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Guideline for Muslim Voters in 70 Muslim-Concentration Constituencies

In 1998 General Election, 30 Muslims were elected to the Lok Sabha, 26 from 70 Muslim-concentration ('Muslim') constituencies and 4 from the rest of the 473 Constituencies in the country:

	No. of Seats	No. of Muslim Winners	Success Ratio
Muslim Majority Constituencies	11	11	100%
Other Muslim Concentration Constituencies	59	15	25.42%
Rest of the Lok Sabha Constituencies	473	4	0.85%

It is clear that the scope for increase lies only in the second category of 59 Muslim concentration (but not Muslim majority) constituencies.

A further analysis shows the party-wise break-up of the 44 seats won by non-Muslims: -

BJP	-	23	ADMK	-	1
INC	-	8	PMK	-	1
LF	-	7	SHS	-	1
S.P.	-	2	TDP	-	1

The conclusion is irresistible that had the secular parties, the INC, the LF, the SP and the TDP put up Muslim candidates, there would be 18 more Muslims in Lok Sabha.

And had the impossible happened and the secular parties formed an alliance or made adjustment or come to understanding with each other and put up a common Muslim candidate, given a one-to-one fight to the BJP and its allies there could be 25 more Muslim MP's!

Fractured, though the Muslim Indians are, as a run-up to the General Election, the Muslim Parliamentarians held a Consultation in October, 1998 and cautioned the political parties of the growing anxiety in the Muslim Indians about their persistence: under-representation in legislatures and, therefore, with the Secular Order itself and requested them, inter alia, to field more Muslim candidates and not to divide the secular votes, in general and the Muslim votes, in particular, in 'Muslim' constituencies. **The political parties paid no attention.**

The Muslim elite, for the first time, in the history of independent India, came forward in May, 1999 to adopt a Declaration on Empowerment of the Muslim Indians which, inter alia, asked for equitable representation of the community in the Central and State legislatures to give them a sense of participation and an opportunity to contribute their energy for the development of the nation. **Once again the political parties ignored the appeal.**

A third initiative was taken jointly by 5 premier

Muslim organisations, all non-political, the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, the All India Milli Council, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-Hind, the Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. They submitted a Muslim Agenda to the major political parties for incorporation in their manifestoes. Once again, they were also requested to close ranks in defence of secularism, rise above partisan interests and form an alliance or come to a nation-wide adjustment. They were also requested to field a common Muslim candidate at least in the 'Muslim' constituencies.

All this exercise has gone in vain. If the election manifestoes of the Congress and the CPM are any indication, the secular parties have simply ignored the anguish of the Muslim community at their continued deprivation and their poor share in development outlay and welfare allocations..

Secondly, the lists of candidates released so far also indicate a negative trend. If one eliminates the candidates, **for the record only**, like the CPM/CPI candidates in Poonani and Manjeri constituencies in Kerala or of other parties in constituencies with very low Muslim proportion in the electorate, one is left with very few winnable Muslim candidates of all secular parties put together.

For deeper analysis 'Muslim' constituencies can be put into 3 categories: a) with more than one Muslim candidates; b) with only one Muslim candidate; and c) with no Muslim candidate of the parties relevant thereto in the light of their past performance.

It is obvious that no Muslim will get elected even from a 'Muslim' Constituency, if no Muslim is fielded by any major political party; that in case of more than one Muslim contesting against another, a non-Muslim fielded by another secular party, or more probably by the BJP, may win.

One concludes that it is most unlikely that the number of Muslims in the coming Lok Sabha will exceed 25, i.e. 4.6% of the total strength or 36.8% of what it ought to be. **Can Indian democracy be called a genuine democracy if the biggest minority in the country suffers a deprivation level of 63.2%?**

There is almost complete polarisation in the electoral arena between the BJP and its allies, on one hand, and the Congress and its allies, on the other. Since Muslim Indians constitute only 12.5% of the electorate (though proportions may vary widely from state to state) and since democracy is a game of numbers, no political party, with the possible exception of the BSP in UP and the RJD in Bihar, are prepared to take the risk of fielding Muslim candidates even in a majority of 'Muslim' constituencies (above 20 per cent) because, with all their commitment to

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

secularism and declaration of faith in the secular consciousness of the masses and all their claims of having deep roots in the people, they are unable to transfer their non-Muslim votes to Muslim candidates. Further, no political party is secular enough to give the Muslims their due if this would mean blotting its books in the hundreds of Hindu-dominated constituencies. Thus, no secular party wants to be perceived as making any accommodation, far less any concession, to the Muslim community or even as articulating their legitimate grievances and aspirations except in vague and idealistic terms. If the name of the game is power why should any political party, even a regional party, adopt an adventurist course? So, as a token of its secular outlook, at best it offers some sops and some unwinnable Muslim candidates to attract as many Muslim votes as possible, without losing any Hindu support.

But to gauge the true depth of Muslim frustration, one has to take into account the fact that fewer capable Muslim MP's in a parliamentary group, the less vocal they are likely to be in articulating the aspirations of the community, which is a legitimate expectation of the Muslim community. In our system a legislator has a multi-dimensional function; he represents the people of his Constituency, the people of the country as a whole and his own community.

Granted that the political climate is not as much communal as it is casteist, inter-caste rivalry has, on one hand, dulled the edges of inter-religious friction but appears, on the other, to lead, by common consent, to exclusion of Muslim Indians from representation in the power structure.

Secular voters, in general, and Muslim voters in particular, except in Kerala and West Bengal and Karnataka and questionably in UP, have no choice but to vote for the Congress and its allies, if they want the BJP to be defeated. Had there been two secular formations anxious to attract the Muslim votes, the situation could have yielded some marginal benefits for the Muslim Indians.

So the secular parties have learnt no lesson. Either they deliberately ignore the Muslims and take them for granted, or the grip of the dominant Hindu castes/groups on the secular parties is so tight that they are compelled to put up non-Muslim candidates from Muslim concentration constituencies. And of course all of them are too egoistic to agree to a principled distribution of seats.

However, the times are changing. the Muslim Indians will no longer beg the secular parties for seats or appeal to their good sense. The survival of secularism is not the responsibility of the Muslim Indians alone, or of the religious minorities only. If the standard-bearers of democracy remains silent spectators of persistent denial of representation to the Muslim Indians, if those who flaunt their commitment to Social Justice deny justice to the

Muslim Indians, pressure will build up for the organisation of a full-fledged Muslim political party – not a non-political political centre, as I have been suggesting so far.

State-wise Position as on 25 August, 1999

No Muslim Candidate in 'Muslim' Constituencies

A.P.	3 out of 3	Kurnool, Nandyal, Guntur
Assam	2 out of 4	Silchar, Kaliabor
Bihar	1 out of 8	Bhagalpur
Gujarat	0 out of 2	Kutch, Broach
Karnataka	2 out of 3	Dharwar North
Kerala	1 out of 4	Badagama
Maharashtra	2 out of 5	Solapur, Jalna
M.P.	2 out of 2	Bhopal, Satna
Rajasthan	2 out of 2	Bharatpur, Jaipur
Tamil Nadu	2 out of 2	Ramanathapuram, Vellore
UP	5 out of 16	Sambhal, Padrauna, Hardoi, Kaisarganj
W. Bengal	5 out of 11	Berhampur, Basirhat, Krishanagar, Diamond Harbour, Bolpur

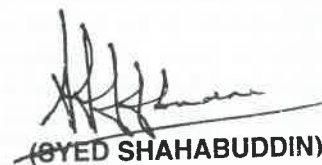
In the circumstances, as a first step the Muslim community, to give expression to its anguish and frustration, should modify its electoral strategy for the coming general election. The point of departure can be that in 'Muslim' Constituencies they would vote for the most winnable Muslim candidate while in other 473 Constituencies they would vote for the strongest winnable candidate - irrespective of religion, capable of defeating the BJP/NDA candidate.

Suggested Guideline for 70 Muslim-concentration Constituencies

1. If **more than one** Muslim candidates have been put up by relevant political parties, the Muslim voters should **vote for** the candidate of the party which had the better position in 1998.
2. If there is **only one** Muslim candidate put up by any relevant secular party (among the first two or three in 1998), the Muslim community should **vote for** him, irrespective of the party.
3. If no Muslim candidate has been put up by a relevant party, the Muslim community should, in protest, **abstain from voting**, whatever the impact on the result.

This may serve to wake up the secular parties and, at the same time, underline the resolve of the Muslim Indians to use their electoral strength for securing due representation in the legislature.

New Delhi
1st September, 1999


(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

Hakim Abdul Hameed (14 Sept., 1908 - 23 July, 1999)

Physician, Scientist, Educationist, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist A Great Muslim Indian, A Great Man

Hakim Abdul Hameed, known universally as Hakim Saheb, was born on 14 September, 1908, in an eminent family of Delhi. His father Abdul Majeed, an 'Attar' by profession, had established a traditional dawakhana in 1907 on a modest scale. He passed away 3 months after he founded the Hamdard Dawakhana in 1922. Hakim Saheb took over this small family concern and nourished it into Hamdard (Wakf) Laboratories, the premier manufacturer of Unani medicines, with an annual turnover of hundreds of crores.

He was acclaimed nationally and internationally as an eminent practitioner of the Tibb-e-Unani and treated hundreds of thousands of patients in his long career.

When India was partitioned, Hakim Saheb stayed on in Delhi and not only weathered the storm but made lasting contributions to restore the moral of the community.

Hakim Saheb had a life-long commitment to education. He established the Hamdard College of Pharmacy, the Institute of History of Medicine as well as the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies which together evolved into Jamia Hamdard in 1989 under the aegis of the Hamdard Education Society (1981) which continues to run a national scholarship programme for talented students. Hakim Saheb also established the Hamdard Public School, apart from a number of schools and training centres. An institution in himself, he was a builder of institutions, unparalleled by any other Muslim Indian since independence. A man, who had never entered the portals of a college or university, he founded Jamia Hamdard and was unanimously elected as the Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University.

Appalled by the under-employment of the Muslim youth, Hakim Saheb established the Business and Employment Bureau to coach them for examination and train them in marketable skills. He went on to set up the Hamdard Study Circle to prepare talented graduates for the Civil Services. Today roughly 2/3 of the Muslim entrants in the superior services every year owe their success to this facility.

His greatest contribution was the standardization of Unani Pharmacopoeia and its publication. Mass production of Unani Medicines under strict quality control and their ready availability through a nationwide network led to a renaissance of Ilm-e-Tib. Some of his products like Rooh Afza, Safi and Sualin have become household names in India and abroad. Perhaps no other physician after Hakim Ajmal Khan received so much renown and did so much for the revival and progress of the Ilm-e-Tib.

He revived the All India Tibbi Conference founded by

Hakim Ajmal Khan and was its President for many years.

A benefactor of Urdu, he established the Ghalib Academy and built it up a centre of research in Urdu literature.

USSR conferred the Avicenna Award upon Hakim Saheb in 1983. In 1991, he was awarded Padma Bhushan. Iran's Academy of Medical Sciences conferred Honorary Fellowship. Hamdard University, Karachi, gave him D. Litt. Honoris Causa in 1993.

A philanthropist who dedicated his earning from his practice and business to the cause of education, the Hamdard Campus today is an educational landmark in Delhi. He lived through the bitterness of the Partition which divided his own family, to give a sense of pride and achievement to the Muslim Indians, teaching them not to curse the darkness, but to light one candle after another, to dispel the encircling gloom.

In 1948, he established the Hamdard Charitable Trust. Later he dedicated the Hamdard Dawakhana as Wakf and established the Hamdard National Foundation to support education, scientific research and community welfare.

He passed away on 24 July, 1999, survived by his two sons - Mr. Abdul Mueed and Mr. Hammad Ahmad. His service to Islam, to his community, to the country and to humanity at large shall never be forgotten and shall be a continuing sense of inspiration to all.

A scholar of contemporary history in his own right, Hakim Saheb had maintained files of clippings on the Freedom Movement since the 30's. Short of entering the arena of politics, Hakim Saheb had deep interest and insight in contemporary politics. With an open mind, he kept in touch with national and international development and the opinion-makers who mattered in public life.

A symbol of composite culture in the best sense of the term, all his life he built bridges between peoples of various religions, languages and regions through his Id Milan, Baqrid Milan and Holi Milan Receptions, which became events attended by a representative cross-section of the Indian society.

Hakim Saheb's aesthetic sense expressed itself in the design and architecture of the institutions he built, particularly the Masjid in the Hamdard Nagar Campus. He always did things in style but without ostentation.

Punctual to a fault, meticulous in planning his time, Hakim Saheb led a very regulated life. Simple, modest, gracious and courteous to all, Hakim Saheb was harmony personified. Physically frail, he was a man of ever-expanding horizons, of ever-rising heights. Truly a 'dervish', within and without.

(Contd. on Page 405)

Lok Sabha: List of 70 Muslim-Concentration Constituencies

S.No.	Constituency	% of Muslim Voters	Position in 1998 I/II/III	Relevant Party	Recommended Muslim Candidate in 1999
Andhra Pradesh (4)					
1.	1. Hyderabad	32	AIMIM/BJP/INC	AIMMM	S.S. Owaisi (MIM)
2.	2. Kurnool	17	INC/TDP/BJP	INC	No Muslim [NM]
3.	3. Nandyal	17	TDP/INC/BJP	INC	NM
4.	4. Guntur	15	INC/TDP/BJP	INC	NM
Assam (4)					
5.	1. Dhubri	55	INC/BJP/CPI	INC	INC candidate
6.	2. Barpeta	38	UMFA/BJP/CPM	UMFA/INC	A.F.G. Osmani (UMFA)
7.	3. Silchar	30	BJP/INC/CPM	INC/CPM	NM
8.	4. Kaliabor	29	INC/AGP/BJP	INC	NM
Bihar (8)					
9.	1. Kishanganj	66	RJD/SP/BJP	RJD	Md. Taslimuddin (RJD)
10.	2. Katihar	37	INC/BJP/JD	INC/NCP	?
11.	3. Purnea	29	BJP/SP/INC	SP/INC	NM
12.	4. Madhubani	23	INC/BJP/CPI	INC	Shakeel Ahmed (INC)
13.	5. Darbhanga	22	RJD/BJP/JD	RJD	M.A. Fatimi (RJD)
14.	6. Bettiah	22	BJP/RJD/JD	RJD/JDS	RJD candidate
15.	7. Bhagalpur	20	BJP/RJD/CPI	RJD/CPI	NM
16.	8. Siwan	20	RJD/BJP	RJD	Md. Shahabuddin (RJD)
Delhi (1)					
17.	1. Chandni Chowk		BJP/INC/JD	INC/JD	Shoaib Iqbal (JDS)
Gujarat (2)					
18.	1. Kutch	19	BJP/INC/AIRJP	INC	NM
19.	2. Broach	17	BJP/INC/JD	INC/JDS	NM
Haryana (1)					
20.	1. Faridabad	25	BJP/INC/SJP[R]	INC	Zakir Husain (INC)
Jammu and Kashmir (4)					
21.	1. Srinagar	Over 50%	JKN/INC/BJP	INC/PDP	Mehbooba Mufti (PDP)
22.	2. Baramula	Over 50%	JKN/IND/JKAL	INC/PDP	Saifuddin Soz (Ind)
23.	3. Anantnag	Over 50%	INC/JKN/JD	INC/PDP	Mufti Md. Sayeed (PDP)
24.	4. Ladakh	Over 40%	JKN/INC	INC	?
Karnataka (3)					
25.	1. Bangalore (N)	17	INC/LS/JD	INC	C.K. Jaffer Sharif (INC)
26.	2. Gulbarga	17	BJP/JD/INC	JDS/INC	Iqbal Ahmad
27.	3. Dharwad North	16	BJP/INC/JD	INC/JDS	NM
Kerala (4)					
28.	1. Ponnani	66	MUL/CPI/BJP	MUL	G.M. Banatwalla (MUL)
29.	2. Manjeri	56	MUL/CPM/BJP	MUL	E. Ahamed (MUL)
30.	3. Calicut	35	INC/JD/BJP	INC/JDS	C.M. Ibrahim (JDS)
31.	4. Badagara	30	CPM/INC/BJP	CPM/INC	NM
Maharashtra (5)					
32.	1. Bombay South	N.A.	INC/BJP/IND	INC/NCP/SP	Aziz Lalani (SP)
33.	2. Bombay SC	N.A.	SHS/SP/JD	SP/JDS	SP-NCP candidate
34.	3. Aurangabad	19	INC/SHS/JD	INC	A.R. Antulay
35.	4. Solapur	15	INC/BJP/JD	INC	NM
36.	5. Jalna	14	BJP/INC/JP	INC/JP	NM
Madhya Pradesh (2)					
37.	1. Bhopal	18	BJP/INC/BSP	INC/BSP	NM
38.	2. Satna	13	BJP/INC/BSP	INC/BSP	NM
Rajasthan (2)					
39.	1. Bharatpur	16	INC/BJP/BSP	INC	NM
40.	2. Jaipur	14	BJP/INC/CPI	INC/CPI	NM
Tamil Nadu (2)					
41.	1. Ramanathapuram	10	ADMK/TMC(M)/PT	ADMK	NM
42.	2. Vellore	8	PMK/DMK/INC	INC	NM

Uttar Pradesh (16)

43.	1.	Rampur	42	BJP/INC/BSP	INC/BSP	Noor Bano (INC)
44.	2.	Moradabad	40	SP/BJP/BSP	SP	S.R.Burq (SP)
45.	3.	Saharanpur	38	BJP/BSP/BKKG	BSP/RLD	Rashid Masood (RLD)
46.	4.	Amroha	37	BJP/BSP/SP	BSP/SP	Rashid Alvi (BSP)
47.	5.	Meerut	30	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	Yaqub Qureshi (BSP)
48.	6.	Kairana	29	BJP/SP/BKKG	SP/RLD	Ameer Alam (RLD)
49.	7.	Bareilly	28	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	Islam Sabir (INC)
50.	8.	Balrampur	28	SP/BJP/BSP	SP	Rizwan Zahir (SP)
51.	9.	Muzaffarnagar	27	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	?
52.	10.	Sambhal	27	SP/BJP/BSP	SP	NM
53.	11.	Padrauna	27	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	NM
54.	12.	Hardwar	26	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	NM
55.	13.	Domariaganj	26	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	?
56.	14.	Bahraich	23	BSP/BJP/SP	BSF	Arif Md.Khan (BSP)
57.	15.	Lucknow	23	BJP/SP/BSP	SP/BSP	Md.Izharul Haque (BSP)
58.	16.	Kaiserganj	23	SP/BJP/BSP	SP	?

West Bengal (11)

59.	1.	Jangipur	59	CPM/INC/WBTC	CPM	Abul Hasnat Khan (CPM)
60.	2.	Murshidabad	58	CPM/INC/WBTC	CPM	Moinul Hasan (CPM)
61.	3.	Raiganj	55	CPM/INC/BJP	CPM	NM
62.	4.	Berhampore	43	RSP/BJP/INC	RSP	NM
63.	5.	Basirhut	43	CPI/WBTC/INC	CPI	NM
64.	6.	Malda	40	INC/CPM/BJP	INC	A.B.A.G.K. Choudhury (INC)
65.	7.	Krishnanagar	32	CPM/BJP/INC	CPM	NM
66.	8.	Diamond Harbour	32	CPM/WBTC/INC	CPM	NM
67.	9.	Bolpur	24	CPM/WBTC/INC	CPM	NM
68.	10.	Uluberia	22	CPM/WBTC/INC	CPM	H. Mollah (CPM)
69.	11.	Katwa	21	CPM/WBTC/INC	CPM	M. Zahedi (CPM)

Lakshadweep (1)

70.	1.	Lakshadweep	95	INC/JD	INC	P.M. Sayeed (INC)
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General Election, 1999**Major Contestants against BJP-Led NDA**

State	National/Regional
A.P.	Congress
Assam	Congress/AGP/UMFA
Bihar	Congress/RJD
Gujarat	Congress
Haryana	Congress
J&K	Congress/NC/PDP
Karnataka	Congress/JDS
Kerala	Congress/LF
Maharashtra	Congress/NCP
Madhya Pradesh	Congress
Rajasthan	Congress
Tamil Nadu	Congress/AIADMK/TMC
UP	SP/BSP/Congress-RLD
West Bengal	Congress/LF

Conclusion

Only in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and other viable secular parties are also in the field, apart from Congress. Thus, the secular voter has to choose between Congress and JD(S) in Karnataka, AIADMK-led alliance and TMC-led alliance, in Tamil Nadu, SP, BSP and Congress in Uttar Pradesh and LF and Congress in Kerala and West Bengal on the basis of relative winability of the candidate and the past performance of the parties.

**Non-Muslim Concentration
Constituencies: Other Winnable Muslim
Candidates**

State	Constituency	Candidate/Party
A.P.	Hanamkonda	Kamaluddin Ahmad (INC)
Bihar	Gopalganj	A. Ghafur (RJD)
Karnataka	Dharwad South	A.G. Samadi (INC)
M.P.	Betul	Ghufran Azam (INC)
Tamil Nadu	Chennai South	M.A. Latif (NML)
U.P.	Budaun	Salim Sherwani (SP)
	Azamgarh	Akbar A. Duniya (BSP)
	Sitapur	Mukhtar Anees (SP)
	Unnao	A.R. Ansari (INC)
	Nainital	Muzaffar Ali (SP)
	Shahbad	Ilyas Azmi (SP)
	Maharajganj	Talat Aziz (BSP)
W. Bengal	Calcutta (NE)	Md. Salim (CPM)
Pondicherry		M.O.H. Farooq (INC)

I am proud of being a Sikh but I have never used religion in my life to get where I am. Therefore, I will never allow anyone to exploit my religion.

- Dr. Manmohan Singh, Congress Leader

Congress(I): Election Manifesto, 1999 (Extracts)

Secularism

Secularism is an article of faith for every Congress worker... In our country, secularism can only mean equal respect for all religions and the clear separation of politics from religion...

... The Congress vehemently rejects the use of religion for political ends. It rejects the mobilisation of people by stirring up religious passions. The Congress regards all citizens as equal. Yet, it recognises minorities of several kinds because of the some disadvantages and handicaps they suffer and the special help they may need...

The debate on secularism is, at its very core, a debate ... on the very essence of the Indian culture. It is a debate between those who see Indian civilisation as what it is – a most tolerant and liberal way of life – and those who seek to distort it by their bigotry, narrow mindedness and intolerance.

Secularism is thus a fight for the very soul of India and for rescuing it from the merchants of hate.

Social Harmony

There is a new ferment and a new yearning among the underprivileged and deprived sections and communities of our society. The Congress has always been sensitive to their growing aspirations for voice, for full representation in the institutions of governance, for social acceptance and the direct exercise of political power.

The Congress is fully aware that increasingly, the demand is for parity, not for charity, the desire is not for benevolence but for participation. The Congress has always championed the cause of equal opportunity. It has consistently believed that equal and full access to education, employment and health is the foundation of an egalitarian society...

But the scars of centuries of discrimination cannot be overcome by education and health alone. There is need for affirmative action in the form of reservation also...

Unity through Diversity

... India is one nation but comprises of diversity and plural culture.

India, the land of multiple identities and of multiple diversities faces many challenges to her political unity. ...

India is one and many at the same time.

That oneness has to be preserved and strengthened.

At the same time the variety has to be recognised, nurtured and given every opportunity for full expression...

The Congress is a national party that has always been responsive to regional sentiments...

Work-Plan – Minorities

The Congress will vigorously pursue the seven-point Intensified Programme for the Protection and Promotion of the Minorities announced on Martyrs' Day 1999...

Measures will be taken to increase the representation of minorities in all public, police and para-military services both in the central in state governments. The Congress commits itself to constitute a Commission to examine, consistent with the relevant provision of the Constitution relating to the minorities, the question of the backwardness of the minorities. It will implement the recommendations of this Commission in the context of the various relevant provisions of the Constitution, in particular Articles 15(4) and 16(4).

The Constitution will be amended to establish a Commission for Minority Educational Institutions and to provide direct affiliation for minority professional institutions to central universities.

New middle-level technical institutes in clusters where, for example, weavers and artisans are concentrated will be started.

The National Minorities Development Corporation and the State Minorities Development Corporations will be made direct-lending institutions.

The corpus of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation will be immediately doubled to spread education and literacy among the minorities.

The spread of modern and technical education among the minorities, especially amongst women, is the most important step that any government can take to integrate the minorities into the national mainstream.

A Central Madarsa Education Board will be established to promote modern and scientific education, along with the traditional curriculum in all madarsas.

Consistent with Article 347 of the Constitution, the Congress will examine demands to declare Urdu as an official language in States where a substantial proportion of the population speaks that language.

The Maulana Azad National Urdu University in Hyderabad will be given all support to emerge as a centre of excellence...

The Protection of Places of Worship Act of 1991 (sic) will be strictly enforced.

Substantial legislation will be introduced for the effective implementation of the rights conferred on minorities under Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution.

All pending litigation involving wakf boards and properties will be resolved on a time-bound basis. The practice of superseding elected wakf boards and keeping them under indefinite suspension will be actively discouraged.

The Wakf Act, 1995 will be reviewed for its effective implementation and where necessary, will be amended to protect Wakf properties.

Special courts will be established to expeditiously try cases arising out of communal disturbances.... □

Shahabuddin's Comments on Congress Manifesto Insaf Morcha's Statement, 18 August, 1999

"From the point of view of the Muslim community the Congress Manifesto for 1999 **is not old wine in a new bottle; it is an empty bottle with a new label**, nothing more than a rephrase of its previous manifestoes.

On the institutional aspect, the Congress has given no thought to the establishment of a Department of Minorities Affairs or a Parliamentary Committee on Minorities on making the Minorities Commission or Commission for Linguistic Minorities more effective and relevant.

Question of Reservation:

The most disappointing feature of the Manifesto is its ominous silence on the Question of Reservation in legislatures, public employment, higher education, development and welfare benefits and credit flow. The question of Empowerment is today uppermost in the mind of the Muslim community, after 50 years of persistent and systematic deprivation.

On the question of public employment including the Central para-military and the armed forces, the Manifesto promises to set up a Commission to monitor the impact of the 'effective steps'. But the manifesto does not spell out the 'effective steps'. Moreover, the Government does not need a Commission to notice the persistent under-representation of the Muslim community in public employment in all services and cadres, at all levels and in all departments.

The National Minorities Finance and Development Corporation or the Maulana Azad Educational Foundation are no substitute for providing proportionate share to the Muslim community under all educational development and welfare schemes at all functional levels.

Babari Masjid Question:

There is not a word about the restoration of the Babari Masjid site – not even an assurance of expeditious hearing of the title suit and unconditional execution of the final judicial decision. There is not a word about the lack of progress in the CBI case in which the leading lights of the BJP, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal figure among the 49 accused and charge-sheeted.

The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 has been a dead letter. Thousands of mosques all over the country remain closed or occupied adversely. And there is growing resistance to construction of new mosques or renovation of old ones by mischievous elements encouraged by the silent backing or passivity of the authorities. The Manifesto offers no credible solution.

Communal Violence:

As regards communal violence, the Manifesto totally bypasses the question of action on the Srikrishna Report or the Hashimpura massacre.

Education: To facilitate recognition and affiliation of

Muslim educational institutions, it is proposed to create a Commission. This may be of some limited value, **only if it is a statutory body** whose directive will be binding on professional bodies, universities and governments.

As regards modernisation of the Madarsa education, no major Muslim religious seminary is prepared to accept government intervention which would erode the very concept and purpose of Madarsa education. This Scheme has merely served so far to provide an alibi to the State for its failure to provide adequate educational facilities in Muslim-concentration areas.

Status of Urdu:

The promise to declare Urdu as Second Official Language in Urdu-concentration States lacks precision. Why can't the Congress make a clear and emphatic commitment not only to Urdu but to all languages in a minority situation, subject to 10% cut-off limit, at State, district, sub-district or local level? There is not a word about reinstatement of Urdu as Mother Tongue in School Education.

It is indeed unfortunate that the Manifesto shows no progress in the thinking of the Congress on the Minorities Question, in general, and on the problems of the Muslim community, in particular."

Prospects of Congress in 1999

The 1998 election was a disaster for the Congress. It was in the reckoning in only 300 of the 542 Lok Sabha seats. It won 141 and came second in 159. However, the alarming feature for the party was the fact that its candidates lost their deposits in 188 seats, the bulk of them in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Although the Congress wants to be seen as the obvious winner, it can only categorise 52 seats as safe for the party. In 87 constituencies, its candidates won by less than 10 per cent margins in 1998. In another 128 constituencies its candidates trailed by less than 10 per cent, although in only 83 of these did the Congress secure second position.

To improve its position the party has to focus its energies on these 267 Lok Sabha seats. The biggest opportunities are in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

Local alliances may improve the party's prospects in Bihar, Tamil Nadu and UP but there is dangers in the possible division of Congress votes in Maharashtra. The Congress hopes to contain the damage from Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party. A 50:50 division of the 1998 Congress vote could pave the way for a Shiv Sena-BJP sweep in Maharashtra...

(Source: The India Today, 9 August, 1999)

Vijay Simha

On Congress and Minorities

Just when they should have been given a decent burial, old suspicions about the Congress' relations with minorities have resurfaced thus lending a touch of frost to the wary embrace the two find themselves in.

(The) first list of the Congress has only four Muslim candidates out of a list of 72, just over five per cent. And almost all the Sikhs come from the Punjab list with just about one or two from constituencies outside Punjab. Enough to create a stir in minority communities.

The coming elections are being seen as the first in a long time when both Muslims and Sikhs are expected to vote for the Congress in larger numbers than they did in the last few years, an anticipation based on the return of the Sikh and the Muslim vote in the last round of Assembly elections in Delhi, MP and Rajasthan.

... Muslims began to show a return of the faith they had reposed in the Congress before the December 6, 1992 Babari Masjid demolition.

And in recent times, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has tried on many occasions to woo the minorities, regretting both the anti-Sikh riots and the Babari Masjid destruction on separate fora. Sonia Gandhi has also attended conferences and other functions of both communities in larger numbers than her predecessors...

Thus it was that the party was expected to take steps friendly to both communities. Instead, the last few weeks have seen an unpleasant resurfacing of old hostilities and suspicions. More so, as the Congress high command has exhibited a disturbing return to the earlier practice of saying one thing and doing another.

For example, Sonia has stressed repeatedly that minorities must be given their due share in the party hierarchy and in elected bodies as well...

The party's dealings with Muslims have aroused anger. Serious demands have been made that the Congress nominate a Muslim from Chandni Chowk, where Muslims reside in large number in the Capital, to which the party has played cool.

In the last 50 years, since Independence, the Congress has never nominated a Muslim from any of Delhi's seats in the Lok Sabha. Forty people have so far contested on a Congress ticket beginning 1952 and not one was a Muslim. To rectify this, Muslim leaders have suggested the party choose a member of this community from Chandni Chowk, offering a choice of youth and experience to select from... Days have passed but Sonia hasn't responded yet.

She has a low at stake in states like UP from where she plans to contest also, and the minorities are a crucial number... If Sonia has to revive the party... she will have

On Congress Inching towards Coalition

Keeping varying perceptions ... aside, the Congress is preparing for a coalition arrangement at the Centre in the post-poll scenario and is likely to contest around 400 seats at best, leaving the rest to allies.

The thought of running a coalition government at the Centre is keeping the debate alive in the Congress with top leaders divided on the issue: some feel it is fine while others pale at the thought... However, in an important perception of realities, the Congress appears to be coming around to accepting the possibility come October.

What this in mind, the party is hunting for State-wise allies with some important outfits like H.D. Deve Gowda's Janata Dal faction in Karnataka, the anti-Naveen Patnaik BJD group in Orissa, the BSP and Ajit Singh's Lok Dal in Uttar Pradesh, the BSP in Madhya Pradesh and Sharad Joshi's Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra on the priority list.

These possible allies are in addition to existing friends and the alliances the Congress has sewn up for the coming elections in other states.

The party has six coalition partners in Kerala (IUML), Kerala Congress (Mani), Kerala Congress (Jacob), Kerala Congress (Pillai), Communist Marxist Party and K.R. Gowraimma's JSS, three allies each in Tamil Nadu (ADMK, CPM, CPI) and Bihar (RJD, CPI, CPM), two in Maharashtra - RPI (Gavai) and RPI (Ambedkar) - and one in Goa (MGP) already lined up.

In addition to this is the tacit understanding with the Left in states like Andhra Pradesh, UP, Assam and, to an extent, in West Bengal where the common foe is Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress. And if Deve Gowda, Tathagat Satpathy, Kanshi Ram, Mayawati, Ajit Singh and Sharad Joshi also come around, the line-up of Congress friends becomes long enough to merit an alliance, though it won't have an official name like the BJP-led NDA.

This in itself is an important acceptance of ground reality ... and shows ... Sonia Gandhi's flexibility on the issue. To an extent, Sonia is only reiterating the Congress' Pachmarhi Declaration...

However, some work needs to be done yet... What all this means is a reduction in the number of seats the Congress can contest. Of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha ... (this) means a maximum of about 400 for the Congress, close to the 370 to the BJP plans to contest in. Such a configuration can only end in a coalition government at the Centre with or without the Congress.

(Source: The Indian Express, 30 July, 1999)

to thaw the chill in the relationship between the Congress and the minorities.

(Source: The Indian Express, 11 August, 1999)

National Democratic Alliance: Agenda for 1999 General Election (Extracts)

... We reach out to the minorities and even at the cost of repetition proclaim that we will safeguard the rights as enshrined in our Constitution. NDA is the political arm of none other than the Indian people as a whole. No one will be cast aside; fairness and justice will be rendered to one and all and we assure you that there will not be any discrimination. We appeal to our brothers and sisters of the minorities that we wholeheartedly extend our hands of friendship, in these fraternal words.

- * Let us hold hands and walk together to build a resurgent, modern India.
- * Let us throw away our old prejudices.
- * Let us put an end to divisiveness.
- * Let us have a moratorium on contentious issues.
- * Let us bind ourselves with bonds of trust and friendship.

We want an India which we all feel part of, in whose future we all have a stake. And we want to enter the new millennium with confidence; not with divisive feelings.

This is our call for reconciliation and it is part of our commitment to the minorities.

Genuine Secularism: We are committed to establishing a civilised, humane and just civil order; that which does not discriminate on grounds of caste, religion, race or sex. We will truly and genuinely uphold and practise the concept of secularism consistent with the Indian tradition of 'Sarva panth samadara' (equal respect for all faiths) and on the basis of equality of all. **We are committed to the economic, social and educational development of the minorities and will take effective steps in this regard. ...**

Editor's Comments

The NDA Agenda does not spell out any effective steps for the economic, social or educational development of the minorities. The Agenda only offers a 'moratorium on contentious issues'. One imagines they include the construction of Ram Janambhoomi Mandir on the Babari Masjid site, the promulgation of a common civil code and the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution. The BJP spokesmen have reaffirmed that once the BJP has a majority of its own in the Lok Sabha, it shall take up these and other items on its long-term agenda.

The Agenda has nothing to say on the key ideological issue of one culture or many cultures.

The Agenda is silent on how to ensure equal respect for all religions and equality of opportunity for religious minorities.

The Agenda is nothing more than a call to the religious minorities to surrender themselves to the juggernaut of Hindutva and accept religious assimilation and cultural submergence.

On BJP's Move to Drain Away Secular Voters Insaf Morcha Convener Shahabuddin's Statement, 22 July, 1999

"The BJP has launched a campaign across the country to implement its electoral strategy of attracting a section of the secular voters and particularly soften the Muslim voters.

For the first time in its history, the BJP recently held State Conference on the Problems of Minorities in Patna and Bangalore. It may hold similar Conferences in the capitals of other Muslim concentration States, to show its 'concern' for the minorities with a minority-friendly face.

The government electronic media is giving publicity to 'Muslim leaders' calling on the Prime Minister.

The P.M. himself is issuing statements on special occasions of interest to the Muslims, like the recent Urs of Hazrat Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilvi.

What is most important, **the BJP is reviving 'Muslim organisations' and even floating and promoting new organisations and playing up the Muslim names of their leaders and founders to create the impression that the Muslims are beginning to take another look at the BJP.** Some of these organisations are A.I. Muslim Majlis-e-Shoora, the Bharati Majlis, the National Muslim Welfare Movement. These are no more than paper organisations and their organisers have no roots or standing in the Muslim community.

Secondly, with a view to scatter secular votes and thus reduce their weight in support of a secular candidate, the BJP is likely to fund independent Muslim/Caste candidates in Muslim-concentration constituencies.

In constituencies where candidates have been fielded by more than one secular parties, the BJP may also fund the campaign of non-winnable candidates, only to deflect as many secular votes as possible away from the leading secular candidate who is its real rival. Needless to say, the BJP does not lack financial resources for such nefarious games.

The Insaf Morcha cautions the Secular Parties and calls upon the secular voters, particularly the Muslims, not to be misled by such tactics and vote massively and unitedly for the secular candidate, irrespective of the party, who stands the best chance of defeating the BJP candidates.

K.K. Katyal on NDA Agenda

... The NDA's "moratorium on contentious issues" ... obviously, relates to the BJP's decision not to press for Hindutva... According to the Congress(I), however, the BJP has taken this stand only for public consumption and in the short term but the "hidden agenda" remains (and) sees (it) as an "unprincipled compromise for political power".

(Source: The Hindu, 18 August, 1999)

Ziya-us Salam on BJP and the Minorities

"We have provided the minorities with samman and security", said a senior BJP leader with beguiling simplicity in New Delhi recently. It was a claim that would have been entirely laudable had it conformed to any yardstick of veracity. Unfortunately, it turned out to be an exercise most ill-opportune.

Barely 24 hours later Ahmedabad was in flames, torn apart between two communities in the walled city. Seven people lost their lives and scores were injured as politicians conveniently passed on the buck to each other. For the first time in recent years, the riots even spread outside the walled city.

However, the most disturbing part was not so much the fact that riots took place in the city. What is of concern is the laxity of the administration and the total lack of political will to ensure that riots do not take place.

In fact, for last year-and-a-half, communal fires have been raging across the country, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa have all experienced riots. The only thing which is different is the scale. The magnitude, if not the frequency, has gone down, if that is some consolation...

Most of these clashes included a spat between lumpen elements belonging to different communities.

However, what gives a lie to the government claim that the BJP rule has been largely trouble-free and peaceful have been the incidents of anti-Christian violence in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Orissa...

This surely cannot be termed as "security and samman" for the minorities... As the BJP-led alliance seeks a reaffirmation of faith from the nation in the next hustings, this is an albatross the partners will have to carry. Playing the ostrich is unlikely to pay on the day of political judgement. (Source: The Statesman, 12 August, 1999)

VHP's Yagyas for 'Stability'

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has planned 5,000 yagyas for the return of a stable government at the Centre... These yagyas had been started from July throughout the country and it will last till September 25.

... These Yagyas would be called aditya yagyas, which were organised to weaken Ravana, "a symbol of evil". He said the VHP was "praying for Pakistan's decline on all fronts"...

He said the yagyas were aimed at "creating awareness" for a stable Government which could give a befitting reply to Pakistan's misadventure...

(Source: The Pioneer, 7 August, 1999)

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C.R. Irani on Election Commission's Disqualification of Thackeray

... In a well-considered judgement, the Bombay High Court on 7 April, 1999 (coram, Bharucha, J.) set aside Prabhoo's election and held that Thackeray as the candidate's agent and with his consent had appealed for votes on the basis of his religion and promoted or attempted to promote enmity and hatred between different classes of citizens on grounds of religion and community...

... The Supreme Court promptly granted a stay on 18 May 1989. Thereafter the matter ... languished in the apex court for six years and the stay was vacated only on 11 December, 1995 when Justice Bharucha's judgement was upheld.

Under Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, ... the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, had to refer the quantum of punishment to the Election Commission and their recommendation is binding... The Assembly failed to refer the case of Thackeray ... until 14 November, 1997...

Thackeray tried everything to delay proceeding before the Election Commission... The Commission's ... disqualification from voting or standing for election for six years ... was sent to the Law Ministry headed by Thambi Durai on 22 September, 1998 but the notification was not issued until 17 July 1999...

The effective date of disqualification was 11 December 1995, the date of the final decision of the Supreme Court. Therefore, it will last only till December 2001. Meantime, Thackeray has been able to vote in two elections.

Two delays have to be explained: (why did) the Secretary of the Maharashtra Assembly ... hold back the reference ... for over a year? ... why did it take the Vajpayee Government till 17 July 1999, to issue the notification? An explanation should come from the Prime Minister. Nothing prevented an alert Central Government from activating the reference to the Commission. **The period of delay covers the tenure of four Prime Ministers – Rao, Gowda, Gujral and Atal Behari Vajpayee. Each of them had the opportunity to act but did not. Why?**

It has been prevailing wisdom that if Thackeray was touched, Mumbai which was Bombay would go up in flames. The Supreme Court and Election Commission have done their duty and the scourge of Bombay is as quiet as a lamb. Let this be a lesson for the future...

(Source: The Statesman)

Prafulla Marpakwar On Thackeray's Disqualification

... The Election Commission of India put a full stop to the Sena's appeal for votes on the basis of religion by defranchising party, Bal Thackeray, for six years.

"Garva se Kahon Hum Hindu Hai"... Hindustan Hinduon ka hai...nahi kisi ke baap ka", Thackeray had thundered, while campaigning for Ramesh Prabhu, the Sena's candidate during an Assembly by-election to the Vile Parle seat 12 years ago.

Though the election petition filed by the Congress candidate, Prabhakar Kunte, was disposed of in his favour by the Supreme Court in December 1995, the recommendation to defranchise Thackeray had been pending. Apart from Thackeray, other party leaders like Manohar Joshi, Dattaji Salvi, Madhukar Sarpodkar, Chhagan Bhujbal (who was then with the Sena) and Subhash Desai also brainwashed a jaded, but thirsting, electorate by projecting Sena as the sole guardian of the rights of Hindus.

On December 9, 1987, Thackeray had said during his speech which became the subject mater of Kunte's election petition: "Hinduism will triumph in the Assembly election and we must become honourable recipients of the victory to ward off the danger on Hinduism... elect Ramesh Prabhu to join Chhagan Bhujbal, who is already there. You will find Hindu temples underneath if all the mosques are dug out. Anyone who stands against the Hindus should be showered or worshipped with shoes. A candidate by name Prabhu should be led to victory in the name of religion".

On December 10, 1987, Thackeray repeated his appeal. He said: "we have come with the ideology of Hinduism. Shiv Sena will implement this ideology. Though the country belongs to the Hindus, Ram and Krishna are insulted. They valued the Muslim votes more than your votes...

We do not want the Muslim votes. A snake like Shahabuddin is sitting in the Janata Party, a man like Nihal Ahmad is also in the Janata Party. So the residents of Vile Parle should bury this Janata Party.

In his petition, Kunte had also pointed to leaflets circulated by Prabhu in the constituency. One of them read: "Think before you vote. Remember about the saviour of Hindu religion and Shri Shivaji... remember his struggle with sword and shield (Prabhu's election symbol). You are under oath of the saffron flag and the existence of Hindu religion".

(Source: The Indian Express, 30 July, 1999)

CPI(M): Election Manifesto, 1999 (Extracts)

Strengthen Secular Foundations

The CPI (M) advocates:

- Legislation for separation of religion and politics in light of the S.C. Judgement in the Bommai case.
- Effective prohibition on the use of religious issues for electoral purposes;
- Implementation of the Protection of Places of Worship Act to see that no disputes on religious places arise;
- The Ayodhya dispute to be referred to Supreme Court under Article 138(2) for a speedy judicial verdict;
- Special steps to prosecute all those found guilty by the Sri Krishna Commission for the Mumbai riots of 1993.

Education

... The CPI(M) will strive for:

- Introduction of compulsory primary education accompanied by free mid-day meals, provision of textbooks and other education materials.
- Free and universal education to be guaranteed for all children upto the age of 14 years. The 83rd Constitutional Amendment Bill, which lapsed, must be revived and adopted to make education a basic right for children upto the age of 14. ...

Rights of Minorities

Equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, irrespective of religion or caste are essential for a secular-democratic society. The Muslim community and some other minorities suffer from various forms of deprivation and discrimination. Special measures are required to remove their social and economic backwardness. While doing so, the CPI(M) appeals to the minorities to abjure fundamentalism and join the common endeavour to struggle for a just society.

- protection of the just rights of the minorities; implement provisions of the Constitution to prevent discrimination.
- Special scheme for promoting educational facilities for deprived minorities.

Media and Culture

- * All national languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution should be equally encouraged and developed.

On Rights of Minorities

Minorities have suffered discrimination, as a result of which they have remained economically, socially and educationally backward.

CPI will ensure -

- Appropriate mechanism to end discrimination in the matter of employment and other economic affairs. Concrete steps to ensure due representation in government and public sector services including police and security forces. **Quota system in employment for minorities on Kerala pattern.**

CPI(M): Electoral Strategy for Election, 99 New Delhi, 25 July, 1999

... The crucial question is: How to defeat the BJP and its allies? If the Left and democratic forces had been strong in a major part of the country, there would not have been any problem at all. But unfortunately this is not the case except in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. It is true that right now, given the present correlation of class forces, no real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord rule can emerge. The immediate objective is to secure the very unity of the nation, its secular-federal edifice, so that the ground for forging the struggle for a real alternative by changing the correlation of class forces in favour of the working class and other toiling masses could be prepared. **The paramount immediate concern is to defeat the BJP and its allies...**

... The CPIM) and the Left cannot subscribe to the theory of "equidistance". No doubt the Congress has compromised its secular character several times in the past, but yet that character remains. This is why **we cannot equate it with a rabidly communal party like the fascistic RSS controlled BJP which has to be defeated at all cost.**

... In the three states where the CPI(M) and the Left are strong, they will fight the Congress. But in other states where the Left is not so strong, we will contest some of the seats and, as for other seats, **we will evaluate the situation seat by seat and extend support to such effective secular parties as are able to defeat the BJP-led combine.** In states like UP and Maharashtra where secular votes are feared to be divided, **we will support any secular candidate who is able to defeat the BJP in the seat concerned.** What role the Left will play in the post-poll scenario, will of course depend on the concrete poll results...

The CPI(M)'s objective in the present situation is:

- 1) to enhance the strength of the CPI(M) and the Left in Lok Sabha...
- 2) to rally all the secular and democratic forces as far as possible...
- 3) to extend support to other effective secular parties wherever necessary so that the BJP-led combine could be defeated.

(Source: The People's Democracy, 1 August, 1999)

CPI: Election Manifesto, 1999 (Extracts)

Statutory status for Minorities Commission at Centre and State level.

- Formulation and implementation of schemes for economic, social and educational upliftment of the minorities, particularly the artisan communities. Adequate funds for minorities finance corporation and proper functioning to ensure success of self-employment schemes.
- Recognition and promotion of Urdu Language under Article 345 or 347 of the Constitution.

Harish Khare on the Demolition of Janata Dal

As in life, so in death, the Janata Dal looms larger than life. Because, for almost a decade, the Dal symbolised the middle- middle India's search for a wholesome third way; this India - comprising the emerging middle class and the middles in the caste hierarchy - desperately wanted a centrist alternative to the authoritarian-dynastic prescription of the Congress(I) and the communal sectarianism of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

But except for a brief period when Vishwanath Pratap Singh enjoyed unrivalled acceptability, the Janata Dal never matched the popular imagination. It remained a dream unfulfilled; but, nevertheless, was the innocent's unfinished quest for a perfect political party. That is why the latest split in its ranks carries with it a glorious ring of a first-rate disaster.

... The unvarnished reality is that the Yadav-Patel-inspired split has been engineered primarily by the so-called leaders' desire to survive the next Lok Sabha/Assembly elections...

The split has very little to do with ideology or ideas; and, it must be acknowledged to their credit, that neither Yadav nor Patel has sought to put any nobler gloss over the opportunistic and self-serving action. Both Yadav and Paswan find themselves checkmated in Bihar by Laloo Prasad Yadav, and they would not stand on false ideological prestige to seek the Samata Party/BJP help if the yesterday's adversaries are willing to help the two get into the Lok Sabha. Once in the Lok Sabha, they will live to fight another battle.

The same survival instincts have motivated Patel, who is entitled to his fantasy that the BJP would help him become Chief Minister again.

... Each one of them finds a role model in Inder Kumar Gujral, who as Prime Minister of the United Front Government had no qualms about seeking the help of the BJP's ally, Akali Dal, in order to get elected from the Jalandhar Lok Sabha constituency.

... Like Chandra Shekhar, he would sup with any political formation that enabled him to occupy that front-row seat in the Lok Sabha from where he can hector the House and the country; all for a chance to play the "elder statesman" role in the great theatre called Parliament...

During its best days, the Janata Dal was the ideal model of politics of aggregation and amalgamation, an accommodative political platform that represented the heterogeneous and pluralistic India; a platform that rejected the hegemonic demands of the Congress(I) as well as spurned the politics of exclusion practised by the BJP.

To the extent these individual leaders continue to

nurse their narrow caste/community base, the centrist space in Indian politics remains largely unsurped. Should George Fernandes succeed in his grand plan to consolidate into one entity the disparate "third" forces such as the Samata Party in Bihar, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, the Lok Shakti in Karnataka, and the Sharad Yadav-faction, it could perhaps become the core around which a revival of centrist forces is feasible...

Yet the Janata Dal split and the moving closer of the Yadav/Patel faction towards the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance represent a definite setback to centrist politics.

In the post-Ayodhya demolition phase, the dominant political concern has been the preservation of the secular character of the Indian polity. That secular character was deemed under siege from the Sangh Parivar-inspired forces; consequently, the secularism/communalism divide became a defining (and at times convenient) yardstick. That divide stands breached by the decision of the Yadav-Patel faction to join the saffronite crowd. Whatever the long-term implication of the Fernandes consolidation within the NDA, the Yadav-Patel faction has provided political aid and ideological comfort to the Sangh Parivar.

By reverse reasoning, the defection of the Janata Dal faction has weakened the legitimacy of "secular politics". The very defection of the Yadav-Patel faction to the saffron camp raises doubts about the sincerity of conviction of all those who still choose to man the secular ramparts.

The credibility of the entire secular camp stands considerably eroded; after all, if today a Sharad Yadav or a Patel joins the enemy forces, what is the guarantee that others may not defect tomorrow for the sake of a safe Lok Sabha seat? ...

If the Janata Dal split has weakened the secular cause, it also has the potential of reviving anti-Congressism as an operating ideological pretense. The emergence of Sonia Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the Congress(I) has disquietened all those voices and individuals which felt uncomfortable with the "dynasty" and, consequently, lent shoulder to each and every anti-Congress stratagem...

Even if the defection ... to the saffron camp does not constitute any catastrophic depletion of the centrist forces or bring about any qualitative accretion of strength to the BJP, it does highlight the opportunistic character of the political class.

This defection will not help the much-needed process of recouping the legitimacy of the political parties and their leaders...

(Source: The Hindu, 25 July, 1999)

Rizwan Qaiser On Loyalty Test for Muslim Indians

... Along with the rest of the society the Muslims too gave vent to their patriotic feelings, **even though the larger society has not been able to look upon the Muslims' sense of duty towards the country with conviction...**

What stole the show was the meeting of the All India Imams' Association in Delhi in early June... Some of the speakers expressed the desire to go to Kargil to fight the enemy if they were given arms. While everything was going well, just then the dust of doubt was raised (about Ali Mian and Dilip Kumar)... The logic of compelling anybody to furnish the proof of one's patriotism is flawed.

... The Muslims of the previous generation too had to undergo much the same experience when not the zealots of today's Hindutva brigade but nationalists used to entertain similar misgivings about them. Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India, for instance told the Muslims on January 6, 1948, that mere declarations of loyalty to India would not be sufficient, as "only practical proof" would do. He also said, "You cannot ride two horses. You select one horse, whichever you like the best." What Sardar Patel did not realise was that the other horse was not the choice of an average Muslim.

... Historically speaking, therefore, the opinion of a little more than one tenth of the Muslims, particularly the elite was imposed on the rest of them and falsely described as the collective decision of the community... With the partition, Indian Muslims found themselves benumbed and caught in a crisis of sorts... Gradually they gathered courage to take a decision for themselves and chose the horse which would take them to a common destiny with the rest of the people of the country; even though they knew that the road ahead was bumpy they clung to it fast.

Despite having travelled such a long distance of more than half a century if their patriotic credentials are doubted, it agitates the minds of the Muslims, more so of the younger generation. This is because they suffer from no guilty conscience and know that the good of the community can only be in consonance with the larger good of the country. (Source: The Hindustan Times, 31 July, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Hindustan Times, 2 August, 1999

With reference to Rizwan Qaiser's article "Loyalty of Indian Muslims" (31 July), the author begins with conceding that the larger society has not been able to look upon the Muslims' sense of duty towards the country with conviction.

No doubt, the reason lies in both the continuing identification of the Muslim Indians with Pakistan in the Hindu mind and the continuing fear and insecurity in the

Mulayam Singh Yadav and Muslims Shahabuddin's Letter to The Nation and the World, 16 August, 1999

Dr. M.R.A. Siddiqui (in The Nation and the World, 1 August, 1999) credits the Samajwadi Party leader with protecting the Babari Masjid when he was Chief Minister in 1990, with the non-occurrence of communal massacres during his term in office and with giving jobs to Muslims.

As for the first, one has to give full marks to Shri Yadav for doing what he did. But, subsequently, he did not lift a finger when the Sangh Parivar, on coming to power, changed the topography of the disputed land around the Babari Masjid with massive excavations in October, 1991 to April, 1992, when they illegally constructed the concrete base in front of Babari Masjid for the proposed mandir in July, 1992 and when they finally demolished the Masjid in December 1992.

As for employment one would like to know the figure of recruitment in various departments and cadres during his term and the number of Muslims taken in, post-wise. I doubt that the proportion of the Muslim at any level, in any category or cadre, is anywhere near 16 per cent, which they deserve or has shown any remarkable rise in the total strength during this period.

Regarding communal violence the people should be informed why Mulayam Singh Yadav did not dismiss or prosecute the PAC personnel involved in Hashimpura Massacre, 1987, and why at last long, when his government was forced to consider the prosecution of those indicted by the CID inquiry, only 19 out of 67 were put on trial.

One thing more, Dr. Siddiqui should tell us about percentage of Muslims among the candidates fielded by the Samajwadi Party for the Lok Sabha in 1996 and 1998 and in the immediate preceding UP Assembly Elections.

Statistics cannot be substituted by motivated impressions.

Muslim mind in the communally charged environment. That the Muslim Indians have undergone a psychological transition in 1971 has gone unnoticed and the Hindu Indians have not yet forgiven them for the sins of their fathers, even though they go on repeating their plea of not guilty for the creation of Pakistan.

But the fault also lies with the Muslim community which overdues its show of patriotism and thereby loses credibility. 'The lady protests too much', as Shakespeare puts it.

I wish the Imams were taken at their word, given arms and packed off to the Kargil front. Even now they can be deputed to the LOC. On the other hand, I wish the Muslim youth had queued up en masse at the recruitment centres and admitted to the honour of defending their motherland.

Politics without Ideology - An Overview

Hasan Suroor in *The Hindu*, 2 August, 1999

It has been coming for a long time; and now it has happened. Finally Indian politics has divested itself of whatever little ideological baggage it had carried so far.

The election-induced convulsions among the "secularists" and "socialists" in the Janata Dal; the division in the Left; and the crisis of identity facing the BJP which – minus its hostility towards the minority – is beginning to look like any other centrist party, confirm the marginalisation of ideologies and its replacement by self-serving electoral tactics.

The millennium's (hopefully) last general elections are set to enter the history book as the most ideologically innocent exercise the country has witnessed in living memory.

On the eve of the elections it is like being Alice in Wonderland, all conventional notions of 'who's-who-and-who-stands-for-what' having been stood on the head. Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav whose natural reflexes until the other day consisted of swearing by secularism and attacking the BJP are now eagerly waiting to be admitted into the BJP-led Front. And why? Because that is the only way to beat the challenge from Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar, never mind if in the process the only political force capable of taking on the BJP in the state is weakened.

Survival of the self is the name of the game; the rest is simply a means to get there.

The merger of a section of the Janata Dal, the Samata Party and the Lok Shakti – touted as the coming together of old socialist comrades – has all the trappings of a marriage of convenience.

The Janata Dal and the Samata need each other in Bihar and the Lok Shakti needs the Janata Dal in Karnataka and collectively the three need to hang together to improve their bargaining power vis-à-vis the BJP in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The merger has nothing to do with strengthening of socialist forces and everything to do with protecting individual interests in the coming elections and later in the run up to the Government formation. Similarly, the confusion in the Left has little to do with ideology.

Just when it seemed that the Left had finally come to acknowledge the threat from the divisive Right and was serious about resisting it even if it meant working with the Congress(I), the RSP and the Forward Bloc put a spoke in the wheel. This insistence on keeping an 'equal distance' from both the Congress(I) and the BJP, though projected as 'principled' politics, is purely a tactical line.

The Congress(I) being their principal political adversary in West Bengal – the only State where the RSP and Forward Bloc really matter – they do not want to be

seen partying with it in New Delhi. In choosing between a larger ideological issue – namely the fight against the majoritarian Right – and the local survival kit they have unhesitatingly plumped for the latter. ...

The very concept of 'equi-distance' – first invented by the two Communist parties – never made sense and was really a product of the Left's blind anti-Congressism which, if anything, contributed to the rise of the BJP. It makes even less sense now that the Congress(I) has lost its fangs and the shadow of the BJP looms large.

The plague-on-both-your-houses line is a cynical response to a situation which demands that issues are clearly demarcated, the political 'enemy' is identified and isolated with the help of all those who may be gunning for the same 'enemy'. ...

For the first time, the Left is approaching elections as a sharply divided house with even the two Communist parties pulling in different directions in several states despite their common perception that the BJP should be their main target. Which again shows that considerations other than ideology are at work.

It is the same story with the other major players – the BJP, the Congress(I), the Samajwadi Party and even the fledgling Nationalist Congress Party.

The emphasis this time is so much on working out the winning combination that the traditional political divide lies in tatters... Who knows even the Congress (I) and the BJP may end up on the same couch! ... □

(Contd. from Page 423)

ordinary persons tried to come back, but many were expelled, others were harassed by the police in both countries, and some are still in limbo as late as 1998.

Leaving aside the exceptional case of Punjab ... the impact of Muslim migration from other areas on the residual Muslim population was felt in many ways; some immediate, some long-term. The first and immediate impact was the loss of political leadership, except in the southern parts of India, which was never replaced to the same extent as before 1947 due to the abolition of separate electorates. A second set of loss was that of role models in education, civil service and business as a result of migration of educated middle classes of urban areas and entrepreneurs of Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere but not Madras... A third loss was the emigration of some of the most productive writers and poets of Urdu, a number of creative journals and publishing houses, so much so that today the centres of Urdu publishing are not Hyderabad, Delhi, and Lucknow, but Karachi and Lahore. In the rural areas of the country, however, where most Muslims live, no drastic changes are discernible... □

AP's Minorities Welfare Programme 'ROSHNI' - A Summary

Roshni, a programme focussed on the minorities for their upliftment and development is a new challenge for the Andhra Pradesh Government. It is a well-planned programme with an objective of improving the minorities socially, culturally and economically. It is a step towards developing an equalitarian society.

Self-Employment Scheme: Provision of Rs.10 crore for the Minorities Finance Corporation for sanction of **direct loans for self-employment.**

Artisan Development Scheme: Provision of Rs.5 crore for Minorities Finance Corporation for assisting artisans among minorities.

Tatkal Scheme: Provision of Rs.2 crores for widows among minorities.

Income Generation Scheme: Increase of subsidy limit per beneficiary from Rs.1,000 to Rs.2,500.

Women Welfare Scheme: Formation of 10,000 Women Thrift (DOMWUA) Groups...

Tailoring Training Scheme to cover 5,000 Minority Women through Minorities Finance Corporation.

Urdu as a Priority Language: Establishment of Urdu as second official language in four more districts, viz. Chittoor, Mahboobnagar, Adilabad and Krishna.

- Sanction of one post for Urdu Translator in each of the 12 districts.
- Appointment of Vidya Volunteers to teach Urdu in primary and upper primary schools.
- Provision of Urdu sections in DEIT.
- Establishment of 200 Urdu primary schools during current academic year at mandal headquarters and other places with substantial minority population.
- Provision of Rs.1 crore for sanction of Pre-metric Scholarships for minority school students from VI to X.

Educational Development Schemes: Sanction for three B.Ed. colleges in private sector at Guntur, Nellore and Medak for minorities during current academic year.

Medical College: Sanction for Medical college for minorities.

Computer Training: Computer Training of 5,000 youth among the minorities through Minorities Finance Corporation.

Study Circle: Sanction of one Government Study Circle at Hyderabad for coaching the minorities for competitive examinations.

Community Halls: Construction of 55 more Urdu Ghar-cum-Community Halls (Shadikhanas) will be taken up in other places with substantial minority population (245 sanctioned during the last 3 years) during the current financial year.

Masjids: Provision of funds for construction or renovation of 2,500 Masjids (so far 4458 Masjids covered) during the current financial year.

Shopping Complexes: Provision of 15 crores for construction of 30-40 shopping complexes by Wakf Board. Autonagar: Construction of Autonagar for lease.

Burial Grounds: Allotment of Government land for the Burial Grounds.

Haj House: Construction of Haj House in Hyderabad.

Shahabuddin's Comments

Letter to A.P. Chief Minister, 16 Aug., 1999

Through the kindness of your erstwhile colleague Mr. Bashiruddin Babukhan, I have received a copy of the leaflet issued by the Department of Minorities Welfare of your Government on Roshni, the programme formulated by your Government for the uplift and development of the minorities in A.P.

I appreciate your concern, with the status of the religious and linguistic minorities particularly the Muslim and the Urdu-speaking communities, which "Roshni" reflects. However, I have some conceptual problem in understanding the approach of the Roshni.

In brief, the State Government no doubt has the objective of improving the social, economic and cultural status of **all** backward and disadvantaged social groups including even the deprived sections of the 'forward' groups. **There is no democratic reason for the state to do something for the Muslims and Urdu community which it does not for other groups.** If so, a common programme can be formulated and implemented with an inbuilt quota for all target groups in proportion to their population at the functional or operational level, say, the district or the Taluk or the Panchayat. There seems to be no need for parallel schemes for the eligible beneficiaries in various social groups.

In the existing social environment, a 'separate' approach is likely to aggravate communal tension. On the other hand, neither can the coverage of various groups be left to the discretion of the officers concerned. Therefore, a common scheme with inbuilt quotas is the answer. This applies to Tatkal Scheme, women welfare schemes, computer training, tailoring training, coaching, community hall and pre-matric scholarship schemes and construction of Autonagars.

There are however some schemes like creation of posts of Urdu translators and Urdu-medium teachers, establishment of Urdu medium primary school, sanction of minority educational institutions for professional education which have to be administered by the Department concerned for the benefit of the Urdu-speaking/religious minority communities.

Similarly, there are some schemes which are of specific interest only to the Muslim community, such as grant of government land for Qabristans, financial assistance for construction or renovation of Masjids, development of Wakf properties for commercial purposes, grant-in-aid for Haj House. These have to be specifically tailored to the needs of the community and operated through appropriate statutory bodies like the State Wakf Board and the State Haj Committee or even established NGO's in the field.

Finally, there are schemes operated by the State Minorities Finance Corporation for funding self-employment and small business. **This should not deprive the Minorities communities from the normal flow of bank credit** and serve as an additional channel, particularly for those who need small bonus as seed capital to set up their shops.

(Contd. on Page 426)

Assam: 3.75 Lakhs Suspected 'Foreigners' Disenfranchised

The historic Assam accord steps into its fifteen year of existence at midnight tomorrow (14 August). Looking back, one finds that only 1,455 Bangladeshi infiltrators have been physically expelled from the state.

And, as far as sealing the international border with Bangladesh is concerned, it was proved only a few days ago that not just ordinary and poor Bangladeshis can sneak in, but even dreaded ISI operatives can also walk through... 14 years later, the present chief minister, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, continues to hope that the accord will be fully implemented. Mahanta, then president of the All Assam Students' Union, had signed the accord among others... Last month that the Mahanta Government officially recommended to the Centre that the IMDT Act be scrapped. The Centre, which had announced a policy decision to scrap it, had only a few days ago decided to finally to away with it and apply the Foreigners' Act instead. But this looks more like a pre-poll decision.

Under the IMDT Act, a complainant has to prove a person is a Bangladeshi migrant while the alleged migrant has to do nothing. If the complainant cannot prove it, the person remains in Assam and is then free to move to any place in India. Official statistics say that out of over three lakh people against whom complaints were filed, the IMDT tribunals have been able to identify as infiltrators only 9,608. Of these, only 5,635 were served expulsion orders. The rest have assimilated into the local population.

The police and authorities have been able to physically expel only 1,455 people, though nobody issue whether they have re-entered. Statistics say "a total of 23, 227 re-infiltrants/fresh infiltrants from across the border have been detected and pushed back to Bangladesh" till December 31, 1998. While the total number of infiltrators detected and expelled stands at 1,455, the government appointed 2,086 policemen for detection, apart from 18 tribunals under the provisions of the IMDT Act, each comprising a judge and at least a dozen other employees.

... Thanks to the relentless pressure exerted by AASU, the election department has detected about 3.75 lakh names in the state's voters' list whose citizenship status is doubtful", said AASU...

(Source: The Indian Express, 14 August, 1999)

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Assam: Split in the UMF S.G. Kashyap in The Indian Express, 7 August, 1999

With the election fever building up, the Congress in Assam has appointed former Chief Minister Syeda Anowara Taimur as the "officiating president" of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee with an eye to woo religious minorities...

Her assuming office could help the party regain the confidence of the Muslims who constitute a major chunk of voters in Assam.

A number of prominent Muslim members of the Congress have already switched over to the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)... The split in the United Minorities Front (UMF), an ally of the Congress, is also likely to take away a significant percentage of minority votes.

... a majority of party members stayed with general secretary Hafiz Rashid Choudhury, while the other faction headed by President A.F. Golam Osmani is on the verge of merging with the Congress... On its own, the Congress had polled 39.20 per cent of the votes in the 1998 elections, but the Congress-UMF alliance percentage was more at 43.37.

Now that Osmani's faction prepares to merge with the Congress, the Choudhury faction will field candidates in several constituencies, which will directly affect the Congress support base.

When the UMF was formed in 1985, the party had taken away the Congress's support base among the Muslims resulting in the party being voted out of power in the state...

(Contd. from Page 389)

A life spent in the quest of excellence, with faith and dynamism, Hakim Saheb won the hearts of all and became a model of synthesis – **a good Muslim, a great Indian and a greater Man** who spoke little and did great things.

A man of long silences, of few words and many deeds, a man of sympathy and compassion towards all, Hakim Saheb was a Mard-e-Kamil in the universal sense of the term.

Hakim Saheb had the great gift of spotting, identifying useful people, assessing their capacity and then harness their ability for constructive work. A modern mind, alive to new ideas, he was ever prepared to extend his support to their crystallization into proposals which fitted into his long-term vision going beyond the tumult of the times.

Hakim Saheb's demise is the end of an era. A unique personality, a personification of the Quranic model of 'balance' between contemplation and action, an analogue of the best in the old and the new – at home with men of all cultures and fields of achievement has passed away.

He was indeed fortunate to see his dreams translated into concrete realities during his life-time. □

C.P. Bhambhri on Religion as Central Agenda of Indian Politics

Indian politics of the 1990s has witnessed a definite rupture with the past because it is for the first time that every political party and group has been compelled to take a public position on the role of religion in politics. The forces of Hindutva have come to occupy a central space and every political formation has to respond to the 'agenda of politics' decided by the Sangh, the believers of "one country and one culture".

The Sangh Parivar has succeeded in making every political group take a position on questions like: What is India? What is the place of Hindus in India? What is the relationship between the Hindu majority and other religious-cultural minorities?... The self-appointed defenders of Hindu religion have pushed every other public issue into the background by raising the issue of place and status of Hindus in the agenda of governance of the country.

First, Muslim and Christian minority communities have witnessed serious assaults on their symbols of identity under the protective umbrella of the BJP-led A.B. Vajpayee Government at the Centre and the State Governments managed by the forces of Hindutva in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Second, the custodians of the forces of Hindutva have spread a powerful anti-minority message throughout the country and minorities do not feel safe even in states where non-BJP governments are in power.

Third, the forces of Hindutva had compelled every political party in the early 1990s to take a public position on the temple-mosque controversy, while at the end of the 1990s, political parties have been asked to define their position on the role of Christian missionaries in relation to so-called conversion of tribals to Christianity. The Sangh Parivar had targetted the Muslims by making Babari Masjid as the symbol of Muslim repression over the Hindus, and now they have targetted Christians by painting Churches and Christian missionaries as a threat to Hindu religion.

Fourth, religious preachers, saints and sadhus have been actively involved in defining a 'religious agenda' for implementation by the political class... In 1999, the Dharma Sansad has held its eighth meeting at Ahmedabad to evolve a Charter of Demands which is directed against the Christians...

This unstoppable march of religion in defining the Indian political agenda of the 1990s compelled the "grand old party" of the country to appropriate Hindu religious symbols and also patronise minority religious communities. Sonia Gandhi, the Congress party president ... said that "Hinduism was the guarantor of secularism in India" and she translated this into action by visiting the Hindu religious shrine of Tirupati.

She further extended her symbolic journey of sending a message to Hindus by organising a brain storming session of UP Congress part at Haridwar and it was described as 'Chintan Shivir'. The language and idiom of

Hindus was employed by the Congress in its response to the challenge of the forces of Hindutva.

The 1990s have witnessed a political debate and very active mobilisation on the basis of the Hindu vote bank and 'vote banks' of other religious communities have been claimed or appropriated by competing political parties... A common factor in political competition of the 1990s is that every political party has approached voters on the basis of his religious identity and in the process, religion has come to occupy a centre-stage in the political discourse of the country.

It is worth mentioning that along with the growth of Hindutva and its promotion, protection and patronisation in one form or the other by the Government has also encouraged religious minorities to place a religious agenda before the political parties which are either ruling or expect to rule in India. The Khalsa Tercentenary Celebration was patronised with great enthusiasm by the Akali Dal, the Vajpayee Government and by the leaders of all so-called secular parties

... The religion-based agenda of politics of the 1950s and 1960s was marginal while in the 1990s it has become the defining agenda of politics. What is the explanation for the revival of religion in the public life of the 1990s? The votaries of religion-based politics in the 1950s and 1960s failed to replace and displace the powerful ideological agenda of nation building as defined by the nationalist leadership...

The 1990s witnessed the absence of any ideological inspiration among the people because the new economic policy could not catch the popular imagination of the masses and politics of nation building and development ceased to be a rallying point for political mobilisation. During the phase of ideological vacuum of the 1990's, the forces of casteisation and communalisation emerged in a big way to occupy central position in public life.

The socio-cultural milieu of India is a fertile ground for the mobilisers of caste-based identity or religion-based identity. A powerful alternative ideological agenda had displaced this historically inherited cultural ethos of the country. Religion has emerged in a big way in India because the "traders of religion" have successfully inspired the Indian masses who were experiencing an ideological vacuum...

It is wrong to maintain that a lunatic fringe of lumpen elements is the carriers of religious agenda in the country. A powerful rallying point has been provided by the believers of religion-based politics...

Ideologies of religion have succeeded because the secular agenda has failed to inspire... The forces of Hindutva have successfully positioned themselves as ideologues of the majority community and during the 13th Lok Sabha elections, the BJP with its ideology is a main contender for power, and it is giving a big battle to the Congress.

(Source: The Pioneer, 26 May, 1999)

Pamela Philipose On Sectular Politics

... What is it about the term "sectular" - which is generally understood as the separation of religion from politics — that elicits the most cynical responses? The fact is that sectularism has come to be widely recognised as a social good. Despite concerted attempts of political parties to cynically carve out religion-based constituencies, there is today a general understanding that sectularism is a precondition for India remaining a democratic state representing a diverse people.

What's more, sectularism has acquired electoral currency; it's a value that the Indian voter recognises and responds to. There is no denying the fact that Vajpayee's popularity is premised on his sectular rhetoric. This, after all, is the man who stood up in the Lok Sabha in May 1997, as the debate on Deve Gowda's confidence vote was in progress, and declared that nobody could change the sectular fabric of the country. "India was sectular, India is sectular and India will remain sectular," he had thundered.

It is precisely because Vajpayee can pronounce words of this kind in a manner that appears more convincing than, say, if it had been L.K. Advani mouthing them, that made for his acceptability as a prime ministerial candidate. This is also why Vajpayee, throughout his 13 months as prime minister, had to constantly negotiate his way between two opposing poles: his commitments as a member of his party and those dictated by his role as a "sectular" prime minister. While he paid obeisance to the religious agenda of the Sangh Parivar by calling for a debate on conversion, for instance, he followed it up by going on a fast on January 30, Gandhiji's martyrdom day, to atone for the "sectarian violence" that the country had witnessed in December and January...

The word "sectular" then is on every politician's lips, but never has it been so cynically used, so systematically robbed of meaning, as it is now. There seems to be a deliberate attempt to obfuscate and distort it to suit the power struggles of the day. It's only when voters begin to separate the rhetoric from the reality and perceive the cynical power games that are being played, will we even begin to make our first tentative moves towards a genuinely sectular politics.

(Source: The Indian Express, 30 April, 1999)

Faith-based, Religion-based or Religious? New York Times on Wall of Separation

"Government should welcome the help of faith-based institutions", Gov. George W. Bush of Texas said in 1996. In April 1999, a spokesman for his brother, Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida, told the News and Record of Greensboro, N.C., "The Governor supports faith-based initiatives."

"For too long," said Vice-President Al Gore to the Salvation Army in Atlanta in June, "faith-based organisations have wrought miracles on a shoestring". He welcomed "the voices of faith-based organisations".

In covering Gore's speech, John Harwood of the Wall Street Journal noted "both political parties' growing acceptance of faith-based solutions since Republicans began promoting the idea several years ago."

T.R. Gopalakrishnan On Sectularism in Elections

... The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as "belonging to, or shared by the people of a community; public" By that definition, being communal should be a good thing. But in a strange twist of language, the non-BJP parties have disfigured the word to mean something it was never meant to.

Similarly, the word 'sectular'. The same dictionary defines it as "not specifically relating to religion or to a religious body"... It does make one wonder whether the politicians understand that in the way they use it to criticise their opponents, they make themselves equally open to charges of being 'non-sectular' (or should it be anti-sectular)?

The separation of religion and politics is a basic principle of the Constitution, as is the right to practice the religion of one's choice. The law prohibits any politician or party to campaign for votes in the name of religion. The law further makes propagation of religious antagonism a criminal offence. The Constitution also states clearly that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of religion.

Every politician and political party in the country has to swear an oath to protect and obey the Constitution if he wants to take part in the political process. So if a party is not 'sectular' in its objectives, it cannot find a place in the country's political system. The only yardstick was that if you were part of the BJP-led coalition, then you were 'non-sectular' and 'communal'. The moment you left that coalition you became 'sectular', like Jayalalitha and her AIADMK, which the Left welcomed into its 'sectular' embrace... DMK has become 'communal' for having supported Vajpayee's confidence motion.

... Till Mulayam decided not to play along with the Congress, which promptly pushed him into the 'non-sectular' camp, even while opposing the BJP...

So we go again with another election likely to be fought not on the basis of imaginative policies and programmes but on the hackneyed premise of 'sectular' versus 'communal', with a dash of 'stability' and a pinch of 'swadeshi' thrown in... (Source: The Week, 9 May, 1999)

But Kevin Sack of The New York Times, though reporting Gore's usage in direct quotation ... used the more traditional noun in discussing "government financing of religion-based welfare-to-work initiatives".

Faith-based is not enough to be enshrined in the official canon. Wisconsin ... established the Special Committee on Faith-Based Approaches to Crime Prevention and Justice...

(Why are) the political figures all using faith-based rather than religion-based or, more simply ... the old-fashioned adjective religious?...

American political tradition, following its metaphor of "a wall of separation between church and state", shies away from "religion in politics" but not from **religious values in public life**.

By substituting faith (trust in the truths) for religion (the organised set of beliefs), the new compound adjective gets around the traditional objection.

(Source: The New York Times Service)

Multiculturalism: Our Forgotten National Commitment

Neera Chandhoke in The Hindu, 4 August, 1999

... Chauvinism has erupted over Kargil ... but its roots go back further in time - to the consolidation of an aggressive, intolerant and chauvinistic mood built up and fostered by the Sangh Parivar since the late 1980s... Whatever the cause, the jingoism over Kargil has brought the question of what kind of a nation we want to be to the fore. For even as an atmosphere of hate for the people of Pakistan - who cannot be held responsible for their elite - overtook us, **this suspicion was transferred to our own religious minorities.** So we witnessed the amazing spectacle of the members of a community being asked to prove their loyalty to the nation. How do we explain a nationalism that leaves its minorities under a permanent cloud of suspicion? This is the question we need to face.

Conceivably the minorities, whether linguistic or religious or ethnic, are condemned to this fate in a nation-state. For the model ... has always carried within it the dreams of a homogeneous political community. And such dreams inevitably demand that differences are either obliterated or relegated to the margins. Precisely because it wishes to construct viable nation-states out of disparate people and identities, nationalism has assembled its own fantasies of oneness and uniformity.

... Linguistic plurality was subordinated to the needs of a common national culture. And local dialects and regional languages, cultures, and religious ways of life, with which people identify and with which they are identified by, were steamrolled into oblivion...

... Any assertion of a distinct identity has always been regarded with deep suspicion... But it also reveals itself as articulated prejudices against minority groups.

But history took its own revenge. As in the 1980s and 1990s, civil wars, movements, and discourses centering on identity and recognition swept the globe with considerable force; the brutalities of the nation state were put under the scholarly microscope. The model, it is obvious, has bred its own discontents. The minorities reacted to the forced assimilation of their identities in different ways...

... Political events have challenged the widely held belief that the borders of the nation-state are sacrosanct, that national culture is singular or indeed that particular identities can be coerced into conformity.

It is only with the benefit of hindsight that theorists have come to recognise eight facts about our social and political life. One, that the political community contains a number of cultural communities; some of which may subscribe to persuasions that may be radically incommensurate with that of the majority. Secondly,

cultures are important for individuals because they provide their members with meaning systems that help them to negotiate the world. Thirdly, that notions of the individual and the community are not necessarily antithetical as the modernisation theorists had presumed, and that individuals need both autonomy as well as a sense of belonging, which the community provides. These two aspects ... may conflict, but they may also complement each other. Therefore, we have to work out the tensions in a principled and a politically consistent manner.

Fourthly, that people not only identify with but are also identified by their cultures, and if these cultures are disparaged or subjected to scurrilous remarks, the self-esteem of the members suffers. Fifthly, that both individuals and their cultural community need to be recognised in the sense of being valued by society, because lack of recognition strips people of their self-worth. Sixthly, that in a society marked by majorities and minorities, it is more than possible that minority cultures will either be subjected to direct attacks, or that they will be subjected to what has been called "benevolent neglect". The dissolution of cultures, however, harms the individual member... Therefore - and this is the seventh recognition - we should protect minority cultures through special measures...

And eighthly, that it is possible to have a national culture that is a loose confederation of several groups, a culture that is tolerant of different ways of life, and a culture that is protective of its minorities. It is equally possible to build a national culture that recognises and values other identities and loyalties smaller than the national, and larger than the national. This is the only politically pragmatic road to a viable national community... Collectively, this realisation has been encapsulated in the term multiculturalism.

... India had recognised the importance of multiculturalism as far back as 1928 in the Motilal Nehru Constitution. And this commitment was reiterated in statements by the leadership of the original Congress party and more importantly by the Constitution... The debates in the Constituent Assembly presaged contemporary discussions on multiculturalism by at least 50 years. But as Indians (we) have moved away from (our) original commitment to a plural nation towards rabid nationalism... We will pay a heavy price for forgetting our historical commitments (unless) we let people belong to the nation in their own way without constantly asking for proof.

(The writer is Professor of Political Science, University of Delhi)

(Source: The Hindu, 4 August, 1999)

National Commission for Minorities' Annual Report, 1998-99

Recommendations to the Union Government (Abstracts)

Educational Rights of Minorities

1. Recommended that a central law titled "Minorities Education Act" be enacted containing the following:
 - (i) Principles and measures for a meticulous enforcement of the provision of Article 30 of the Constitution -- to be spelt out in the light of the leading Supreme Court decisions on this subject.
 - (ii) Provisions for the implementation of the Constitutional provisions relating to language and script found in Articles 29, 350-A and 350-B, etc.
 - (iii) Directive principles for the recognition of, and aid to, minority educational institutions in terms of the relevant Constitutional provisions; and
 - (iv) General guidelines for the management of minority educational institutions.
2. Recommended that in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 256, appropriate policy directions be issued by the Central Government to all State Governments for revising their Education Codes/Laws/Rules/Regulations, to fully implement the provisions of Article 30 of the Constitution and the proposed Parliamentary legislation referred to in para 1 above.
3. Recommended that all Parliamentary legislation relating to the UGC, NCERT, AICTE and Medical Council of India, as also the laws of all the Central Universities, be suitably amended to introduce appropriate provisions for the enforcement of Article 30 of the Constitution and the related Norms and Guidelines issued by the MHRD and the NCM, during 1986-89.
4. Recommended that all the specific suggestions and recommendations contained in the NCM Study on "Right of the Minorities to Establish and Administer Educational Institutions" (1998) be accepted and duly implemented.
5. Recommended that all educational institutional established and administered by the minorities be specifically exempted from compulsory reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in admission and faculty appointments, as in required by the law explained in the Commission's Explanatory Ruling on the subject issued in September 1998.
6. Recommended that the Rules and Regulations of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation be modified to the effect that:
 - (i) All educational institutions established and run by the minorities -- under whatever law (including the Central and State Wakf Laws) they may be registered -- will be eligible for grants/financial assistance.
 - (ii) All such institutions shall be eligible for grants/financial assistance irrespective of the length of their existence; and
 - (iii) An organization planning to establish such an institution shall also be eligible to apply for grants/financial assistance/loans, etc.
7. Recommended that education in the general institutions established, run, maintained or managed by the Central, State or Local Self Governments be kept strictly secular and no attempt be made to "spiritualize" it in any degree by adopting or compulsorily introducing observance/singing of any select religious practice, ritual, invocation or song.
8. Recommended that school and college textbooks in Hindi, English and all regional languages be examined once again by a high-powered committee to ensure removal therefrom of all such materials that may adversely affect communal harmony and inter-community relations.
9. Recommended that Human Rights and Minority Rights as recognized by the UN Declarations of 1948 and 1992 respectively, as also all Fundamental Rights and Duties enshrined in the Constitution of India, be compulsorily taught at appropriate levels in all schools and colleges.
10. Recommend that the 50 per cent reservation for non-minority students in minority educational institutions provided for by the Supreme Court decision in St. Stephen's College case be curtailed to 25 per cent by specific legislation -- which should also correspondingly provide that in all non-minority institutions 25 per cent admission seats must go to the minorities.
11. Recommended that a "National Minorities Education Council" be set up with statutory powers to work for an overall educational advancement of the Minorities interaction with UGC, NCERT and other similar bodies and having jurisdiction to regulate the working of minority educational institutions.

Socio-Economic Rights and Development

1. Recommended that the share of the Union Government in the funds of the NMDFC be raised forthwith to 75 per cent, the NMDFC and NCM be inter-linked through an appropriate inter-institution mechanism, NMDFC loan and financial assistance be made available to individuals and organizations of the minority community through simplified procedures and without irrational administrative hassles; and a

MINORITIES COMMISSION

high-powered committee be set up to review the performance of NMDFC and suggest improvement measures.

2. Recommended that the Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme for Minorities Welfare, as revised by the MSJE in consultation with NCM, with due stress on its economic content, be immediately notified for implementation and eventually enacted into binding Parliamentary legislation.
3. Recommended that the new list of minority concentration districts, prepared by the NCM on the basis of the 1991 census report, be immediately notified for the purpose of preferential implementation of the Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare (as revised) and of all welfare schemes for the weaker sections of the society.
4. Recommended that the Reserve Bank of India should, under an appropriate Central Government directive, issue necessary instructions to all nationalized banks for duly framing and meticulously implementing preferential loaning schemes for the minorities through simplified procedures.
5. Recommended that the Proviso in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 (amended version of 1956-90) restricting its scope to particular religious communities be deleted so as not to deny to the Christian and Muslim members of the castes specified in the said Order the socio-economic benefits extended to the Scheduled Castes.

Under-representation in Public Employment

1. Recommended that as even fifty years after Independence there are serious imbalances and inequities in respect of the representation of minorities in all public employment, top priority should be given to the adoption of measures to rectify this situation and ensure the Minorities their due share in the National resources and their management.
2. Recommended that in all public employment under the Central Government there must be at least 15 per cent representation of the Minorities – with a break-up of 10 per cent for the Muslims and 5 per cent for the other minorities taken together; and that this should be ensured by adopting suitable measures and issuing mandatory guidelines to the all government departments, public-sector undertakings and the concerned recruiting authorities.
3. Recommended that the wholly vague provision for "special consideration" to be given to minorities in recruitment to public services, found in the Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme for Minorities, be clarified to specify that it means weightage and relaxation of prescribed requirements as are available

to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

Communal Riots and Inter-Community Tensions

1. Recommended that all the suggestions made in the NCM Study on "Communal Riots: Prevention and Cure" be accepted for implementation through a time-bound programme of action.
2. Recommended that all the suggestions made by the NCM for the implementation of the Srikrishna Commission Report on Mumbai communal riots of 1992-93 be accepted for speedy translation into action.
3. Recommended that an appropriate policy document indicating effective measures for the prevention, control and handling of communal riots be addressed by the Central Government to all the States and Union Territories in the form of directives issued under Article 256 of the Constitution.
4. Recommended that the percentage of minorities – especially of the largest minority, i.e. the Muslims – in the police services all over the country be suitably increased and that appropriate legislative and administrative measures to secure this goal be adopted at the national-level, including that suggested above.

Right to Religious Freedom

1. Recommended that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1990 be amended to provide strict penalties for damaging religious places and premises and for the establishment of Special Courts for speedy trial of all such offences.
2. Recommended that irrespective of religion no member of the Police and the country's Defence forces, etc. – including the army, navy, air force, CISF, BSF and the like – be denied the freedom to grow beard as a religious practice, which is a Fundamental Right protected by the provision of Article 25 of the Constitution.
3. Recommended that use of amplifiers in all places of worship of all religious communities be regulated by a unified central law.
4. Recommended that no select invocation, song, ritual or other practice belonging to any particular religion be introduced for compulsory observance in any public place or on any public occasion.
5. Recommended that all the measures suggested in the NCM study titled "Rights of Minorities to Religious Freedom" (1999) be accepted and legislated upon wherever necessary or otherwise implemented.
6. Recommended that as a core group of the National Integration Council a National Religious Harmony Council be set up to regularly monitor the communal situation in all parts of the country and promote harmonious relations between all the religious communities. □

William Safire On 'Protectoration' of J&K

... Let us ... survey the international 3K trend towards "protectoration".

In Kosovo, NATO acted forcefully to stop Serbia's bloody assertion of sovereignty. Because we are loath to redraw borders, we deny Kosovo independence but will enforce its autonomy. It is now a protectorate of NATO; after a decent interval, a plebiscite will probably be held to permit self-determination.

... Iraqi Kurdistan is a de facto protectorate, dependent on the resolve of the U.S. President.

In Kashmir, we see a protectorate-in-waiting. As the British learned in India, and as the Israelis learned on much of the West Bank, a democracy's administration of a hostile population is ultimately self-defeating.

And India is a democracy. Much as it wants to incorporate Kashmir, it faces growing local resistance and its own ensuing repression and brutalization. Forget "world opinion"; Indian self-respect and economic self-interest will impel it toward the granting of ever-greater autonomy to the Kashmiris.

But what then? Autonomy is desirable; it is seen as a grand experiment in diversity-within-unity, and works fine in Puerto Rico and Scotland. But inmost of the world, autonomy is a peaceful stop on the way to self-determination. In Kurdistan and Kosovo, that means independence.

What about Kashmir? In India's eyes, Pakistan is a garrison state (which) salivates at the prospect of swallowing Kashmir. Would Kashmiris be able to fend off or be better off under militant Muslim rule?

Moderate Pakistanis say: give Kashmir much more autonomy. Start pulling out your occupation forces. We'll promise not to infiltrate. Let the Kashmiris decide their future.

India won't do for that for years. But Kashmir is like a fault in the political earth; the tectonic plates under growing pressure, and the non-nuclear region has much to fear from the Big One. The answer may well take the form of protectorate as it has in Kosovo and Kurdistan – but in this case, the intercession would be invited by all three parties rather than punitively imposed.

Nobody planned this protectoration trend. Nor does it offer finality ... But it seems to be a way of giving peoples time to sort things out for themselves.

(Source: The New York Times, 9 July, 1999)

Jairam Ramesh On Kargil as an Opportunity

... This is not the first time that Pakistan's military has been proved hopelessly wrong. It totally miscalculated the Indian response and resolve and

Amlan Datta On Final Settlement of Dispute

... The lessons of Kargil are obvious... Pakistani introducers crossed the LOC in Kashmir. They were driven out the Indian Army. This was achieved at a high cost (to) both India and Pakistan... At the end of this tremendously wasteful exercise, the actual LOC stayed unchanged. The attempt to change the LOC went in vain. For anybody who cares for the welfare of this subcontinent, the lesson of this experience is simple and unambiguous. India and Pakistan should accept the LOC and agree to scrupulously desist from futile attempts to change it by force...

Accepting the inviolability of the LOC can be a first step towards easing tension and establishing conditions of peaceful coexistence between India and Pakistan right now. However, it is doubtful if that can provide a lasting solution of the Kashmir problem. As it will not satisfy the aspiration for a united and autonomous Kashmir, a certain amount of unrest, not excluding insurgency is likely to continue. Perhaps India can live with that at this stage of its political evolution... but we should have the courage and imagination to think of a more durable solution at the next stage. Ruling over a divided and discontented Kashmir should not be the final aim and purpose of India...

The 21st century, let us hope; will see some bold changes in the political map of the Indian Sub-continent. The emergence of a united and independent Kashmir, possibly shorn of some of its more easily detachable Hindu majority areas, might come as a part of this changed scenario. Kashmir so constituted should be independent of both India and Pakistan. This can only work on the basis of a solemn agreement jointly affirmed by the two disputing states guaranteeing the inviolability of the boundaries of this new Kashmir. Until then, the Shimla Agreement should stay in force. ...

Kargil is a warning. The response required immediately as a first step is rather simple, a reaffirmation of the Shimla Agreement and a decision to abide by the LoC. But that agreement may again prove to be fragile, for it marks only a compromise and not a final resting place...

(Source: The Statesman, 27 July, 1999)

overestimated its clout with China and the US...

But what Pakistan has been able to do is to convert Kargil into a Siachen for us to defend at considerable extra cost and revive world interest in Kashmir. However, this has been only a qualified success since – more than ever before – the idea of converting the LOC into the international border has gained global respectability. India can actually convert Kargil into an opportunity for settling Kashmir...

(Source: The India Today, 26 July, 1999)

Praful Bidwai on Peaceful Solution of Problem

There is a link between the Kargil crisis and the Kashmir (disturbance). It just will not do to pretend that there is no outstanding issue or dispute in Kashmir. Numerous United Nations resolutions, some sought by India, and even the Shimla Agreement, recognise the fact that there is an issue, although this does not mean that Pakistan should forcibly alter the Line of Control (LoC), or train, aid and abet secessionist militants...

... The Kashmir problem is amenable to a peaceful solution. This can only come about through two processes: first, a change in Indian and Pakistani mindset and a beginning of talks on Kashmir; and second, the involvement of the people of Kashmir in the determination of their fate. Kashmir is not just about the peculiarities of Partition and the shenanigans of the maharajah who refused to accede to India until October 1947. Nor is it about how many Kashmiris are Muslim. It is about giving the people a voice in a just solution to the problem, which enhances the collective security of all concerned. The question of Kashmir's identity and relationship to India and Pakistan must be settled on a modern, secular, pluralist basis.

Kashmir is not just a territory. Kashmiris have emerged as important agents of their identity and interests. They must be respected as such.

The Kashmiri people's involvement in the process of dispute resolution will transform its nature. All concerned will then have to confront the issues of democracy, decentralisation, and plurality in culture, society and politics. This will take the issue out of its present straitjacket. This is precisely what is needed. Fortunately, there are at least the beginnings of an intra-Kashmiri dialogue across borders and ethnic and political divides.

Around the Hague Conference on Peace in May 1999, a large number of Kashmiris, from Panun Kashmir to the JKLF to pro-Mujahideen groups, met - perhaps for the first time in such numbers. They called for an end to all violence, for free dialogue and interaction between Kashmiris, and for a return to Kashmir's tradition of peaceful co-existence. This is a major step forward. It must be heartily welcomed. Real progress will come through such moves, not military confrontation with its horrific potential for escalation to the nuclear level.

(Source: The Frontline, 2 July, 1999)

Acts of terrorism must stop immediately because such actions make the Kashmir conflict more - not less - difficult to resolve.

- Madelaine Albright, US Secretary of State

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Kanti Bajpai

On Solution to Kashmir Problem

... As we think about India's choices in respect of Kashmir after the fourth India-Pakistan war, the best option should not blind us to the most practicable one. The best option is that all of Kashmir be a part of India. The most feasible choice, however, is a partition of the state.

Whatever the historical rights and wrongs and legalities involved, the fact is that a partition of Kashmir (along the Line of Control) is the only politically workable solution. One way of seeing this is to consider the alternatives. One alternative is, of course, to do nothing. Having won the war in Kargil, we could insist that there is nothing to discuss on Kashmir. In the immediate aftermath of the war, this is understandable; but it cannot be a serious proposition. ...

The second alternative is to give Kashmir independence. The advantage of this is that we cut our losses and, more to the point, we scare the ... Pakistanis, for whom an independent Kashmir is almost certainly the worst of all possible worlds.

The trouble is that the broader consequences for India could be catastrophic....

A third alternative is to ask the international community to step in and mediate in various ways, and more or less commit ourselves to accept whatever solution emerges.

We could ask for a UN-held plebiscite in Kashmir as was agreed to in the 1950s. We could perhaps submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice or to arbitration (as we did with the Rann of Kutch dispute in 1968). Or we could invite a third party to mediate (some neutral country, say, rather than the US).

None of these third party choices is particularly attractive... What exactly would Kashmiris be asked to vote on — independence, autonomy within India, or joining Pakistan? How would one judge the result? Would a simple majority in favour of any option suffice to settle the matter?...

... Converting the LoC into an international boundary as part of a formal partition of Kashmir appears distinctly achievable compared to the alternatives...

To be viable, partitioning the state will have to be supplemented by a softening of the border so that a unified Kashmiri social life can be resumed. This is vital if Kashmiris are to be persuaded that partition is compatible with their interests...

... In effect, India and Pakistan would be left to regulate the foreign affairs and defence of the two states of Kashmir and cede virtual control of most other governmental functions.

Would Pakistanis accept the LoC solution? Today,

(Contd. on Page 414)

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No War Hysteria but Disappointment with Pakistan in the Valley

The Statesman Report, 29 July, 1999

... Many people in the Valley are dependent on local newspapers and Radio Pakistan for their information as they think that the Indian official media has been concealing the information.

Opinions about the Kargil conflict and the consequent withdrawal of Pakistani forces from Kargil heights differ widely. For the first time, people in the Valley believe that Pakistan has betrayed them by going for a pact with the US ... for the withdrawal of its troops from Kargil.

Majority of them are annoyed with the Pakistani Premier, Nawaz Sharif... Another section believes that Nawaz Sharif has landed in big trouble as the Mujahideen fighting at Kargil have refused to leave the heights...

Much attention is being given to the statements of the militant leaders like the Hizbul-Mujahideen chief, Syed Salahuddin... which unites them, all however is their disenchantment with Pakistan due to its role in the whole conflict. First it stepped up its support to the Mujahideen in Kargil by providing them with every kind of support including the army, but then following international pressure, they decided to withdraw.

For most of the people in Kashmir Valley, India has been concealing the information regarding its casualties in Kargil and it has suffered heavily in this war. Whether they wanted war or not is a question which is not taken with ease and takes some time to be answered...

The pro-separatist forces, especially the Hurriyat, have already expressed their solidarity with the Mujahideen fighting in Kargil and have even coined the slogans "Kargil ke Mujahideen hum tumhare saath hain" (the freedom fighters of Kargil, we are with you).

But surprisingly, there was no war hysteria at all in Kashmir Valley and most of the people maintained their cool...

(Contd. from Page 413)

that possibility seems remote. But a combination of factors may well work to change their minds: defeat in Kargil; diplomatic isolation over Kashmir; India's success in wearing out the militancy; Pakistan's economic and internal social difficulties; and the unwillingness of the mass of Pakistanis to get involved in a full scale war with India.

In addition, India has positive cards to play in bringing Pakistan round. These include: agreements on Siachen, Sir Creek and Wular; free trade with India which is steadily moving ahead economically; and Indian sponsorship of Pakistan in regional organisations such as BIMST-EC, IOR-ARC and ARF. If there is a silver lining to the Kargil war, it is that we have been given a moment to return to the debate over the future of Kashmir...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 25 July, 1999)

V. Radhika on Kashmir Situation

The decade-long militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has claimed thousands of lives and has displaced countless more. But its most serious victim has been the secular and liberal fabric of Kashmiri society. With militancy in the Valley being virtually spearheaded by Pakistan-backed mujahideen and the movement for Kashmir's liberation assuming the character of a jihad, the grip of Islamic fundamentalists on the society has tightened.

Although the Valley has been virtually emptied of Hindus, the resultant homogenisation helping the fundamentalists, in Jammu, where the Hindus constitute a majority, the conflict has assumed communal overtones... The attacks (on Hindus) have only sharpened the wedge between the two communities... The Hindus ... see the security forces as their only protection against the militants.

The distrust and suspicion that prevails between the two communities is a far cry from the secular and liberal tradition that Kashmir has always boasted of.

According to Amitabh Mattoo of Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, the outward symbols of Islamisation, such as the ban on smoking, closure of cinema halls and bars and the increasing number of women wearing burqas are not as visible today as it used to be in the early 90s. Nonetheless, there is a strong and not-so-obvious attempt at the Islamisation of society, especially in the Valley.

New mosques ... with domes and minarets have replaced the traditional flat structures of worship unique to this place. And ... burqa-clad women ... are a common sight in Anantnag and Baramulla. A more subtle approach is through education...

Another disturbing fact is the participation of a large number of Kashmiri youth in the Islamisation process... Anti-India has automatically translated into pro-fundamentalism... Today Kashmir's composite culture is fading away. Shivratri, which used to be one of the most popular festivals in J&K, among Muslims and Hindus alike, has been largely forgotten.

For (Mirwaiz) Omer Farooq ... a former (head) of the Hurriyat Conference, the blame for the rising fundamentalism rests squarely with the government in New Delhi. "The Indian government and its troops have adopted a very repressive policy here; as the majority of people are Muslims they feel the Indian government is anti-Muslim", he said.

"With the introduction of the gun culture, there was an attempt to apply Islamic principles by force in the early 90s. The attempt succeeded to some extent..." However, some (think that) fundamentalist values can never be imposed on the Kashmiris and assert that Sufism - a synthesis of various traditions - was the dominant influence and Kashmiris are not fundamentalist by tradition and temperament... A view that many disagree with...

(Source: The Week, 8 August, 1999)

Benazir Bhutto's Views on Kashmir

... In my last term, I made a mistake in holding the Kashmir issue as the single issue between India and Pakistan. It is not the single issue and now when I took at the future and think of what ought to be done in the future, I think it is very difficult for India and Pakistan to decide about land. It's a very emotive issue. But in this fight over land we have forgotten many things... We have forgotten about the Kashmiris, we have also forgotten that Partition was meant to pave the way for peaceful co-existence ... not ... for a more bitter conflict... I would like to see India and Pakistan and all of South Asia look back on the last 50 years and see what can be done differently in the next 50 years, so that we do not relive the mistakes of the past.

I would like to see India and Pakistan sit down and have negotiation for open borders at the start between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. In the open borders, Pakistan would have to undertake to police it and India would have to undertake to withdraw its troops and to begin a dialogue with the All Party Hurriyat Conference who are the representatives of the Kashmiri people as far as we are concerned. But I think the opening of the borders would enable the people of Kashmir to travel back and forth freely, it would lead to a peaceful environment, the governments of Srinagar and Muzaffarabad could meet from time to time to discuss the obstacles and issues that need to be resolved... these open borders should be part of a larger plan for open borders between all of South Asia. Not just between India and Pakistan, but the whole region...

... The formalisation of the Line of Control, some people think, is a very good idea, but it's an open question as to whether the Kashmiris could accept it, and if they don't accept it this could come up again and upset the applecart. So my view is that without prejudice to both country's positions, let's leave it for another generation. First let us start with open heart and open minds, let us deal with people, and if the minds open up and the hearts open up, and we become less obsessed with land, maybe another generation will be able to come back to this issue. And what will the next generation be like with information technology already dictating a new political landscape? Territorial boundaries had greater sanctity before (but) these concepts are going to undergo a transformation in the coming generation...

... What (Sharif) has done is internationalise Pakistan as a rogue nation. Not the Kashmiris. He's internationalised Pakistan as a bad partner to work with, as a deceitful nation. Kashmir was internationalised when George Bush mentioned it in his meeting with the Soviet President that it was on disputed agenda and had to be resolved. It was internationalised when the UN Secretary General said it was the oldest areas of unresolved agenda in the UN. It's not Kashmir that has got internationalised now, it's Pakistan that has got internationalised in a very bad light, and that's a setback to the Kashmiris.

(Source: The Sunday, 1-7 August, 1999)

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AKSHARAHWL - 2562

Zaheer Ahmed Sayeed on Triple Talaq

... The triple Talaq as an instrument of divorce, should be abolished. The Muslim clergy and their cohorts may cry hoarse that the triple Talaq has been the traditional concept of separation between Muslim partners in marriage. But if a tradition precipitates disharmony in society, is causative of suicides, results in uncared for children with no help emanating from the State, we would be labelled criminals if we allow it to continue. It would be an act of blasphemy to circulate the ideology that abolition of the triple Talaq is against the tenets of the Quran.

With no claims to the higher echelons of Islamic theology or Muslim personal law, (one) takes recourse to the prescriptions by the Quran, which clearly outlines the process of separation or divorce in various verses. The specific verses 236, 35 and 2) are reproduced below for purposes of clarity. For larger interests the reader would be better served by referring, in addition, to other verses, their translations, annotations and explanations documented by Yusuf Ali in the same chapters.

Surah II, Verses 236

There is no blame on you
If ye divorce women
Before consummation
Or the fixation of their dower;
But bestow on them
(A suitable gift),
The Wealthy
According to his means,
And the poor
According to his means: -
A gift of reasonable amount
Is due from those
Who wish to do the right thing

Surah LXV, Verses 2.

Thus when they fulfil
Their term appointed,
Either take them back
On equitable terms
Or part with them
On equitable terms;
And take for witness
Two persons from among you,

Surah IV, Verses 35

If ye fear a breach
Between them twain,
Appoint (two) arbiters,
One from his family,
And the other from hers,
If they wish for peace,
God will cause
Their reconciliation:
For God hath full
knowledge
And is acquainted with all
things

Endued with justice,
And establish the evidence
(As) before God. Such is
the admonition given
To him who believes in
God and the Last Day.
And for those who fear
God, He (ever) prepares.
A way out.

It is more than obvious from these verses and the explanations by Yusuf Ali that:

- (a) There is no mention of the triple talaq in the Quran.
- (b) Reconciliation is the most significant remedy recommended.
- (c) Witnesses and arbiters have to be entertained before the final separation and
- (d) A minimum of four months should pass before the Talaq is completed thus giving time for reconciliation.

With the perambulations it would be more than justified to consider that the traditional triple Talaq is an act of blasphemy which goes against the tenets of the Quran. The verses in translation by Yusuf Ali are reproduced in original form for those who brandish the sword of triple Talaq on the beleaguered Muslim women. Specific time periods for the pronouncement of divorce, compensation to the women in such instances and responsibilities of the male partner are distinctly delineated to the extent that there is no scope for the existing tradition of the triple Talaq. It should be emphasized that the verses reiterate reconciliation at every step with divorce as the most heinous practice should be the last resort and even then it should be adjudicated by arbitrators chosen from the husband's and wife's families. It is more than obvious that the practice of the triple Talaq is a tradition which originated subsequent to the revelation of the Holy Book to the Prophet and is an interpretation of convenience which is perhaps remotely permissible in the most exceptional circumstances rather than what has become the order of the day.

Some segments of the Muslim community object to the abolition of the triple Talaq with the slogan that those favouring its abolition are attempting to misinterpret the Quranic tenets. Such slogans misinform the public, the legal profession and the judiciary. In fact, it is they who distort the Quran, precipitating a disservice to the Muslims at large since the Quran is devoid of any mention of the triple Talaq...

To blame the legal profession and judiciary for the problems arising out of a Muslim divorce ... would be a crime since the "clergy", the polity and intelligentsia have failed miserably. They have not even precipitated a set of codification for the Muslim personal law which the administering authorities could use. The result: a thousand interpretations of a Holy edict.

One's house can only be set in order when discipline emanates from one's own intellect. Short of this demands of a society will perforce result in intrusion by the state and the judiciary to set the house in order. So far the "clergy", the polity and the intelligentsia have precipitated no order in the "house" and therefore the least of the disciplined function by any set of law-abiding, intellectually sane Muslim moiety would be to dissuade themselves from thoughtless and unnecessary interference in the fruitful interpretation of the holy edicts enshrined in the Quran. In short, it behoves the Muslim community, polity and clergy to see to it that the Muslim personal law as it appears to any Muslim of our country is codified. The judiciary should make sure that the triple Talaq ... abolished so that women ... can live in peace.

(Source: The Hindu, 3 August, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Comments Letter to The Hindu, 3 August, 1999

I endorse his view that the institution of Triple Talaq – three pronouncement of divorce in one sitting – has no basis in the Holy Quran. Indeed many Muslim sects regard triple Talaq as legally void and equate it to only one Talaq which implies possibility of revocation and consequent resumption. However, merely banning Triple Talaq will not do but a legally enforceable procedure has to be put into place which makes it punitive for the husband to use his right to divorce irresponsibly and arbitrarily. That is why most Muslim States have institutionalised the procedure of Talaq.

However, polygamy can not be abolished. Abolition will only lead to Promiscuity. But it should also be made justiciable as in several Muslim countries. To sum up, the Muslim law in both divorce and polygamy needs to be codified by the Ulema and the laity working together in the light of the laws of many Muslim States.

Supreme Court On Right of Pre-emption

A. Razzaque Sajansaheb Bagwan and others, Appellants v. I. H. Mohammed Husain, Respondent.

G.T. NANAVATI AND S.P. KURDUKAR, JJ.

Muslim Law – Pre-emption – Right of – Claimed on grounds of being 'shafi-i-jar' and 'shafi-i-sharik', having property adjoining to suit house – Law of pre-emption based on vicinage, held, void- Claim cannot be allowed.

AIR 1965 SC 314 and AIR 1961 SC 1327, FdI.

(Source: AIR 1999 Supreme Court 2043)

Vedic Rule in India?

... The New Delhi-based Ajeya Bharat Party... believes that only natural law can integrate the diversities of the country. The party's website ... says: "Everything in India should be Vedic: Vedic administration, Vedic health care system, Vedic defence, Vedic economics, Vedic foreign policy, Vedic agriculture, Vedic daily routine and Vedic etiquette. If this is done, India will be the supreme and most powerful country in the comity of nations. It will be Jagat Guru Bharat. The whole world will be ruled by Indian Vedic global administration.

If elected to power the administrators of the party will create a Chakravayuha of Indian Vedic armour around the nation so that no power in the world will be able to penetrate the borders. India will become an invincible country – Ajeya Bharat... At present, everything in the country is alien, be it education, defence, economics, foreign policy or law. As a result of this foreign influence, all roads to development have been blocked... The ultimate solution to the country's problems Indianisation of India.

(Source: The Times of India)

Patna High Court On Promulgation of Wakf Act, 1995

Ghulam Mohsin Jafri, Petitioner v. State of Bihar and others, Respondents.

ASOK KUMAR GANGULI, J.

Wakf Act (43 of 1995), Section 11 (3) – Notification S.O. 1007 (E), dated 27.12.1995 – Central Government bringing Act into force in all States on 1.1.1996 – Separate notification for each State not necessary

Constitution of India, Article 226 – Locus standi – Public law – Constitution of State Wakf Board – Legality – Board member has locus standi to challenge.

Wakf Act (43 of 1995), Section 1(3) – Wakf Act (29 of 1954), Section 10 – Commencement of new Act – Constitution of State Wakf Board thereafter under repealed Act challenged as illegal – Board impleaded as party – No necessity to implead members.

... Notification under repealed Act constituting State Wakf Board – Wholly illegal and without jurisdiction.

(Source: AIR 1999 Patna 115)

Rajasthan High Court On Wakf Administration

Shokat Ali Ansari, Petitioner v. State of Rajasthan and another, Respondents.

B.J. SHETHNA, J.

Wakf Act (43 of 1995), Section 12 & 14 – Wakf Board – Term of Board and its Chairman constituted under old Act continued by way of interim arrangement till constitution of new Board – Does not bar appointment of Administrator – No right, much less fundamental right of petitioner Chairperson of earlier Board is violated thereby – Old Wakf Board need not necessarily be continued till constitution of new Wakf Board.

(Source: AIR 1999 Rajasthan 175)

Kerala High Court On Wakf Tribunals

Aliyathammada B.P. Haji, Petitioner v. Pattakal Cheriyaakoya and others, Respondents

C.S. RAJAN, J.

Wakf Act (43 of 1995), Section 83(1), (2) – Jurisdiction of Tribunal – Is wide enough to determine any dispute or question or other matter relating to Wakf for Wakf property – Absence of order by Wakf Board in that regard would not restrict the Tribunal from exercising such jurisdiction.

(Source: AIR 1999 Kerala 289)

Madras High Court on Establishment of Technical Institution

E.V.P. and Padmavathi Educational Trust and another, Chennai, Petitioners v. All India Council for Technical Education and another, Chennai, Respondents.

S.S. SUBRAMANI, J.

Constitution of India, Articles 226, 14 – Establishment of Technical Institution – Application for permission to start institution – Rejection of, on basis of Expert Committee Report – Copy of said report not placed before applicant – Applicants neither informed about defects in Institution – Nor reasonable time given to rectify defects – Order rejecting application on flimsy grounds – Not proper.

... Both these petitioners wanted to start a Technical Institution for which a letter of viability was issued by the respondents. The petitioners informed the respondents that they have satisfied all the conditions in the letter of viability and they requested them to give permission to start the Institution.

It is pursuant to the said request, the impugned orders have been passed rejecting the same.

... It is alleged that the impugned order violates the principle of natural justice. The reason for such a contention is that the Expert Committee visited these institutions, they gave the impression that all the conditions have been complied with. But, only when the orders came, they came to know that the report is not in their favour. According to the petitioners, a copy of the Expert Committee Report should have been given to them so that they could have explained how the report is bad.

It is also said that it is the practice of the respondents to inform the applicants about the defects in the Institution and a reasonable time is also given to rectify the same. In this case, that practice was put to an end, without any reason...

... The petitioners are entitled to have a copy of the Inspection Report. If any adverse material is to be relied on by the respondents against the petitioners and which is the only basis for the decision, the petitioners should have been informed about the contents of that document...

... I find none of the reasons mentioned in the impugned letter can be supported and I feel that the intention of the respondents is only to reject the application for some imaginary reason...

It seems to be the attitude of the respondents that they have learnt only to reject the application for some reason or other and they have not considered the legal position, even though the same has been repeatedly informed to them by various decisions of this Court. The approach should be whether there are minimum facilities available for starting an Institution and whether with that minimum

requirements, the Institute can go on. The approach should not be to reject all the applications on the basis of flimsy grounds. It is unfortunate that the Authorities have failed to follow this, whenever an application is being filed for seeking permission to establish an Institution. Merely because a permission is required to be sought for, the Authorities should not think that they are above the law and their action cannot be challenged. Their action should be reasonable. When the State is not in a position to establish the colleges as is required, private educational institutions are coming forward and take up that responsibility. When that responsibility is taken up by them, the attitude of the respondents should not be to defeat the good intention of these applicants.

In the result, the impugned orders are quashed and there will be a direction to the respondents to reconsider their decision and they are directed to pass fresh orders on the applications of the petitioners within a period of three weeks from today.

(Source: AIR 1999 Madras 290)

Fake Degrees on Demand in Lucknow

... Scores of dropouts in need of original marksheets, whether matriculation or graduation, can approach (institute of welfare) and place their orders for a 'secure' future...

The fee, like product pricing, varies with the good(s) to be delivered. The only information required from the candidate is: name, father's name, postal address and date of birth... Original papers proving age, school attended or last examination passed are of no consequence. The candidate's presence is not a prerequisite...

(They) fill in the candidate's examination form, portraying him as a regular student, studying in a recognised college, in keeping the applicant's convenience... In fact, the candidate is not even meant to study for the exams! A proxy examinee technically termed as a 'trained candidate' from the village will be paid to appear at the examination...

And if the 'trained examinee needs a bit of help in solving questions, the bribed invigilator easily identifies the proxy (and) share a bit of his knowledge.

President Clinton on Child Labour

Here are children chained to often risky machines, children handling dangerous chemicals, children forced to work when they should be in school, preparing themselves and their countries for a better tomorrow.

NCM: Proposal for 100 Seats for Minorities in Lok Sabha

[In a significant move the National Commission for Minorities has urged the political parties to "ensure at least 100 seats for the minorities in the next Lok Sabha".

The text of letter of 30 June, 1999 addressed by Chairman, Tahir Mahmood to the Presidents of all major political parties follows - Editor]

I have to convey to you an important and well-considered recommendation of the National Commission for Minorities. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, 1992 speaks of the right of the minorities in every country to effectively participate in the national decision-making processes. And the Constitution of India guarantees equality of status and opportunity to all the citizens of the country. Both the national and the international laws, thus, clearly provide for a fair share of the minorities in the governance of the country. We in the Commission have a convinced opinion that the first and foremost condition for an effective empowerment of the minorities in India, the need for which is often talked about by all and sundry, is to ensure them adequate participation in the affairs of the nation. This would surely, in our opinion, be due fulfillment of the minorities' birth right in this regard and not in any way a generosity or magnanimity on anybody's part.

Unfortunately, the presence of the minorities in Parliament has ever since 1950 been quite disproportionate to their actual population in the country. The demand for reservation for minorities raised from certain quarters, is confused with the so-called "communal representation" and is opposed generally on the presumption that a minority-community candidate can represent only the concerned minority, which itself is prima facie wrong. We are, however, not talking of either "communal representation" or even a formal reservation. We only want that the minorities should be given a fair share, more or less proportionate to their population, in terms of seats in the legislatures where they will of course represent particular constituencies and not specific communities. And in our opinion this is to be achieved by an informal political, and not by a formal legal, process.

We, therefore, recommend that all political parties should, at the time of allotment of tickets for the forthcoming election to Parliament and State Assemblies, ensure the minorities of the country a reasonable presence in both the national and the State level legislative bodies, proportionate to their population as far as possible. Enclosed herewith for your ready reference are two tables indicating the population of various minorities and their numerical status in the 25 states and 7 union territories...

The minority population in the country as a whole, according to the latest census report is 18.59 per cent. Going by this percentage, the minorities should have over a hundred seats in Parliament. We do, therefore, especially recommend that all political parties should ensure at least 100 seats for the minorities in the next Lok Sabha.

Supreme Court

On Prospective Application of Quota Rule

Baburam, Appellant v. C.C. Jacob and others, Respondents.

S. SAGHIR AHMD AND N. SANTOSH HEGDE, JJ.

Constitution of India, Article 16 - Reservation - Quota rule - Decision in 1995 AIR SCW 1371 laying down law that reservation is in relation to number of posts comprising in cadre and not in relation to vacancies - Clarified to be operative prospectively - Prospectivity was given only to see that status prevailing prior to judgement should not be disturbed - Decisions of Departmental Promotion Committee as well as appointing authority applying quota rule to vacancy given much prior to judgement in 1995 AIR SCW 1371 - Order passed by Tribunal setting aside appointment by applying ratio laid down in said judgement - Erroneous.

(Source: AIR 1999 Supreme Court 1845)

Shahabuddin's Letter to

The Pioneer, 2 August, 1999

Shri Rajeev Deshpande's dispatch on the "Pressure for Dalit Muslim Quota" focusses on the move to remove Dalit Muslims from the OBC lists and place them on the SC lists.

On one plane it makes constitutional sense to remove the religious condition altogether from the definition of the SC's and make SC privilege available to those in the same occupation who belong to a religion other than Hinduism and to those who embrace another religion, at least for one more generation. But Shri Deshpande omits to figure out the miniscule proportion of the Muslim community which would be affected.

Secondly, he omits to state that the Dalit Muslims who are pitted in unequal competition against Hindu and Muslim Backwards in the OBC Lists, shall continue to face insurmountable competition with the sections of Dalit Hindus who are for more advanced, like the children of the creamy layer. All Muslims OBC's no doubt face an unequal competition with the Hindu OBC's. The solution lies in a separate quota for Muslim OBC's.

Also the Muslim community, as a whole, constitutes a Backward Class and, as in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Manipur, deserves reservation in public employment, development and welfare benefits, with preferential treatment for the sub-communities, notified as OBC's.

A three-way division of the Muslim community into High Castes, OBC's and SC's will aggravate their deprivation. A minority community which constitutes 12.5 per cent of the population **which is subject to bias and prejudice as a community**, should be protected by a quota and not fragmented.

I hope your party will give due consideration to this important recommendation of the Commission...

Empowerment Through Reservation

Shahabuddin's Letter to Radiance, 7 August, 1999

Mr. Mohd. Mumtaz Ali in his article "Reservation or Reconstruction of the Muslim Community of India" (Radiance, 8-14 August, 1999) has raised some very pertinent questions.

Indeed without mobilisation of Muslim masses – without a show of democratic power, no plea even by the Muslim elite for the empowerment of Muslim Indians will be taken seriously by the power structure. To put it in a nutshell **there can be no empowerment without 'power'.**

No political party has paid any heed to the political and economic deprivation of the Muslim Indians and their consequent frustration and their growing discontent with the secular parties. Indeed many Muslim Indians are questioning the very purpose of the secular order and the political strategy of their exploitation as vote-banks for one secular party or another.

Educational and economic development, social reform are all long-term processes. What is needed is unity of thoughts and action under a politically mature, well-informed, competent and selfless leadership.

But Mr. Ali does not answer the basic question how do the Muslim Indians aspire political, at least functional, unity in the present state of anarchy? Angels will not come down from heavens to aid or lead us.

I strongly feel that unity can be generated only through a mass movement and the movement will throw up a leadership with a mass base.

No mass movement can be built without a Cause. We have identified a cause: **Empowerment through Reservation.**

Such a movement may evolve into a political party. Time has come for the Muslim Indian to shed their psychological reservation in this regard. If no secular party is prepared to take a stand on their legitimate aspirations; there may be no option left for them but to have a Muslim, **but not a communal**, Party whose objective is not dominance but participation, not parity but proportionality, not separation but equitable coexistence in political space and just distribution of economic resources to all identifiable and self-conscious social groups.

Perhaps this is a task for the next century. But the sooner there is a beginning, the better for the community and the country.

BJP MOS Naqvi Views

... Reservation is against the basic concept of Islam because it does not approve of stratification of society. However, reservation for Muslims is justified only on the ground of economic deprivation... The entire reservation issue should be given a fresh look...

OBCs: Demand for Political Representation

The Reddy-OBC war in Andhra Pradesh – simmering for many years – has burst out into the open. Apprehensive that Reddys would once again corner a major chunk of the tickets, even though they constitute no more than nine per cent of the state's population while the OBCs add up to a whopping 36 per cent, the latter are now in an aggressive frame of mind...

... Their message (is) very clear: you cannot ignore us any more and if you do it will be at your own peril... the war is symptomatic of the ground-level churning that is on in the communities which are large in number and have become conscious of their political rights with every successive election.

Frequent polls and the advent of television has only expedited the process. This is not only true of the BCs in AP. The Jats in Rajasthan, who want the BC status the Congress promised them in its manifesto last year but failed to implement, are also part of the same phenomenon.

... It is the Jat Mahasabha – which controls lakhs of voters – which has been on the warpath... Jats have traditionally voted for the Congress, while Rajputs have opted for the BJP in Rajasthan. But Jats now feel they have been denied the power and influence that should have come their way. The state has not had a Jat Chief Minister.

This upsurge, which comes to the fore at poll time, underscores yet another message. Even as the polity seems to be moving towards bipolarity in terms of two clear coalition arrangements, the process of fragmentation will continue unless mainstream parties can transform themselves and give hitherto deprived communities their due place in the power structure.

The caste mahasabhas which are getting politicized are capable of converting themselves into BSP-type formations.

Kanshi Ram's impact goes beyond his pockets of influence. The Magidas (equivalent of the Chamars in North India) ... makes the point that the Malas (equivalent of the SC sub-caste Dher) have been cornering more seats even though the Madigas were numerically larger.

Similarly, the impact of Laloo and Mulayam has gone beyond .. Bihar and UP, galvanising the Yadavs in other states. There are two Yadavs in Chandrababu Naidu's Cabinet.

The wheels of Mandalisation have been grinding away. The process is not limited to the reservation of jobs in government for the OBCs (which aspire to) political representation which their numbers demand...

(Source: The Indian Express, 8 August, 1999)

President K.R. Narayanan on Urdu and Urdu Journalism

Inaugural Speech at A.I. Urdu Editor's Conference, New Delhi, 29 July, 1999 (Extracts)

... Today Urdu is the third largest language of India and it is included in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. There are 43 million people constituting over 5% of the population speaking Urdu in India. It is recognized as a language for Sahitya Academy Awards. It is the official language of Jammu and Kashmir, the second official language of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi. And as Pandit Nehru once pointed out Urdu is a link with Western Asia and with countries whose friendship is important to India. Above all it is a lively link with the people of Pakistan. Urdu represents a fusion of cultures, and for India it is an integrating and synthesizing language. Mahatma Gandhi had seen this role of Urdu and he had pleaded for a language for India which is an amalgam of Hindi and Urdu - Hindustani. At the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held in Indore in 1918 he said that Hindi is incomplete without Urdu. He later said that after the attainment of Independence: "In my view he who objects to Urdu is to that extent less of an Indian".

It is no surprise that Urdu became an important medium of journalism in India and assumed an all India character. ...

Urdu journalism played an important role in the struggle for independence and also in the movement for social and political awakening of our people... Urdu journalism was also devoted to social change and reforms and new scientific ideas... Urdu papers ... espoused the cause of freedom powerfully and earned the wrath of British authorities. In fact it was said that the British lived in fear of Urdu journalism.

Today Urdu journalism occupies the third largest position in India after Hindi and English. Urdu papers are brought out in 15 states and 2 Union Territories of India. With a total of 2670 publications it is the third largest numerical group after Hindi and English. It occupies the second position at all-India level for dailies - there are 495 Urdu dailies. With these impressive figures the Urdu Press can become a powerful media in the next millennium. During the last two decades Urdu press showed a phenomenal increase according to official statistics. The rate of growth is higher than that of the Indian dailies in all languages put together.

But Urdu like other language papers suffer from various handicaps. Some of these problems have to be addressed boldly. The Committee appointed by the Government of India in 1972 for the promotion of Urdu under the Chairmanship of Shri I.K. Gujral made important recommendations in relation to Urdu journalism ... which deserve serious consideration and follow up action. A Committee of Experts appointed by the Government of India in 1990 under the Chairmanship of

Mr. Ali Sardar Jafri examined the implementation of the Gujral Committee recommendations...

Urdu is the depository of the composite culture of India. As such it can be one of the subtle and powerful instruments of national integration, communal harmony and social amity in our vast country of rich diversities... The potential readership of Urdu newspapers has not yet been reached or exploited. It has been said that Urdu newspaper industry is awaiting the arrival of a Northcliffe or Murdoch. That would be a contribution to Urdu journalism and to Urdu language and literature which is a sore house of our rich composite cultural values and nationalist sentiments...

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Hindustan Times, 16 August, 1999

Apropos Ms. Vandana Madra's letter "Promoting Urdu" (HT, 13 August, 1999), I would like to correct her wrong impression that Urdu is written in the Arabic script. Urdu is neither written in the Persian script. **Urdu is written in the Urdu script**, which is phonetically much more comprehensive than Arabic, Persian, Devnagri or even Latin scripts. Neither is Urdu a dialect; it is a highly developed language with its own script.

Many Urdu words which Ms. Madra considers sweet and sonorous simply cannot be written in the Devnagri or, for that matter, in any of the above scripts.

No living language should close its doors to words from other languages. Urdu from its very origin has never practised linguistic apartheid. So let Urdu words find their way freely into the heart and tongue of non-Urdu-speaking people but let Urdu retain its characteristic script.

All India Urdu Editor's Conference: Office Bearers

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Dilip Raote on Urdu as Mirror of Change in Muslim Community

These days I propagate Urdu. I don't know the language, but I can read the script. I subscribe to an Urdu daily and occasionally buy women's magazines. I read them slowly with the help of a dictionary...

I got interested in Urdu because I realised I didn't know anything about the Muslim community which forms some 13 per cent of India's population...

My Muslim friends are all convent-educated. They have little connection with Mumbai's Urdu-reading Muslims. Most of them can't read Urdu...

I also tell non-Muslim friends among journalists to learn Urdu. It would not only expand their area of specialisation, but they would also be able to observe at first hand a most interesting sociological change in the Muslim community...

The transformation of Mumbai's – and Maharashtra's – Muslims since Babari Masjid is astonishing. I call it the Muslim Renaissance. It is based entirely on education. No other Indian community is investing so much in the idea of education, nor glorifying so much the achievements of its children who are topping school and college exams. These winning children get more space in Urdu newspapers than film stars do. The Muslim community is showing the zest of the neo-convert and has launched a jihad against ignorance and illiteracy. In newspapers the word taleem (education) occurs in headlines on every page. Muslim places of worship, like those of other religions, collect a lot of money. This money is being sought to be invested in education. Technical schools as well as professional courses and counselling centres for the unemployed are coming up. Computer literacy is being pushed hard.

... Mad mullahs and strident fringe elements have been silenced. If the Muslim community maintains this zest, in 20 years at most it will be providing intellectual guidance to Muslim West Asia instead of being merely a recipient of the charity by that region.

Another transformation is being provoked by women. I suspect fundamentalist Muslim males, at least in Maharashtra, are in retreat. Educated activist Muslim women are making fiery speeches... Others are flaunting their freedom... Absolutely amazing how a community can change in so short a time.

(From) women's Urdu magazines, I want to know their aspiration, because it is the women's aspirations that determine men's ambitions... Women must be pushing their men hard towards economics and away from politics and religious fundamentalism.

There are all these 'human interest' stories in the revived Muslim community. For non-Urdu journalists, it's a largely unexplored field. Much gold can be mined there. Besides, since the community is acquiring a different kind of awareness now, it will impact politics and economics in as yet unpredictable ways. The beginning of this shift may be seen in the coming elections.

There is a threat to the community implicit in its resurgence. The 'foreign hand' may play a large part in

setting the community's clock back... Indian Muslims may face destabilisation efforts. And that could lead to the ultimate irony – Muslims and Hindus coming together to thwart foreign fundamentalist plots to create trouble in India...

(Source: The Times of India, 1 August, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Times of India, 2 August, 1999

Apropos Dilip Raote's "Why I read Urdu Papers" (TOI, 1 Aug., 1999) I share his perception of a wave of change in the Muslim Indian community and his vision of Hindus and Muslims coming together to thwart foreign fundamentalists plotting to create trouble in India. But who will thwart the native fundamentalists who, by word and deed, vitiate the social environment and push back the Muslims into their protective shell.

I.P. Tewari on Urdu

... The British ... created two distinct languages out of the core language. And thus were born Hindu and Urdu written in Devnagari and Persian scripts (other scripts were eliminated) as languages of Hindu and Muslims, respectively. It was done in such a subtle manner that both the communities lapped it up as a genuine gift... The shared culture was given up by Hindi and Urdu writers who became atavistic, encouraged as they were by the foreign masters.

Hindi and Urdu writing only reflect the aspirations of the upper and middle classes who are products of the English rule. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Hindustani as the common language written in both the scripts, Devnagari and Persian. The ... writers under the spell of the Communist Party produced literature that bore no resemblance to the language of the people...

(Source: The Pioneer, 3 August, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Pioneer, 18 August, 1999

Apropos Shri I.P. Tewari's letter "Not One but Many Languages", there is no doubt that Hindi and Urdu have a common origin but much water has flown down the Ganga since they went into intersecting orbits though at some point, they still come close to each other. In common speech they are hardly distinguishable from each other but as the discourse gets more intellectualised, they become increasingly unintelligible to each other.

Had Gandhiji's advice been accepted and put into effect when the first elected governments took office in 1937, the divergence would have been reduced, if not eliminated altogether. But this was not to be.

But this does not mean that Urdu be deprived of its rightful place in education, information or administration in India. Urdu should be treated exactly as Hindi or any other national language is treated in States other than those in which they are the principal languages. Even this modest objective demands a 'long battle'. The Urdu-speaking community must accept the challenge.

From Torrent to Trickle: Indian Muslim Migration to Pakistan, 1947-97 - II

Omar Khalidi in Islamic Studies, Autumn, 1998

Muhajirs had outworn the welcome in Pakistan within a few years. The Muhajir political domination of the country ended with the assassination of Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, in 1951, although they remained firmly entrenched in the civil service, educational institutions, journalism, business and industry, and independent professions for at least another decade.

In order to establish citizenship by birth, most Muhajirs deliberately misrepresented themselves to the census enumerators to escape adverse consequences associated with being a Muhajir, sometimes contemptuously referred to by Sindhis as panahgirs, refuge-seekers. Within India, the act of migration to Pakistan by close relatives was rarely revealed publicly for fear of negative implications... The loyalty of most Muslims became suspect. The Muslim minority communities in India were marooned at home and with the passage of time not quite welcome in Pakistan. To be known to the police and the authorities for having relatives in Pakistan was not a pleasant prospect for most Indian Muslims. For a Muhajir it made no practical sense to identify himself with the land of his birth in Pakistan, and the members of the residual relatives had relocated across the national border...

With the introduction of the passports between the two countries in 1953, it became possible for Indian Muslims to migrate to Pakistan legally. Given the relatively low level of education in areas that became Pakistan, that country still needed educated and skilled labour that could be absorbed in the expanding economy. As late as December 1971, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi was authorized to issue documents to educationally qualified Indians to migrate to Pakistan...

Not all Indian Muslims who migrated to East Bengal were able to go to Pakistan. This was tragically demonstrated in 1971. During the Pakistani army's crackdown in East Bengal and the subsequent war ... the immigrant Urdu-speaking population collectively – though erroneously – known as Biharis supported the state against the Bengali majority. After the conclusion of the war, almost 500,000 Pakistanis, a great many of whom had immigrated from Bihar, were left in Bangladesh. Some 200,000 remain in Bangladeshi camps. They were Pakistanis before the war and continue to define themselves as "stranded Pakistanis" in Bangladesh. The successive Pakistani governments, whether military dictatorships or democratically elected loath to upset ethnic and political balances in Sindh and so refused to repatriate what are, by every definition, Pakistani citizens.

Thus the original critical question posed but never answered during the Pakistan movement – whether Pakistan was to be the homeland of all Indian Muslims or

just another state where Islam would be the "official" religion – has been answered by the experience. It is not meant to accommodate all Muslims of the Sub-continent... It may "officially", i.e. formally be an Islamic state but ... (for) record of ethnic conflict management ... hardly brings much honour to the Muslims of South Asia.

Migration Shrinks to a Trickle

The December 1971 ... war over Bangladesh was a watershed event in the history of modern South Asia. The perception of Pakistan as the homeland for Muslims of undivided India was finally shattered. The news about large scale killing of fellow Muslims in East Bengal by units of the Pakistan army horrified Indian Muslims...

After 1971 very few Muslims went to Pakistan. Several factors are responsible for this change. First is the relative decline of anti-Muslim violence in India during the early 1970s... Indian democracy acted as the safety valve for the resolution of ethnic conflicts. The second reason is the rise of ethnic nationalism and the improvement of education within Pakistan which made the migration prospects difficult. Tighter controls at the international borders made illegal migration hazardous... Problems associated with legal travel with visa prevented frequent visits, thus weakening the kinship ties of divided families across the borders.

Psychologically, most middle class Muslims were reconciled to sink or swim within India by 1971 and stopped looking to Pakistan as a desirable destination. Fortunately, for many middle and lower class Muslims, the oil boom in the Middle East provided a tremendous alternative employment potential, whereto thousands have headed since the 1970s... On June 18, 1995, Pakistan's Interior Minister, Naseerullah Babar, informed the National Assembly that during the period from 1973-1994, as many as 800,000 visitors came from India on valid travel documents. Of these only 3,393 stayed back. Granting that those entering illegally would not inform the authorities of their arrival, their numbers are in all likelihood not large given the loss of pull factors within Pakistan. Inter-marriages between Indian and Pakistani Muslims have declined sharply...

Of those who left for Pakistan, most never came back; a minority, however, did. These include several thousand Mewati peasants, "8000 government servants", and other individuals who for one reason or another did not want to live in Pakistan. Among the intelligentsia these included Sayyid Sajjad Zaheer (1905-73), K.M. Ashraf (1903-62) both of the Communist Party of India, the poet Sahir Ludhianawi (1921-62), and Qurrat al-Ain Hyder (b: 1927), a leading novelist who left Pakistan in 1960. Unlike the well-connected members of the intelligentsia, many

(Contd. on Page 403)

Darshan Desai on Communal Riots in Ahmedabad

Indian Express Reports

I
Today, it is Ahmedabad. A fortnight ago it was the small town of Idar in Sabarkantha district which went through rioting and arson. In between, attempts have been made to create trouble in Nadiad and Dabhoi although these did not succeed.

It began rather modestly, though later to reflect a pattern, when the Vishwa Hindu Parishad dug up some old cases of inter-religion elopements, distributed mischievous leaflets and organised a bandh in Nadiad town against "the Muslim conspiracy to lure away Hindu girls".

Earlier this week, the VHP tried to kick up trouble in Dabhoi town in Vadodara district by interfering in a friendship between a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy although their parents are business partners and had no objection.

In Ahmedabad, attempts were made to incite Muslims under the pretext of burning effigies of Nawaz Sharif in mixed localities. In Idar, violence and arson broke out during the Rath Yatra festival which was, incidentally, observed for the first time in the town's history.

Either directly or tacitly, the one organisation that comes into the picture everywhere is the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In Nadiad and Dabhoi, VHP men publicly owned up their actions. In Ahmedabad and Idar, Opposition leaders are pointing fingers at them, although the VHP says it has nothing to do with what happened in these places.

VHP president Jaideep Patel has an explanation for everything. About Dabhoi and Nadiad, he says, "People are bound to react because there is a conspiracy to increase Muslim population." As for the controversial effigy burnings, he blamed "anti-social elements". And Idar? "It is the Congress, it is Amarsinh Chaudhary (former chief minister)", he says.

Regarding the current violence in Ahmedabad, Patel says it is a post-Kargil, ISI-sponsored conspiracy. "How can we be involved when more Hindus have been stabbed", he reasons. When pointed out that the police FIR in the Gomtipur violence on July 24 names a VHP activist and a BJP worker, he replies, "That must have been the Congress trying to fix us". About police officers privately naming the VHP, he says, "They are being vindictive."

Minister of State for Home Haren Pandya also absolves the VHP. "SO many cases have been filed in connection with the riots; and only in one case there is a passing mention of a VHP volunteer. So far no VHP involvement has been found as an institution," he says.

Police officers, however, say that it is the Hindutva elements who initially created trouble by mixing anti-Muslim slogans with effigy burnings, and it turned into violence because the government was slow to react. Now, the VHP has publicly demanded release of Hindus arrested in connection with the riots.

Police officers, and even BJP leaders, link the problem to a growing chasm between the BJP and the VHP. In fact, a VHP memorandum, submitted to Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel about Ahmedabad incidents, makes interesting reading. It accuses the BJP government of giving "a free hand to pro-Pakistan elements", and allowing the police to "commit atrocities on Hindus".

Further, the memorandum asks the government not to act under the influence of the Minorities Commission, give up the façade of protecting minority interests, and even makes a sarcastic reference to "the BJP's Model State" – the term used by the BHP for Gujarat.

Haren Pandya, even while giving a clean chit to VHP, insists, "Whoever is involved in violence will be booked, irrespective of religion". As for the VHP's grievances, he was evasive, "Our priority is to restore peace".

(Source: The Indian Express, 30 July, 1999)

II

While political parties are busy blaming each other for the Kargil conflict at national level, their party persons in Ahmedabad are holding each other responsible for the riots which have so far claimed seven lives. The two main parties are already looking for electoral gains from the present situation.

The BJP leaders say the Congress and Shankersinh Vaghela are behind the violence because they need to consolidate the Muslim vote. The Congress says that BJP and its affiliates are involved with an eye on Hindu votes. The VHP blames it on the ISI says it is an attempt to restrict the post-Kargil advantage to the BJP...

The BJP (gives) its own reasons to blame it all on the Congress and party spokesman Bharat Pandya says the Congress started the blame game. "They started naming our people"...

On being asked how and why was the ISI involved, he says: "To reduce the impact of Kargil. Two Dawood henchmen were caught sometime ago, a cache of arms and ammunition has been found and narcotics have been seized from various places. These are indications of ISI getting active". On Congress he says, "the party can have an interest in supporting anti-socials elements to garner Muslim votes".

When told that there was no direct evidence of Congress involvement, "We have never stated the Congress was directly responsible. We have stated they could have reasons to be and that too after they blamed us first...", he asserts.

(Source: The Indian Express, 1 August, 1999)

III

Although peace has returned to the city, road blocks put up at Shah Alam toll naka in the wake of the killing of a passerby near Shalimar cinema on July 28 still serve as a dubious 'Line of Control' between areas dominated by

Hindus and Muslims.

Similar blockades have been raised at the other end of the area at Chandola Lake and at Meera Talkies crossroads which leads to Milatnagar slums. The blockades seem to have been placed for the dual purpose of providing security to the residents as well as checking undesirable elements.

... Local councillor Badruddin Shaikh ... had approached the police for removal of the barriers, "but the police wanted us to take responsibility for any violence that might take place in the future", he said.

Residents point out that no road-blocks had been raised in other areas which witnessed clashes. Nor had the authorities sought such assurances from people elsewhere.

(Source: The Indian Express, 7 August, 1999)

IV

Perceived for long as two sides of the same coin, the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in Gujarat now seem to be at loggerheads. Tension is building up between the two with the BJP Government trying to distance itself from its erstwhile saffron partner and, in the process, the VHP finding its influence over the Government diminishing.

... Public utterances by both sides during recent communal disturbances in Ahmedabad ... brought to fore the ... tussle. When Minister of State for Home Haren Pandya confirmed the involvement of VHP and Bajrang Dal men in two incidents, he also said, "Those close to us think that just because we are in power, they can do anything and get away with it".

Earlier, the VHP, in a strongly worded memorandum to Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, had alleged that Hindus were being victimised by police. Then came state BJP general secretary Gordhan Zadaphia's statement, complaining that the Congress was linking the party with the VHP and the Bajrang Dal. Explaining the VHP stance, state president Jaideep Patel asserted: "We are for Hinduism and we will oppose those working against Hindus, whether it is the BJP or the Congress..."

Differences between the BJP and the VHP had surfaced when the state government had converted the Minorities Board into a full-fledged corporation with a special corpus fund some months ago. Later, the Home Ministry and the VHP came to loggerheads over police postings and transfers. And then came the Ahmedabad violence.

... The state government agreed to set up a Gau Sewa Aayog but we demand that the Aayog be given a ministry status", asserted Patel...

Pandya denied there were any problem between the BJP Government and the VHP, but parried further questions on the issue. At the same time, he maintained that the Government had acted and would continue to act objectively... But the VHP nurses a sense of betrayal. Said a VHP leader, "We made the party what it is today... Hindus are humiliated by the same Government".

(Source: The Indian Express, 11 August, 1999)

Instant 'Justice' in Jama Masjid

The walled city area is the oldest part of the capital but ... even the system of meting out justice is as old as the place itself.

When 18-year-old Muhammad Abid went up to the minar of the Jama Masjid ... before the evening namaaz ... he was asked to come down... When he did, (it was) alleged he (had) sexually harassed... He was taken to the office of the Naib Imam and allegedly beaten up. Yahya Bukhari, son of the Imam, slapped the boy and tonsured his head...

He created a furore in the neighbourhood and hundreds of residents gathered in front of the Jama Masjid police station...

The real issue is lost in the debate... "Even if he had molested the lady, why was he not handed over to the police? Who is Bukhari to beat him up and to ensure him?" said an angry resident. Seeing the public outrage, the local police ... has registered a case...

(Source: The Indian Express, 4 August, 1999)

'Possessed' Children Beaten to Death

In a bizarre incident, five 'possessed' children were beaten to death by members of their own family in Sherkot, Bijnore ... on Friday. The police have recovered the bodies of the victims. Five members of the family, including four women, have been arrested.

... Nazma, daughter of Mulhtar Ahmd had taken her three children to her father's residence... The Children - Nisha (5), Nizamuddin (4) and Azam (3) -- were very naughty. (This was attributed to) some evil spell cast on them by their godmother.

The family then called a maulvi to exorcise the spirit. 'Wazifa' was performed under his guidance... (After several days other police broke open the house to found profusely bleeding bodies of 5 minor younger sisters, Asma (16) and Afsana (10)...on the floor, bearing several wounds...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 25 July, 1999)

Father Kills Daughters for Remarriage

Two girls were reportedly murdered by their father ... in their Gokalpuri house in North Delhi. The third daughter managed to escape. According to the police, Hamidullah returned home late last night and gave his daughters a capsule each to consume. Roshan (11) and Gulista (8) swallowed the tablets and fell unconscious. Seeing the condition of her two sisters, the eldest daughter Majida (15) did not take the capsule and ran (out) and sought help. Hamidullah, who is absconding, reportedly wanted to remarry and saw his daughters as a hindrance.

(Source: The Hindustan Times)

Dancing to Prove Himself True Indian

Sallauddin Pasha, the 30-year-old Bangalore-based Bharatanatyam and Kathak exponent, has vowed to dance till the Kargil conflict ends to show to the world that he is a true Indian...

(Source: The Indian Express, 7 July, 1999)

Mushirul Hasan on Nirad Babu's Hostility towards Muslims

... Nirad Babu ... became conscious, as he tells us in his autobiography, of a new kind of hatred for the Muslims du-ring the *swadeshi* movement (1906). A cold dislike for them settled down in his heart. He rejoiced at Italy's attack on Tripoli in 1911, also when Turkey joined the German side at the end of 1914 "so that the Muslims would be taught a lesson". Strongly anti-Muslim in 1920 (in his own words) owing to the pan-Islamic upsurge, he was uneasy with the "menacing assertiveness" of the Bengali Muslims. He was repelled by the cheerless prospect of living in a province where Muslims would be a dominant social and cultural entity.

Why? The answer comes from Nirad Babu himself. "Nothing was more natural for us," observed Nirad Babu, "than to feel about the Muslims in the way we did". He and his friends were told, even before they could read, that the Muslims had ruled and oppressed the Hindus, spread their religion with the Quran in one hand and the sword in the other, abducted Hindu women, destroyed temples, and polluted sacred places. "As we grew older we read about the wars of the Rajputs, the Marathas, and the Sikhs against the Muslims, and of the intolerance and oppression of Aurangzeb".

So, what was the verdict? Muslims constituted a society of their own with a distinctive culture. They could not be absorbed into a unified nation. For this reason the arguments trotted out by Gandhi and Nehru to contest their demands were "false" and "foolish". The gigantic catastrophe of Hindu-Muslim discord in his days did not surprise him a bit, because this conflict was implicit in the very unfolding of Indian history. Nehru, in particular, failed to comprehend this reality owing to his social and cultural affiliations - "more a Muslim than a Hindu, so far as he is anything Indian at all".

Whenever he saw a burqa-clad person, he apostrophized her mentally: "Sister! You are the symbol of your community in India." The entire body of the Muslims, according to him, was under a black veil. And his advice to them was to immigrate to Pakistan. "There is something unnatural in the continued presence of the Muslims in India and of the Hindus in Pakistan, as if both went against a natural cultural ecology". Food for thought for Bal Thackeray!

What explains the hostility of this self-proclaimed liberal humanist towards the Muslims? Nirad Babu's own explanation, one that holds true for scores of Bengali intellectuals in the past and present, is illuminating. Bengali thinkers and reformers, in his view, based their life work on the formula of a synthesis of Hindu and European currents. Islamic trends and Muslim sensitivities did not touch the arc of their consciousness. They stood outside as an external proletariat. In fact, the Bengali culture of the 19th century built a perimeter of its own and put specifically Muslim influences and aspirations beyond

the pale...

... We need a Nirad Babu in a country like ours... But we also need somebody who can strengthen multiculturalism and pluralism, somebody who would recognise the role and place of the minorities; Muslims included, in a democratic and secular polity. Given his ideological predilections and his deep-seated prejudices towards the Muslims, Nirad Babu was perhaps not cut out to play this role either as a historian of ideas or as a citizen of the world.

(Source: The Indian Express, 7 August, 1999)

Vinod Nair

On Holy Menace in Delhi

For some, they are literally holy cows. For others, they are (moving) road-dividers and speed-breakers. They lie in repose right on the middle of the road while motorists, quite used to having them around, manoeuvre their vehicles through the space available on the road.

The cattle of Delhi's roads have become a commuter's nightmare. Though the civic authorities claim that the number of stray cattle has come down appreciably, there are still enough on the Capital's roads to add chaos to the confusion caused by the traffic.

The reason so many cows wander on the roads could be attributed to the sizable number of dairies which exist in the city. Dairy owners, reportedly, let the cattle free to feed. MCD commissioner V.K. Duggal says that unless dairies are relocated on the peripheries of the city the problem cannot be eradicated completely. "We ... impounded around 17,000 stray cattle in the past few months...

Once the cattle are impounded, says the MCD chief, they are handed over the NGO-run cattle farms (gosadans) situated on the Capital's outskirts. (But the) MCD officials say that land allotted at concessional rates to NGOs is not being used properly... (Source: The Times of India, 15 July, 1999)

(Contd. from Page 404)

Creation of posts of Unani medical or para-medical staff and recruitment thereto may help some members of the Muslim or Urdu-speaking communities but essentially these posts cannot be reserved for a particular social group.

To conclude, I would suggest that you may kindly consider issuing a general guideline to the State administration that in the implementation of all government schemes relating to welfare and development as well as recruitment to all posts at all levels, every identifiable social group at the operational/functional level should be accommodated, subject to minimum qualification, in proportion to its population at that level e.g. recruitment of teachers or constables or drivers or distribution of public housing, educational scholarships, stipends for the indigent or the aged. □

Main Conclusions of the Wadhwa Commission Report

Graham Stewart Staines, an Australian missionary devoted most part of his life in India to the cause of eradication of leprosy and rehabilitation of leprosy patients. As a missionary, he was also involved in spreading the Gospel... He himself was not involved in conversions ... there have been instances of conflicts between Christian and non-Christian tribals evidencing growing tensions between them... The administration was quite unconcerned and oblivious to the growing tension... Unfortunately, some of the tribals perceived Staines to be the person behind spread of Christianity by converting innocent and unsuspecting tribals and the one making inroads into their culture and customs.

Dara Singh was growing in stature. He is a fanatic. He committed crimes against Muslim traders. There was no check on him. There were criminal cases pending against him and yet he was not declared as absconder... Tribal youth looked at him with awe as if they found a Messiah in Dara Singh. They drew his attention to the

conversions in Manoharpur by the Christian missionaries... These youth are not members of any organisation. Dara Singh understood the psyche of the tribals. He played on their emotions and provoked their ire saying that Christian missionaries were destroying Hindu religion. He prepared them and then led the attack...

The act of murdering Staines and his two children was inspired by Dara Singh and his clout and no authority, organisation or any other person played any role in or in connection with the killings. There is no evidence that any authority or organisation was behind the gruesome killings.

FIR registered in the case does not represent true state of affairs. It is certainly a doctored document... there should be an independent inquiry to find out the circumstances leading to the recording of the FIR...

There should be proper understanding of the provisions of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967 and the rules made thereunder.

Comments on the Report

Walter Fernandes in The Times of India, 13 August, 1999

The Wadhwa Commission report on the killing of Graham Staines says that Dara Singh acted alone and that no organisation was involved. The same statement was made in 1948. It was said that Godse had acted alone. India went into mourning and shops closed down spontaneously the day after the Mahatma's murder. The RSS claimed total innocence. Nevertheless, many of its cadres celebrated the crime. Is history repeating itself?

The Commission's counsel and its investigating team provide circumstantial evidence of Dara Singh's links with the Sangh Parivar. In seven of the eleven FIRs of communal crimes against him he is linked to the Bajrang Dal and in the rest to the BJP. The counsel's report also provides evidence that he worked for the BJP in the 1998 elections, that he was active in the *gorasksha samiti* and that he attacked Muslim cattle traders.

Yet, after all this, we are told that no organisation was involved in the burning alive of Staines and his two small children; that Dara Singh by himself motivated 50 persons to go to a village far from theirs to burn children to death; further that kerosene and other combustible material were procured and information obtained about the whereabouts of Staines, without support from any organisation. Eyewitnesses testify that those involved shouted "Jai Bajrang Bali" and dispersed when a whistle was blown – an act known to be the slogan and strategy of a communal organisation. But all this and more evidence is ignored in the final report.

Many individuals and organisations wanted the Commission to study this crime in the overall context of the communal situation in the country and of attacks on Christians during 1998. There were at least 108 recorded cases of such attacks in Gujarat alone during 1998. The year ended with tension in Karnataka. There was a major

incident in Orissa itself just when the Commission was beginning its hearings. But it did not study the Staines murder within the overall national scenario. Amid this violence the Prime Minister only demanded a debate on conversions, not on the criminals behind these attacks. The Commission used clause C of its terms of reference to discuss conversions and exonerate Christians. Under its clause B it discussed the involvement of the Sangh Parivar and exonerated it too... This report once again brings into focus the issue of the very credibility of Commissions of Inquiry. After every police firing, communal massacre or train accident, a Commission is appointed to study its causes. Most of them do a whitewash job and present what look like doctored reports...

Most of these reports give the official version or do not fix any responsibility. When they do fix responsibility, they are rejected. For example, the Sri Krishna Commission pinpointed responsibility and identified persons behind the pogrom in Mumbai in 1993. The Maharashtra government rejected its report...

Farce and Commissions

... Where do we go from here? Are we to continue the farce and appoint a Commission to study all the inquiry commissions? Or will we, as citizens of this country, demand justice for the victims of these crimes and tragedies? Three ministers from the Union government spent less than an hour at the site of the Staines murder, without knowing the local language and declared it to be a foreign conspiracy. The home minister cleared the RSS even before the inquiry could begin. The Orissa government filed FIRs against Dara Singh but has not arrested him or declared him an absconder...

(The author works at the Indian Social Institute)

(Source: The Times of India, 13 August, 1999)

Fred Weir **On Revolt in Daghestan**

Russia's historical chicks are coming home to roost with a vengeance on its volatile Caucasus frontier.

Three years after Moscow lost a bloody war to put down separatist rebellion in Chechnya, a virulent brand of Islamic extremism is igniting civil war in the neighbouring republic of Daghestan, a mountainous region beside the Caspian Sea. In recent days as many as 2,000 armed (Islamic) militants... have seized several villages near Daghestan's border with Chechnya and demanded that Russian troops leave the republic.

Moscow has accused Chechen warlords of orchestrating the attack and has cracked down with massive military force. But critics warn that, however, the military operation turns out, Russia is repeating mistakes it has been making in the region for 200 years.

By doing so it risks a protracted cycle of turmoil in the non-Russian, non-Orthodox Christian republics of the North Caucasus. That could lead, ultimately, to the death of Russia's ... federal system.

"our federal authorities find it easy to blame outsiders for the latest troubles in Daghestan, but this is a very narrow view", says Alexander Iskandaryan, deputy director of the Independent Centre for Caucasian Studies in Moscow. "Of course Chechens are involved as are agitators from the Arab world and other places. But most of the rebels in Daghestan are local; as are the causes of their uprising." Russian TV has been showing eerily familiar scenes of the fighting in Daghestan ... and Kremlin officials (are) proclaiming imminent victory over the "bandits". But there is a growing, uneasy sense that it is all coming closer to Russia's heartland...

The USSR fought a nine-year war in Afghanistan, ostensibly to step the tide of militant Islam. Russian troops are still entrenched ... in the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan. In December 1994 Russian troops invaded Chechnya, just 1000 km south of Moscow, to crush an independence drive. Two years later, with as many as 80,000 people dead and half a million made homeless, defeated and demoralized Russian forces withdrew.

Chechnya is the largest and most ethnically homogeneous of the 5 autonomous republics making up the north Caucasus region. Russia conquered them in the mid 19th century after decades of guerrilla resistance, and has had to put down countless uprisings since then. Most of the region is culturally Islamic, though like many mountain lands it is ethnically diverse...

With the Soviet order gone and the new Russian state apparently incapable of addressing the growing economic malaise or forging a common identity with its peoples, the region is now a powderkeg.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 12 August, 1999)

UK: Monitoring **Muslim Militancy**

The Islamic fundamentalist organisations in Britain, particularly those linked with Pakistan, have come under scrutiny and their activists are being monitored by a special branch of the Scotland Yard and intelligence cells of various other anti-terrorism agencies.

The refusal of visa to Jamaat-ulema-Islami leader in Pakistan, Maulana Fazalur Rehman, to attend a Khatam-i-Nabuwat Conference in Birmingham on August 9, has alerted the fundamentalist groups here. The organisations like Markaz-ud-dawa-wal-Irshad, the British wing of the Lashkar-i-Tayyaba and Tahrik-e-Kashmir and Harkut-ul-Mujahideen, which have been very aggressive and active here and now afraid that the British have lost patience with them.

Normally the annual dinner by the Pak-UK association was attended by 30 to 40 British MPs but this year none was present. The signal, specially after Kargil and threats ... to Americans by the likes of Fazalur Rehman, is that the tolerance level for the Islamic militant groups has dipped very low.

A highly placed source informed that the intelligence departments of most western countries are now pooling information and coordinating their monitoring of such Islamic groups.

... The Maulanas who were calling for jihad from various mosques and encouraging the young to volunteer (to serve) in Kashmir or to join Taliban have suddenly gone underground. But the authorities fear that some militants could damage US interests in Britain and incidentally pose danger to the locals as well...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 8 August, 1999)

Malaysia bans 'Islam' in Party Names

Malaysia's Home Ministry has ruled that no new political parties will be allowed to use the word "Islam" in their titles, the national Bernama news agency said. ...

Deputy Home Minister Azmi Khalid, quoted by Bernama did not give reasons (for ban on the) word "Islam"...

But Mahathir has been struggling to secure Muslim votes from the Parti Islam (PAS), an Islamic party and the only opposition party that controls a Malaysian state. Muslims form slightly more than half of Malaysia's total population of 22 million. ...

Azmi said there were two other political parties with Islamic names - Barisan Jamaah Islamiah Semalaysia and Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia - but they were not active.

Malaysia has 39 political organisations, and 14 of them are grouped under Mahathir's government coalition.

(Source: The Muslim World, 14 August, 1999)

Freedom of Religion and Belief – A World Report by Kevin Boyle and Juliet Sheen Review by Kumar Suresh

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance". But the existing situation the world over, reveals the fact that this right is far from universally enjoyed. Religious persecution of minority faiths, forcible conversions, desecration of religious sites, pervasive discrimination, torture and killing on religious grounds constitute the major and gross violation of human rights even after fifty years of the proclamation of Universal Declaration. It is also dismaying to note that too little is known about the experience of both enjoyment and violation of this freedom. The study under review makes the first systematic and comprehensive attempt towards understanding and reporting the state of this right indifferent geo-political regions of the world, covering around sixty countries. The countries covered in the study have been classified into five major regions – Africa, America, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East.

... Experts and scholars were invited to contribute reports on their respective countries/regions supplemented by the reports prepared by human rights NGOs, by different religious groups, by inter-faith bodies and humanist organisations. This collective enterprise was given a concrete shape ... with the institutional support of the Human Rights Centre of the University of Essex, UK.

... The themes in the Report include, among others, the relationship between belief groups and the state; freedom to manifest belief in law and practice; religion and schools; religious minorities, new religious movements; the impact of belief on the status of women etc.

It is important to note that the right to freedom of religion and belief enjoys a legal status in most of the countries. However, the legal status of right or its official pronouncement does not ensure its congruence with the societal realities and operational dynamics. Therefore, many entries in the report do not confine themselves to legal status of the right only but also point out the state of freedom in practice. For instance, the entry on India contributed by Abdulrahim P. Vijaypur highlights the gap between the precept and practice of the right to freedom of religion and belief. He rightly points out that the occurrences of communal riots, caste violence, perception

of discrimination among the minorities, especially Muslims, are the major issues which question the constitutional propriety of the state with regard to non-discrimination and freedom of religion and belief... though the Indian state is based on its secular constitutional premises, the operational reality appears to be not in full conformity with it.

The situation in two other important South Asian countries Pakistan or Bangladesh, is no better. Both the countries are subject to political instability on the one hand, the infringement of the right to freedom of religion and belief on the other...

Simultaneously, *The World Report* dismantles the myth of secular West, modernist nation-State based on enlightenment, universalism and rationalism. Freedom of religion and belief in the countries of the West is perceived to be in its ideal state... *The World Report*, however, unravels the fact that this right is restricted at the operational level.

... Non-recognition of differences is a major source of discontent among the minorities, especially among the Muslims. The Muslim students have been prohibited for wearing *hijab* in their schools. This has been seen as a denial of the freedom of expression of cultural difference of the women.

... The Report points out that although the US is a country that often prides itself on being a melting pot for different nationalities and cultures, only relatively recently has significant attention been paid to the positive values that minorities bring to the larger culture (p. 153). So far as community relations are concerned they are not essentially tolerant. The lingering intolerance of Protestants towards Catholics, discrimination and harassment against the Muslims, lack of acceptance and equality for indigenous American traditional beliefs are important pointers in this regard. More specifically Islam is subject to the most consistent manifestations of intolerance...

Unlike the USA melting pot argument, the freedom of religion and tolerance of diversities is enhanced by Canada's commitment to multi-culturalism...

To sum up, the study constitutes an important contribution to our knowledge of the state of freedom of religion and belief around the world. It provides stimulation for further investigation, research and action... It is an essential reading for researcher, activists, monitoring agencies and policy-makers alike...

(Source: The Human Rights Today, April, 1999)

Chronology of the Month (16 July – 15 August, 1999)

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Government: PM Vajpayee addresses nation on Independence Day, rules out talks with Pakistan, announces induction of Agni II Missiles (15 Aug).

Political Parties – BJP: *BJP enters into electoral alliance with Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and DMK and MDMK in Tamil Nadu (4 Aug) and with TDP in AP (11 Aug).

*Uma Bharti pleads for due place for OBC's in BJP (21 July).

*President Thakre promises action against Vinay Katiyar for his statement on the Quran (21 July).

*Despite assurances, BJP fields only 4 Muslim candidate for Lok Sabha, one each in UP, Bihar, W. Bengal and J&K.

*RSS asks all front organisations to work for BJP victory.

*VHP commits itself to support only BJP candidates.

*Shahabuddin cautions Muslim voters against softening towards BJP (22 July).

Congress: *President Sonia Gandhi inaugurates Jamhoori Convention of Jamiat-ul-Ulema and promises just and equitable treatment to Muslims (30 July).

*Observes 57th anniversary of Quit India. Sonia Gandhi recalls Congress slogan 'Karo ya Maro' (9 Aug).

*Releases Manifesto. Pledges to provide stable, able and experienced government; disappoints Muslim (13 Aug).

Janata Dal: *Janata Dal splits and Samata Party and Lok Shakti join with Paswan faction to form JD(U). JD(U) demands admission to NDA formed by BJP; BJP leadership, particularly in Karnataka and Bihar shows reluctance.

*Election Commission freezes 'Chakra' symbol.

Left Front: *RSP and FB criticise CPM and CPI's tilt toward Congress.

*CPM and CPI soften stand towards Pawar's NCP despite its philosophy of equidistance with BJP and Congress (21 July).

SP: *Decides to contest on its own in UP; allies with NCP in Maharashtra. Attacks Congress as communal (11 Aug).

RJD: *Laloo Pd. Yadav negotiates adjustment with Congress, CPI and CPM.

BSP: *Refuses offer of adjustment with Congress in UP; announces candidates for all 85 seats (22 July).

*Kanshi Ram wants unstable government and 'an election a year' (25 July). Alleging BJP's overtures to SP and NCP (both committed to equidistance) (13 Aug).

RPI: *A force in Maharashtra, breaks up to align with Congress and NCP respectively.

RLD: *Ties up with Congress in UP (30 July).

Muslim Politics: *JUH supports Congress (30 July).

*IUMI renews ties with Congress in Kerala (30 July).

Election Commission: *Applies Code of Conduct strictly to stop government exploitation of Kargil and use of official media.

*Discovering of duplicate ballot boxes in Bihar creates

major electoral scandal in Bihar (10 Aug).

*State Election in AP, Maharashtra and Karnataka to be held with Lok Sabha Poll.

Foreign Espionage: *Central and State Governments relate widespread ISI activity with rise of 'Muslim fundamentalism' based in Masjids and Madarsas.

*Sangh Parivar exploits ISI scare to create distrust and suspicion against Muslims and Muslim institutions.

Human Rights: *NHRC orders damages for illegal detention (29 July). Alleges Centre obstructing probe in Brijbehara Massacre in 1993 (13 Aug).

Corruption – Animal Fodder Case: *Patna H.C. raps CBI and ED for slow probe (27 July).

Indo-Pakistan Relation: *Indian Air Force shoots down Pak naval reconnaissance plane on Kutch border; major debris fall in Pakistan. Pakistan calls it 'barbaric aggression'. UN, USA, China counsel restraint (10 Aug).

KASHMIR QUESTION

Kargil War: *Pakistan COAS admits violation of LOC by Pakistan forces (16 July). Pull out deadline extended to 16 July. Last three pockets vacated (26 July).

*India offers to free Kargil POWs (13 Aug).

Insurgency: *Following Pakistan's withdrawal on LOC, internal insurgency hots up. Militants strike in Jammu and massacre 15 of a family, including 6 children and 4 in Poonch (19 July). Strike again and kill and kidnap (21 July).

*Between 6 and 14 Aug., militants target camps of security forces on 12 occasions mostly in Kupwara district; 29 security personnel reported killed.

*Human Rights Watch accuses both security forces and militants of violation of human rights (16 July).

Political: *State Government ascribes discontent in J&K to erosion of autonomy (26 July).

*Mufti Md. Sayeed resigns from Congress and floats J&K Peoples Democratic Party (28 July). Decides to contest election on platform of unconditional negotiation with militants.

*Left support Saifuddin Soz in Baramulla.

*NC finds pro-BJP tag hard to erase; revives autonomy question.

*Hurriyat condemns militant ban on Amarnath Yatra.

*Pandits demand Union Territory within Valley.

Pakistan: *PM Sharif promises to continue 'moral, diplomatic and political support' to Kashmiri separatists.

*Pakistan rejects Indian pre-conditions for bilateral talks (21 July). Pakistan urges third party mediation (22 July).

*Sharif calls for unconditional talks (24 July). Pakistan refuses talks on 'any other issue except Kashmir' and suspends all channels of bilateral contacts (31 July).

*Pakistan subjects talks to 'grant of right of self-determination' (9 Aug).

*Hizbul Mujahideed/United Jihad Council breathes defiance of any control by Pakistan Govt. (5 Aug). Council rejects solution based on division of Kashmir (4

CHRONOLOGY

Aug).

***Benazir Bhutto calls intrusion 'the biggest blunder' (22 July).**

***JKLF questions possibility of merger with Pakistan after 'misadventure of Kargil' (2 Aug).**

Foreign Reaction – USA: *State Deptt. asks Pakistan to check militants (22 July). *US Secretary of State asks Pakistan to withdraw troops from remaining areas in Kargil and revive Lahore process (25 July).

***USA reported to have evolved formula based on more autonomy on both sides and conversion of LOC into a soft border for Kashmir (2 Aug).**

UK: *Foreign Secretary Cook revives plebiscite idea; while calling for end to support to militancy for outside (22 July).

Iran: *Calls for peaceful settlement 'in accordance with international law' (29 July).

OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN

Babari Masjid: *AIMPL Board expresses concern at slow pace of title suit proceeding in Allahabad H.C., Liberhan inquiry and CBI case (18 July).

***Allahabad H.C. instructs CBI Court not to proceed with case till it passes order in pending criminal review petition (22 July). CBI case adjourned till 26 Aug (23 July). H.C. fixes 17 August for hearing (10 Aug).**

Hindi Chauvinism: *Bajrang Dal/BJP leader Vinay Katiyar attacks the Quran as source-spring of violence

***VHP observes Akhand Bharat Diwas on 14 August.**

***VHP asks PM to cancel Pope Paul's visit (27 Aug).**

Personal Law: *AIMPLB decides to appeal against Bombay H.C. judgement on maintenance of divorcees and to take up question of amending to the Muslim Divorcees Act again after election (18 July).

***JUH files appeal in the Zaitoon Bibi Case (3 Aug).**

Haj: *Haj Committee holds All India Haj Conference for Haj 2000. PM Vajpayee inaugurates (16 July).

Conversion: *NCM asks Orissa, MP and Arunachal Pradesh Governments to amend their laws limiting conversion only to change of religion to Islam/Christianity (22 July).

Voting Rights: *CEC Gill indicates continued disenfranchisement of about 4 lakh voters of doubtful/disputed citizenship because case is still pending before S.C. (19 July). Writ likely to be heard in late September.

Communal Violence: *Communal violence rages in Ahmedabad from 20 July to 2 Aug. 8 killed; hundreds displaced. *VHP-Bajrang Dal activists caught red-handed while torching a Muslim hotel torching. Congress and BJP blame each other. CPI calls for judicial probe.

Education: Rajasthan government wipes saffron blots from textbooks (8 Aug).

Reservation: *Congress President Sonia Gandhi denies reservation for Muslims in public employment (30 July).

***JD(S) leader Deve Gowda promises reservation for minorities in admission (9 Aug).**

***Kerala Muslim Jamaats Council demands reservation in legislature (3 Aug).**

Urdu: *A.I. Urdu Editor's Conference holds annual session in Delhi. In inaugural address President Narayanan

calls for due support to Urdu as an Indian Language (29 July).

***Ghalib Institute holds Seminar on Daagh Dehlvi (31 July).**

ISI Scare: *JUH demands dismissal of Assam CM Mahanta for linking Assam Muslim youth and Madarsas. (10 Aug). MUH and UPPA also criticize CM. CM clarifies that Muslim community cannot be held responsible for anti-national activities of some Muslim youth working for ISI (10 Aug).

Muslim Organisations: *JUH breaks ranks with other Muslim organisations, signatories of Muslim Agenda, and extends unconditional support to INC. Mahmood Madni, G.S., son of Asad Madni, resigns from SP and joins Congress (30 July).

***AIMMM Working Committee adopts the Muslim Agenda but appoints its own Committee for further action (27 July).**

Wakfs: *Delhi H.C. admits petition urging Government to return 182 Wakf properties in Delhi (8 Aug).

***Supreme Court hears A.I. Imams Organisation petition and authorises AIO to serve notice on Wakf Boards (23 July).**

Monuments: *Delhi H.C. orders Government to file reply on continuance of unauthorised structures in Red Fort (2 Aug).

Other Minorities: *Wadhwa Commission holds Dara Singh responsible for killing of Staine family; exonerates VHP and Bajrang Dal. Report widely criticised for ignoring role of Hindutva organisations in creating communal tension and motivating Dara Singh and local people.

***Christian leaders call for public celebration of 2000th birth anniversary of Christ (4 Aug).**

***Kerala Bishops demand more seats for Catholics in Parliament (21 July).**

Muslim World: *Bangladesh bans another book by Taslima Nasreen (12 Aug). mass grave relating to 1971 massacres found in Dhaka (14 Aug).

***State of California, USA asked by Court to allow Friday prayer by prisoners (12 Aug).**

***Pakistani women protect against 'honour killing' of women (13 Aug).**

***Russia launches offensive against Islamic revolt in Daghestan (10 Aug).**

***Kurdish leader Ocalan, under death sentence, appeals to KDP militants to pull out of Turkey (5 Aug).**

***Security Council condemns Taliban for resuming offensive in civil war and threatens sanctions (6 Aug).**

***Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan declares war on P.M. Nawaz Sharif (25 July).**

***UK appoints Parliamentary Committee to look into 'forced marriage' among people of South Asian origin (4 Aug).**

Obituary: *Eminent physician, philanthropist and educationist, Hakim Abdul Hameed, 91, passes away in Delhi (23 July).

***Eminent columnist Iqbal Masud, 76 passes away in Mumbai (4 Aug).**