP); Muslims harassed; town under curfew for weeks (9 Oct).

*Tension in Bihar Sharief; Government orders removal of idol from Wakf land (10 Oct).

*Mass rally in Mumbai demands punishment to the guilty of 92-93 Riots (24 Sept).

*Communal violence in Sojitra town in Gujarat (17 Sept) and Dariapur in Ahmedabad (1 Oct).

Terrorism: *Deendar Anjuman declared non-Muslim by JIH, AP and JUH (21 Sept).

*UP Government seeks ban on SIMI for subversive and terrorist activities. SIMI President denies involvement with ISI. UP CM unable to identify a single Madarsa which trains students for subversion (15 Oct).

Objectionable Book: *W. Bengal bans Bengali book with imaginary picture of Holy Prophet (28 Sept).

AMU: *Crisis unites university community (17 Sept).

Peace reigns in campus, Sir Syed Day observed with éclat. Muslim organisations accuse UP Government of communalizing situation.

Education: *UGC warns Universities against unapproved courses (15 Oct).

Other Minorities - Jains: *Rajasthan recognises Jains as minority (16 Sept). *Sikhs: Akhal Takhat bans printing of Guru Grath Saheb in non-Gurmukhi (4 Oct).

*Christians: *School attacked in Bulandshaher (28 Sept). *Buddhism: Tension in Farukhabad over origin of temple (14 Oct).

Minorities Rights: *US Commission holds inquiry into attack on religious minorities in India (16 Sept).

Indo-Pakistan Relations: *MQM Delegation visits India to inform Muslims about situation of Mohajirs in Pakistan (1 Oct). Altaf Hussain's statements criticizing Partition widely noted (see text).

*Track II diplomacy resumed in Delhi with Naik, Gujral and Amartya Sen (18 Sept).

Muslim World - Palestine: *Peace process breaks down over status of Jerusalem.

*Israel kills over 100 Palestinian youth and bombards Arab towns to curb stone-throwing. UN Security Council condemns Israel (7 Oct). *Arab States worried over India's silence and proximity with Israel.

*Pakistan: *JIP criticizes military regime. Pakistan minorities depose before US Commission (26 Sept). Pakistan accuses India of complicity in bomb blast in Islamabad (22 Sept). *Cyprus: *Turkey supports confederation for Cyprus.

*Afghanistan: *Shia leader Kalb-e-Sadiq calls Taliban anti-Islamic (22 Sept).

Commemoration: *788th Urs of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti observed in Ajmer (29 Sept). Vajpayee and Sonia lay chadars.

Obituary: *Haji A.M. Ubaidullah, doyen of Muslim community in Tamilnadu, passes away (2 Oct).

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