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The Unfinished Agenda of Social Justice

The National Democratic Alliance with Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee as its sole Leader has emerged victorious in the 13th General Election to the Lok Sabha and has formed the new Government. Prime facie the new government commands a majority of nearly 60 and, therefore, promises stability and appears likely to complete its term.

While the BJP itself has remained more or less static at 182 (an increase of one only), it struck gold in Maharashtra, with the split of the Congress, and in Bihar, with the rout of Laloo's RJD. But the NDA today has a wider geographical and social representation through the pre-election alliance among the BJP and the regional parties and the pragmatic co-option of their emergent social bases.

Vajpayee has emerged as the national leader, his charisma cutting across geographical, social and even political divides. Even the Sangh Parivar has, for the present, accepted him as its best bet, if it is to pursue its long-term mission under a benign protective umbrella. But a truce does not mean permanent peace. Towards the end of 1998 Vajpayee had asserted himself in desperation and has subsequently steered his ship successfully and safely through the shoals of political bargaining and converted an opportunity - the defeat of his government in April, 1999 by one vote - into a personal triumph in October, 1999.

The BJP has come to power on the strength of only 25% of the national electorate, even after jettisoning the contentious baggage and taking on board the enemies of yesterday. Indeed, in a sense the present government is essentially a saffron-tinted replica of the Janata experiment of 1977, with the helms - man wearing a different ideological cap - Hindu Nationalism rather than Indian Nationalism!

The electoral strategy - the alliance with regional parties raising hopes of a stable majority - the coalition Dharma, the projection of a liberal as the leader - the Vajpayee Factor and the exploitation of patriotic sentiments in the wake of Pakistan's misadventure and capitulation in Kargil, the Kargil Effect, has paid off. No less effective was the emotional 'videshi' card played against Sonia Gandhi which did touch patriotic chords in many Indian hearts even though it was devoid of any constitutional or legal basis. On the other hand, the dependence of the Congress solely on the charisma of the Dynasty, its presumptuous rejection of the possibility of a coalition, its failure to exploit the hollow and largely negative record of the Vajpayee Government's 13 month in office sealed its fate.

But the coalition bristles with cleavages. The TDP (with 29 seats) as well as INLD (with 10 seats) have opted out of the Government; the rifts within the JD(U) are

already showing; the newly formed Congress Government in Karnataka is unlikely to concede the demand for more Cauvery water from Tamilnadu which may force a rethink in the DMK; the Shiv Sena is feeling disenchanted after losing Maharashtra to a Congress-led coalition which may take a self-destructive turn. Mutual recrimination within the BJP in UP following the drubbing may take its toll. Rising discontent in the minorities on account of their virtual non-representation in the jumbo-sized national government may simmer.

The NDA Government, with 2/5 of its support coming from regional parties - representing A.P., W. Bengal, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Haryana and Punjab - may find it difficult to maintain a balance between the Sangh Parivar's pressures of centralisation and the regional aspiration for decentralization.

The compulsions of Brahminical ideology and of governance by consensus will no doubt continue to pull Vajpayee and the Sangh Parivar - in opposite directions. A political or social crisis may yet pull them apart or alternatively blow up the alliance.

Dedicated to its ideology of Hindutva, the Sangh Parivar will not give up its ultimate objective of Hindusing the Indian Society and polity but it may for the present to adopt a stance of realistic patience.

It remains to be seen whether with all its secular pretensions, the Vajpayee Government shuts its eyes to the public postures and even mischievous agitation by the members of the Sangh Parivar and whether parties like JD(U), DMK and BJP, TC long nurtured in secular politics will be agreeable beyond a point to the blatant violation of the secular consensus.

All this leaves much scope for the prophets of doom.

The Congress lost the race for various reasons - it shied away from the prospect of coalition and therefore from forming electoral alliances. I falsely assumed that in quest of stability, the people would vote for a party rather than for an alliance. It played hide and seek in projecting Sonia Gandhi as the future Prime Minister, thus wearing a mask of deception. It did not know how to face the Kargil situation. It failed to generate enthusiastic support among the religious minorities or among the SC's and the ST's. While the BJP lotus appeared to bloom, the Congress appeared to close its petals and go back to its traditional dependence on high caste support. And the high castes found a better home in the BJP!

The Congress still remains the second largest party - despite its poorest electoral performance since independence - and after serious introspection and a possible change of guard, it may play an effective role in opposition and widen its base to include the deprived sections. The Congress, the Left and the other secular parties like the SP and BSP may develop a strategy of

floor coordination to expose the ideological double-facedness of the Vajpayee Government and its misuse of power to promote the long-term objective of the Sangh Parivar, as well as to broaden the alternative leadership beyond the charmed circle of the Dynasty.

The General Election has proved that though the BJP and the Congress rank far above other political formations, neither is a national party in the real sense of the term, with an effective presence in all parts of the country and a following among all sections of the people. The two have much in common both in terms of policies and social constituency.

Bereft of a debate on ideology or principles the general election became a popularity contest between Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi. There is no doubt that the former has won. But Mr. Vajpayee has been wisely moderate and conciliatory in his post-election pronouncements, calling for national consensus to move the country forward. But in his train are narrow minds filled with vindictiveness and even authoritarian predilections. The unfinished agenda of Social Justice – which subsumes Secularism – awaits the Government.

The vote cast in favour of the NDA comes to approximately 40% and with the poll turnout of about 60%, this amounts to 24% of the total electorate. This shows that the Vajpayee Government, though secure within the House, commands the support of just about one-fourth of the people of the country, despite money and media support. The results can hardly be described as a surge of the saffron wave. But this does not imply that the wave has been dissipated. It only implies that it has been shown down.

The Third Force stands shattered with the Left alone maintaining its ideological integrity. The other secular elements – the SP, the BSP, the RJD are no longer on speaking terms. The historic role of the Left now is to act as the core and reassemble the pieces. But that will require an understanding of the political dynamics of religion and caste and correlating it with that of class. The deprived groups can be knit together only if their identities are recognised and respected and they are assured places of dignity and equality.

What is really important is the fact that the dividing line between Indian Secularism and Hindu Communalism stands effaced in practice. By common consent, in their bid for the Hindu vote, both the BJP and the Congress sidelined the religious minorities. If the BJP fielded only 5 Muslim candidates in the whole country (including 2, for the record, in the Valley), the Congress can hardly pat itself on its record – whether in terms of articulating their aspirations and grievances in its manifesto or fielding good Muslim candidates in due numbers from right places. Even in states in which there was a straight contest between the Congress and the BJP-led alliance and the Muslims had no option but to vote for the former, and they

did, the Congress hardly fielded Muslim candidates. Only in UP the Muslims had a choice between the SP, the BSP and the Congress; since the three could not reach any electoral understanding, the Muslims engaged in tactical voting and voted largely for the strongest and the most winnable candidate of the three in every Constituency and brought the BJP down from 57 to 29! This was the most severe jolt received by the BJP apart from the loss of Karnataka and Maharashtra in the simultaneously held Assembly elections. The UP experience shows the way for the future.

The Muslim strength in the Lok Sabha has risen from 29 to 31 and is likely to rise to 32, despite the loss of 3 in Bihar. There are several important states with virtually no Muslim representation – MP, Maharashtra, AP, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana. Thus, on a state-wise basis, 23% of the Muslim population of the country has no representation in the Lok Sabha, while the rest has thrown up 31 against 54 demographically due. The State level of deprivation among 13 major States of Muslim concentration varies from 100 to 0%.

The Vajpayee cabinet is the first since Independence, not to have any Muslim or Sikh Cabinet Minister. One wonders why even the old war-horse Sikander Bakht has been locked up in the stable. In the Council of Ministers, as a whole, out of 71, there are only 2 Ministers of State – Omar Abdullah from the J&K NC which, though not a charter member of the NDA, jumped into the coalition jumbo, and Shahnawaz Husain whose victory from the only Muslim majority Constituency in Bihar – Kishanganj – is a slap on the face of Laloo Yadav, the self-proclaimed Messiah of the Muslims. In the Lok Sabha, apart from the old 'Muslim' trio – Banatwalla, Owaisi and Ahamed, there is only C.K. Jaffer Sharif, who having been denied the Chief Ministership of Karnataka will sit in the opposition and hopefully keep a watch on the interests of the community.

The 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabhas did precious little to address the legitimate aspirations of the Muslims or articulate their problems and grievances. The 1999 is not expected to do any better. The discontent in the Muslims against the self-proclaimed secular parties will continue to grow. Who knows this may crystallise into the formation of a widely desired 'Muslim' or 'Muslim-driven' secular political party, to talk on equal terms and work in close cooperation with other secular parties, not only to stop or reverse the Hindutva Rath but to resolve long ignored inequities. But who knows, desperation and opportunism may lead at least a section of the Muslims to seek accommodation with the Hindutva forces, forsaking the quest of Equality, Justice and Dignity, accepting subservience and asking for charity!

That would indeed be a sad day for the greatest democratic experiment of our times – equitable

(Contd. on Page 489)

1999: Break-up of Muslim MPs

Party	No. of Muslim MP's	Party-wise		State Represented	State-wise			Parties Represented
		Total No. of MP's	% of Muslims in Party		Total MPs	Muslim MP's	% of Muslims in State	
1. INC	9	112	8.04	Assam, Karnataka, UP, W. Bengal, Lakshadweep, Pondicherry	1. A.P.	42	1	MIM
2. CPM	5	32	15.63	Kerala, W. Bengal	2. Assam	14	1	INC
3. NC	4	4	100	J&K	3. Bihar	54	3	RJD, BJP
4. BSP	3	14	21.43	UP	4. J&K	6	4	NC
5. RJD	2	7	28.57	Bihar	5. Karnataka	28	3	INC
6. MUL	2	2	100	Kerala	6. Kerala	20	3	MUL, CPM
7. SP	2	26	7.69	UP	7. UP	85	8	INC, BSP, SP, RLD
8. RLD	1	2	50	UP	8. W. Bengal	42	6	CPM, INC, TC
9. TC	1	8	12.5	W. Bengal	9. Lakshadweep	1	1	INC
10. MIM	1	1	100	AP	10. Pondicherry	1	1	INC
11. BJP	1	182	0.55	Bihar	11. Others	244	0	
12. Others	0	259	0		Total	537	31	5.77
Total	31	537	5.77					

Lok Sabha 1999: Level of Deprivation of Muslim Indians

State	Muslim Population			No. of Seats				Level of deprivation in 1999
	as % of NMP	as % of SP	Total	Due Share of Muslim	Actual in 1999	Actual in 1998	Diff-erence	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(10)
A.P.	5.61	8.91	42	4	1	1	[7-6]	
Assam	6.04	28.43	14	4	1*	2	0	25
Bihar	12.12	14.80	54	8	3	6	-1*	25
Delhi	0.84	9.44	7	1	0	0	-3	37.5
Gujarat	3.42	8.73	26	2	0	0	0	0
J&K	3.75	64.18	6	4	4	4	0	0
Karnataka	4.95	11.63	28	3	3	1	+2	100
Kerala	6.43	23.33	20	4	3	2	+1	75
M.P.	3.11	4.96	40	2	0	0	0	0
Maharashtra	7.23	9.66	48	5	0	0	0	0
Rajasthan	3.34	8.01	25	2	0	0	0	0
Tamilnadu	2.89	5.47	40	2	0	0	0	0
U.P.	22.84	17.33	85	16	8	6	+2	50
W. Bengal	15.23	23.61	42	11	6	6	0	54.5
Lakshadweep		94.31	1	1	1	1	0	100
Pondicherry		6.54		0	1	0	+1	
INDIA	12.60		543	70	31*	29	+2*	44.3

* Results of Dhubri (Assam), a Muslim-majority Constituency, is awaited.

Analysis:

- 1) Level of deprivation has gone down marginally with net addition of 2-3 seats. Net loss of 3 seats in Bihar has aggravated the situation.
- 2) level of deprivation varies from 0 (J&K, Karnataka and Lakshadweep) to 100 (Delhi, Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu), not to mention other States and UT's with less than 5% Muslim population. For the 8 States which have retained Muslim MP's, overall deprivation rate is 43%.
- 3) 10 Muslim MP's are from Muslim-majority Constituencies, 18 are from 59 Muslim concentration (20-50%) seats and only 3 from other 543 seats.

- Editor

Joint Statement of Secular Academicians and Intellectuals

The electoral campaign ... has ... skirted substantive political issues and future course of development of the polity and society. The BJP, having ensconced itself as the dominant partner of a so-called National Democratic Alliance, has been projecting itself as the future hope for India. As concerned citizens, we deem it necessary to call this claim into question and bring to public notice the damage already done to the polity and society during the preceding thirteen months of misgovernance.

The communal character of the BJP had never been in doubt... For a period people overlooked the dangers this posed to the nation over both the short and long run... Despite the BJP taking on a moderate mask, the Government, far from seeking to check this virus, fanned communal fire all around. Atrocities against Christians, aided and abetted by the BJP, the leading party of the coalition, is only the tip of the iceberg. Above all, it has during this period attempted to create a mindset that has encouraged and hardened and hardened communal antagonisms, social hatred and a cult of intolerance towards social and cultural diversities... Communalism is a camouflage for substantial social inequalities and economic disparities that continue to characterize this country...

If the Vajpayee government has impoverished the nation on the one hand, it has at the same time committed the country ... to a mindless involvement in a nuclear arms race. It is our understanding that this has been done to appease the acute national security consciousness of the growing sections of the emerging middle class which constituted the ruling coalition's support-base.

Every democracy requires legitimate political institutions to ensure stability and a degree of fairness and accountability. The BJP-led coalition has ... systematically undermined the dignity and legitimacy of the office of the Rashtrapati, Judiciary and Election Commission... Never was the PMO used in such an unabashed manner to settle intra-party squabbles... What is particularly pathetic is that institutions and constitutional functionaries have been de-legitimised in a language which Gandhi or other freedom fighters would have shuddered to use against even the Viceroy... The standard language of discourse under the present dispensation has acquired an absolutist orientation... A section of liberal-minded Indians were taken in by the amoral multiple-speak (double-speak is a misnomer) of the Sangh Parivar... A leader who is unable to distinguish himself from anti-democratic politics ... has no ground for presenting himself as a suitable choice for the prime ministership of this country.

Anand Patwardhan
Krishna Kumar
M.H. Qureshi
Suhas Borkar
Tanika Sarkar
Rajni Kothari
Vijay Pratap
Javed Alam

K.M. Shrimali
Arun Ghosh
Smitu Kothari
D.L. Sheth
Rajeev Dhawan
Vaskar Nandy
Imtiaz Ahmad
Zoya Hasan

K.N. Panikkar
Asghar Wajahat
Bhisham Sahni
Devdutt
Dalip Swami
Habib Tanvir
Irfan Habib
And 44 others

Praful Bidwai On RSS-BJP Linkage

... The NDA should know, if it has any sense, that the BJP is not an ordinary, "normal" party, with solely a parliamentary agenda. It is both a party and part of a social movement that challenges and seeks to redefine the very nature of Indian nationhood by giving primacy to just one of India's many, many communities. Its long-term goal is to transform this society along Hindutva lines. This totally violates the liberal-democratic, secular, federalist spirit of the Constitution and the foundational premises of our freedom struggle. The BJP resides in that twilight zone that lies between parliamentary democracy with its openness and pluralism, on the one hand, and parochial, paranoid, exclusivism, on the other. It has shown no signs of changing its character. This is unsurprising. Parties of its ilk do not change radically. They are not free to do so, being controlled from the outside.

The RSS-BJP link is not a marginal one, nor some kind of historic hangover. It is an organic, living connection. It is so intimate that the RSS could demand last year that all BJP State units be led by longstanding pracharaks. This was considered so "natural" that there was no fuss. It just won't do to pretend that the BJP under Vajpayee has evolved into a different party. For one, Vajpayee does not control the organisation; he ceded that function 15 years ago to others. And for another, he is not very different from Sangh hard-liners on the core issues that matter. He is just a more shrewd, devious and manipulative - not "liberal" or pluralist - face of the Hindutva phenomenon, one that is more acceptable to our communalised upper class elite.

(Source: The Frontline, 10 September, 1999)

Shahabuddin On Two-Nation Theory

Apropos Col. R. Nanda's letter "Clarification" (13 August, 1999) Muslims do not constitute a national or even a State vote bank for any political party but tend to vote tactically for a particular candidate in a given constituency. This is the natural defensive behaviour of a minority community which, day in and day out, is asked to prove its loyalty and 'join the mainstream'. It appears to me that to Col. Nanda, only one political party constitutes the national mainstream and all others, for which Muslims vote in various constituencies, do not!

Jinnah's two-nation theory is dead. since there cannot be any territorial co-terminality between religion and state, in our multi-religious world. But the Hindutva forces are committed to the creation of a Hindu state in India and the BJP serves them as the political instrument. Logically, how can any citizen, who sees the falsity of the two-nation theory, support the BJP?

Even a cursory analysis will show that while 99% of Muslims vote for secular parties, the BJP thrives on a Hindu vote bank.

(Reply to Col. R. Nanda's Letter, The Statesman, 13 August, 1999)

K. N. Panikkar on BJP's Strategy

A fractured mandate again, even if the National Democratic Alliance led by the BJP has mustered enough support to form a government. No single party has got a majority, either in terms of votes or seats. While the BJP has just about maintained its earlier strength, the Congress has further declined. The CPI-M has barely held on to its seat share of the last election. Only the regional parties have managed to improve their position, whatever ... the reasons. The Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, DMK in Tamil Nadu, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh and Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, which jointly account for more than hundred seats, are the prominent among them.

The opinion voiced by some during the election analysis that this election reflects a polarisation of political forces and India is moving towards a bipolar system is far from the truth. In fact, the two main parties, the BJP and the Congress, together account only for about 300 seats. The rest, almost 250 seats, are in the kitty of smaller and regional parties.

The BJP's success in this election is mainly due to its coalition strategy... Given its communal ideological commitment and its active participation in the demolition of the Babari Masjid, the BJP was not able to gather enough support to remain in power in 1996. As L.K. Advani recently confessed, the BJP then realised that it cannot come to power without incorporating the regional parties into its support base. It therefore cobbled up an alliance of eighteen parties in 1998 and twenty-four in 1999 — although they had nothing in common ideologically and programmatically — by putting on the backburner its controversial Hindutva agenda.

This strategy has yielded rich dividends in this election, as the NDA has managed to gain a comfortable majority, thanks to the performance of the allies. More than one-third of the seats of the NDA is their contribution... Rather than the charisma of Atal Behari Vajpayee it is the Vaikos, Ramadosses, Chautalas and Abdullahs who made the success of the BJP possible. The critics of the BJP, particularly of the Left and secular, might decry this opportunistic strategy, but for the BJP the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The BJP leadership has shown enough resilience to compromise the present to ensure the future.

In contrast, the Congress refused to come to terms with the present; instead it chose to cling to the past. It suffered from an exaggerated sense of self-importance and a misplaced trust in its nationalist legacy. It failed to realise that except in a few states the party machinery has corroded, no leadership worth the name existed and that its social base has considerably shrunk. These can hardly be recreated overnight... The sympathetic crowds, which thronged the meetings of Sonia Gandhi, were not

translated into votes primarily because the party did not have the machinery to do so. Some of its good candidates, like Manmohan Singh in Delhi, lost to relatively insignificant nominees of the BJP.

Unlike the BJP, the Congress wrongly read the political present. It actually lost the election when it failed to provide an alternative after the fall of the BJP government. This failure was mainly due to a miscalculation of its potential. The only way the Congress could have made a comeback was through a coalition government for which several political formations had pledged support. Without seriously pursuing it and declining support to a Left government the Congress insisted on a single party government, failing which it opted for an election. The unexpected and impressive success in the assembly elections in Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh was perhaps the main factor, which influenced this rather intransigent and politically unwise decision.

The Congress thus lost an opportunity to bring the secular forces together. As a consequence, the Congress faced the election without any allies, except the highly tainted parties like AIADMK and RJD which instead of advancing its electoral prospects proved to be counter productive.... What ... sealed the fate of the Congress was the lack of allies in a fractured polity in which small parties wielded decisive power in several areas. Many of them are individual based parties without any clear-cut ideological moorings and therefore could be part of any political formation. While the BJP went out of its way to mop them up, the Congress did not try to bring even the like-minded parties to its fold.

The success of the BJP to a large measure is rooted in the failure of the third front to posit a viable alternative to both the Congress and the BJP at the national level. Much before the elections the third front had already disintegrated... The BJP's grand design of coalition took shape from the ashes of the united front. But for that it would not have progressed much further than the 1996 position. **Ironically the third front committed to defeat Hindu communalism has actually facilitated its success...**

The BJP's rise to power is clearly not on its own social and political support. Neither its organisational strength nor the popularity of Atal Behari Vajpayee would have ensured its success. What enabled the success of the BJP is mainly the lack of political vision of the socialist. When the Hindutva agenda unfolds itself in the coming years they are likely to rue their unprincipled collaboration. **For ... the hidden agenda of the BJP is not likely to remain very much hidden.**

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 14 October, 1999)

Venkitesh Ramakrishnan on Left Strategy Against Communalism

... The CPI(M) and the CPI have underlined that all efforts must now be concentrated on preventing the BJP from returning to power through the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)... They consider this their paramount responsibility because the Hindu Right represented by the BJP has marked tremendous growth in recent years. The CPI(M) argues that the central task having been identified, it will be detrimental to take a position of equidistance from the BJP and the Congress(I) as advocated by the Samajwadi Party (SP) of Mulayam Singh Yadav and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Sharad Pawar. This line of the CPI(M) is based on a candid admission that the contours of the Third Front are yet unclear...

In view of this line, the CPI(M) has refrained from aligning itself with the SP or the NCP although both parties face the BJP-led alliance as their principal opponent in the areas of their strength, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra respectively. The CPI(M) was a small but important ally of the SP in Uttar Pradesh until the 1998 elections, and both were members of the erstwhile United Front (UF).

The CPI ... has a different perception of the SP and the NCP. The CPI leadership believes that although the SP and the NCP have "failed to understand the struggle against communal forces in the right perspective, these parties should not be kept away from a larger secular platform."

Interestingly, the smaller parties of the Left - the RSP and the Forward Bloc - are closer to the SP-NCP position...

The differences with regard to electoral strategies have reflected in the alliances the Left parties have formed with other secular parties. Highlighting the centrality of the fight against the BJP, the CPI and the CPI(M) evolved specific tactics for States such as Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Tamil Nadu and worked out seat adjustments with the Congress(I) and the AIADMK among others. Although both the CPI and the CPI(M) had negotiations with the RJD led by Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar, only the CPI(M) could clinch an accord with it.

The Left had consistently opposed all these principal non-BJP parties not only on ideological and political grounds but also on account of doubts about the political and moral integrity of their leaders. Despite this, the CPI and the CPI(M), after considerable inner-party debate, decided to align themselves with these forces on the ground that the paramount political task at hand was to halt the advancement of right-wing communal forces...

The lack of agreement on electoral strategies prevented the Left parties from coming out with a joint manifesto. Central to this inability is the candid admission of the CPI and the CPI(M) that a Third Front, which would chart a path independent from that of the Congress(I) and

the BJP, is yet to take shape...

... During the 13 months of BJP rule the U.F. collapsed with two of its principal constituents, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) turning allies of the BJP. According to CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, accepting the collapse of the U.F. realistically and seeking modified ways and means to defeat the communal threat is not tantamount to succumbing to the Congress(I)...

... The RSP and the Forward Bloc, however, tend to believe that the U.F. or a similar Third Front can be built by the Left by joining hands with parties such as the NCP and the SP, which pursue an anti-BJP, anti-Congress(I) line...

However, the manifestoes and election policy documents of the Left parties agree on most other issues. These documents assert that the Left platform represents the aspirations of all sections of the working people, of all patriotic citizens who are committed to a socially and economically just order...

The parties allege that the Government instilled fear and insecurity among the minorities by allowing the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal, both members of the Sangh Parivar, to attack Christians and Muslims...

(Source: The Frontline, 24 September, 1999)

(Contd. from Page 483)

representation in the power structure and participation in governance to all minorities in a multi-segmented and plural polity.

Neither the winner and the loser have come to terms with the social reality - the upsurge of the deprived. In 1999, the political game remained effectively limited to placating the High Castes and co-opting the Higher Shudras which together constitute only 30% of the Indian people, with some regional variations. The majority of the Indian people - the Lower Shudras, the Achhuts, the Adivasis and the non-Hindu religious minorities continued to be treated as objects of politics and served as pastures for the others. India is a multi-segmented society in transition, with rising expectations and assertion of various identifiable and increasingly self-conscious groups. The economy is no doubt growing but in the ultimate analysis it is not economic progress but Social Justice which will provide political stability and decides the future of the Indian democracy.

New Delhi,
1st November, 1999


(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

Jairam Ramesh on Caste in Indian Politics

Caste is the DNA of Indian civilisation... During election time, the air is thick with Reddys, Kammas and Kapus, with Lingayats, Vokkaligas and Kurubas, with Nadars, Thevars and Vanniyars, with Nairs and Ezhavas, with Marathas, Malis and Dhangars, with Patidars and Kolis, with Rajputs and Jats, with Brahmins, Thakurs, Yadavs, Lodhas and Chamars. Within Dalit castes, we talk about Malas and Madigas, about Chamars, Valmikis and Pasis. Within OBCs, we talk about Yadavs, Kurmis, Koeris and Gujjars. Muslim society too is not caste-free and has to be seen ... in the OBC/non-OBC perspective to gain any meaningful insights. Sikh politics is a matter of Jats and Mazhabis... West Bengal is an exception of sorts but this has less to do with the CPI(M) and more to do with the nature of bhadralok society and the fact that the bulk of the lower castes converted to Islam, thereby converting caste fissures into a Hindu-Muslim divide.

That caste resurfaces with competitive politics was first pointed out way back in 1957 by ... M.N. Srinivas. But he did not foresee its metamorphosis. New insights had to await the seminal contribution in 1970 of ... Rajni Kothari, who wrote that casteism in politics was just the politicisation of caste. Since then, because of rapid urbanisation, the spread of literacy, rising aspirations, the impact of reservations, the growth of mass communications and the diffusion of economic growth, caste has been further transformed.

Instead of being the instrument of hierarchy and stratification, caste is becoming a means of ameliorating social conditions. Instead of being a tool of oppression, it has become the main vehicle for identity assertion, social mobilisation and political co-optation. Caste as a vertical divisive concept has been supplanted by its use as a device for horizontal alignments in a multi-ethnic society – leading to a colourful vocabulary like AJGAR (Ahir, Jat, Gujjar and Rajput), KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim), MAJGAR (Muslim+AJGAR), DYM (Dalit, Muslim, Yadav), my (Muslim, Yadav) and MAMULI (Marwaris, Muslims, Lingayats). Caste as a means of exclusion is becoming a means of inclusion. In short, paradoxical as it may sound, caste is no longer a symbol of institutionalised inequality – it is, instead, a catalyst for institutionalising egalitarianism...

That caste fundamentalism and caste domination does not yield political dividends on a sustained basis has become amply clear. The lesson is simple – you cannot be seen to be ignoring an influential caste but you cannot be perceived to be dominated by it... Myron Weiner argued that by strengthening the tendency towards regionalism and federalism, caste-based politics is reinforcing the historic tendency towards decentralised authority in India.

That itself, is the key for keeping this land of multitudinous diversity together.

There has been significant academic revival in caste in its new avatar... Dhirubhai Sheth has published in Economic and Political Weekly a perceptive analysis of what he calls the secularisation of caste which is also leading to the rapid entry of new castes into the middle class.

... The Anthropological Survey of India has identified 4,635 communities that make up the sum of Indian society. These jatis continue to thrive as endogamous groups... Also, caste oppression survives not just in Bihar but also in states which have witnessed a social revolution, like Tamil Nadu. But caste wars no longer reflect just the inequities of the old social order. They symbolise the decay of that order, the growing Dalit assertiveness and the competition between upwardly mobile lower and middle castes and Dalits... As a result of the crusade of caste-based parties, sensitivity to caste issues is slowly being internalised in the Congress and the BJP. But in north India particularly these parties are still uneasy with the politics of parity, used as they are to charity politics.

(Source: The Indian Today, 27 September, 1999)

V.P. Singh's Views

... The Third Front may be fragmented today but it's too early to write it off because the ground-level conditions for it have not vanished. The idea is alive. National parties have to talk in terms of coalitions and fronts... The last few governments we have had are coalitions or fronts of some sort. But there's an inherent contradiction in these fronts because the regional parties cannot give up their state base while the national partner wants to carve and extend its base in that state. At some stage, the tensions will give way and at that juncture the Third Front formation dynamics can start.

This may be valid some three-four years later. Or even a year from now... Many regional parties and social justice forces have got absorbed into the BJP or Congress. Survival is a dominant factor and it determines the behaviour of individuals and parties. You apply this to any Third Front constituent and it explains that behaviour. TDP is saying what option did we have but to be with BJP, Karunanidhi is saying it; Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, Mulayam Singh are functioning on the same logic. I believe there's a large section of people who want an alternative to Congress and BJP. So long as it's there, the potential for a Third Front is there too. I will not write off the Third Front now...

Neerja Chowdhury On Emerging Trends

Elections '99 underscore the paradigm shift that has visibly taken place in political representation.

Communities have become more conscious, yet more segmented and, at the same time, more aware that they have to reach out to other groups to be successful.

The Dalit assertion is particularly pronounced this time. In Tamil Nadu, the TMC has forged a new Dalit-Muslim combine, bringing together militant Dalit organisations like the Puthiya Tamizhagam and Dalit Panthers, which had boycotted polls for 12 years, with other fringe groups. The Madiga-Mala conflict has sharpened in Andhra Pradesh. Mayawati has further consolidated her grip over the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh. Ram Vilas Paswan could easily shift to the BJP because of the support he enjoys from the Pasis in Bihar.

Even the upper castes have voted tactically in many places this time. There were reports that the Brahmins swung back to the BJP in Allahabad when they realised that a division in their vote (between Rita Bahuguna of the Congress and Murli Manohar Joshi of the BJP) may enable the BSP to romp home.

The OBC revolution, which started over 25 years ago in the north and 50 years earlier in Tamil Nadu, when the Periyar-led Dravidian movement challenged the Brahminical order in the south, is moving into the next phase now. The most backward of the OBCs (they comprise 30 per cent in Bihar) and the Dalits are asking why the fruits of Mandal should be cornered only by the more well-to-do and better organised OBCs (synonymous with the Yadavs today)... Banking on this sentiment (a party may) field a Mallah in a constituency, in the hope of an accretion to its vote bank...

The BJP is finding it unusually difficult to deal with the turbulence within its own ranks in UP, with increased consciousness among the backward classes... Since the party has been an avowedly upper caste outfit for a long time, these communities are finding it more difficult to make way for others than might have been the case, say, in a party like the Congress which too has been controlled by the forward castes.

The BJP will have its task cut out in UP in the months to come. Like a bone in the throat, Kalyan Singh has got stuck in the BJP's gullet. It is neither able to spit it out nor swallow it. Dethroning him will push him into Mulayam Singh's arms in what could become a backward consolidation, with the potential of pushing the BJP to the sidelines. For the upper castes are likely then to swing to a Muslim-backed Congress. Retaining him would deepen the simmering discontent in the upper castes, pushing them increasingly into the arms of the Congress.

... In the seventies and even the eighties, the newly emerging groups led protest movements in opposition to majority governments. These groups are now in the power set-up, representing various interests and identities and fighting for space. The protest movements on issues have

BSP A New Approach

The realisation that Dalit votes alone cannot help in winning seats may have come a bit too late for the BSP leader ... Mayawati. Her spurning all attempts by the Congress(I) for an electoral alliance in this crucial state much against the wishes of her president Kanshi Ram, may result in a poor performance at the hustings...

If crowds at election rallies are any indication, the Dalits may be losing charm of the BSP and a section of them may shift their electoral loyalties to the Congress(I)...

A number of Dalit commoners as well as intellectuals feel that it was no use voting for the BSP as it managed to bag only four seats despite securing about 21 per cent votes last time... Mayawati is making a serious effort to woo the Muslims. She is promising reservation to Muslims if they voted for her party to win sufficient seats to enable it become part of the next government at the Centre...

Describing the BJP as a fascist force, she takes much pride in announcing that it was the BSP which pulled down the BJP-led government recently as a return of the BJP act in pulling her government down in Uttar Pradesh not long ago. Her party would make a tactical move in voters' interest after the elections, Mayawati said, appealing for a vote for the BSP nominee from Meerut-Mawana Lok Sabha seat, Haji Yaqub Qureshi.

(Source: The Hindu, 9 September, 1999)

V. Krishna Ananth On Dalit Consolidation in UP

... The Dalit consolidation behind the BSP seems to suit all other players in Uttar Pradesh. None of these platforms seems eager or wants to resist this process. For, after all, the BSP's agenda is restricted to politics and that too to the idea of exclusion.

... The Dalit votes will be expendable as long as they go only to the CPI(ML).

... The end, the striking feature of the poll campaign by the mainstream parties in the Gangetic basin is the virtual exclusion of the Dalits from the discourse...

One finds the political spectrum divided into four major chunks. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party continues to be a force in those regions which have a substantial population of the intermediate castes, particularly Yadavs, and there its nominees are assured "Muslim votes." And where the Congress(I) has put up a "strong" candidate, he is assured Muslim support. And in other places, it is the BJP. The three are united on excluding the Dalits from their scheme of things...

(Source: The Hindu, 26 September, 1999)

disappeared.

Successive prime ministers in the last ten years have learnt that power sharing is the key to the management of contradictions and to survival...

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

Vidya Subrahmaniam On Stability of NDA Coalition

... Atal Behari Vajpayee is the first Prime Minister since 1971 to have been re-elected to office... Vajpayee has metamorphosed from last year's hesitant leader of a tentative coalition to confident commander of a 24-party alliance. And yet, a bird's eye-view of the Lok Sabha would show much the same picture: a slightly larger ruling side and mostly the same faces. The dazzle of the big picture could also be hiding details common to 1998. Through Vajpayee's spectacular journey to superstardom, **the BJP has itself remained static. From 161 seats in 1996 to 182, both in 1998 and 1999, the BJP's growth graph in the Lok Sabha would hardly qualify as dramatic. The opposite, in fact, if its vote per cent was taken into account - from 20 to 25 to 23 for the same period.**

As a strategy, this cannot be faulted. Faced with forced isolation, the BJP chose to grow through a network of alliances. However, the downside of this meant that it had to necessarily restrict its own political space and, indeed, allow the balance of power to shift in favour of the allies. The BJP's top leadership pleaded on bended knees as partners threw tantrums...

... Officially second-in-command, L.K. Advani remained unusually subdued. After two trips to Chennai, bouquet in hand, Jaswant Singh returned to ... the CTBT. Yashwant Sinha had no role beyond finance. Lesser leaders - and party workers - had even less to do in the NDA.

The Vajpayee bandwagon has since grown from 18 members to 24 and the BJP's share in the coalition - both in terms of seats and votes - stands further reduced. Of the NDA's 305 seats, the allies account for 123. And, even of the BJP's 182, only a hundred-odd have been won on its own strength, the rest coming via alliances... The Janata Dal (U) could, indeed, be the UF reborn. It ... bristles with larger-than-life leaders: Sharad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, George Fernandes, R.K. Hegde, Ram Vilas Paswan, all have ambitions going far beyond ministership. During campaigning, Fernandes was, in fact, candid enough to admit ... that he didn't envisage a long-term relationship with the NDA.

For all this, the NDA is inherently more durable than its previous version... It has a 30-plus majority which means more room for manoeuvre. The Telugu Desam Party has a squad large enough to threaten the alliance's stability and its decision to stay out of government could be a worry. But Chandrababu Naidu is a peace-maker by temperament... Mamata Banerjee is volatile but not self-destructive. More than anything else, the NDA constituents have a common enemy in the Congress for which reason alone they must hang together. With two dozen constituents and an increasingly restless BJP cadre to take care of, life may not be ... more comfortable than before for Vajpayee. Yet, it is unlikely to be the nightmare it was.

(Source: The Times of India, 10 October, 1999)

State Reports On Andhra Pradesh

A difference of 6.86 per cent of the votes polled between the Telugu Desam-BJP combine and the Congress(I) led to the rout of the Congress(I) in the elections to Lok Sabha from AP. The Congress(I) polled 42.90% of the votes and obtained five seats while the Telugu Desam-BJP combine polled 49.76% of the vote and got 36 seats. The Telugu Desam, contesting 34 seats, obtained 39.78% of the vote while the BJP, contesting eight seats, got 9.98% of vote.

An analysis of the voting figures shows that the Congress(I) tally of Lok Sabha seats did not reflect its strength of 90 seats in the Assembly, because its victory margins were small while the Telugu Desam's margins were big, and so, though the Congress(I) won in four out of seven Assembly segments, it lost the Lok Sabha seats because of bigger margins of the ruling combine...

(Source: R.J. Rajendra Prasad in The Hindu, 10 October, 1999)

On West Bengal

Despite conceding five seats to the Trinamul Congress-BJP combine, the CPI(M)-led Left front has been able to keep its overall percentage of votes intact in West Bengal. But the vote-share of the Congress(I), which fared better in some areas of North Bengal and emerged victorious in Berhampore, dropped by two per cent and helped the Trinamul Congress-BJP alliance, wrest three seats from the CPI(M).

The Congress(I) bagged 13.29 per cent votes as against 15.20 in the 1998 election... Even as the Congress improved its fortunes to some extent in some pockets of North Bengal, in most of the 42 constituencies the party candidates finished third. The State Congress president, A. B. A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury, retained the Malda seat by a reduced margin and the PCC working president, P. R. Dasmunshi, wrested the Raiganj seat from the CPI-M.

But what surprised everyone was the victory of The Congress(I) candidate from Berhampore Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury which except in 1984, the Revolutionary Socialist Party never lost...

(Source: PTI in The Hindu, 10 October, 1999)

Uttar Pradesh

... The ruling BJP lies decimated in the Lok Sabha elections, losing as many as 28 seats from its previous tally of 57. The BJP yielded as many as 14 seats to Samajwadi Party and 10 to Congress...

Though BJP's loss was huge, the party also gained seven new seats in its modest tally of 29 with six coming from SP and one from BSP.

The Samajwadi Party ... bagged 26 seats, six more than its previous tally of 20. While it retained 10 seats it had held in 1998, it wrested 16 seats - as many as 14 from BJP and two from BSP.

The BSP also posted spectacular victories, bagging 14 seats compared to just four in the previous elections. While it retained four from its previous tally, the party

(Contd. on Page 509)

A Debate on Dalit-Muslim Unity

Saiyid Hamid

On Muslim and Dalit Relations

... V.T. Rajshekar, Editor of Dalit Voice's thesis that the deprived sections of India's population should come together and strive jointly for securing the rights that have been denied to them is unexceptionable. However, except for a vague wish, nothing specific has been suggested...

Rajshekar has referred to the efforts made by him to draw Muslims closer to Dalits... He never had any authority to negotiate on behalf of the Dalits... There has been no instance of any important Dalit political leader having ever tried seriously to forge unity between the two communities... Apart from looking back wistfully at missed opportunities of Dalit-Muslim unity, Rajshekar does not unfold a plan on which that unity could be based. He has not outlined any steps to bring the two communities closer together and work out a joint plan of action in social, educational and political spheres... Rajshekar will be doing a real service if he were to prepare a plan for bridging the distance on the basis of common interest. This plan should be approved by the political leadership of Dalits. Once this has been done, concrete steps can be taken in order to forge the desired unity... What is required are specific proposals from the top leadership of the Dalit community.. We would suggest that a proper plan for forging a unity in areas where it is feasible may be worked out so that it is ripe for the attention of the political leadership.

We would, however, like to caution (Rajshekar) on two points: firstly, the diatribe against "Muslim elite" had better been eschewed, for Muslims might construe it as yet another attempt to drive a wedge between different parts of the community; secondly, the tone so far as it relates to the people whom Rajshekar chooses to call Vaidic should be less strident... The objective should not be an attack on the high caste Hindus but a joint effort to secure through constitutional means the rights that have been denied to Dalits as well as Muslims ... and (to) strive to seek "empowerment"... The strategy would not lie in mounting a provocative frontal attack on the sections that have power and authority but in building up public opinion...

... What is needed is understanding between different sections and not an onslaught.

(Source: The Nation and the World, 16 August, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Comments

Letter to The Nation and the World, 18 Aug., 99

I appreciate the timely note of caution which you have sounded in your editorial of 16 August, 1999 of which I hope, Mr. V.T. Rajshekar shall take serious note.

Mr. Rajshekar has never clarified the term Dalit. If Muslims are also Dalits, the concept of Dalit-Muslim unity is meaningless. But Dalits is the term adopted by the SC's (the Achhuts) to substitute Gandhiji's term Harijan which sounded somewhat patronising.

Thus Dalits have moved on to organise themselves in the form of political parties of which they form the core and which they control. The notable examples are the RPI and the BSP. Alternatively they joined hands with the OBC's (the Shudras) in parties such as the Janata Party and its various offshoots. The Muslims have no political organisation, not even a non-political community organisation (like the Yadav Mahasabha) to speak for them. Secondly, the SCs enjoy reservation in legislature which gives them a share of political power. The Muslims enjoy no such reservation. This means that in election after election, in State after State, few Muslim candidates are fielded and the community remains under-represented in the legislature. Muslims have been condemned to remain electors, without becoming legislators and, therefore, a factor in the political game.

The basic pre-condition for consolidation of Dalit-Muslim unity of action is reservation in legislatures for the Muslim and the establishment of either a non-political Muslim organisation to speak and to enter into agreement on behalf of the Muslim community or a secular political party of which the Muslims forms the core and which has the Muslims in the driver's seat.

In the absence of these two basic conditions, Muslims will not be an equal partner in the common struggle or share the results in equitable measure. They shall only play second fiddle to the Achhuts as they have so far successively to the High Caste Hindus and then to the Shudras.

Thus, while the concept the Dalit-Muslim unity is beyond question, to convert it from a concept to a program of action and the basis for a united struggle, the Muslims and the Achhuts have to enter into an agreement on equal terms through their representative organisations.

Shahabuddin's Letter to Rajshekar

The Dalit Voice, 16 August, 1999

I have always shared your view that any suppressed group will get its due place in the power structure only when it becomes conscious of its identity and of its strength and adopts the path of struggle.

I feel that the constitutional terms like BC, SC, ST or OBC are socially and politically vague and confusing terms which serve to suppress the realities of the caste system, to deny the existence of various groups and sub-groups among the Shudras, the Achhuts and the Adivasis. Today these groups are not only finding themselves and discovering their pan-Indian spread across the administrative divide.

There is also no doubt that the Muslim community as a religious minority is sailing in the same boat as the other suppressed and deprived groups and all of them must struggle unitedly.

A problem arises partly from the fact that at one level as a Muslim group the entire community is a target of Hindu communalism and therefore of hostile

DALIT-MUSLIM UNITY

discrimination at every level and at another level, the community consists of many sub-communities which have analogues, functionally speaking in the various sub-castes of the Shudras and the Achhuts.

The Muslims face a dilemma whether they should wage their struggle for equality and justice collectively as a religious minority or separately as extensions of various Hindu sub-castes.

The dilemma has become further accentuated by the fact that because of upward social mobility and sanskritisation some Shudra sub-castes have taken up the standard of Hindutva and emerged as essentially Hindu communities, whether it is Yadavs, Koeris, Kurmis, Chamars, Dusadhs or Pallars or Vanniyars or Madigas or Malas.

Should the Muslim Community consciously disintegrate itself and join hands with corresponding Hindu sub-caste groups? It is doubtful in the prevalent climate of communal hostility that they would receive their due share. Moreover it may be asked to pay a religious price for it. The Muslim community whether as a community or as a combination of various sub-communities is anxious to avoid religious assimilation and cultural submergence irrespective of whether, how and when they receive their just dues.

The answer to this dilemma lies in the entire Muslim community being treated as a Backward Class with a quota, with inbuilt Muslim sub-quotas for various Sub-communities. Alternatively, there should be a Muslim Sub-quota within the OBCs quota for the Muslim BCs, which would cover nearly 80-90% of the community. In any case, the Muslims have no hope of getting this due within the OBC quota just as the MBC's cannot within the OBC/SC or ST quotas.

The organisational coordination can be achieved only if there is a representative Muslim body, not being a political party, which would press the Muslim concern with all political parties or a Muslim political party which would form an alliance or come to understanding with a party like the BSP or the RJD or RPI.

I request you to apply your mind to this problem so that the Dalit-Muslim unity that both of us dream of can be built on solid foundations of mutual trust.

Rajshekar's Editorial Reply

This is our reply to Syed Shahabuddin who has raised a serious question – the “dilemma facing the Muslim community”...

Backward Muslims tell us that they are suffering because the elite Muslims have blinded them in the name of Islam...Comprising not even 5% of the community (they) are taking away all the cake in the name of Muslims. On another side they are suppressing the revolutionary aspects of Koran (“Spirit of Islam”), drugging and doping the Muslim masses so that the suffering but angry Muslims do not go out of control and revolt against the Aryan ruling class...

If Dalit-Muslim unity is the panacea for all our ills,

why no elite Muslim has come forward to support us? ... The “Aryan Muslims” are not ready to confront the Aryan rulers because it is in the name of Muslims they are getting all the benefits and the funds that flow from Muslim countries.

... Aryan rulers of India have no complaint against these fair-skinned “Aryan Muslims” who have the dark-skinned Dravidian SC/ST/BC original inhabitants. And the “Aryan Muslims” also hate the dark-skinned Muslim masses. The racial divide is visible.

... The Muslim ruling class is opposed to Dalit-Muslim unity. Its fear is that if the Backward Muslims unite with their blood relations (SC/ST/BCs) it will get isolated and Islam will get divided. This “fear” is deliberately voiced to once again frighten and then hoodwink the ... innocent Muslim masses who alone keep Islam alive in India. However, the truth is the “Aryan Muslims” fear that the Dalit-Muslim unity will spell doom to India's upper case Aryan rule... The dividing line is becoming clearer... The identity of every segment – whether it is SC/ST/BC or Muslim/Christian/Sikh – is well maintained and getting strengthened.

... The Koran fully sanctions preservation of identity. The “Aryan Muslims” are trying to destroy this identity in the name of “Muslim unity” and Islam...

... Dalits did not divide Islam or Muslims. It is the “Aryan Muslims” by keeping the distance from BC Muslims who have caused this division...The elite Muslims are not interested in Islam but in maintaining their hegemony over Muslim masses and Islam.

(Source: The Dalit Voice, 1-15 October, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Rejoinder to Rajshekar 22 September, 1999

I have just gone through your editorial in the Dalit Voice of 1-15 October 1999. You begin by saying that this is your reply to my letter. I have read my letter again which you have kindly published. But I find nothing in your editorial which can be construed as a response to the points I raised and the suggestions I made.

On the face of it, you are not prepared to grant, even the Backward Muslims, a separate sub-quota in the overall distribution of the resources of the State within a united framework of the Shudras, the Achhuts, the Adivasi and the Backward Muslims. How do you ensure that the Backward Muslims will not be shortchanged in this combination, if they work for and bring this combination to power?

Secondly, from my personal knowledge, I can tell you that the dividing line between the so-called Muslim elite and the Backward Muslims is not absolute, the Muslim elite today includes many Backward Muslims and a vast majority of the so-called ‘elite’ are economically no better off than the Backward Muslims.

I do not see why you go on instigating the Backward Muslims against the so-called Muslim elite. In a democratic process, the elite, being 10% of the

(Contd. on Page 509)

MHA: Annual Report on Foreign Contribution, 1997-98

... A scrutiny of the returns for the year 1997-98 submitted by 12,198 associations reveals that foreign contribution amounting to Rs.2864.51 crores was received during the year.

Among the States and Union territories, Tamil Nadu had the highest number (1991) of associations reporting receipt of foreign contribution. However, Delhi reported the highest receipt of foreign contribution (Rs.418.52 crores)... The following States/UTs received foreign contribution in excess of Rs.15 crores during 1997-98

S.No.	State/UT	No. of Reporting Associations	Amount (Rs. in crores)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1256	398.08
2.	Assam	145	17.32
3.	Bihar	598	83.24
4.	Gujarat	477	71.93
5.	Himachal Pradesh	66	44.50
6.	Karnataka	1012	315.88
7.	Kerala	1419	255.38
8.	Madhya Pradesh	379	60.35
9.	Maharashtra	1031	323.52
10.	Meghalaya	91	24.08
11.	Orissa	534	56.95
12.	Rajasthan	166	22.97
13.	Tamil Nadu	1991	416.64
14.	Uttar Pradesh	686	128.25
15.	West Bengal	1124	168.88
16.	Delhi	624	418.52
17.	Others	599	58.02
Total		12198	2864.51

The list of donor countries is headed by the USA (Rs.731.07 crores) followed by Germany (Rs.577.08 crores), UK (Rs.376.47 crores), Italy (Rs.198.47 crores) and Netherlands (Rs.169.66 crores)...

During the year 1997-98, 35 associations received foreign contribution in excess of Rs.10 crores while 69 associations received between Rs.5 and Rs.10 crores and 536 associations received between Rs.1 crores and Rs.5 crores.

Among the reporting associations, Maharishi Ved Vigyan Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Andhra Pradesh received the highest amount of foreign contribution (Rs.56.47 crores) followed by Foster Parents Plan International, Delhi (Rs.44.34 crores) and Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Andhra Pradesh (Rs.42.93 crores)...

The highest amount was received for activities connected with Health and Family Welfare (Rs.306.43 crores), followed by construction/extension of schools/colleges (Rs.290.01 crores) and Rural Development (Rs.279.91 crores)...

Donor Countries during 1997-98		
S.No.	Country	Amount (Rs. in Crores)
1.	Australia	63.62
2.	Austria	28.41

3.	Belgium	50.21
4.	Canada	69.49
5.	Denmark	21.33
6.	France	58.70
7.	Germany	577.08
8.	Hongkong	21.00
9.	Italy	198.47
10.	Japan	38.16
11.	Kuwait	11.08
12.	Netherlands	169.66
13.	Norway	30.72
14.	Philippines	15.32
15.	Saudi Arabia	13.25
16.	Spain	78.83
17.	Sweden	27.88
18.	Switzerland	140.62
19.	United Arab Emirates	18.91
20.	United Kingdom	376.47
21.	United States of America	731.07
22.	Others	124.24
Total		2864.51

Major Foreign Donors during 1997-98

S.No.	Name	Amount (Rs. in crores)
1.	Christian Children Fund, USA	64.78
2.	Evangelische Zentralstelle (EZE), Germany	59.03
3.	Foster Parents Plan International, USA	55.45
4.	Missio, Germany	48.93
5.	Kinder Not Hilfe (KNH), Germany	46.31
6.	U.S. Aid, USA	42.79
7.	Action Aid, UK	42.47
8.	Miseror, Germany	39.76
9.	World Visions International, USA	37.55
10.	Maharishi Ayurvedic Trust, UK	31.42
11.	Age of Enlightenment Trust, UK	27.68
12.	Ford Foundation, USA	26.49
13.	Inter Church Co-ord. Committee, Netherlands	23.02
14.	Manos Unidas, Spain	22.75
15.	International Planned Parenthood Fedn., UK	21.45
16.	Christoffel Blinden Mission, Germany	20.53
17.	Oxfam (India) Trust, UK	20.38
18.	Opere Don Bosco, Italy	19.91
19.	Manos Unidas Committee, Spain	19.89
20.	Christian Aid, UK	19.47
21.	Zentralstelle Fur Entwicklungshilfe, Germany	19.14
22.	Bilance, Netherlands	18.77
23.	Sokagakkai Bhinjukku, Japan	18.05
24.	Bread for the World, Germany	16.04
25.	Mission Prokure, Germany	15.33

Major Reporting Associations in Receipt of Foreign Contribution during 1997-98

S.No.	Name of the Association	Amount (Rs. in crores)
1.	Maharishi Ved Vigyan Viswa Vidyapeetham, A.P.	56.47

FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION

2.	Foster Parents Plan International, Delhi	44.34
3.	Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, A.P.	42.93
4.	S.I.F.P.S.A., U.P.	42.79
5.	World Vision of India, Tamil Nadu	35.15
6.	Mata Amritanandamayi Mission, Kerala	34.32
7.	Action Aid, Karnataka	32.00
8.	C.S.I. Council for Child Care, Karnataka	24.69
9.	Christian Children Fund, Karnataka	24.22
10.	Family Planning Assn. of India, Maharashtra	21.60
11.	S.O.S. Children's Village of India, Delhi	20.30
12.	Churches Auxiliary for Social Action, Delhi	20.10
13.	A.M.G. India International, A.P.	17.74
14.	Bharat Sokogakkai, Delhi	17.38
15.	Missionaries of Charity, West Bengal	17.28
16.	Indo German Social Service Society, Delhi	17.04
17.	Tibetan Children's Village, Himachal Pradesh	16.02
18.	Oxfam (India) Trust, Delhi	15.90
19.	Mysore Resettlement & Development Agency, Karnataka	15.57
20.	Caritas India, Delhi	15.49
21.	Watch Tower Bible Tract Socy. of India, Maharashtra	14.61
22.	Gospel for Asia, Kerala	14.44
23.	Holistic Child Development India, Delhi	12.71
24.	Indian Socy. of Church of Jesus Christ, Delhi	12.61
25.	India Campus Crusade for Christ, Karnataka	12.34

Purpose-wise Receipt of Foreign Contribution during 1997-98

S.No.	Name of the Association	Amount (Rs. in crores)
1.	Health and Family Welfare	306.43
2.	Construction/extension of schools/colleges	290.01
3.	Rural Development	279.91
4.	Help for the poor, aged and destitutes	210.06
5.	Care of Orphans	191.25
6.	Research	125.94
7.	Construction/extension of other buildings	115.43
8.	Stipends/scholarships	56.75
9.	Repair/Maintenance of schools/colleges	49.85
10.	Education of Priests/Preachers	47.73
11.	Religious Functions	46.58
12.	Maintenance/Repair of places of worship	40.85
13.	Construction/Extension of places of worship	39.88
14.	Relief for natural calamities	36.79
15.	Agricultural activities	31.75
16.	Repair/Maintenance of other buildings	27.01
17.	Housing	15.98
18.	Publication of religious literature	11.37
19.	Environment	7.68
20.	Animal Husbandry	5.14
21.	Sanitation	4.43
22.	Cultural Programmes	3.59
23.	Theatre/Films	3.57
24.	Maintenance of places of historical/cultural importance	0.64
25.	Any other purpose	915.90
	Total	2864.51

*With Best
Compliments*

from

**KALEEM
KAWAJA**

**THE ASSOCIATION
OF INDIAN
MUSLIMS OF
AMERICA**

**THE ORGANIZATION
FOR UNIVERSAL
COMMUNAL
HARMONY**

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

US - Deptt. of State: Annual Report

On International Religious Freedom, 1998 – India, 9 September, 1999

Section I. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. India is a secular state in which all faiths generally enjoy freedom of worship; government policy does not favor any religious group. However, tension between Muslims and Hindus, and to a lesser extent between Hindus and Christians, continues to pose a challenge to the concepts of secularism, tolerance, and diversity on which the State was founded. In addition, governments at state and local levels only partially respect religious freedom.

There are no registration requirements for religions... Legally mandated benefits are assigned to certain groups, including some groups defined by their religion.

There are many religions and a large variety of denominations, groups, and subgroups in the country, but Hinduism is the dominant religion. The Constitution defines Hinduism, for legal purposes, as including the Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh faiths, a definition rejected by some persons in those communities. According to 1998 government statistics, Hindus constitute 82.4% of the population, Muslims 12.7%, Christians 2.3%, Sikhs 2%, Buddhists 0.7%, Jains 0.4%, and others, including Parsis, Jews, and Baha'is, 0.4%... Tribal groups, which for the sake of government statistics generally are included among Hindus, often practice traditional indigenous religions... Large Muslim populations are found in the states of UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, W. Bengal, AP, and Kerala. Christian concentrations are found ... in ... Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Goa. Some of the northeastern states have large Christian majorities. Sikhs are a majority in Punjab. The country's caste system historically has strong ties to Hinduism... Dalits (formerly called untouchables) are viewed by many Hindus as separate from or "below" the caste system; nonetheless, they too are expected to follow their dharma if they hope to achieve caste in a future life... Caste today is therefore as much a cultural and social phenomenon as a religious one.

Over the years, lower castes and Dalits have frequently converted to other faiths because they viewed conversion as a means to achieve higher social status... Yet lower caste and Dalit converts continue to be viewed by both their co-religionists and Hindus through the prism of caste. Converts are widely regarded as belonging to the caste of their ancestors. Yet lower caste and Dalit converts continue to be viewed by both their co-religionists and Hindus through the prism of caste. Converts are widely regarded as belonging to the caste of their ancestors... According to the 1991 census, scheduled castes, including Dalits, made up 16% and scheduled tribes 8% of the country's 1991 population of 846 million... Low caste Hindus who convert to Christianity lose their eligibility for

affirmative action programs. Those who become Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs do not, as the Constitution includes these faiths within the definition of Hindu...

The Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act makes it an offense to use any religious site for political purposes or to use temples for harboring persons accused or convicted of crimes... The current legal system accommodates minority religions' personal status laws; there are different personal laws for different religious communities. Religion-specific laws pertain in matters of marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance...

There is no national law to bar proselytizing by Indian Christians. Foreign missionaries generally can renew their visas, but since the mid-1960's the Government has refused to admit new resident foreign missionaries. Those who arrive now do so as tourists and stay for short periods. As of January 1993, there were 1,923 registered foreign Christian missionaries. During 1998, as in the past, state officials refused to issue permits for foreign Christian missionaries to enter some northeastern states. In March 1999, several declared missionaries reported that the Government had instituted a policy of not renewing missionaries' visas. Renewal had been routine until the institution of this new policy...

Missionaries and religious organizations must comply with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which restricts funding from abroad and, therefore, the ability of certain groups to finance their activities. The Government is empowered to ban a religious organization if it has violated the FCRA, has provoked inter-community friction, or has been involved in terrorism or sedition. There is no ban on professing or propagating religious beliefs, but speaking publicly against other beliefs is considered dangerous to public order, and is prohibited.

In October 1998, the Union HRD Minister floated a plan to "Indianize and spiritualize" public school curriculums at all levels and to make the study of Sanskrit compulsory from grade 3 through grade 10. The plan also contemplated the teaching of Hindu texts from the Vedas and the Upanishads in secondary school. The plan was withdrawn after protests... In October 1998, the BJP state government of Uttar Pradesh declared that children in government schools would henceforth be required to sing two anthems, the Vande Mataram and the Saraswati Vandana. The lyrics of the songs were offensive to the Muslim community and the proposal was shelved...

In early February 1999, following a series of attacks on Christians, the office of the Director General of Police in Gujarat reportedly sent a circular instructing district officials to collect information about Christians, including the number of missionaries, their funding sources, and the "tricks" they used to convert persons. After public

criticism of the census, the government of Gujarat stated that it was being carried out to assist in the protection of Christians, and later expanded it to cover Hindus as well. However, Christians obtained a court order barring the census. On March 2, 1999, the government of Gujarat withdrew the effort.

Animosities within and between religious communities in India have roots that are centuries old, and these tensions - at times exacerbated by poverty, class, and ethnic differences - have erupted into periodic violence throughout the country's 51-year history. The Government makes some effort to prevent these incidents and to restore communal harmony when such incidents occur, but these efforts are not entirely successful. The Government has taken steps to promote interfaith understanding, which include the creation of the National Integration Council, the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Minorities Commission...

The UN Special Rapporteur for All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief published a report in February 1997 ... the Rapporteur concluded that the country's constitutional and legislative protections of religious freedom contributed to religious tolerance in the country, as did a "conception of secularism implying not the rejection of religion but equality for all religions."

However, he warned that tolerance was susceptible to attack by religious extremists. The status of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report.

While religious freedom is protected by law, enforcement of the law has been poor, particularly at the state and local levels, where the failure to deal adequately with intra-group and inter-group conflict and with local disturbances has abridged the right to religious freedom. In particular, there was a significant increase in attacks against Christians by Hindu extremist groups during the period covered by this report. In many cases, the government response was inadequate...

The BJP ... is one of a number of offshoots of the RSS, an organization that espouses a return to Hindu values and cultural norms. Members of the BJP, the RSS and other affiliated organizations have been implicated in incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians and Muslims. The BJP and RSS express respect and tolerance for other religions, but the RSS in particular opposes conversions from Hinduism and believes all Indians should adhere to Hindu cultural values. The BJP officially agrees that the caste system should be eradicated, but many of its members are ambivalent about this. Most BJP leaders, including Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee and Home Minister L. K. Advani, are also RSS members, as are the chief ministers of the state governments in Maharashtra, UP, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. The BJP's traditional cultural agenda has

included calls for construction of a new Hindu temple to replace an ancient Hindu temple that was believed to have stood on the site of a mosque in Ayodhya that was destroyed by a Hindu mob in 1992; for the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution, which grants special rights to the state of J&K, India's only Muslim majority state; and for the enactment of a uniform civil code that would apply to members of all religions. All of these proposals are strongly opposed by some minority religious groups. The current BJP-led national government, however, has taken no steps to implement these measures, and has promised that it would not do so ... if it returns to power... While the BJP at national level has downplayed its Hindu nationalist agenda, some Christian groups have noted the coincidence of its coming to power and an increase in complaints of discrimination against minority religious communities. These groups also claim that BJP officials at state and local level have become increasingly uncooperative. There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners. ...

Section II. Societal Attitudes

During the period covered by this report, a deterioration of religious tolerance was evident in several states. (Caste) tensions have frequently led to, or exacerbated, violent confrontations and human rights abuses. However, for the most part they do not have a significant religious component.

The practice of dedicating or marrying young, pre-pubescent girls to a Hindu deity or temple as "servants of god" "Devadasis," is reported ... to continue in the several southern states... Devadasis, who are generally Dalits, may not marry ... and are required to provide sexual services to priests and high caste Hindus...

On occasion, Hindu-Muslim violence led to killings and a cycle of retaliation. For example, in November 1997, police in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu joined Hindu rioters, killed 18 Muslims, and committed numerous other abuses (see Section I). On February 14, 1998, Muslim militants in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu retaliated for this incident with a series of bombings in Coimbatore that took the lives of 68 persons and left at least 200 others injured... The Al-Ummah militant group, which carried out the 1998 Coimbatore serial bombings, was charged with responsibility.

Controversy between Hindus and Muslims continues with regard to three sites where mosques were built centuries ago... The potential for renewed Hindu-Muslim violence remained considerable.

In February 1998, the Sri Krishna Commission, set up by the Government to inquire into the cause of Hindu-Muslim riots in Mumbai in December 1992 and January 1993, released its report... The Maharashtra government, led by a BJP-Shiv Sena coalition, rejected the report, which laid responsibility for much of the violence on leaders of both of those parties. Several Muslim

organizations have requested that the Supreme Court reverse the Maharashtra government's rejection of the report... In western India, Hindu extremists in 1998 set fire to Muslim shops and forced Muslims to flee their homes in retaliation for the intermarriage of Muslim men and Hindu women, and the alleged forced conversion of Hindu women to Islam... Throughout the period (Muslim) militants (in J&K) continued to target members of the state's remaining Hindu community with violence. Militants carried out several execution-style mass killings of Hindu villagers in J&K between January and August 1998, and again in February 1999.

There was a sharp increase in the number of attacks against Christian communities and Christian missionaries by Hindu extremists during the period covered by this report. According to Indian human rights organizations, there were over 90 incidents during 1998... Such attacks occurred in Bihar, MP, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Gujarat... At the end of 1998, a wave of apparently organized attacks against Christians began. Many of the attacks occurred in the Dangs district of Gujarat...

On January 23, 1999, Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons were killed... On January 30, 1999, Home Minister Advani stated that the Bajrang Dal had not been involved in the Staines killings. However, soon after the incident, the Government ordered a judicial inquiry into the killings. A Supreme Court Justice, D.P. Wadhwa, was appointed to head the Commission of Inquiry...

Since 1998, there have been reports of increasing harassment of Christian aid workers. Many report having been hampered in their work due to threats, bureaucratic obstacles, and, in some cases, physical attacks on their workers. Several Christian relief organizations have reported difficulty in getting visas renewed for foreign relief workers...

Members of militant Hindu organizations (including members of the Hindu Jagran Manch, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and the Bajrang Dal) reportedly are concerned about Christians' efforts to convert Hindus. They claimed that Hindus, including economically disadvantaged Dalits and tribals, were being forced or induced to convert by Christian missionaries. On September 30, 1998, the Secretary General of the VHP publicly warned Christian missionaries to leave India. VHP working president Ashok Singhal in December 1998 publicly stated that the missionaries were part of a "Christian conspiracy to propagate their religion and wipe out Hinduism from this country." On December 29, 1998, the VHP announced that it would launch a nationwide campaign against Christian missionaries to stop them from converting Hindus to Christianity.

Missionaries have been operating schools and medical clinics for many years in tribal areas... Tribals, such as those attacked in the Dangs district, and Dalits are outside

of the caste system and occupy the very lowest position in the social hierarchy. However, they have made socioeconomic gains as a result of the missionary schools and other institutions, which, among other things, have increased literacy among the lowest castes. Some higher caste Hindus tend to resent these gains. Some fault the missionaries for the resulting disturbance in the traditional Hindu social order as better educated Dalits, tribals, and members of the lower castes no longer accept their disadvantaged status as readily as they once did...

Despite the incidents of violence during the period covered by this report, relations between various religious groups generally are amicable among the substantial majority of citizens. There are efforts at ecumenical understanding that bring religious leaders together to defuse religious tensions. The annual Sarva Dharma Sammelan and Mushairas held on many occasions are examples of events that help bring the various communities together. The holidays of Eid Milan, Holi Milan, and Iftar are occasions for Hindus and Muslims to celebrate at parties together, and are important social events that promote communal harmony. After the recent episodes of violence against Christians, Muslim groups protested the treatment of Christians by Hindu extremists...

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

... The Ambassador on several occasions expressed to senior government leaders the deep concern in the United States over the attacks on Christians in 1998 and early 1999 that were carried out by groups loosely affiliated with the BJP government. The Ambassador met with ... BJP President Kushabau Thakre on November 6, 1998... On January 12, 1999, the Ambassador met with VHP President V.H. Dalmia... On January 6, 1999, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth met with Indian Ambassador in Washington, and during the meeting he relayed U.S. concern about the persecution of Christians in India.

On February 1, 1999 Assistant Secretary of State Inderfurth met with Foreign Secretary K. Raghunath and again raised the issue of the attacks on Christians, and the U.S. concern over the matter. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Harold Hongju Koh met with Home Secretary B.P. Singh to discuss religious persecution issues on February 2, 1999. The Secretary's Special Representative for International Religious Freedom, Robert Seiple, met with Indian Ambassador in Washington on February 22, 1999.

Embassy officials meet with religious officials to monitor religious freedom on a regular basis... The Embassy maintains contacts with U.S. residents, including those in the NGO and missionary communities ... to religious freedom, and embassy staff members meet with local NGO's to keep apprised of developments concerning religious freedom. □

APHC: Chairman Geelani on the Kargil Crisis

Bloody confrontation at Kargil has left many questions unanswered... In such a circumstances, we feel duty-bound to put such information, howsoever little it may be, in a clear perspective so that people may have a better understanding of the historical background and the present position of ongoing mass uprising in Jammu and Kashmir... We earnestly desire that no more Kargils happen... We are presenting this booklet to the general public to spread a better understanding of the havoc policy makers of this country are causing by stubbornly refusing to address the Kashmir problem.

Conflict at Kargil ... has provided a new opportunity ... for fresh thinking on the issue of J&K by the policy-planners... Common man has a right to know the underlying reasons of the Kargil crisis... People of India have a right to know as to why so many soldiers were forced to become cannon fodder, for whose wrongdoing their hard-earned money was wasted...

... The cost of Kargil in terms of human losses is enormous... The cost analysis in terms of resources ... is also relevant... The immediate direct cost has been so enormous for the economy that the government considered imposition of Kargil tax to recover the same...

The recent Kargil crisis has also necessitated a year round vigil in this sector... The long-term cost of Kargil has been estimated to be around 35,000 crores to be spent for modernization of armed forces...

Kargil has seen propagation of one of the greatest falsehood of the recent history. Kargil and Kashmir dispute are two separate issues. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The confrontation at Kargil was a part of ongoing uprising in rest of the state to achieve right of self-determination.

The question arises: why right to self-determination for the people of Jammu & Kashmir? ...

(Under) Independence of India Act, 1947 ... these states were supposed either to merge with one of the two countries in accordance with the wishes of the people and the doctrine of partition (Hindu-majority States with India and Muslim-majority States with Pakistan) or elect to remain independent. J&K was a predominantly Muslim-majority State... The regime was facing an imminent collapse... The Maharaja fled the capital, Srinagar, on 25 October 1947 and urged for Indian intervention. Indian government did send her army on the condition that he should sign the instrument of access.

India brought the issue to the United Nations in January 1948... The Council passed a resolution on April 21, 1948 envisaging a cease-fire, the withdrawal of all outside forces from the State and a plebiscite under the control of an administrator who would be nominated by the Secretary General. ...

First Kashmir war in 1947-48 has drawn an artificial bloody line on the heart of Kashmir now called "Line of Control" dividing its people...

The people of J&K have never reconciled themselves

to this position... Every life is sacrosanct and should not be wasted. The security personnel posted in the territory of J&K are not serving any high moral cause...

Repression has never solved any problem. It only complicates the matter by steeling the determination of the movement... Kashmir is not just a territory. It is the future of 13 million Kashmiris that is at stake... People of J&K are the ultimate arbiters of their destiny...

Kashmir dispute has caused severe hardship and misery to the people of this sub-continent... Nuclearisation of India and Pakistan has added further urgency in the matter. This has also enhanced concern of international community on the continuing stalemate over the J&K dispute... It has been firm view of the APHC that no lasting solution of the dispute is possible without genuine, substantive and meaningful talks involving the three basic parties to the dispute i.e. genuine representatives of people of the state and governments of India and Pakistan.

Shahabuddin's Comments

Letter to Geelani, 4 October, 1999

I have just gone through your brochure 'Kargil Crisis: Need for Introspection'.

I find it strange that the brochure does not even mention the admitted fact of intrusion across the LoC by the militants and even Pakistan army personnel. If the APHC thinks that such intrusion by militants of Kashmiri, Pakistani and even foreign origin is legitimate and welcome, it should say so.

Indeed, you describe the Kargil war 'as a part of ongoing uprising in rest of Kashmir'. I disagree. I also doubt if the end-result can be described as a 'success' for those directing or aiding the 'uprising'. The open violation of the LoC has strengthened the position of the GOI that the uprising in Kashmir is a foreign-managed show and not an spontaneous or indigenous movement.

There are some historical inaccuracies also. The UN Resolution did not envisage the 'withdrawal of all outside forces for the state'. It envisaged **total** withdrawal by Pakistan but the retention of some Indian forces in the state, because the UN could not ignore the fact of India's sovereignty over the state. Also the plebiscite was to be held while the state government remained in power.

Secondly, the Indian Independence Act, 1947 did not envisage division of a princely state on the basis of the religion of the majority of its people. Even the Government of Pakistan did not take that position. The decision to accede to one Dominion or the other was to be taken by the ruler. This was accepted by Pakistan.

All this is history. What is important for the APHC is to realise **that the UN Resolutions do not envisage independence as a third option.** Nor does Pakistan support the idea of independence. Nor do the majority of people in the Ladakh, Jammu and perhaps Gilgit-Baltistan regions?

(Contd. on Page 512)

US Role on Kargil – Indian Reactions

- L.K. Advani (Home Minister)** Kargil was a turning point in Indo-US ties. The year 1999 has turned out to be a watershed in Indo-US relations.
- A. B. Vajpayee (Prime Minister)** I am fully satisfied. The USA concurs with India's view (on Clinton Sharif joint Statement).
- Natwar Singh (Former Diplomat)** "Personal interest" amounts to third party intervention (on Clinton-Sharif statement).
- Shankar Bajpai (Former Ambassador)** ...Even those who recognise that Pakistan engineered the crisis also believe that India needs to make concession on Kashmir. In fact, we now have a more intractable diplomatic problem than we did before Kargil erupted. The Sharif-Clinton statement seems favourable to us. But it also crystallised the Kashmir dilemma... The Washington agreement ... puts on us the burden of convincing the world, including Pakistan, that yes, we'll discuss Kashmir.
- Arvind N. Das (Journalist)** Internationalisation of Kashmir was inevitable under this (BJP led) regime, which has accepted a unipolar world (and) accepted the US as a global policeman.
- T.N. Kaul (Former Diplomat)** ... Not much help can be expected from US except on its terms, some of which are humiliating and some smack of threats of domination and interference.
- Parkash Karat (Member, CPM Politbureau)** ... The US had its own agenda for Kashmir with the Clinton administration's action in Balkans making it clear that it was ready to support the demand for national self-determination by an ethnic group, provided it served its interests.
- Muchkund Dubey (Former Foreign Secretary)** The US wants the LoC to be scrupulously respected in order to ensure that its violation does not result in a war between India and Pakistan... There is absolutely no hint in their emphasis on the sanctity of the LoC of a change in their position on Kashmir, which is to regard it as a dispute and to insist that the wishes of the Kashmiri people must be taken into account in finding a solution to it. The US administration has chosen its words carefully when it says that it has no plans at present to intervene directly in the conflict... It can mean that as of now there would no direct intervention... It can also mean that there would be "indirect intervention which can later climax to direct intervention.
- Mohit Sen**

Kargil Aftermath – American Perceptions

- James Foley (U.S. State Deptt. Spokesman)** Our interest is encouraging an expeditious and intensification of efforts by India and Pakistan to resolve their outstanding differences, again including Kashmir.
- Stephen Cohen (US Expert on Kashmir)** US had taken up the South Asian conflict a little late in the game. We were obsessed with getting India to sign the CTBT instead of focussing on Kashmir, we let the deeper issues slide.
- Michael Krepon (President, Henry L. Stimson Centre)** Once the Kargil chapter is over, the world will expect that India and Pakistan to resume talks. It is clear to all that India has to take the initiative. There is no quid pro quo but an expectation that India step up to the plate.
- Karl Inderfurth (US Asstt. Secretary of State)** Tensions remain high over Kashmir. Military action, including shelling, continues along the LoC as do acts of terrorism. As long as tensions remain high and people are dying, the situation can always reverse itself.
- Shirin Tahir-Kheli (Former US Ambassador to UN)** Washington's focus on the current crisis must not be followed by a period of inactivity until the next crisis looms... US need a road map of a multi-faceted approach to its relations with South Asia.
- Teresita Schaffer (Former US Ambassador)** What would help the leaders of India and especially Pakistan to accept some of the bitter pills such a settlement (Kashmir) would inevitably involve? Are there ways that the international community could make this process, or these far-reaching decisions easier.
- Frank Wisner (Former US Ambassador to India)** US must reconcile to the fact that rolling back India's and Pakistan's nuclear arsenals is no longer on the cards, US must develop security dialogue with India, exchanging estimates and intelligence. We can engage all. But we need India, in the equation. Without her, the equation is not whole. And we need Pakistan to insure the stability of South Asian and its environs.
- Asian Wall Street Journal** Where are the Kashmiris? They deserve to be heard since their uniqueness is part of the problem and they must be part of the solution... Real autonomy within India seems like the most practical solution?
- The Financial Times** India needs to make some concession on Kashmir issue to avoid 'a hundred Kargils'.

(Source: The Kashmir Sentinel, 1-30 September, 1999)

Praful Bidwai on East Timor and Kashmir

New Delhi cut a sorry figure by vacillating on participation in a UN-sponsored or authorised force in East Timor in the context of a referendum there overwhelmingly favouring independence... If ... India thought it was too risky to interfere with the Indonesian militias' "sovereign" right to attack the Timorese, it was guilty of more than just misjudgment...

India's timorousness over Timor is in line with its failure to criticise, leave alone condemn, Indonesia's annexation of the territory and its genocidal terror which led to the killing of a third of Timor's population. This has ... to do with ... fears that a referendum or international intervention in East Timor would lead to similar demands for Kashmir.

There is a major difference between Kashmir and East Timor in legal status, past UN resolutions, and the extent of suppression of human rights. The fears arise out of another, greater, anxiety, over growing challenges to the principle of absolute national sovereignty within the international community – composed not just of states, but of peoples. Evidently, India's policy-makers do not accept any abridgment of "sovereignty" that they cannot countenance dealing with the *substance* of issues such as Bosnia, Kosovo or Timor without reversing the logical order by first asking what they imply for India's right to hold on to Kashmir...

At work here is a purely instrumental notion of foreign policy, divorced from universal values or general principles and doctrines. Even national sovereignty is less a principle than a matter of expediency for our policy-making elite, which gives it the freedom to do what it likes; above all, freedom from accountability. In the second instance, it also helps New Delhi ward off and counter attempts to highlight Kashmir and failures of its own policy. This is part of a larger trend...

India ... has, for "pragmatic" reasons, given up its own agendas for a more democratic, global order. It has willfully suffered erosion of its economic sovereignty. Through the nineties, it has moved away from a non-aligned perspective to a search for strategic proximity with global hegemons, especially the US. Thus, India does not question the principle behind Washington's plans to investigate and discuss breaches of religious freedom abroad, although it haughtily says: "the government and people of India reject any intrusive exercise into how we conduct our affairs". What it rejects is only the extension of the exercise to this country...

"Intrusion" is fine so long it is aimed at an adversary state. Similarly, it is kosher to capitalise on a great new shibboleth called "terrorism" as the fulcrum of a closer relationship with the US – simply because that makes Pakistan and the Taliban the target of a seemingly global initiative... The emphasis on "terrorism" ... risks buying into the dangerous myth of the global "Islamic threat", with its communal implications.

As scholars like Fred Halliday, John Esposito and

George Joffe have argued, this is largely a conspiratorial concoction invented by western Islamophobes for a variety of purposes, including rationalising a new cold war. In reality, there is little in common between different social movements, even Islamicist ones, in the Muslim world. Second, the shibboleth wholly ignores, indeed suppresses, and often legitimises, state terrorism, which is far more pervasive and infinitely more destructive than sub-state terrorism. State terrorism is far more organised, intense and institutionalised than anything that guerrillas and militants can put together. Many more murders have been committed in this century for reasons of state than out of religious prejudice.

New Delhi's new gambit, then, is as inconsistent as contradictory. With such policy premises, India is likely to be seen as a state that worships sovereignty insofar as it is divorced from principle, and from the people, something to be affirmed only when it comes to weapons of mass destruction, human rights violations and information denial, not where public welfare is involved. The people are not sovereign, only states are. Surely this needs correction... This nation is capable of a less trivial, narrow, and parochial vision, one based on universal values at least as worthy as those that informed its own freedom struggle. (Source: *The Times of India*, 21 September, 1999)

Referendum Results

East Timor Votes to Break Away

Editorial, *The Statesman*, 7 Sept., 1999

Given the high turnout despite threats of militia violence... Indonesia's 27th province, annexed soon after it obtained freedom from Portuguese colonial rule in 1974, voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence... It now devolves upon (Indonesia) to ensure the conditions for a peaceful and orderly transfer of power, which includes the release from detention of and safe passage to Xanana Gusmao, the leader of East Timor's movement for independence... The real opposition comes from within the Army... While pro-Indonesian militias have unleashed a campaign of intimidation and terror against East Timorese, ... Army and police units have stood idly by and done little to stop them...

... Not restraining the militias in East Timor and holding back on the promise of independence, however, can set conditions for a bloodbath in East Timor... Habibie should invoke his authority as commander-in-chief of the armed forces to uphold law and order and guard against bloody reprisals directed at East Timorese by pro-Indonesian militiamen. He should also ensure speedy repeal of the 1976 law which makes East Timor an Indonesian province. Should he fail in any of these obligations, and the situation in East Timor spiral out of control, a full-fledged UN peacekeeping force, or one organised by regional powers such as Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines, could be considered. India ... should also participate if invited...

Arun Joshi On Election Scene in Valley

The battle lines are clearly drawn. It is a fight between "Azadi" and "autonomy".

While secessionists strongly advocate boycott of polls to highlight their demand for "freedom", the mainstream parties are hooked onto the slogan of "autonomy and pace". Militants consider elections a compromise and have warned the voters against exercising their franchise, cautioning them that this would be construed as an act of "treachery". ...

The "Azadi" slogan is chanted by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and other groups like that of Shabir Shah's Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party.

They have been holding anti-election rallies and consistently telling people. "Nothing short of right of self-determination would satisfy the people of Kashmir..."

On the contrary, the mainstream parties are encouraging the people to vote... They have succeeded in finding takers for it is commonly felt that economic stability is impossible without peace...

The National Conference leaders constantly harp on the tune that they were the ones who ushered in peace after years of strife. This was the refrain of Omar Abdullah's speech at the main crossing here.

"Everyone can see the change in the scenario", he says and observes, "No one can work miracles but the party and government's efforts have brought a change".

National Conference leaders also talk about the continued efforts from across the border to incite violence in the State and how they have resisted it. We are trying our best, they say.

His main rival Mehbooba Mufti, is at her rhetorical best in Beerwa when she lists what she calls "one misery after another of the people of Kashmir".

She also makes to appeal to the women in the crowd by adding, "I am a women, a mother. I can understand the pain you people undergo every day and the harassment you face at the hands of men with guns whether in uniform or otherwise."

As for the voters, they are sharply divided. Some agree that the atmosphere is calm in Srinagar and some adjoining towns. There has been an upswing in the economic activity too. And the first few months of year were a boon as tourists came in large numbers until Kargil happened. But the opposite view holds that only some parts of the Valley were peaceful and that the rest of Kashmir was still reeling under the terror of violence.

The midnight knocks, demand for food and shelter, cordon and searches and frisking and beating on the streets still continue, they feel. For them there is no end to the fear.

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

UN General Assembly Sleeps Editorial, The Statesman, 27 Sept., 1999

The reason why Pakistan's usual rhetoric on Kashmir doesn't work as well on international audiences is its involvement in Afghanistan. The Russians have complained of the presence in Chechnya and Dagestan of militants trained in Pakistan and the Chinese too have found some in Xinjiang. Then, there is the Bin Laden-Taliban nexus which makes the Americans see red...

What does Sartaj Aziz mean when he says India practices "the black art of state terrorism in Kashmir"? India does not terrorise Kashmir, it represses it, it is not the aggrieved party vis-a-vis the Kashmiris, it maintains order. And if Indian agents are creating trouble in Pakistani cities - they may be - it is certainly not anywhere near the scale on which Pakistan has operated in Kashmir in the past and probably intends to do in the future... On terrorism, Pakistan's case is weak... No one now wants Kashmir to be handed over to Pakistan... Pakistan's case has been steadily weakened by what Pakistan itself has become - a state in permanent crisis, trying to hold on to its fragile identity, toying with militarism and Islam, a threat to its neighbours and nuclear potent. India's case may or may not be stronger, there is no way to consult the Kashmiris on the question, but it is certainly putting up a civilised appearance. Also Kashmir may just be a dead issue for the international community, even though it gets mentioned regularly in international conflict reports... One reason is that people have realised there is simply no solution to the problem in the immediate, it is best to let it rot in as much peace as possible. They will see when the next flare-up comes along. In other words, no comprehensive long-term peace strategy, on the lines of ... Israel or Northern Ireland, is considered possible at the moment...

US Stand on Kashmir Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 4 Oct., 99

... There are still not a few in the US who are influenced by a distorted picture of the Indo-Pakistani scene. The reason is not only the remnants of a habit of thinking belonging to the cold war days ... but also the belief that India tends to bully the much smaller Pakistan and represses the people of Kashmir. Unfortunately, Indian diplomatic efforts have not been successful enough ... and present the real picture about how the wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971 were started by Pakistan and how Kashmir represents the essence of India's multicultural polity as opposed to Pakistan's theocracy where even Muslim sects ... are virtual second class citizens, not to mention the Hindu and Christian minorities.

... Mercifully ... the Clinton administration has not

(Contd. on Page 512)

A.G. Noorani

On Balance-Sheet in Kashmir

... Since 1953 when Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed as CM and put behind the bars, India's Kashmir policy hinged largely on the continued imprisonment of one man, coupled with rigged elections. The interregnum from 1964-1975 was spent the same way, with spells of brief freedom. The Sheikh returned to power in 1975 after an accord with the Centre. India's policy now hinges on Farooq Abdullah alone. Sheikh Abdullah is dead. Farooq Abdullah stands discredited. How can he serve as a tribune of the people? ...

In which other democracy in the entire world can one find so continuous a record of poll rigging in just one region?... Where else, too, such systematic violation of human rights... Kashmir ... is a tragically fractured State with bestialities against the Hindus by the Pakistanis, the alienation of Kashmiris from the Union and the refusal of the Buddhists in Leh to accommodate Muslim refugees from Kargil.

How long will New Delhi rely on the renegades as instruments of its policy... This is not a status quo a democracy can live with. In the wake of Kargil, many an expert, in India and abroad, confidently proposed that the entire messy business be ended by converting the LoC into an international boundary... Surely any Indo-Pak accord on this basis would have to be submitted to the peoples of both halves of the state for their endorsement... Does any intelligent person expect the Valley to accept it? Or, will it be forced on them "for their own good"?

On two points international opinion is unanimous. There will be no plebiscite; but, nor any solution which is unacceptable to the people. Therein lies the challenge to diplomatic creativity - to devise a proposal which strikes a bare balance between the extreme positions of both sides - plebiscite and the status quo.

That would make sense only if they agree first to abandon their reliance on the use of force; Pakistan, to grab the state entire and India to suppress the people's

Redefining Kashmir Problem

Editorial, The Greater Kashmir, 4 October, 1999

The new autonomous mode of Hurriyat functioning was again underlined by the address of its ailing senior leader, Abdul Ghani Lone, to the contract group of Organisation of Islamic Countries...

Coupled with the statements of another senior leader of APHC Moulvi Umer Farooq ... debunking Osama bin Laden's jihad call on behalf of Kashmir and saying that Kargil hurt Kashmiri cause, it can be safely assumed that **Hurriyat is through a major redefining process of its role.** From being a tame organisation on the fringes of ongoing turmoil, the Hurriyat over the years has gradually

moved centrestage and become identified with the struggle. There has been an imperceptible and smooth shift from a stiff militant hold to a political grip over the separatist movement.

Though being roundly viewed earlier as the extension of Pakistan's meddling in Kashmir, Hurriyat of late has given enough credible indications that discourage this assessment. In fact, there is a definite attempt on its part to own and indigenise a problem that is

Hamid Gul, Former ISI Chief's Views on Kashmir

... Kashmir is not a question of land or territory, it is a question of fundamental human rights. Now the Indians want the Line of Control to be turned into a permanent border. The shortest solution is the most honourable and the least bloody - let the Kashmiri people exercise their right of choice...

... The Mujahideen, regardless of their ethnicity, have plenty of moral, legal and historical justification to challenge the usurper. It is a just war. The real problem is whenever India sits down for talks about Kashmir, their central motive is how to deny the Kashmiris their right of choice.... In bilateralism, at one end are the talks across the table, and, on the other, is a settlement in the battlefield. Our choice is and will remain the former.

... If India opts for a limited war and it results in a stalemate, the post-war scenario for India will be disastrous. It will blow the fragile Indian political integrity to smithereens... If this bone of discord is removed both our countries and people can share the bounties of the region's opportunities unfolding by the day.

... All this hinges upon the right of choice of the Kashmiris. Get over this psychological barrier and we shall have an ideal security and economic system that the rest of the world will envy.

(Source: The Week, 18 July, 1999)

exclusively being seen as a bilateral problem between the two claimant countries...

... History is witness to the fact that over the past fifty years, a bilateral view of the dispute has predominantly seen it as a territorial dispute rather than a problem of the people... Lying in wilderness for the past fifty years, the Kashmiris have a huge stake in any resolution to the conflict. The Kashmir problem has acquired a reality and rationale of its own, that can hardly be overlooked...

will. Far more than India realises, a policy of conciliation might yet reconcile the people of Kashmir to the Union. An effort must be made simultaneously to address those long-felt resentments of Pakistan on Kashmir which drove it repeatedly to one mad venture after another.

(Source: The Statesman, 23 September, 1999)

Views of

Hanumangarhi Mahant Baba Gyan Das

... The VHP is involved in grabbing temples. In the beginning, I was the only one here to oppose them. Now, everyone has come together – all the sadhus and mahants except for a few like Paramhans and Nritagopal Das of the Digambar Akhada...

Is making a temple some kind of magical trick? They claim to be cutting stones and doing the preparatory work but for the past eight years all they have produced is two pillars... In any case, if the Sunni Wakf Board loses the case, the site will go to the Nirmohi Akhara, not the VHP... Today, when the VHP leader Ashok Singhal comes to Ayodhya, none of us goes to meet him. After the elections are over, all the sadhus here will launch an agitation to free Ayodhya from the VHP and BJP. Those who trade in religion will not be allowed.

... No one here will dispute the idea that there should be a Ram temple there since it was his birthplace. But the temple should be built with love and understanding, not hatred and extremism like the VHP people are doing. We do not want a Ram temple that is made with blood.

The Muslims here are terrified of the VHP and its activists, not the Hindus of Ayodhya, not the sadhus and sants...

The BJP claims that there have been no riots since it came to power but I find this logic strange. *Jab ham hi danga karate hain, to jab hamari sarkar hai to danga kyon karayen?* ... People of all religions – Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians – fought for this country. India belongs to all equally. How can someone say that Muslims are not Indians? But the RSS wants to break the country and create a Hindu Rashtra which they can then control. I want a secular state in which all people are equal.

If people are converting to other religions, whose fault is this?... To stop conversions, you should persuade people convince them. Why do you want to have a law?

(Source: The Times of India, 28 September, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Offer**Letter to Baba Gyan Das, 6 October, 1999**

I have read your interview in the Times of India, New Delhi on 28 September, 1999 and I am deeply impressed by your broad outlook.

However, you have stated that a Ram Temple should be built on the site of the demolished Babari Masjid 'since it was his birth place'. Of course you have ruled out force for building the temple. But I would like to know from you if there is any scriptural evidence for the claim that **Shri Ram Chandrajai was born exactly on the site later occupied by the Babari Masjid**. If there is no such site, the proposed Ram Temple may be built

**Shahabuddin's Rejoinder to Goradia
Letter to The Pioneer, 23 September, 1999**

Shri Prafull Goradia's letter "Compromise Possible" (23 Sept., 1999) exemplifies the utter insensitivity of the Hindu elite to the religious sentiments of the Muslim minority.

First, the Ayodhya problem did not begin in 1986; it began in December 1949 with forcible occupation of the Babari Masjid, with administrative collusion. Then it lay dormant for nearly a quarter of a century when the VHP launched a campaign in October, 1983 for 'liberating Ram' and constructing a temple on the Babari Masjid site, culminating in the legal farce of 'opening' the doors of the Masjid and thus de-facto transforming the Masjid into a public Mandir. The Babari Masjid Movement was born only **after** this momentous event.

Second, a compromise is always possible, but not a surrender. The Muslim community has variously suggested that the proposed Ram Janambhoomi Mandir be built next to the Babari Masjid, without covering the site of the Babari Masjid; it has even offered Wakf land for the purpose.

Thirdly, the Gyanvapi Masjid and the Shahi Idgah continue to be functional Masjids, they are duly protected by the Law of 1991.

To say the least, Mr. Goradia is unrealistic if he thinks that the Muslim community will voluntarily surrender any Masjid to appease Hindu chauvinism. Ironically, Mr. Goradia calls a state, in which places of worship has been taken over by use of force, a 'paradise of religious tolerance and inter-religious bonhomie'. Is he still living in 1984? □

anywhere within the sacred limits of Ayodhya.

As you know, several sites in Ayodhya claim this honour. Next to Babari Masjid stands the Ram Janamsthan Mandir. Just outside the Babari Masjid was the Ram Chabutra. This was demolished alongwith the Babari Masjid. These sites have been long regarded as the birth-site of Shri Ram Chandrajai. The direction given in the pilgrim guide to locate the Janamsthan do not pinpoint the Babari Masjid site. You have also stated that you want a secular state in which all people are equal. This means that Mandirs, Masjids, Churches and Gurudwaras are to be equally respected. So how can you want a Masjid to be demolished and a temple built in its place.

Personally, I have many a time proposed that if the Hindu brethren so desire a grand and magnificent Ram temple may be built **on a site adjacent to the Babari Masjid on the Wakf land, which is in dispute, with the Ram Chabutra as the Griba Grabha**.

I request you to be kind enough to think over the matter and respond to the proposal made by me. □

**9 Accused in Babari Masjid
Demolition Case in 13th Lok Sabha**

Besides Home Minister L.K. Advani ... eight more accused of the Babari Masjid Demolition Case have won ... in the 13 Lok Sabha polls, while two others have lost. They include Vinay Katiyar, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti.

(Source: The Radiance Viewswweekly, 17-23 October, 1999)

Iqbal A. Ansari on Hashimpura Massacre

While communal riots had broken out in other parts of Meerut in May 1987, several hundred Muslims from Hashimpura Mohalla were picked up by the PAC during curfew on 22 May from their homes and taken away in trucks to the police station. A few days later about 50 bodies of those arrested were found floating in Upper Ganga Canal in Muradnagar, Distt. Ghaizabad. The bodies had gunshot wounds.

Inquiry reports by senior reputed journalists and organisations revealed that it was a case of barbaric cold-blooded murder of members of the Muslim community by the PAC personnel to terrorise them. The incident had shocked the entire nation. This ghastly incident of miniature 'ethnic cleansing' had aroused the conscience of the nation as well as of the international community... In its statement on 30 May 1987 the PUCL said that "such a thing could happen only in Hitler's land". The PUDR characterized it as "PAC Violence against Muslims"... The Amnesty International in its report ... came to the conclusion that "there is evidence to suggest that members of the PAC have been responsible for dozens of extra-judicial killings and disappearances..."

The UP Government made an ex-gratia payment of Rs.20,000/- for every death in Hashimpura. Consequent to the disposal of the case No. 506 of 1987 filed by Mrs. Nandita Haksar of the PUDR in the Supreme Court on 12.9.1990 the UP Government raised the compensation to Rs.40,000/-.

The Government of UP also instituted an inquiry into killings of Hashimpura Muslims by the CID. The CBCID submitted its report in February 1994 indicating 66 PAC personnel. It sought permission of the Government to prosecute the indicted personnel, but the Government of UP did not make any move.

On 15 February, 1995 Mohammad Yameen and others of Meerut filed a petition in the Supreme Court with the prayer that the UP Government be asked to produce the said report of the CBCID and initiate legal proceedings against the indicted personnel of the PAC-Police and for raising the amount of compensation to one lakh as had been then paid in other similar cases. The Supreme Court directed the petitioners to first approach the High Court. Accordingly the petitioners filed a petition in the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court (writ petition No. 1379 of 1995 (MIB)).

Meanwhile the Government of UP gave permission for prosecution of only 19 accused, chargesheet against whom was filed on 20 May 1996 (case No. 126/96) in the court of CJM, Ghaziabad. After several hearings bailable warrants were issued by the said court on 31.1.1997 against the 19 accused for appearance on 5 April, 1997.

Till date warrants have remained unserved.

In its delayed counter-affidavit filed on 1 March, 1997, the Government of UP ... claimed that since chargesheets had been filed against 19 of the accused, departmental proceedings were started against the other 37, and full payment of Rs.40,000/- as compensation had been paid for admitted 39 deaths in Hashimpura (Meerut) petition ... dismissed.

Till date the case is pending before the Lucknow Bench. The petitioners have not filed their rejoinder. In the CJM Ghaziabad court on every date non-service of the bailable warrant is routinely recorded.

All those who raised their voice of protest against the genocide have literally forgotten the massacre. The poor victims have been left to fend for themselves.

It is very saddening to recall that the appeal in May 1995 by the Minorities Council to Human Rights Groups to monitor the progress and intervene in the legal proceedings... (The victims) feel betrayed by the National and UP State Commissions for Minorities which have not used their statutory powers to make the Government of UP expeditiously prosecute all the 66 indicted personnel in a special court... They complain of the insensitivity of the National Minorities Commission in not responding to their representation on the subject submitted on 2 April, 1997. The National Human Rights Commission has not moved in the matter at all. It has not even directed the Government of UP to raise the amount of compensation for the Hashimpura killings (which were custodial killings) from the paltry sum of rs.40,000/- to at least Rs. 2 lakhs with interest awarded to Sikh victims of 1984 Delhi Communal Riots...

In the Minorities Council of India's May, 1999 appeal again reminded all those who had been expressing grave concern over violence against minorities - of which targets in the recent past have been Christians - to effectively intervene in the Hashimpura case to get the indicted PAC-Police personnel successfully prosecuted as impartial law-enforcement is the only way to make minorities and all other weak and vulnerable groups feel secure. In the appeals the uniqueness of the Hashimpura case was also pointed out as it was not a case of casualties caused during riots by excessive and indiscriminate use of firepower by the security forces in the name of controlling riots, as has usually happened in other riots. In Hashimpura locality there was no rioting at the time. Hundreds of innocent persons were picked up from their houses and taken to the police station out of whom about fifty able bodied healthy youth were selected for cold blooded killing with a view to (in the words of Nikhil Chakravarty) terrorising the entire Muslim community. In

view of these circumstances those killings and dumping of dead bodies in the Ganga canal are in the nature of custodial killings with genocidal intent...

... As Convener of the "Committee on Communal Riots" appointed by the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) (Iqbal A. Ansari) asked the Commission to acquire all the documents, including the CBCID report, related to the Hashimpura case. As official letters from the NCM did not succeed in eliciting the required information... the NCM had to requisition the documents on 16 March 1999 under powers vested in it under Section 9(4)(b) of the NCM Act 1992. In response to it ... some papers related to the case have been received by the Commission in June, 1999.

... The Minorities Council (wrote) to the Chairman, NCM on 20 July, 1999 impressing upon him the need for intervention by the Commission for speedily bringing to justice the 66 indicted personnel and for adequate compensation to the victims.

Fortunately the MCI's appeal to the national NGOs has not gone unheeded. The Citizens For Democracy (CFD) and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) have indicated positive response.

The Minorities Council under the presidency of Justice R.S. Narula in cooperation with the CFD and the PUCL and possibly of the All India Milli Council has decided to get the legal proceedings expedited.

The issues that need to be raised are the following: -

1. Payment of adequate compensation for all the admitted 39 / claimed 45 deaths ... by the terrorist action of the Police-PAC personnel, should be more than the amount of Rs.2 lakhs with interest awarded by the Delhi High Court on (5 July 1999) in Civil Writ Petition No. 1429 of 1996 (Bhajan Kaur vs. Delhi Administration) to the next of kin of those killed in anti-Sikh riots, commensurate with the heinous nature of the brutal crime...
2. No government enjoys the prerogative to arbitrarily decide that legal proceedings were required only against 19 out of 66 indicted personnel. It has not stated the reasons for this protective discrimination in favour of 37 others... It is for the Court to decide if any distinction was to be made between supposedly two sets of accused persons.
3. In view of the gravity of the crime and in view of the delay of 12 years, there is a need for asking the High Court/Supreme Court to monitor the trial which should be done on day-to-day basis by the Special Court headed by a judicial officer from outside UP.
4. The Government of UP should be asked to make a public declaration of disciplinary action taken against 37 PAC-Police Personnel and) the postings and promotions enjoyed by (them)...

Shahabuddin's Commentss

Letter to Iqbal A. Ansari, 29 Sept., 1999

I have read through your note on the Hashimpura Massacres.

Firstly, on a point of accuracy, the Muslim youth who were massacred in cold blood were not selected out of the residents taken to the police station. In fact the selection was made right in the spot and apparently one of the trucks, full of selectedable-bodied youth in the age group, 20-40, was not taken to the Police Station but direct to the killing field, out of the district of Meerut, to the Ganga Nehar near Muradnagar.

Secondly, to be fair, at my instance, Chandra Shekharji was the **first** person to expose the crime. He reacted strongly at a press conference where the survivor who had taken refuge at my residence was produced. In fact later this youth was interrogated by the DIG, CID, UP at my residence.

Thirdly, the date of submission of the UP CID Report should be checked again. I find it difficult to believe that the Report was submitted only in February, 1994.

I would like to know whether, at your request, the NCM has taken any action in the case after June, 1999. At the very least it can recommend to the Government of UP:

- a) enhancing compensation
- b) prosecuting the other 37.

I would also like to know if the NCM has agreed to intervene in the case, at least after the MCI, the PUCL, the CFD and others file the writ petition in the Supreme Court or the High Court.

(Contd. from Page 492)

gained nine from BJP ... and one from SP.

(Apart from 10 won by Congress, BJP's loss of 28 seats turned out to be a gain for BSP, SP and Ajit Singh's RLD which together wrested 18 seats from the saffron party...

The BJP received its worst drubbing ... since it stormed into the political scene riding high on the Ayodhya Movement in 1991, bagging 51 seats and 32 per cent votes. In subsequent elections the party grew stronger (with) 52 seats in 1996 and 57 in 1998.

(Source: The Statesman, 11 October, 1999)

(Contd. from Page 494)

community, do not matter and the Backward Muslims can take over the political leadership of the Muslim community, as they have already in some spheres.

I do not appreciate your emphasis on dividing the Muslim community which is a Backward Class, while in the case of the Shudras (OBC), the Achhuts (SC) and the Adivasi (ST), you never exclude their 'elite'. In fact, the BSP which you support has prospered on the support of the SC elite.

M.P. High Court

On Regulation of Teacher's Education

National Council for Teachers Education and another, Appellants v. Chouhan Education Society and others, Respondents.

D.P.S. CHAUHAN AND DIPAK MISRA, JJ.

National Council for Teacher Education Act (73 of 1993), Sections 12, 14 – Institution for teachers education – Strength of – Fixation of – Council has the authority and jurisdiction.

The Council has the authority and jurisdiction to fix the strength of the institution imparting education for he teaches at the time of grant of recognition if authority for fixation of strength is not permitted and if the strength already fixed by the University or the State Council is held valid, the whole purpose of the Act would be frustrated as the Act was brought with the intention and object to constitute and control the educational institution meant for teachers. It cannot be denied that if the standards are not met with proper education cannot be imparted. T

he norms and standards specify the details related to 'Conditions' required for recognition, permission and additional intake of seats for any course or training in teaches education. Suitable and adequate institutional building having academic wing, administrative wing, hostels, and staff quarters, contribute to qualitative teacher education programmes.

If the strength of an institution is sought to be changed, the educational institution or the institute has to rise up to the mark to the standard as provided for by the NCTE.

Constitution of India, Article 14 – Educational institution – Imparting education to teachers – Fixation of its intake capacity – Deficiencies are almost the same in every institution – But while other institutions were granted intake of 100 students, the petitioner has been granted intake of only 40 students – Direction to Council for making fresh assessment – Held, proper.

Constitution of India, Article 226 – Education – Institution imparting education to teachers – Educational society admitting students in excess of permitted strength – Permitted them to appear in examination though it had no authority to do so – Students also did not take care to know as to whether the institution had authority to impart education to them and whether the institution was authorized to impart education to so many students – Writ petition challenging the same – Direction by High Court to conduct and complete the examination and publish the result – not in accordance with law as holding of examination would not be a proper solution of the controversy involved.

(Source: AIR 1999 Madhya Pradesh 206)

A.P. High Court

On Establishment of Engineering College

Lavu Educational Society, Guntur, Petitioner v. The Government of Andhra Pradesh and others, Respondents.

G. BIKSHAPATHY, J.

A.P. Education Act (1 of 1982), Section 20 – Establishment of Engineering College – Approval by State Government – Rejection of – Reason that temporary accommodation is quite far away from permanent location – is irrelevant and unwarranted – More so when approval was granted by All India Council for Technical Education.

... Approval by All India Council for Technical Education – Grounds considered by Council for taking decision – Cannot be revised or reviewed by State Government for coming to different conclusion.

(Source: AIR 1999 Andhra Pradesh 335)

A New Vision in

Muslim Girls' Education in Kerala

Soudabi, the girl who won the first rank in this year's SSLC examination with record marks, has given a boost to Muslim girls' education in this Muslim-majority district where teenage marriage of girls is rampant.

First Muslim girl to get the first rank, Soudabi has grown to be a symbol... Soudabi's rank has warmed the hearts of champions of Muslim girls' education...

For Muslims particularly those in Malappuram it is cause for collective celebration.

The attention Soudabi's rank received and the praise heaped on her are an indication of the pride and delight of the community... Shortly after the SSLC first rank, two Muslim girls cornered the top honours in the VHSC examination: Fousiya of Kulanada won the first rank and K. Shajitha of Arathil the third rank. These were followed up by the outstanding performance of Muslim girls in the CBSE examination.

... A recent sample study, carried out by the UNFPA in the district, showed that eight per cent of the women surveyed were illiterate and that a huge majority of the illiterate women was Muslim... Many social evils like teenage marriage and teenage motherhood among the Muslims ... could be eradicated by giving women the opportunity for higher education...

The examples of Soudabis, Fousiyas and Shajithas are significant in the context of obscurantist tendencies sneaking back to the community...

The Muslim women's education scenario in the district has two distinct features: a near-total primary school entry and a heavy drop out rate in high school classes. One major reason for the alarmingly high drop out rate is the widespread practice of teenage marriage. (though) marriage of girls below 18 and boys below 21 is banned by law...

(Source: The Hindu, 22 July, 1999)

M.R. Haque on Waqf Experience in India

In India, which has the second largest Muslim population in the world, ... in the last 800 years, large number of movable as well as immovable properties have been dedicated, for the purpose recognised in Islam as religious, pious or charitable and have been categorised as Auqaf properties... Waqf is contrary to the concept of modern trusts as the property is not vested in a Trust but in God and is therefore, is perpetual, irrevocable and inalienable...

Various surveys and compulsory registration in the Waqf boards reveal that about three lakh Waqfs have so far been registered all over the country, so far. On the basis of this, it can be claimed that India has the largest number of Auqaf... We have never been satisfied with the surveys and registrations. There has been persistent dissatisfaction over the functioning of the Auqaf and of the Waqf Boards. The genuineness of this concern cannot be questioned... Most of the Waqf properties in India are in the form of land and, (therefore, subject to) litigation and encroachment unless protected and maintained properly... The protection (was) withdrawn under the British rule. This destroyed the very fabric of Auqaf management.

Development during British Rule

(Under the British Rule) Regulation XIX of Bengal Code, 1810, and Regulation VI of Madras Code, 1817, vesting general superintendence of the Waqf in several districts in the Board of Revenue, was promulgated but all that did not make any improvement in the situation till the enactment of The Religious Endowment Act, 1863 ... reflected a fundamental change in the perception of the British government regarding the responsibility of the state for proper Waqf administration. As per the provision of the Act, all religious establishments under the possession of the Board of Revenue or legal agents were transferred to the trustees and legal committees that were appointed to exercise the power of the Board of Revenue. This was followed by Qazi Act 1864, and Charitable Endowment Act, 1890.

But the basic problem was (that) inasmuch as the English law of Waqfs differed substantially from the English law of trust, ... the English courts pronounced judgements contrary to the Shariat.

The judgement of the Privy Council in the Abdul Fatah Mohammad Isak case snatched the power of the Muslims to establish Waqf alal-Aulad for the benefit of one's own family... The Waqf Validating Act, 1913, restored the right to create Waqf alal-Aulad... The Official Trustee Act 1913, covered the Waqfs meant mainly for charitable purpose. The Charitable and Religious Trusts Act, 1920, strengthened the administration of charitable and religious trust.

The Musalman Waqf Act, 1923, ensured audit of accounts of mutawallis. Several Waqf acts were also passed by the State Government to augment the Waqf

administration...

Development in the Post-Independence Period

... The Central Waqf Act, 1954 ... was a milestone in the evolution of the Waqf legislation and a big step in the betterment of the Waqf administration. The Act repealed most of the earlier Acts and covered the entire country except W. Bengal, UP, Maharashtra and Gujarat (except Kutch)... However, the actual working of the Waqf Act, 1954 manifested many deficiencies, leading to amendments in the years 1959, 1964, 1969 and 1984, finally leading to the passage of the Waqf Act, 1995...

The Waqf Act, 1995 has been regarded as a very good piece of legislation ... by legal experts. It is applicable to the entire country except Jammu & Kashmir and Dargah, Khawaja Saheb, Ajmer... It has also made the constitution of Waqf boards more democratic with (wider representation and) the predominance of elected members...

This (democratic) character ... may improve the functioning of the Auqaf and of the Waqf boards... The powers vested with the chief executive officer of the boards to serve notice on encroachers of Waqf property and to take assistance of the sub-divisional magistrates in case the encroacher does not vacate the Waqf property is a new provision in the direction. Moreover, in contrast to a normal limitation of twelve years in the Waqf Act, 1954, (which was raised to thirty years by an amendment in 1984), (under the) Waqf Act, 1995, there is no limitation of time for filing suits for recovery of Waqf properties under adverse possession. The Act also imposes restrictions of mutawallis on sale, exchange, mortgage of immovable properties of the Waqf. The leasing of Waqf property is now possible only through a public notice, which may lead to transparency and better income. Contrary to the previous Act, now Waqf properties of religious character such as Dargahs, Khanqahs and mosques cannot be alienated, except strictly under the law. There is a provision for setting up tribunals in each state to resolve disputes relating to Waqf property expeditiously... For the first time, for erring mutawalli(s) fine and penalties of removal from the post and imprisonment had been evolved for their acts of omission and commission and their failure to get Waqf properties registered with the Waqf board.

The Waqf Act, 1995 still in the process of implementation all over the country is bound to make the Waqf administration more (effective) and uniform...

Implementation of Waqf Act, 1995

The Waqf Act, 1995, passed by Parliament in November, 1995... New Waqf boards have been constituted seven states and three union territories: Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Delhi and Lakshadweep... The State Governments/

Union Territory administrations that have already constituted Waqf Tribunals are Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The Union Territories of Delhi and Lakshadweep have done likewise... The Waqf Act, 1956 (appears to) need some improvement and the efforts are on for the same.

The Central Waqf Council (CWC), the apex body to advise the government on matters concerning the ... Waqf ... was established in December, 1964, by an amendment to the Waqf Act...

... There is a need to give a fresh look at the relationship between the CWC, the state Waqfs boards and the state governments. (Also) the powers of the Council (needs to be) categorically defined...

Unfortunately, most of the encroachers and grabbers of the Waqf properties are members of the (Muslim) community... The intelligentsia, which expresses its disgust, off and on, towards the management of Waqfs, does not take active interest and remains ignorant of the ground realities. Except for a tiny minority, the majority in the community remains silent... They are not aware of the (latest) developments ... in legislation and surveys...

The pace of development of Auqaf has been less than expected... Therefore, the potential of income generation ... of Auqaf has not yet been exploited fully.

In 1974, a scheme for the development of urban Waqf properties was launched by the Council for which (it) gets a grant-in-aid every year... Up to March 31, 1999, as many as 98 projects had been provided a loan of Rs. 1,762 lakhs. Of these 53 projects have been completed and the remaining are under progress...

In addition, 72 minor projects have been given loans amounting to Rs. 318 lakhs. Of these ... 47 have already been completed... The scheme for the development of urban Waqf properties envisages that 33 per cent of the increased income would be spent on the technical education/vocational-training programme of the poorer Muslims and on the scholarships to the poor and needy students...

The development of rural Waqf properties has also attracted attention of the Council and a new scheme for the development of rural Waqf properties has been launched on the pattern of the development of urban Waqf properties scheme... But these schemes can be successful only when there is a movement in the community for the protection, maintenance and development of Auqaf...

(Source: The Nation and the World, 1 July, 1999)

(Contd. from Page 502)

I do not deny your right to demand independence but the APHC must come out loud and clear whether it supports or endorses terrorism as a legitimate means for securing the freedom of the state. As you say all life is sacrosanct. So is human dignity. Then how can you support the violence unleashed by the militants, Kashmiri or otherwise? Granted the Indian security forces have violated human rights, can one wrong justify another? □

Aawaz-e-Niswan: National Conference Mumbai, 4-6 June, 1999 - Conclusions Unanimously Accepted Demands

The following demands were unanimously accepted in the Conference:

- Unilateral and arbitrary triple Talaq must be banned.
- Men and women should have equal rights to divorce.
- Divorce needs to be accompanied with financial rights.
- There should be compulsory registration of Talaq.
- There should be a systematized procedure for divorce.
- The right to maintenance under Section 125 should be reinstated for divorced Muslim women.
- Women should retain the right to reside in the matrimonial home after divorce.
- Mehr should be a value-added amount and should be paid in full. It should be in the form of property, gold, or fixed deposits where the value of it increases with time.
- Women should get custody of children if they want it. Financial status should not be taken into account.
- Women and men should have equal rights to natural guardianship.
- All communities should have the legal right to adopt.

Unresolved Issues and Debates

In the discussions of the conference, it was felt that there was need for more work and debate before some issues could be resolved enough to carry forward campaigns on. These were:

- The procedure for registration of marriage. The procedure by which marriages would be registered remained unresolved. While some felt that for Muslim marriages, the nikahnama was an initial registration and proof of marriage, the process by which all marriages would be registered needs more discussion.
- All participants agreed that Mehr amounts should be higher and given to the woman as her right, but what we need to further work out is how and when Mehr should be given.
- Similarly while there was complete consensus on registration of Talaq, the modalities of where Talaq can be given (in court, in public, like nikah, etc.) and how and where it should be registered need to be worked out.
- We also need a larger and intensive debate on what a standard nikahnama should contain and how such a standard nikahnama can be followed everywhere.
- There is also need for more discussion to work on the details of women's right to residence in the matrimonial home and right to matrimonial property.

(Contd. from Page 505)

deviated from its sensible stand against any mediation in the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan's insistence on such intervention is, of course, intended merely to muddy the waters, just as its call for a solution of the problem within a specific period denotes the attitude of a hustler... Pakistan knows that its case in Kashmir is weak; hence the call on outsiders to step in... But the international recognition of the terrorist threat which Pakistan now represents is beginning slowly to have an impact. □

RSS: Eminent Civilian and Diplomat Rajeshwar Dayal's Testimony Golwalkar's Conspiracy to Set Western UP on Fire in 1947-48

I must record an episode of very grave nature when the procrastination and indecision of the UP Cabinet led to dire consequences. When communal tension was still at fever-pitch, the Deputy Inspector General of Police of the Western Range, a very seasons and capable officer, B.B.L. Jaitley, arrived at my house in great secrecy. He was accompanied by two of his officers who brought with them two large steel trucks securely locked. When the trucks were opened, they revealed incontrovertible evidence of a dastardly conspiracy to create a communal holocaust throughout the Western districts of the province. The trunks were crammed with blueprints of great accuracy and professionalism of every town and village in that vast areas, prominently marking out the Muslim localities and habitations. There were also detailed instructions regarding access to the various locations, and other matters which amply revealed their sinister purport.

Greatly alarmed by those revelations, I immediately took the police party to the Premier's(Pant's) house. There, in a closed room, Jaitley gave a full report of his discovery, backed by all the evidence contained in the steel trunks. Timely raids conducted on the premises of the RSS had brought the massive conspiracy to light. The whole plot had been concerted under the direction and supervision of the supremo of the organisation himself. Both Jaitley and I pressed for the immediate arrest of the prime accused, Golwalkar, who was still in the area.

Pantji could not but accept the evidence of his eyes and ears and expressed deep concern. But instead of agreeing to immediate arrest of the ring leader as we had hoped, and as Kidwai would have done, he asked for matter to be placed for consideration by the Cabinet at the next meeting. It was no doubt, the matter of political delicacy as the roots of the RSS had gone deeply into the body politic. There were also other political compulsions and RSS sympathisers, both covert and overt, were to be found in the Congress party itself and even in the Cabinet. It was no secret that the presiding officer of the Upper House, Atma Govind Khar, was himself an adherent and his sons were openly members of the RSS.

At the Cabinet meeting there was the usual procrastination and much irrelevant talk. The fact that the police had unearthed a conspiracy which would have set the whole province in flames and that the officers concerned deserved warm commendation hardly seemed to figure in the discussion. What ultimately emerged was that a letter should be issued to Shri Golwalkar pointing out the contents and nature of the evidence which had been gathered and demanding explanations thereof...

Golwalkar, however, had been tipped off and he was nowhere to be found in the area. He was tracked down southwards but he managed to elude the couriers in

pursuit. This anfractuouse chase continued from place to place and weeks passed. Come 30 January 1948 when the Mahatma, that Supreme apostle of peace, fell to a bullet fired by an RSS fanatic. The whole tragic episode left me sick at heart...

(Source: The Radiance Viewswweekly, 10-16 October, 1999)

RSS: Demonising Religious Minorities

The Sangh Parivar (SP) ideology openly proclaims the Muslims, the Christians and the Communists as the enemies of the Hindu nation. It is around this that different issues are given religious veneer, which in turn prompt the people like Dara Singh and Godse to light the match or pull the trigger to finish off the 'enemy'...

In the last five decades country had witnessed whipping up of 'anti-Muslim' passion by different organs of SP by falsely propagating that Islam (was) spread through sword, that Muslim kings destroyed Hindu Temples, that Muslims are more loyal to Pakistan, and that they are polygamous and produce more children. Similarly at the (time) of partition an intense 'hate Gandhi' atmosphere was created by RSS propaganda, which ended in (his) assassination...

Now they have turned the hate campaign against the Christians and the recent murders are taking place in its backdrop, a continuum of the communal riots directed against Muslims and the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Here it is important to note that since Gandhiji's murder the proliferation of RSS into SP has ensured a 'division of labour' because of which the Khakhi clad volunteer does not have to wield the lathi against the 'enemies of Hindu nation'.

The 'clever' organisation of SP ensures that these 'dedicated soldiers' of SP can later be disowned by the RSS or SP to protect the organisation from wrath of law. This disowning is possible, as there is no proper record keeping of the membership of these organisations...

Apart from nabbing the culprits ... it is equally or more important to counter the 'hate ideology' which is demonising country's minorities. The fight against the communal forces must not confine itself to the legal battles. We must oppose these forces in cultural, ideological and political spheres to strengthen the liberal, tolerant ethos of the society.

(Source: P.R. Ram in The Indian Currents, 13-19 September, 1999)

RSS has never supported the act of Godse and was the first to condemn the assassination through a written statement. The statement, issued within hours of the ghastly assassination, said that it was an un-Hindu act.

- H.V. Seshadri, SG, RSS

Aryans, Sanskrit: Roots of Indian Culture?

Gail Omvedt Questions Hindutva Postulates

Language is a crucial component of identity, and so an important locus of emotion, controversy and aspiration. India, perhaps the most multicultural country (has) a multitude of them. Among these, Sanskrit stands out for its sacred character....

Sanskrit to its proponents, is much more than sacred, it constitutes both the divine world and the core of Hindu/Indian culture. To the ... sociologist, M.N. Srinivas, "Sanskritisation" was a term symbolising the lower castes' movement towards the social standards that symbolised all that was elite Indian; to the now-caretaking BJP Government, it is a language that all the children of India should learn and as early as possible, the only language that would really assure their Indianness. And there has always been a stubborn element claiming that Sanskrit is also the oldest language, the language not only of the Aryans but of the Indus civilisation itself...

The discovery of linguistic connections between Sanskrit and the European language (gave) rise to an "Aryan myth" in which many Europeans, in true orientalist fashion, exalted the Aryan past of India, romanticised its mystic traditions, and explained caste in terms of an Aryan conquest over inferior native peoples... The "Aryan Myth" also won widespread acceptance in India itself.

The Indian elite in the 19th Century themselves took up and used this myth for their own purposes ... justifying upper-caste dominance through their identification with Europeans, while the non-Aryan "indigenous" peoples, the Shudras and Dalits, were taken as a non-Aryan black majority. It was only when non-Brahman and Dalit movements, first Phule and then the Dravidian movement and finally the Dalit movement even in north India in the Twenties reversed this, claiming an ethical as well as historical superiority for the conquered non-Aryans, that the elites changed their line. Golwalkar, who took charge of the RSS after Hedgewar, argued in the Thirties that in fact the Aryans had originated in India. It is this revised form of the Aryan myth that forms the basis for much of Hindutva thinking today and motivates pseudo-scholarly books... It represents an ideology which tries to reconcile the assertion of Indian "national unity" with the claim to priority of Sanskrit and the Aryans.

... No serious scholars would deny that sections of what are generally called "Indo-European" peoples migrated into India from Iran sometime before 1500 B.C. None would deny that the language they spoke, later to become classical Sanskrit, was related to European languages. None outside of India would accept the current Hindutva theory that their language was the language of the Indus civilisation.

There is still debate about whether these "Vedic Aryans" actually destroyed the Indus civilisation, many archaeologists argue that the primary agent of its fall was

ecological destruction. Most historians and archaeologists also dispute the notion that there was a single, massive Aryan "invasion"... There is little doubt that the Aryans were a more war-like group than the inhabitants of northwest India at the time; there is little doubt that they were less "civilised" (they had no cities, no writing) than many of those they confronted, with superiority only in weapons technology - the horse, the bow and the chariot...

... Though the language found on the seals of the Indus civilisation has still not been deciphered, there is consensus that this language was Dravidian, that proto-Dravidian languages were prominent in North India at the time of Aryan entry...

Sanskrit itself emerged in the context of conflict, conquest and struggle with Dravidian speakers, in a social process in which the Vedic Aryans were trying to protect themselves from social-linguistic contact, maintain the purity of their language and stigmatise the speech of those they considered to be slaves or "dasas". Language became a sign not only of identity but also of purity... In spite of this attitude, they could not avoid Dravidian influences on some of the basic features of the language.

... Dravidian languages, then, are older than Sanskrit. The secular, perhaps even, can claim priority with the sacred... But Hindutva proponents are reluctant to admit this; to them Indian identity involves not only the sacredness of Sanskrit but its centrality, its priority. As a result, widespoken "adivasi" languages like Santhal and Munda hardly receive any linguistic or media recognition, while Sanskrit is taught in schools and given programme on the media. This effort to derive everything from Sanskrit has led to contradictions, indeed the proponents of Hindutva sometimes tie themselves up in logical knots trying to maintain their particular version of unity-in-diversity. How, for instance, can the condemnation of efforts to divide "North" from 'South' or "Aryan from Dravidian" at the same time insist on an "Aryan-Sanskritic" priority...?

Nevertheless ... it is a sad reality that so many, even progressive North Indian scholars are reluctant to admit the priority of Dravidian languages, or face up to the destructive aspects of the role of the Aryans...

It is not surprising then, that students in schools throughout most of India should go on thinking that Sanskrit indeed is the fount of Indian culture and the Aryans are "our ancestors".

The failure of progressives throughout India to really challenge the priority asserted for Sanskrit and to confront the genuine claims for the priority of Dravidian languages has made it almost impossible to achieve an alternative understanding of Indian history and culture that could really confront Hindutva. Language ... remains subordinated to politics in India today.

(Source: The Hindu, 19 September, 1999)

Vasantha Surya on a Frankenstein Called Hindutva

... Some who helped to bring the BJP to power have been trying to justify or rationalise their disastrous choice ... looking up to the leaders to throw them something – some small evidence of civilised intentions – which could be quickly flung over the unmistakable, the obscene spectacle of bigotry. Embarrassment has turned to alarm, and now to fear and revulsion as the Frankenstein monster going by the name of 'Hindutva' (which is nothing but pseudo-Hinduism) exposes itself.

To understand how 'Hindutva' functions, it is necessary to look at those whom 'Hindutva' serves. The core constituency of the BJP is the mercantile class rooted in the North and the West, but with branches all over the country and strategic alliances of all kinds with other elite groups (including the 'thinking class' which so prides itself on its independence). It finds the major political parties, national and regional, but the BJP has a claim on the major part of its munificence. This is because more than any other party, it is free of socialism and egalitarianism (and) has a Hindu majoritarian agenda. Toughened by its RSS education, the BJP is more willing than any other party to reach inside the teeming cornucopia of Indian life for anything it can feed into the

maw of the majoritarian agenda.

Along with its fraternal organisations ... the ruling party is committed to grinding up everything to the uniform consistency demanded by a majoritarian vision of the Indian nation-state. Art, literature, music, cinema, science, history, education, sports (yes, even cricket!), fundamental rights, the Constitution – even gods and goddesses, symbols and myths which they claim are exclusively "Hindu" – everything is grist to the mill. One minority after another has been sent a message: *You do not belong! You had better behave!*

... this synthetic khaki religion ... this new cult has been spliced together out of certain contradictory urges among the Hindu 'thinking' classes. One is to boast about the past and congratulate themselves on the superiority of Hindu culture and religion; another to denounce other creeds for their 'backwardness', their 'fanaticism' and other offensive propensity to convert others. A third urge is to imitate those very creeds, seeing in them the organisational strength which Hinduism lacks, and secretly admiring them for their doctrinal exclusivism, so useful for creating a 'community of the faithful'...

(Source: The Hindu, 2 February, 1999)

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Imtiaz Ahmad on Secularism

... Gandhi was bold enough to admit that secularism could be relevant to India only in the sense of tolerance and accommodation and equated the secular orientation in the Constitution to sarvadharmā sambhav (equal treatment of all religions)... Nehru abandoned the advocacy of the European-type of secularism and equated secularism in India to "equal distance from all religions."

Critics ... have generally focussed on precisely the ground that was either left open or imperfectly defined by the architects of new India. On the traditionalist and religious fundamentalist side, the critics have claimed that the secular idea ... undermines religion or negates its positive role in ordering life. On the secular liberal side, the critics have faulted secularism for its foreignness to the distinctively indigenous genius which rejects the dichotomy of the religious and secular or encompasses both within a common framework for life.

Both sets of criticisms ... are widely off the mark in that they take the European conception of secularism and plant it on the Indian soil merely in order to attack it... Under the circumstances, the mounting criticism of secularism on grounds of its foreignness or its negation of the positive dimensions of religion is little more than a kind of shadow-boxing.

Taking a practical view, it would appear that leaving secularism largely undefined ... was after all not a bad strategic choice. The ambiguity allowed secularism to be accepted widely among the different social and religious communities...

Muslims and other groups were initially skeptical of what secularism might entail and whether the state was actually seriously committed to upholding it. They preferred to wait and watch. **Then they rejected it, claiming that it carried the potential to deny them a basis for the preservation of their cultural distinctiveness and religious integrity.** Finally, they recognised the positive role of secularism and have been using it to advantage wherever possible. There may be no clear recognition as yet among the Muslims that the claims of the secular state and society impose limits and they cannot simply take it as given but have a responsibility to play a role to strengthen it. They are enthusiastic in demanding that the state and others act in a secular fashion, but are reluctant to insist that secularism be adhered to when members of their own community act in ways which seem to undermine secularism. Even so, secularism is seen by most Muslims as a positive feature, in marked contrast to a growing section of Hindus which is inclined to reject secularism on the ground that it does injustice to the Hindu historical heritage and turns an "epistemic error into a political blunder."

Ambiguity over the precise meaning and content of secularism may have been an advantage to begin with, but it ... is being turned fast into a cover to dislodge secularism from its place. Fundamentalist groups ... are trying to play upon this ... ambiguity to enlarge the spaces

for their operations and are suggesting their own ideologically surcharged points of view as alternatives to secularism. Under the circumstances, the need to define secularism and put a positive content into it ... has become imperative... People see religion as a source of their self-definition in a world where their identity both as individuals and as groups or communities is constantly being threatened by developments at the national as well as global level. Therefore, while they might not be devout practitioners of religion on an individual-personal plane, they like to retain the integrity of religion as the basis of a distinctive communitarian identity... They are more than ever inclined to come out in demonstration of a sense of solidarity...

People are unwilling to concede their religious faith and communitarian self-identification to the state, but they also expect that what communitarian self-identification they choose to project should not exercise a determining influence over their life chances. They want the choice to uphold their religion in both the private and public domains and to stick to their communitarian self-identification without direct interference from the state or other social and religious communities. At the same time, they insist that ... they should enjoy equal access to assets in society, economy and the polity. They are contending that the present dispensation of secularism has acted to the detriment of some groups and advantage of others and this is tantamount to a negation of the secular credo...

Unless secularism becomes an ideology and public policy capable of ensuring for the people so vastly different in their religious outlook and world-views equal opportunities and access to social and economic assets without their religious faith or self-identification working as a negative factor against them, we are likely to have more and more of communalism, conservatism and religious fundamentalism and less and less of secularism.

(Source: The Hindu, 31 July, 1999)

Shahabuddin's Comments, Letter to The Hindu, 2 August, 1999

Prof. Imtiaz Ahmad's article "Secularism in Search of a Meaning" (31 July, 1999) sets up an artificial dichotomy, and then demolishes it! Indian secularism is a well-defined concept. Its object was never to secularise the Indian society which, both Gandhi and Nehru knew, was inherently religious but to set up a **secular state** which did not identify itself with any religion, which respected religion and extended equal respect to all religions and which maintained neutrality and equidistance in situation of inter-religious conflict. By implication secularism meant protection of religious minorities and their right to identity equality. What more of a meaning or positive content does Prof. Imtiaz Ahmad desire?

No doubt, in practice under pressure from the majoritarian forces, the State, and particularly the

(Contd. on Page 518)

Parvathi Menon on the Legacy of Tipu Sultan

By its indecisive and inept handling of what should have been the inaugural event of the bicentennial of Tipu Sultan, the J.H. Patel Government in Karnataka has let an important political opportunity slip out of its hands. Tipu Sultan, the 18th century Mysore ruler, died on May 4, 1799 while defending his capital, Seringapatnam (Srirangapatna) from British attack. A function to commemorate his death anniversary was to have been held by the State Government in Srirangapatna on May 4. This was to have set in motion a year-long programme highlighting and reaffirming the historical legacy of this remarkable ruler who waged one of the earliest and most uncompromising fights against British rule. A series of government-sponsored events, well-planned and with strong academic and cultural inputs, would have helped correct the distortions that have gained currency in recent times in the understanding of Tipu Sultan; they would also have strengthened the secular spirit in these communally charged times. But this was not to be.

... The function marking the death anniversary was held on May 15 at Srirangapatna... Security was tight owing to threats by the Bajrang Dal... The only event that took place on schedule was an International Seminar organised by the Tourism Department on May 5 and 6. This, in effect, became the official function.

... The Janata Dal Government's vacillations and lack of purpose have left the field open for the Sangh Parivar to peddle its communalised version of Tipu Sultan's place in history. The Bajrang Dal has already unleashed a pamphlet war questioning the popular view that Tipu Sultan was a tolerant and far-sighted ruler... The pamphlets project the Hindu fundamentalist view that Tipu was not a "true Kannadiga" and that he was an Islamic bigot. They further claim that Tipu's father Haider Ali usurped power from the Wodeyars and changed the official language from Kannada to Persian. According to the Karnataka gazette, "some 8,000 temples were destroyed by Tipu." (Bajrang Dal) reeled off figures of even "forced conversions" – 40,000 persons in Mangalore and Kodagu. Even more ominous than this onslaught of false and propagandist history is the viciousness with which the Sangh Parivar has hit out at those who tried to contest this viewpoint and who seek to use the bicentennial celebrations to promote communal harmony and secularism. ...

Through all this, the question remains; what is the legacy of Tipu Sultan, and does it have contemporary relevance? How does modern research evaluate the life and times of this unusual ruler? On the one hand there is this view which feeds the purpose of Hindu communalism – that Tipu may have been a clever strategist but he was a Muslim bigot driven by the motive to convert people. On the other hand there is the view that Tipu Sultan was an early practitioner of secularism, inspired by a nationalist zeal in his fight against colonialism. The first view draws largely from the hostile accounts of Tipu by the British.

They had an obvious purpose in discrediting Tipu by

calling him a tyrant and a bigot, as he posed the most serious challenge to their rule in the 18th century. The second view derives from source material penned by those who were sympathetic to Tipu and his cause – Persian accounts, for example – and the writings of many Frenchmen who worked and fought in India. The French were Tipu's allies. There is also a third view; that there was nothing remarkable about Tipu in a modern sense, he was an 18th century prince like any other who sought to retain his feudal privileges which the British were threatening to take away. This view holds that he was not secular in the modern sense of that word, but found it politically expedient to pursue a broad policy of religious tolerance in a country where a wide range of faiths and religious beliefs existed.

These views found expression at a two-day seminar organised by the Department of Tourism in Bangalore on May 5 and 6. Prof. Aniruddha Ray, who specialises in the history of the late 18th century, said: "Tipu followed a tradition of statecraft that was already strong in the Deccan: that of maintaining a public distance from religion." The Bahmanis, and the Vijayanagar rulers before them, all followed this practice.

The seminar, which brought Tipu scholars together, was indicative of the interest generated in the history of this period and of the large collection of sources that exist in regions and countries as far away as Scotland and Australia. Four papers based on sources available in France were presented. A view of Tipu's administration was provided by a study of a trilingual Hukamnama by Prof. A.R. Kulkarni. Written in Marathi, Kannada and Persian, the Hukamnama is an order signed by Tipu Sultan to his chief officers on the rules and regulations of governance. Anne Buddle, Registrar, National Galleries of Scotland, presented an interesting account of the economic and technological landscape of 18th century Mysore...

Taken together, the historical evidence of the period suggests that at a personal level Tipu was a versatile and innovative ruler, in constant search of knowledge. He seemed to have possessed the conviction, in embryo, that in order to make Mysore strong he had to emulate the European powers in developing industry and commerce. Tipu was accurate in identifying the British as his principal enemy. His legacy can be enriched only when new material is incorporated into the history of his life and times.

(Source: The Frontline, 4 June, 1999)

(Contd. from Page 517)

administration, acquired a tilt and a colour and the religious minorities were denied equal access to 'social assets, economy and polity'. State secularism cannot by itself erode private communalism or abolish religious conservatism or fundamentalism. These social objectives can be achieved only through education, development and modernisation, within the context of a secular state. Prof. Imtiaz should not confuse the State structure with social processes.

Mukul Keshavan:

Is Indian History Merely a Hindu Pageant?

... The equivalent question, that is, what is the impact of Hinduism on India, is never asked... the reason the question is not asked is simple: since India is seen as Hindu, the question is redundant...

So the question of religious influence is generally asked to understand how extinguished or marginal faiths flavour the constitutive or mainstream one. To assess the influence of Islam on India, is a majoritarian brief... To explore the impact of Islam on India is a legitimate enterprise. No malign Hindu demons need lurk in a mind that frames that question. I am suggesting that the matching question – the influence of Hinduism on India – is not as often (or ever) asked because of a lazy reflex that assumes that Hinduism was the context for everything that happened in Indian history. This assumption does our intellectual life no credit... Indonesia ... a predominantly Muslim nation, routinely examines the way in which Islam came to influence and dominate Indonesian society. Europeans have for centuries tried to understand how Christianity came to permeate and then transform a continent...

Were we to assess the impact of Hinduism on India, it would help to see Hinduism in the perspective of time, to begin to see it as something that happened in the course of a historical past instead of assuming, by a kind of default, that the backdrop of Indian history is a fuzzily embracing and eternal Hinduism. From this point of view, India's greatest debt to Islam is the presence of a hundred million Muslim citizens who, by their very presence, interrogate the sometimes unthinking, sometimes all-too-thought-out position that Islam, along with other 'minor' traditions, provides colour and variety to the Hindu pageant that is Indian history. (Source: The Times of India, 15 August, 1999)

What About Jain and Buddhist Temples Destroyed by Hindu Rulers

RSS chief Rajendra Singh reportedly in Lucknow has asked Muslims to hand over the temples of Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura to the Hindus. (in lieu of) "around 3,000 Hindu temples were demolished by Muslim rulers..." There could hardly be a more attractive offer for the Muslims to buy peace, nay to survive, in their own country. Does the RSS (and its front organisation BJP, VHP, etc) want the history to be rewritten; if so, of which period? Also how does the figure of 3,000 temples include Jain and Buddhist temples? Have the Jains and Buddhists (who form part of Indian society as much as Hindus) been consulted before offering the deal to Muslims? Again has any study been made by the RSS and its allies to identify hundreds of Jain and Buddhist temples ... destroyed or turned into Hindu temples by Hindu rulers? Is it too much to expect Hindus to show the same magnanimity to Jains and Buddhists as they expect from Muslims, by restoring the Jain and Buddhist temples...

(K.Y. Shrenik's letter in The Hindustan Times, 29 September, 1999)

National Council of Churches in India Joint Statement on 'Communal Cleansing in Orissa, 12 September, 1999

We the Christians in India along with all the minorities, the marginalised and all fellow patriots condemn the killing of Sheik Rehman and Father Aruldoss by the fascists.

The fact that 'Communal Cleansing' is the national agenda of Fundamentalists and their criminal cadres has been established once again by these acts. Each of these incidences was preceded by distribution of hate literature or holding of hate campaign by RSS/VHP/Bajrang Dal as evidenced in the enclosed comprehensive document.

In spite of the effort of Justice Wadhwa to sidetrack the truth, the records of depositions before that Commission establish beyond any doubt the organizational identity of Dara Singh, Rajkishore Mahanta and other criminals associated with RSS/VHP/BD. After every such attack ... on the minorities, the Sangh Parivar comes to defend the criminals... Thereby not only betraying their link with these criminals but also confirming their fascist agenda...

Therefore, we demand that all the anti-social criminal cadres be banned. We also demand appropriate action (against) the Home Secretary and the DGP of Orissa for their misleading statements against the minorities...

K. Rajaratnam	Aruldoss James	V. Devasahayam
Prasanna Kumari	M. Ezra Sargunam	E. Sunder Raj

M.D. Nalapat on Causes of Conversion

Choice is central to democracy, and this includes the right to adopt a different faith...

Those Hindu fundamentalist organisations which seek to scare away 'saviours of souls' of the Staines variety through murder are acting as allies of the alien interests in subverting the prospects for social stability and economic growth. Missionaries succeed in their task not because Christians are active but Hindus are: in discriminating against their co-religionists by following the corrosive tenets of the caste system...

So long as tribal Hindus (sic) are not treated as the equals of their plains cousins, there will be an incentive for many to escape through the embrace of a faith that does not perpetually condemn them as inferior...

... For the 85% of the Indian population outside the circle of the higher castes it made little difference whether they were exploited by Rajput or by Mughal despots... Several 'defenders' of the country's greatness still practice the prejudice that warped and destroyed much of society... So long as caste arrogance and discrimination continue so, will the motivation for conversion. Dignity is a basic human right, and if this is denied by one set of beliefs, then the victim will seek it elsewhere. If much of the country has yet to get converted to Christianity and Islam, the reason lies not in the Dara Singhs but in the hundreds of Hindu social reformers, especially from the underprivileged sections (like) Jyotiba Phule and Sri Narayana...

(Source: The Times of India, 30 September, 1999)

Renaming Jharkhand as Vananchal

A.J. Philip in The Indian Express, 8 March, 99

In the lexicon of Hindutva, the word adivasi has disappeared. The Sangh Parivar prefers to call them vanvasis (dwellers of forests or jungles). It is just a step away from calling them junglis (illiterate, uncouth and uncivilised). Thus the fall in the status of a people who take pride in calling themselves the adi (original) people of the land is at once apparent. This metamorphosis is the fallout of a deliberate policy of the Sangh to deny the tribals the status they deserve... Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, the largest Sangh-affiliated body working among the tribals, started in 1952 ... is part of a grand project of rewriting history which the parivar and its affiliates have ventured into...

The tribals' response has been quite unlike that of the untouchables, who find the name Harijans (children of God), coined by Mahatma Gandhi, highly patronising and condescending and have, therefore, been resisting it with all their might. Instead, they prefer to call themselves Dalits, a term which can be applied to the socially underprivileged of all communities. The reason why the Sangh denies adivasis the status of the original dwellers is that it runs counter to its own claim that the Aryans, who brought Vedic civilization to the country, are the original inhabitants of the land.

Historians cast in the Hindutva mould have been turning all historical evidence upside down in their bid to prove that the Aryans are not immigrants. Akbar's chronicler exclaimed, "What a series of years, of centuries must necessarily have elapsed before the boundless tract of country, inhabited by wild and vigorous tribes, could have been brought over to Brahminism." The renaming of the adivasis is a continuation of this very process under which they become yet another low caste of Hinduism.

... The adivasis, whom the anthropologist calls the Fourth World or the indigenous people, suffered the first lexical assault when they were brought under the official term Scheduled Tribes by the British, who drew up separate legal provisions to look after their interests. The framers of the Constitution found it convenient to follow the British practice and there are separate schedules in the statute to cover the untouchables and the adivasis. It is a different matter that the schedules have not yielded any positive results to the tribals except for the reservations they enjoy in government service. As early as in 1960 the UN Dhebar Commission which inquired into the status of the adivasis "discovered that the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which set up special areas all over tribal India in which governors were expected to take special interests, had been an almost complete failure."

Today, 39 years later, the situation has only worsened. A clear case is Bihar where the statutory Tribal Council, which should be consulted on all tribal-related issues, has not met even once since 1972. That is even when a plethora of new tribal districts were created and a Jharkhand Autonomous Council was constituted and later dissolved... Each mega-project has been at the cost of the adivasis... Apart from some menial jobs and petty cash,

(Contd. on Page 522)

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Asghar Ali Engineer on Mass Media and Minorities

... Very few papers ... take pains to write about minorities after thorough study and with positive and constructive attitude.

The English papers – though more careful – also often throw caution to the wind while reporting crucial events pertaining to minorities. The language papers are (with honourable exceptions) much worse. They never observe any caution and often display crude prejudice in reporting about minorities. And there is yet another category, mouthpieces of communal outfits like Samna, who deliberately and even maliciously, project distorted image of minorities and thrive on this. In the north, central and western India, the Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati papers ... are the worst culprit. They often display crude prejudices against minorities in their reporting or the stories which they publish. Samna, the Marathi mouthpiece of the Shiv Sena, uses highly provocative language against Muslims and Christians... During the Bombay riots this paper openly called Muslims pro-Pakistani traitors and wrote several highly provocative editorials against Muslims. The campaign was so vicious that the ex-Chief Secretary of Maharashtra J.B. D'Souza filed a public interest writ petition in the Bombay High Court (against) its editor... It should be borne in mind that the Samna is read by lakhs of Maharashtrians every day and their opinion is formed by it. Even the policemen read it regularly and form their perceptions about minorities from what appears in Samna. No wonder if they have very jaundiced views about them.

And what is sad is that the Samna is no exception though other language papers may not be as crude... These papers ... stereotype every minority community...

It is, for example, assumed by even well-meaning scholars, that all Muslims supported Partition in 1947. It is a highly questionable assumption...

The other notorious example is of cricket. When Pakistan won and some Muslims rejoiced at its victory, the media projected as if all Muslims did so. Unfortunately the cricket match which is deified by the media and projected out of all proportions, became a holy war not only between two countries but also, according to a section of media, between Hindus and Muslims. And this despite the fact that an Indian Muslim Mohd. Azharuddin would lead the Indian team.

The minorities are often stereotyped as 'fanatical' and 'fundamentalists' and acts of few individuals would be seen as of entire community. Even if a religious leader issued any appeal to the Muslims, it will be described by a loaded word like fatwa and as if fatwa is binding on all Muslims...

The way the Shah Bano movement was projected in the media including the secular media gave an impression as if only Muslims mistreat their women and deny their basic rights. Article after article was carried to this effect. Suddenly the national press became champion of Muslim women's rights!... That Islam treats women better than many other religious traditions or legal systems, was never brought out in any media analysis. The only thing projects in the media was that Islam metes out worse treatment to

women.

The Babari Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi controversy is another example in this regard... The language press particularly gave an impression that it is a settled fact that Babar had demolished a Ram temple in Ayodhya and now it is time the Hindus vindicated their honour by constructing a Ram temple by removing the mosque. The regional media, particularly the Hindi media gave a distinct impression that it is ironical that Hindus cannot construct a Ram temple in their own country. The leading Hindi newspapers from UP published highly exaggerated reports on incidents in Ayodhya in 1990 when Mulayam Singh, the then Chief Minister of UP tried to prevent kar sevaks from reaching Ayodhya... Even the Press Council reprimanded these papers for publishing false accounts of what happened at Ayodhya. The press also does not adequately project the positive aspects of Indian Muslims which can create a different image of the community...

Even committed secular papers who are sympathetic to the minorities do not have reporters and commentators who specialise in minority affairs and have intimate knowledge of minority communities. Even these secular commentators often homogenise these minority communities... When Punjab was faced with Khalistani movement, many papers wrote as if all Sikhs were supporting the militants and stood for Khalistan...

Recently there have been attacks on Christian minority by the Sangh Parivar. The main issue was conversion. The Christians were also similarly stereotyped and the media projection, particularly the language media in north and western India, wrote as if every Christian in this country was for conversion... Today ... 'inter-faith dialogue' has been popularised by the Christian organisations in contemporary India... Even an attempt was made by a section of language media to accuse Mother Teresa of inducing conversions forcibly. Also, this section of media projects as if all conversions are induced by 'coercion', 'fraud' and 'inducement'. Whatever communally inclined politicians say about minorities is carried by a section of print media as if it is an established truth... The mainstream Gujarati media openly wrote anti-Christian articles and published hostile news items... The communal riots in Ahmedabad, particularly in 1969 and 1985 spread like wild fire because some Gujarati papers carried rumours in headlines as if these were true stories. Next day these items were contradicted in a small corner on inside page and that too when all the damage was done.

In every religious community there are all sorts of people – liberal, secular and fanatical and fundamentalists. Neither all can be liberal and secular nor all can be fundamentalists. Yet when it comes to minority communities and few vocal elements among them indulge in fanatical acts the entire community is held responsible. The voice of liberal secular Muslims or Christians or Sikhs is marginalised as some kind of exception. A vast majority among them which is voiceless for number of reasons, is thought to be fundamentalist or fanatical.

There is another aspect which also has to be seriously

MASS MEDIA

considered... Positive contributions made or being made by the minorities in the process of nation-building ... hardly come through in our media. Even today there are many Muslims in various fields – political, academic, scientific as well as social wherein Muslims are making important contributions... Academics ... who have taken liberal secular stand on many controversial issues and have made seminal contributions in their own respective fields (are) not adequately projected in media.

...All communities in India are making contribution to the process of nation-building. It is certainly not the monopoly of any single community or caste. Also, the problem of minority should be seen in a dynamic framework, not in a static frame-work which media often does. The behaviour of the community changes according to the newly emerging contexts. The attitude of Muslims in north India towards Pakistan, for example, has undergone a sea change. The political developments in Pakistan in recent years have brought about a tremendous change in their attitude. Also, today there is much greater enthusiasm among Muslims about modern education and they have realised that education is a must for them... If they are behind in the race, it is more because of poverty than their resistance to education. The ground realities are changing fast and these changes are being absorbed by all whether minorities or majority...

... There are several papers which are sympathetic to the cause of minorities and they defend them courageously... Many renowned papers like The Hindu, The Times of India, The Statesman, The Telegraph and some other appears can be cited... Even a small section of language media has also played a positive role... It is these papers which have done journalism proud in India.

(Source: The Nation and the World, 1 September, 1999)

(Contd. from Page 520)

which ultimately reached the moneylenders, the adivasis have got precious little in return for their ancestral land. ...

It is not that the tribals have not protested. From the Mahal Paharia revolt in 1772 to the Naxalbari and Srikakulam uprisings in the sixties which threw up leaders as varied as Birsu Munda and Jaipal Singh, they have been protesting against inequities and injustices. But each time the brute force of the state was used to suppress them. Every measure of homogenisation - so that they are exactly like everybody else - has been a direct assault on what the adivasis consider precious. The Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act and the Wilkison rules that sought to respect their identity have given way to laws that do little justice to their own time-tested social and legal institutions, customs and practices. The Panchayat Raj Act is the latest of its kind which will undermine their traditional systems... It is this apathy, this disinterestedness that encourages the Sangh to alter their nomenclature. It is not confined to calling adivasis vanvasis. Anything that distinguishes them and anything that marks their distinct identity becomes anathema to the parivar. It is for this reason that Jharkhand, which fired the imagination of the adivasis of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana of Bihar over a century becomes just Vananchal in the Sangh jargon.

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

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Tussle over Masjids in Kerala

Although the CPM, which is locked in a battle with the Saffron brigade over control of Hindu religious bodies, has little stake in the religious institutions of the Muslim community, Muslim organisations are not untouched by power plays of other groupings.

Two factions of the Sunnis – who constitute a majority of the Muslim population in Malappuram district – led by E.K. Abubacker Musliar respectively – are fighting for the control of the mahal committees and mosques in the district. The former has control on greater number of mahal committees than Kanthapuram. However, the rift between the two has been more or less remained contained. Also in the race to gain control of Muslim institutions are the progressive Mujahids, Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Development Front. The Jamaat-e-Islami, by hard work, could wield considerable influence among the Muslim community and thereby grab some mahal committees. The NDF too is making a bid to get into the committees.

For the CPM, it will be a tough task to get representation on the mahal committees, giving the hostility of vast sections of the Muslim community towards it, particularly after the hardening of the CPM stand against 'minority communalism', said to be a euphemism for Muslim fundamentalism. The reported terming of Malappuram district a haven for terrorist activities by some CPM leaders has angered them. "The Marxist party does not deserve any sympathy", said Mohamed Moulavi, a Katheeb of Pookottoor.

The Indian Union Muslim League has a say in the administration of majority of Jamaat committees in Kasargode district which are being targeted by the CPM. In Puthika, the Angadimugal mosque committee is led by CPM activist. "The CPM's attempt to get into the committees was checkmated in time as nobody wants politics to enter the portals of mosques. We are trying to unite the two Sunni factions so that we could resist political interference", said Akkim Moulavi at the 'Asarathu Jaaria (Kannadi Palli).

"The CPM did make attempts in the past to infiltrate into Muslim religious organisations. Of late, no such instances have come to our notice and I don't think their design will bear fruit in the case of Jamaat-e-Islami", said T.K. Mohammed, party's central committee member.

Killing of Sorcery Suspects

In a barbaric incident, two women were beaten to death by their husbands and in-laws on the suspicion that they were practising sorcery on other family members (in Hyderabad on 20 June, 1999).

The deceased, Shameem Begum (19) and Zubeda

Sale of Girls under Police Patronage

Investigations by the Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission (MPHRC) have confirmed reports about the large-scale sale of tribal girls in Shivpuri district of the State... Acting under open patronage of the local police, the flesh traders sell poor tribal girls to far-flung places like Nagpur, Mumbai and even abroad... Investigations... had also found substance in the allegations about policemen acting as intermediaries for the flesh traders...

(Source: The Indian Express, 19 August, 1999)

Tribals Treated as Bonded Labour

The mood is upbeat at Kharbhaav village. At nightfall, grubby tumbler are raised to toast the tonsuring of Suresh Ramu Pawar. It is the privilege of every landlord to strip, beat and tonsure any Katkari tribal who steps out of the circle of bondage defined by the rural aristocracy here. A kilometre away, at Banglapada, fear is evident in the adivasis as they discuss the tonsuring of 20-year-old Pawar, who was thrashed, stripped and paraded seminaked through Kharbhaav village, 18 km from Bhiwandi along the Bhiwandi-Vasai Road in Thane district, on August 13. His cardinal sin: Pawar was too fatigued to till the paddy fields of one of the biggest landlords in Kharbhaav, Gopal Patil, and had therefore abstained from work that day. Incensed at Pawar's defiance, Gopal Patil's son Vilas beat him...

(Source: The Indian Express, 22 Aug., 1999)

No Floatation of Dead Bodies in Ganga

The age-old practice of consigning dead bodies to the waters of the Ganga is being discontinued due to increasing pollution and lack of flow in the river.

Instead, even the priests who perform the last rites are persuading the people to bury the dead on the banks of the river or go in for creation... The practice...(was related) to the belief that it would provide salvation to the soul.

But over the years, the... course has been changing, the waters getting shallower and the currents weaker... The bodies did not float away, but not entangled in the weeds and garbage...

Begum (24) were done to death with sticks and belts by their husbands Mohammed and Mashroo and their father Mohammed Sadiq Ali Qureshi... According to police, Sadiq Ali Qureshi, an RTC driver, and his wife Saleha suspected that their daughters-in-law were practising sorcery... It is learnt that Sadiq Qureshi himself practised black magic and performed some prayers before killing his daughters-in-laws... Mohammed Ali... got married to Shameem just seven months ago. Zubeda and Mashroo Ali were married for 10 years and have two children...

(Source: The Deccan Chronicle, 21 June, 1998)

Rakesh Sahgal On Qila-i-Kuhna Masjid

... Delhi ... is scattered with the ruins of forts, mosques and mausoleums spanning centuries.

... One of the most graceful mosques in Delhi is the 16th century Qila-I- Kuhna Masjid, better known as the Sher Shah mosque. Located within the ... Purana Qila, it is one of the two surviving structures... The other is the Sher Mandal... when Sher Shah, the Afghan, defeated Humayun in 1540 on the Ganges, Humayun was in the process of building his new city Dinpanah. In those days the river Yamuna flowed close by and Humayun had chosen this site so that he could enjoy the cool summer breeze. Now that Sher Shah had become the Sultan of Delhi, he continued the building programme started by Humayun. Sher Shah completed the walls and built several structures for use of his court within the fort.

The Sher Shah Masjid has five arched openings in the façade. The central arch is higher than the others and frames within a projection. One peculiar feature of the mosque structure in the 15th century and specially in Delhi was the placing of little towers at the back of the mosque. These have sloping rounded sides and seem to be models of the Qutub Minar. This feature is also present in this mosque which is considered the finest mosque of this period because of its best proportions. The use of different colour stones – red, white, grey and black beautifully render the features. Also one can see here ... a fine blend of Hindu and Muslim features. The chhajjas and the jharokhas exist in perfect harmony with the horse-shoe shaped arches, the Arabic texts and geometric decorations.

The prayer hall of the Sher Shah Masjid measures 51.2 m by 14.90 m. the mihrab has concentric arches thus enhancing the scope for ornamentation. The central bay of the hall is surmounted by a beautiful dome. The courtyard in front of the Masjid originally had a shallow tank with a fountain. It has now been converted into a garden. (It has no minarets). (Source: The Hindustan Times, 9 February, 1999)

Lucknow: Heritage Zone

Lucknow's Heritage Zone, comprising the architectural landmarks of the glorious era of the Nawabs of Avadh will be given the long-overdue facelift. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation is all set to illuminate the magnificent Roomi Darwaza built by Nawab Asafuddaulah, the Bara Imambara and the mausoleums of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan... Tourists to Lucknow will be offered the 'City Walk' package for three days. Here, tourists can hop off the bus ... and walk up to Bara Imambara, Roomi Darwaza, Chhota Imambara, Clock Tower, Qaiserbagh Palace complex and even the Picture Gallery ... to explore and appreciate the beauty of these architectural marvels at their own pace.

(Source: The Meantime, 1 September, 1999)

Liberty D. Veedon On Heritage Zone in Mehrauli

Twenty unprotected monuments near the tomb of Jamali-Kamali, a stone's throw away from the Qutub Minar, have been saved from total ruin because of the initiative of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)... There are nearly 130 monuments within a 200-acre radius in the area. Only 30 of these have been declared protected.

The 20 monuments, which have now been preserved from vandalism and nature ... had last found mention in a listing made by Zafar Hasan in 1910. INTACH, which has undertaken the process of listing all the monuments in Delhi, found these edifices which date back to the 13th century, in the DDA park surrounding Jamali-Kamali's tomb... There were no mappings... the landmarks had changed... The structures have been identified as guard houses, tombs, baradari enclosures, wall mosques and horse stables. (They) have been cleared and cracks and other damages repaired with the help of experts. The Delhi Tourism department had sanctioned Rs.20 lakh for the project. The research and expertise was provided by INTACH... INTACH is hoping to hand over the maintenance of the 20 monuments to the archaeological department of Delhi... (Source: The Hindustan Times, 27.5.1999)

Shahabuddin's Letter to Wakf Board/DDA

4 October, 1999

Perhaps you are aware that a historic Masjid, belonging to the Lodi period, located at the intersection of the Mehrauli-Badarpur Road in the vicinity of the Qutub Minar has been demolished by the owner of the land on which it stood. The owner, one Mr. Naseem claims that he had taken the approval of all authorities concerned including the Delhi Wakf Board. I am sure that you appreciate that a Masjid is by definition a public Wakf. So, first I would like to know if the Delhi Wakf Board had indeed permitted Mr. Naseem to demolish it. The DWB has simply no such authority. But what is more important is to ensure that the Masjid is rebuilt on its old foundations.

INTACH's Reply, 15 October, 1999

... I thank you for your support of our stand on the unfortunate demolition. A new double storey concrete structure was being erected in the place of the Wall-Mosque. I still fail to understand why the wall mosque, in perfect structural condition was demolished. The matter has been raised with the DDA and the ASI. While the ASI has filed and FIR against any further construction, the DDA has forbidden any further construction. As regards the ownership issue, the owner claims the property to be in private ownership and I appreciate your clarification that a Masjid is by definition, public Wakf. I would request you to kindly write a similar letter to the Vice-Chairman, DDA...

M.D. Nalapat on India's Stake in Democracy in Pakistan

Although (only some US) Senators and Representatives have signed on the "Pakistan letter" calling for the appointment of a Special Envoy for Kashmir, the episode indicates the downside of India's "Kargil Diplomacy", wherein New Delhi actively sought out US redaction to the Pakistan incursion. Having whetted Washington's (substantial) appetite for intervention through its (Islamabad-style) requests for help in making the other side see reason, the Vajpayee government may face a fresh bout of Clintonite involvement, similarly to that faced during 1993-95 by the Narasimha Rao Government. Already, a clutch of Pakistan-centric scholars has descended on the Indian Capital, bringing with them the same nostrum of unconditional engagement and unilateral concessions to Pakistan that Kargil discredited...

(The) government ... will have to undertake a post-mortem of strategy towards the US, and mothball methods and individuals who have proved barren of positive results in the past... New Delhi needs to reach out to ... American scholars unencumbered by the failed legacy of the ancien regime. Specifically, scholars such as Gary Bertsch of the University of Georgia (co-author of *Engaging India*) and Gail Minault of the University of Texas need to be encouraged to generate more realistic US approaches towards dealing with the world's largest democracy. Such strategies will need to be treated on par with other major democratic powers (such as France), rather than in the continuance of futile efforts by the Stephen Cohens and others to restrict the country to the SAARC box, even here only as the equal of a much smaller Pakistan...

... There is need to draw attention to the flooding of Punjabi migrants to PoK, and the denial of democratic rights to the population, besides the annexation of the Northern Territories and the ceding of vast areas ... to China. Islamabad needs to be reminded to itself obey the UN resolution dated 13 August 1948, which calls for the total withdrawal of all Pakistan nationals from the whole of Kashmir. It is only after Islamabad itself implements its part of the suggestions that it has any moral authority to ask India to obey the same...

India needs to draw attention to Pakistan's own refusal to establish the pre-conditions for a plebiscite, as well as the suppression of the rights of Kashmiri-speaking people in PoK and the other parts of the state administered by it. New Delhi also needs to broaden such diplomacy to include a discussion on the denial of equal rights to minorities ... in Pakistan. The reason for this is that only a fully democratic Pakistan will respond to Indian calls for normalisation of relations. Analysts who parrot the view that India's interests mandate a "stable" Pakistan forget that it has to be a stable and fully federal and democratic Pakistan... India has a crucial stake in promoting genuine democracy and federalism in Pakistan.

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

Arjun Sengupta On Possible Fallout of Friendship

... For India, friendly relations with Pakistan are immensely beneficial... Imagine what will happen if Pakistan genuinely gives up the hostilities and becomes friendly with us. The cross-border militancies will be replaced by cross-border movements of peoples and ideas, goods and services, investments in physical and human capital and cultural exchanges. There will be enormous gains from the peace dividend.

... If there is a preferential trading arrangement between India and Pakistan, removing the tariff and non-tariff barriers, there will be a substantial increase in trade for both, without hurting trade with other countries...

... Pakistan has not given us MFN status because it fears that if India is given the same treatment as to the US, Japan or Korea, Indian goods would flood its market. It is a wrong policy for its part, but that does not mean that we should also follow that wrong policy...

A better policy would be to let Pakistan develop enough vested interests through exporting to India under MFN, and building capacities and profit lines tied to the Indian markets.

... The peace dividend that may accrue to us from improved relations between our two countries (will) increase the scope for reducing our defence expenditure. The benefits of reduced tension would, of course, go beyond (this) to a radical change in our environment leading to the elimination of terrorism altogether.

... Our efforts have to be to convince the people of Pakistan that friendship with us can be enduring and beneficial for them.

For a long time, Pakistan's military and their fundamentalist supporters argued that Indians never accepted Pakistan. But 50 years after Indians of different religions, cultures and ethnic groups have stayed together, this has little credibility among most Pakistanis...

But the Pakistani military and fundamentalists still exploit the Kashmir situation. People in Pakistan still believe that Kashmiri Muslims are subjugated by India by its military, bureaucracy and an unpopular government... The answer to that is not convincing when it is given in terms of constitutional procedures...

Nor is it acceptable to them that if Kashmir is not kept as a part of India, secularism will be at stake or India's federal structure will fall apart. The only fitting answer will be if we can demonstrate that Kashmiri Muslims would be happy to live in India, they would live with freedom and human rights and they would prosper economically and socially, benefiting from its huge market and enjoying its functioning democracy, much more than if they were in Pakistan. This is not a difficult task.

... The bond between the people of Pakistan and India can become so strong that the divisiveness fomented by the military and the fundamentalists can be completely defeated...

(Source: The Times of India, 25 September, 1999)

Satanism in Turkey

Three Satanists killed a young woman in a human sacrifice to appease the devil so he would stop earthquakes plaguing Turkey since 17 August, newspapers reported today.

Omer Celik, 23, Engin Aslan, 18, and Aslan's girlfriend, Zinnur Dincer, 19, met 21-year-old Sehriban Coskunfirat in a bar late on 13 September, took her for a drink at the Ortakoy cemetery, in Istanbul's European sector.

(The woman) was stabbed and killed by hammer blows to the head ... while (one of them) had sexual relations with the corpse "in accordance with Satanist ritual"...

Bihari Muslim Woman Millionairess in U.K.

... Perween Warsi, who founded a company 13 years ago to make chilled and frozen foods is now said to be worth Pounds 35m.

... Her customers now include Asda, Safeway, Whitbread and supermarkets in France..

(Source: The Independent)

Muslim Separatism In the Philippines

The largest Muslim separatist group in South Philippines refused to drop its demand for an independent Islamic state...

"We will not compromise our demand for independence", said Ghazali Jaafar, vice chairman for political affairs of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). "Our demand is non-negotiable - a strict Islamic state, nothing less".

President Joseph Estrade said his administration would pursue peace negotiations with the MILF, but stressed that any agreement ... must be within the framework of the ... Constitution...

(Source: The Muslim World, Karachi, 9 January, 1999)

Iranian Prodigy - Hafiz at Seven

...Mohammed Husayn Tabatabai, a seven-year-old Iranian prodigy ... has memorised all 600 pages of the Quran... Tabatabai also claims to have equally retained hundreds of Traditions of the Prophet Mohammed.

Awarded a doctorate of religion by the Islamic College in Coventry, Tabatabai appears on national television in Iran twice each week. He has speaking engagements throughout Western Europe, including UK...

It is a rare sight in the UK but throughout the Middle East and South Asia, Mohammed Tabatabai might face some stiffer competition: children as young as five have been known to master the task... (Source: The Statesman)

On Hindu Holidays in Pakistan

... A Government Notification listing "optional holidays" for the Centre and the four provinces has a ... long list of Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh and Parsi festivals. Even New Year's day in 1999 forms part of the optional holidays.

Other holidays listed for 1999 ... are: Basant Punchami (January 22), Shivratri (February 15), Holi (March 1), Dulhandi (March 2), Nauroze (March 21), Good Friday (April 2), Easter Sunday (April 4), Baisakhi (April 13), Buddha Purnima (May 5), Chehlum (June 5), Janam Ashtami (August 8), Dussehra/Durga Puja (October 5), Shab-e-Meraj (November 6), Guru Balmiki birthday (November 12), Guru Nanak birthday (November 23), Shab-e-Barat (November 23), Divali (November 24) and Giarhwin Sharif (November 25).

Such a list of holidays points to the fact that howsoever minuscule, people from all religions continue to live in Pakistan (and) some "formalities" continue to be observed by the Government of Pakistan.

A press release on the Notification said: "... No Government servant shall be granted more than one optional holiday in the case of Muslims and three optional holidays in the case of non-Muslims in one calendar year".

The optional holidays are denominational... A Government servant should not be refused an optional holiday which is of religious significance to him...

(Source: Amit Baruah in The Hindu, 3 December, 1998)

Developments in Bangladesh

... During her two-and-a-half year tenure, Hasina ... has scored successes in several fields, unlike Khaleda Zia. She dazzled Bangladesh when she signed the Ganga water sharing agreement with India on 2 December, 1996, within six months of assuming office, forcing New Delhi to recognise Bangladesh's rights on the river water. She also persuaded the 2,000 Shanti Bahini guerrillas to surrender and brought back over 60,000 Chakma refugees from the Indian State of Tripura.

While her critics apprehended the death of millions in history's worst floods in Bangladesh in 1998, Hasina ... successfully weathered the ravages. Not a single Bangladeshi died of starvation... She arranged free food supplies to an estimated four million farmers hit by the floods.

Another significant achievement has been ... empowerment of women in Bangladesh (with seats) reserved for women at all tiers of local government...

(Source: The Sunday, 8-13 February, 1999)

Chronology of the Month

(16 September – 15 October, 1999)

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

General Election: *The 13th Lok Sabha constituted following 5-phase election (**10 Oct**). Pre-poll National Democratic Alliance, led by BJP's Atal Behari Vajpayee obtains clear majority and is invited to form Government. 71 member Council of Ministers sworn in with only 2 Muslims MOS's, JKNF's Omar Abdullah and BJP's Shah Nawaz Husain (Bihar). TDP and INLD extend support from outside.

Party Position: *BJP remains static at 182 (+1); Allied parties TDP, JD(U), Shiv Sena, DMK, BJD, TC, INLD and 60 others command another 120 seats.

*Congress goes down to 112 its lowest innings since independence.

*SP and BSP do well in UP with 26 and 14 respectively.

*RJD washed out in Bihar with 7 only.

*Left fortress in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura remains in tact.

Election Campaign: *EC bans publication of exit polls; SC dismisses EC plea.

*Kerala H.C. orders boothwise counting; SC rejects.

Election Issues: *Election largely fought on non-issues – Karil War, Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin, Vajpayee's charisma. Neither ideological divide nor development short-falls figure prominently. Community and caste consciousness play major role.

*Muslims generally vote tactically for the strongest anti-BJP candidate, constituency-wise.

*BJP and Sangh Parivar claim no compromise on Hindutva ideology.

*Vajpayee describes minority fears as boogies.

*31 Muslims elected, a marginal increase, Muslims in 14 States and 6 UT's constituting 23% of National Muslim Population remain unrepresented; Muslims of 8 states represented have an overall level of deprivation of 43%.

*First Muslim majority constituency Kishanganj (Bihar) falls to BJP.

Congress: *Sonia Gandhi emerges sole leader; elected Chairperson of Congress Parliamentary Party; takes blame for defeat (**12 Oct**). Decides to function as Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha.

Third Force: *Disintegrates with break of JD into JD(U) and JD(S).

*SP and RJD part company (**15 Oct**). SP to contest Bihar Assembly election on its own.

States: *Congress leader S.M. Krishna, 67, sworn in as Karnataka C.M. (**11 Oct**). 3 Muslims inducted in Cabinet.

*Congress and NCP (Pawar) form coalition Government in Maharashtra.

Judiciary: *National Seminar organised by Bar Council recommends creation of National Judicial Commission for appointment and transfer of judges (**22 Sept**).

Corruption: *Law Commission recommends forfeiture

of illegally acquired property of public servants (**9 Oct**).

Reservation: *SC rules against retention of seniority on promotion under reservation and reduction of minimum qualification for admission to specialisation courses (**19 Sept**). *RPI calls for President's intervention to restore reservation in promotion (**1 Oct**).

Islamic Fundamentalism: *RSS Chief links terrorism with Islamic fundamentalism (**25 Sept**).

*ISI Scare builds up in mass media by government machinery.

Human Rights: *UN SG defends military intervention to stop gross violation of human rights (**23 Sept**).

*NHRC co-sponsors International Symposium on Torture. Symposium adopts declaration for comprehensive legislation to control torture (**24 Sept**).

*NHRC orders compensation to widow for electrocution of husband by live wire on municipal road (**19 Sept**).

*US State Dept. Report on Freedom of Religion for 1998 raps BJP-RSS (**9 Sept**). BJP terms report as mischievous.

*Human Rights Watch asks GOI to ensure freedom of conscience (**29 Sept**).

*NHRC urges UP to set up State HRC (**28 Sept**).

Foreign Policy: *NAM rejects Pakistani proposal to study establishment of conflict resolution machinery within NAM. India opposes (**24 Sept**).

*France supports India's claim to permanent membership of Security Council.

*India and USA agree to coordinate effort to control terrorism (**28 Sept**).

KASHMIR QUESTION

Political Development: *General Election marred by two attacks on former MOS Maqbool Dar, and on State Haj Minister, killing of BJP candidate and poor turnout despite alleged use of State machinery to force people to attend rallies and to vote. Lowest turnout in the country of about 10% against national average of 60; 4 civilians killed by security forces on voting day in Baramulla (**18 Sept**). Inquiry demanded.

*For campaigning against election Hurriyat leaders Geelani and Butt booked by Government under Public Safety Act and detained along with workers (**28 Sept**). Hurriyat decides to launch Jail Bharo agitation (**1 Oct**). Farooq Abdullah accuses Hurriyat leaders of using militants to threaten voters (**2 Oct**).

*Pakistan announces separate constitutional package for the Northern Areas (**4 Oct**).

*JKLF, based in POK, threatens to cross LOC; India asks Pakistan to restrain it. JKLF rejects Pak plea; Movement fails (**4 Oct**); Pakistan detains participants in second rally including Amanullah Khan (**5 Oct**).

*Hurriyat leader Lone criticises Pakistan on Kargil affair and asks it to leave Kashmiris alone to continue the

CHRONOLOGY

struggle (27 Sept).

*Former Minister Saifuddin Soz alleges large scale rigging (29 Sept).

Insurgency: *Sufi Ghulam Mohammad, editor, Srinagar Times attacked (28 Sept).

*Transport of arms and ammunition from J&K to Delhi in fruit trucks discovered (30 Sept).

*Militants attempt to blast J&K Secretariat in Srinagar, 1 killed and 5 wounded. APHC blamed (29 Sept).

*Tehrik-e-Mujahideen calls for closure of cinema, video parlours etc. within 2 days (26 Sept).

*Pakistan press reports declaration of Jihad by Osama bin Laden against India (17 Sept). APHC leader Omar Farooq denies any Osama's locus standi to intervene in J&K (20 Sept). Taliban denies veracity of report (24 Sept).

Foreign Reaction - USA: *US Ambassador to Pakistan Milam admits State victim of trans-border terrorism (24 Sept).

*US official Inderfurth sees international role in rebuilding Kashmir's economy while hopes for resumption of bilateral dialogue. India rejects US offer

*President Clinton rejects proposal to appoint Special Envoy in Kashmir (17 Sept).

*USA includes Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Ansar, Hadid and Faran in list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations (9 Oct).

UK: Labour Party Conference fails to support Pakistan case.

*Pugwash International sees threat of nuclear conflict over Kashmir (12 Oct). However, US Expert Stephen Cohen discounts possibility of nuclear escalation (7 Oct).

Iran/Saudi Arabia: *Farooq Abdullah alleges financing of 'fundamentalist madarsas' by Iran and Saudi Arabia (12 Oct). Iran denies allegation.

OIC: *OIC Foreign Ministers Meeting reiterates call for resolving dispute in accordance with UN Resolutions. Rejects relevance of polls. APHC leaders not permitted by GOI to attend (29 Sept).

India-Pakistan: *Pakistan and Kashmiri leaders demand referendum under UN auspices on East Timor pattern (18 Sept). *F.M. Jaswant Singh rejects international mediation (23 Sept). Indian Rep. flays call for UN intervention (7 Oct).

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN

Babari Masjid Question: *VHP revives temple construction issue (19 Sept).

*BJP leader Advani rules out shelving Ayodhya and other contentious issues permanently (19 Sept).

*UP C.M. Kalyan Singh promises Ram temple on Babari Masjid site 'soon' (28 Sept).

*I&B Minister Mahajan hints at construction of Mandir without notice; Congress calls it evidence of hidden agenda (1 Oct).

Personal Law: *Mumbai H.C. rules in favour of continued maintenance of mother by son, even after

second marriage (5 Oct).

Infiltration: *Assam Government seeks SC's assistance to abrogate Tribunals Act. SC expresses concern and directs Central Government to file comprehensive affidavit (20 Sept).

Minorities Commission: *NCM submits its biannual report for April-September, 1999 to Government. No report ever discussed in Parliament.

Culture: *Delhi officially observes traditional Phool Walon ki Sair (1 Oct).

Monuments: *Delhi H.C. orders DDA to demolish illegal construction around Zafar Mahal in Mehrauli.

Other Minorities: *RSS and VHP Plan anti-Christian Rath Yatra and agitation on eve of the Pope's visit (22 Sept).

*Delhi Archbishop Lastic urges PM to restrain RSS (26 Sept). Sangh Parivar demands apology from Pope for forced conversion and statement on equality of all religions, asks GOI to cancel state guest status.

*Christian nun stripped and forced to drink urine in Chapra, Bihar (23 Sept). NCW and NCM take up joint investigation (28 Sept).

*2 Churches torched in Kerala (4 Oct).

*Tribal organisations take up case of ill-treatment of tribal servant by Indian diplomat in France (6 Oct).

Indo-Pakistan Relations: *Pakistan files claim against India in International Court of Justice for compensation for aircraft shot down in Kutch on 10 August (21 Sept).

*European Union urges India and Pakistan to resume dialogue (22 Sept).

Muslim World - Pakistan: *USA warns Pakistan against military coup after ISI Chief's visit (26 Sept).

*Army COS Gen. Pervez Musharraf takes over power and PM Nawaz Sharif and his ministers put under house arrest (12 Oct). Emergency declared (14 Oct). Constitution placed in abeyance; legislatures suspended; provincial governments dismissed; many Ambassadors recalled.

*9 Shias massacred in Karachi mosque (1 Oct). Opposition rejects Government charge against RAW (1 Oct).

*Pakistan asks Taliban to stop training terrorists (6 Oct).

Russia: *Russia invades Chechnya. Martial law declared (6 Oct).

*Daghestan revolt continues.

Central Asia: *Tajikistan votes for establishment of Islamic parties (7 Sept).

Obituary: *Eminent academician and Urdu writer S.M. Hasnain, 79, passes away in Karachi (10 Oct).

*M.J. Zakaria Sait, former Dy. Speaker, Kerala, 58, passes away in Karachi (3 Oct).

*Malik Mushir Ahmed Khan, ex-MP, 76, passes away in Sahawar (Eta) (17 Sept).

*Eminent Urdu poet Hasrat Jaipuri, 77, passes away in Mumbai (17 Sept).