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TO SAVE THE SECULAR ORDER, TACTICAL VOTING, CONSTITUENCY BY CONSTITUENCY, FOR STRONGEST SECULAR CANDIDATE

In the Indian political system, an election is the interaction of parties and candidates in a Constituency, which forms an electoral unit. Given the plurality of the Indian society, the social demography of each Constituency is different. Hence a political party which is the instrument for the promotion of the interest of one or more social groups cannot possibly have a sway or even equal influence in all Constituencies.

POLITICAL PARTIES

There is no political party today on the national stage which is truly national either in its following or in the horizontal spread of its influence or in its vertical structure. That is why rarely has a government represented the majority of the electorate. That is also why, practically in all Constituencies, there is a multi-cornered contest. In such contest, a party whose candidate obtains the support of 25%-30% of the electorate generally wins.

No party is morally perfect, without a gap between its profession and practice, between its idealism, when out of power and its pragmatism, when in power. Every party wears a mask, tries to put its, best foot forward at the time of election, makes promises which are not meant to be kept. But, even then, a party is recognised by its ideology, its vision of India and its track record and by its social constituency which, in other words, means its captive voters, its vote bank.

ANTI-DEMOCRATIC AND ANTI-SECULAR MAJORITARIAN FACE OF THE BJP

The BJP believes in the RSS philosophy of Hindutva, the ideology of Cultural Nationalism defined in exclusivist terms. Since it equates Indian culture with Hindu culture, its Cultural Nationalism stands exposed as Hindu Nationalism. It incites revanchist sentiments and dreams of converting the Indian State into a Hindu Rashtra. It has hardly any non-Hindu following worth the name; it has hardly ever had any non-Hindu legislator at the centre, with the exception of the old war-horse Sikander Bakht or in the states. In distributing its tickets it has traditionally discarded non-Hindus on the ground of vulnerability because it knows that a BJP-tainted non-Hindu will not secure the support of his community and, because he is a non-Hindu, he will not be supported by the traditional Hindu vote-bank of the party. Except in its minority cells - a recent creation - one can hardly spot a Muslim. In its programme of action, the BJP is, indifferent to the hopes and aspirations of the religious minorities and because of its Brahminical outlook, hostile to the emerging Shudras. It seeks to consolidate the Hindus on an anti-Muslim platform. That is why it builds up Hindu public opinion in the name of righting the so-called "historical wrongs". It presents the Muslim period of Indian history as a Dark Age and consider independence on 15 August, 1947 as deliverance from a thousand years of slavery. While promising equality to all, it seeks Hindu dominance over non-Hindus and to assimilate them all in the Hindu fold.

The BJP is essentially a majoritarian party, it sees politics and economics as a zero sum game so that any gain for the non-Hindu communities in the distribution of power and resources is seen as a loss for the Hindu community. It wishes to impose Hindu ethos on non-Hindus. It wants to transform the multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural Indian State into the Hindu State.

Internally, it seeks to restore Brahminical supremacy so that the State is equated with the Hindu while the Hindu is equated with the Brahmin. Thus, essentially, **the BJP is anti-democratic.**

Its slogan "one nation; one culture and one people" leaves open the distinction between the nation and the people. In the case of a country of continental dimension which is in the process of `becoming' a nation and building a state, the appropriate slogan should be "many peoples, one nation, one state".

The BJP places Hinduism above all other religions because in Vajpayee's words "Hinduism alone is a universal religion while all other religions are `panths' or modes of worship". Joshi goes one step further and designates all religious groups as Hindus with a prefix - Mohammadi Hindu, Masihi Hindu, Nanaki Hindu, Mahabiri Hindu. He had no reply when I asked him once whether he would designate the Hindus as **Hindu-Hindu?** This is nothing but an expression of the mindset which sees assimilation as a desirable goal indeed a `favour' for all non-Hindu religions, languages and cultures which have their home in India. **These are the reasons why the BJP is looked upon as a threat to national unity and communal harmony, democracy, secularism and social justice and rejected by an overwhelming majority of the Indian people.**

The secular parties (are accused) of having treated Muslim Indian as a vote bank . The fact remains that every party subsists on a vote-bank, defined in terms of religion or caste or language or race or even geographical origin. In a plural society and in a multi-ethnic state, vote banks based on ethnic identity and ethnic mobilisation are inevitable. But India, being a sub-continent, the political parties face the problem of size. There is hardly a national party. Hence the Yadavas vote for Laloo Yadav in Bihar and then in UP for Mulayam Singh Yadav. Once the high castes formed a vote bank for the Congress. Today this vote-bank has shifted to the BJP. Yesterday the SCs were a vote bank of the Congress; today large sections form a vote bank of the BSP. **So, the**

vote banks exist but their political impact varies with place and time, from Constituency to Constituency and from election to election.

PARTY MANIFESTOES

The manifestoes of the major parties/formations - the Congress, the CPM, the Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party, the BSP, the CPI command political interest because the Common Minimum Programme of the secular parties, if they defeat the BJP, must address matters of concern to the religious and linguistic minorities and economically weaker sections. Selecting areas of priority relating to employment, education, development, welfare and identity, we may shortlist such items of concern and exert pressure on all secular parties/formations to commit themselves to them. This would generate a wave of hope and will transform negative (anti-BJP) voting to a positive act of political faith. But one thing is clear; **no social or ethnic group can ask for special favours but only for a common dispensation for all based on the concept of equality and justice. Some concrete ideas are given below to judge the manifestoes:**

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES AND WEAKER SECTIONS

1.1 Reservation in Public Employment for **all** identifiable social groups which form at least 1% of the population at the recruitment level in proportion to their population and index of backwardness.

1.2 Equitable share in Benefit of Development Programmes and Schemes to **all** social groups in proportion to their population at the operational level.

1.3 Universal flow of bank credit to all small Entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, artisans and craftsmen and small and marginal farmers upto Rs. 25,000/- on nominal interest on the basis of production capacity.

1.4 Declaration of public wakfs/endowments as Public Premises and Exemption from rent and ceiling laws.

2.1 Statutory compensation for loss of life, limb, property Dignity to the victims of mass frenzy and police firing in all cases of Social Violence.

3.1 Declaration of all languages as additional official language at the Panchayat, Block, District and State levels wherever at least 10% of the population speaks a particular language.

3.2 Universal use of the Mother Tongue as Medium of Primary Instruction and as compulsory First Language from Class I to X.

4.1 Reservation in University and professional education for **all** educationally backward groups in proportion to their national population.

4.2 Facilities of Recognition and Affiliation of Minority Educational Institutions.

4.3 Declaration of the A.M.U., the J.M.I. and A.K.A Urdu University as Minorities Institutions.

5.1 Expedition of the Title Suit, Ayodhya inquiry and Babari Masjid related CBI cases and assurance that final verdict on the title to the Babari Site shall be implemented at all cost.

5.2 Protection of the personal law of **all** religious communities against any interference or change against their express wishes.

6.1 Inclusion of all eligible residents in the electoral roll **unless** found to be foreign national by competent judicial or quasi-judicial authority.

6.2 Fresh Delimitation of Constituencies on the basis of administrative bodies; rotation of reservation and non-reservation of minority concentration constituencies.

6.3 Reservation in Central and State Legislatures for OBCs, Muslims and other identifiable social groups which form at least 1% of the population at the appropriate level, with inbuilt uniform reservation for women in each quota.

7.1 Establishment of Department of Minority Affairs at the Centre and the States and allocation thereof to the Prime Minister/Chief Minister.

7.2 Publication of Cross-tabulated economic and social census data on minorities.

PRE-ELECTION LINE-UP

The pre-election scenario is by and large clear. With the erosion of national parties and emergence of regional parties, the situation varies from one state to another. Even in the same state one secular party or formation may not be equally strong all over the state to take on the anti-secular threat the BJP and its allies pose.

MUSLIM REPRESENTATION IN PARTY LISTS

Finally, to judge a party's secular credentials is not only to judge its ideology or the programmes it proposes to implement but the extent to which it is prepared to share the power of decision-making with the deprived groups - beginning from the party structure, the list of candidates in elections to the government and the administration. Seen from this angle, all secular parties fail the test, partly because the deprived groups are not as active in mass politics and people's agitations as they should be. Yet all secular parties must make all possible endeavour to co-opt as many representative of the deprived groups in their structure in their candidatures and in the government, when they come to power.

There is no time to change the party structure but the representation of minorities in the lists of candidates and their quality are a good test of the sincerity of its secular professions. The BJP has so far fielded 5 Muslims out of 301. At this rate, the Muslim representation, quantatively comes to 1.6% for a religious minority which constitutes 12% of the population and the candidates are non-entities.

SECULAR PARTIES/FORMATIONS

The disunity of the Secular Forces is today the

biggest advantage to the BJP - not its money, not its propaganda, not its programme, not its ideology, not its track record, not its manpower, the RSS. **In a one-to-one contest the BJP will be reduced to a shadow of its bloated self! In their mutual antipathy, in their personal ego-clashes of their leaders, in their cherished habits of thought of the past, they have refused to see the writing on the wall.**

So, where the Secular Parties have failed, the Secular Voters must step in, organise themselves and stop the BJP Rath!

There are 3 categories of States. In the first category, the voter has no option but to vote for the Congress or the Congress-supported candidates almost in all constituencies of the state. In the second, Congress does not exist and the choice has to be a constituent of the UF. In the third category, more than one secular parties/ formations, including Congress, are pitted against the BJP so the strongest secular candidate, constituency-wise, has to be identified and voted for. If (in any Constituency) the BJP is on the margin or a minor player or not in the field at all, the electoral contest is between two secular formations. Here the secular voters may make an ideological choice and vote according to his conscience.

I - Congress:

Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, H.P., M.P., Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan - Congress

II - United Front:

Jammu and Kashmir (NC), Tamilnadu (DMK-TMC).

III- Congress or United Front:

A.P.	:	TDP (UF) or Congress
Assam	:	AGP (UF) or Congress
Bihar	:	RJD-Congress-JMM or UF (JD)
Karnataka	:	Congress or UF (JD)
Kerala	:	UDF or LDF
UP	:	UF (SP) or Congress or BSP
W. Bengal	:	LDF or Congress

ADVICE TO THE SECULAR VOTERS

All said and done, to sum up, my advice to the Secular Voters is as follows:

* if there is only one secular party/formation in the Constituency, all secular voters must vote for it.
* if there are more than one secular parties/formations in the Constituency, the secular voters must choose the strongest in order to defeat the BJP
* In constituencies in which neither the BJP or any ally is in the contest, the secular voter may vote according to his convenience.
* Everywhere they must vote massively and thus fully utilise their voting power.

This is the only way the secular voters can save the Secular Order and Save INDIA!

New Delhi,
1 February, 1998

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Mohit Sen on Building a Nation-State in Plural Society

The national state is under unprecedented assault... The Soviet Union having disintegrated, the more imperial elements of the US administration are moving in for the kill. For them, the objective is the establishment of pax Americana in what they consider is a unipolar world in terms of military and political power. The objective is to be gained as peacefully as possible and at minimum cost. There is to be no repetition of Vietnam nor even of Operation Desert storm. Casualties, above all, are to be avoided. The best way, therefore, is to accentuate conflict and then dominate both sides by mediation and peace-brokering.

... This strategy ... has been in operation in our subcontinent as well. Pakistan's undeclared war against us has spread beyond Kashmir and Punjab...

Only those blinded and deafened by delusions about their supposed historical role ... can choose to ignore the signals that these developments send. The danger is that they seem to be ignored by those at the helm of affairs...

Another menacing development is the links that are being established between important sections of business and terrorists of different types... At a different level, there is the unbridled assertion of economism by the trade union movement before which the government surrenders It has no moral leg to stand upon, of course, to oppose the unions after the ... surrender to big business and black money ... in the so-called dream budget. ...

Nationalism is a product of historical development. A nation is neither something present from the beginning of time nor is its advent sudden. The accumulation of experience leading to the shaping of a distinctive and shared identity results in the emergence of a nation. That specific moment is almost universally associated with a movement succeeding in winning a state to which willing even joyful allegiance is extended...

The movement, however has to be of a specific kind and it has to build upon historical inheritance. The movement has to embrace all regions, languages, communities and classes which have, in varying measure, shaped that inheritance and been shaped by it. Conflict cannot be avoided but the point is to internalise it and even to use it to advance the existing unity. ...

Rigid Definition

India's emergence and continuation as a nation and the persistence of its national state is a copybook example of the historical generalisation... India can be said to have begun in Mohenjodaro and become on August 15, 1947. Its inheritance was a treasure of unified diversities. Colonial rule came in the way of this inheritance becoming the foundation of a modern state. The national movement was much more a reassertion and enriching of this inheritance than even a movement of resistance to and elimination of foreign rule.

Fifty years have passed... India has formed itself more decisively in these five decades than in previous centuries. Democracy, secularism and comprehensive development have led to our irrevocable establishment.

The emergence in politics of those from the lower depths has serious negative features, especially in the shape of casteism... The national inheritance and the reinforced nationalism of the years of freedom have also shaped their personalities. The dangerously misleading response of pandering to casteism and even glorifying it as social progress overlooks the nationalism of the newly-emerged.

Denial of nationalism in the name of region and caste is, however, not as damaging as the attempt to construct an alternative nationalism. In the name of cultural uniformity which, in fact, does not exist, what is sought to be built is an excluding nationalism. Those engaged in this endeavour imagine that the more rigid the definition of nationalism, the greater will be its strength. The opposite is true both of nationalism in general and of our nationalism in particular.

We have become Indian by acceptance and addition and we have established India by giving power to unified plurality. This has, above all, been possible because of the winning of the national state...

Globalisation, it is said, has made the nation redundant. Not so and not even in the immediate present... Those threatened can resist successfully only if they have recognised their own existence.

(Source: The Times of India, 10 December, 1997)

A Comment on Hindutva Thesis

I would have enjoyed reading 'The New Age Hindu' by Mr. K.R. Malkani (October 20) had I been a schoolboy... Malkani can choose to speak or write like a grown baby... We live in a civilised society and a scientific age. We are approaching the end of the second millennium. Humanity is full of hope and dreams for a great future. At a time like this we cannot allow our intellect to march backward like a crab to hibernate in Mr. Malkani's fabled kingdom. We cannot opt for obsolete customs and exploded myths. We cannot return to an age long past...

Malkani's article is a jumble of cumbersome cliches and tedious truism. His equations like Hinduism = Indian nationalism, or religion = culture, or Hindus = the people of India, are utterly untenable. He does not seem to realise that his definitions are as ridiculous as a theory like 'Every cat has a tail'. He sorely needs to read some good books on the history of India vis-a-vis the history of Hinduism to know that his story is not the only story of India's glorious past or that his vision of India's prosperous future is not the only vision of India. He should note, above all, that India is much greater than Hinduism and Hindus. Nationalism is essentially a politico-territorial concept. Mr. Malkani, therefore, must not try to Hinduise Indian nationalism... - R.P. Sharma

(Source: The Times of India, 14 November, 1997)

Asghar Ali Engineer on Multiplicity of Identity

Some people in India insist that one should have only a single identity, that is the national identity. All other identities should be either given up or subordinated to the national identity. Such a position is difficult to main even under an authoritarian regime, let alone in a vibrant democracy. Every citizen has multiple identities and these are equally important.

A citizen has his regional, linguistic, religious, sectarian, caste and professional identities. All these matter to him though one may be more important that the others in a given context and the context may keep changing. Thus, in the vent of external invasion the national identity may take precedence... When there is caste conflict, the caste identity assumes importance...

The democratic process intensifies power struggle and hence the assertion of various identities assumes vital importance. Authoritarian regimes may suppress or subordinate various identities but a democratic regime will not do that. Democracy is nothing if it does not give free play to the power struggle among various sections.

In India, three identifies have played a seminal role since colonial rule was established - religious, caste and regional (or ethnic) identities. In fact, the religious and caste identities played a much greater role than the regional identity during the colonial period but the regional identity became equally aggressive after independence as we witness in the northeast and Kashmir. The colonial period was known more for its religious conflict...

The religious identities were not as intense in the pre-British period as it became after the British rule was consolidated. Earlier, the religious identities were quite diffused among the masses... They had a greater awareness of their caste and professional identities. In fact, in the pre-British period as it became after the British rule was consolidated. Earlier, the religious identities were quite diffused among the masses... They had a greater awareness of their caste and professional identities. In fact, in the pre-British period the whole social dynamics depended on caste functions. A person belonging to a weaving caste was more aware of his caste identity as a bunker (weaver) than of his religious identity. However, the dynamics of the British rule were such as to throw up religious identities as of vital importance... The politics of identities plays an important role in the democratic process. It has an emotional basis and its politicisation has a greater emotional impact. Precisely for this reason, it is cleverly manipulated by politicians. Various identities - religious, caste and regional - are shaping the politics of the country... Their internal unity will be possible only when there is a threat from the "other identity"...

... There have been Hindu-Muslim conflicts in independent India... A multi-religious democratic society can hardly avoid inter-religious conflict as different religious groups are bound to assert their identities to bargain for a greater shape in power. In independent India, the upper caste Hindu elite had been enjoying power... With the deepening of the democratic processes .. the religious minorities and the lower castes began to assert their identities vigorously, accentuating religious and caste conflicts... When the upper caste were forced to concede a bigger share in power to the minorities and backward castes, they asserted the religious identity most aggressively by launching the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. Though apparently religious, this movement was also essentially a political struggle, with the upper caste Hindus seeking to consolidate their power. However, they did not succeed and had to concede a greater share in power to the lower castes...

The regional elite is also calmouring for a share in political power. It is no longer possible for any national party to rule at the Centre and in the States. The States are controlled by the regional parties and they are sharing power at the Central level too....

In any democracy, various identities are bound to assert themselves politically and this assertion, within limits has its own legitimacy. It can lead to a correction of the balance of power in society. But if it crosses the limit and uses violence, it can cause serious conflicts and destablise the country. The democratic aspirations should not be ignored and violent assertions should not be permitted... **(Source: The Hindu, 12 December, 1997)**

BJP: Vajpayee's Views on Islam and Muslims

... The Muslims ... must have a feeling of patriotism for the country. But the Islamic division of the world into dural harab and durab Islam comes to the way. Islam has yet to flourishing in a country where Muslims are in a minority".

They cannot convert the whole of India to Islam. After all, they have to live here. So they have to recognise this fact. And today, it has become a matter of grave concern and deep thinking in the Muslim countries. Because Koran offers no guidance in this regard. It only talks of killing Kafirs on converting them to Islam.

But they cannot do it always and everywhere. How can they do it where they are in a minority? If they try to do it, a major clash will take place and only the members of the minority will be killed. But Muslims themselves have to change this state of affairs. We cannot change it for them. The Muslims of this country can be treated in three ways: one is tiraskar, which means that if they do not change themselves they would be rejected as our compatriots. Second is puraskar, which is appeasement. This would mean bribing them to behave which is being done by the Congress and others of their ilk. The third way is parishkar meaning to change them, restore them to the mainstream by providing them samskar. We want to change them by offering the right samskar. ...

(Source: The Hindustan Times)

Congress: Post-Partition Review
AICC Resolution November, 1947 (Extracts)

... The Congress has never accepted the theory that there are two nations in India. It has firmly believed in the whole of India as nation bound together by indissoluble cultural and historical links which had been further strengthened in the course of the national struggle for freedom. India is a land of many religions and races, and must continue to remain so. Nevertheless, India has been a country with a fundamental unity, and the aim of the Congress has been to develop this great country as a whole as a democratic secular state where all citizens enjoy full rights and are equally entitled to the protection of the State, irrespective of the religion to which they belong. The Congress wants to assure the minorities in India that it will continue to protect, to the best of its ability, their citizen rights, against aggression."

... The AICC feels that ... migrations should be discouraged, and that conditions should be created in the Indian Dominion and in Pakistan for minorities to live in peace and security. Every effort should be made to enable the evacuees and refugees from either Dominion ultimately to return to their homes and original occupations under conditions of safety and security. In any event, the policy to be followed in the Indian Union is to protect the minorities still residing here, and to prevent their removal by force or by the creation of any circumstances to compel their evacuation."

"The AICC has noted with regret that communal organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League, and the Akali Party have sought to promote their respective interests based on so-called religious considerations in conflict with the national interest. National interest must mean and include a healthy synthesis of all interests based not on religious but political, social, material and moral grounds. Political activities must accordingly be conducted by political organisations which are based on political and economic policies, and which are open to members of all communities. There is a growing desire on the part of some organisations to build up private armies. Any such development is dangerous for the safety of the State and for the growth of corporate life in the nation. The State alone should have its Defence forces, Police, Home Guards, or other recognised volunteer forces. The activities of the Muslim National Guard, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, the Akali Volunteers and others, in so far as they represent an endeavour to bring into being private armies, must be regarded as a menace to the freedom of the country. The AICC appeals to these organisations to discontinue such activities, and to the Central Government and the Provincial Governments to take necessary steps in this regard." ...

BJP: Atal Bihari Vajpayee
On Secularism

... Mahatma Gandhi describes the correct attitude towards religion as Sarva Dharma Samabhava, equal respect for all religions...

In fact by propounding the theory of Sarva Dharma Samabhava, Gandhiji continued the age-old Indian tradition which can be traced to the ancient saying of "Ekam Sadvipra Bahudha Vadanti"... Sarva Dharma Samabhava ... reminds us of the ancient Indian tradition of liberalism and tolerance. Gandhiji's great stress on (it) was reflected in our freedom struggle. Our objective was to free ourselves from the colonial rule and to establish democracy.

Under the democratic system, every citizen has a vote and thus he is an equal partner in the election of a Government. There is no discrimination on the basis of his religion.

Sarva Dharma Samabhava is not against any religion... The Indian concept of secularism is more positive. It is specially suited to India as followers of different faiths had been living in India since time immemorial long before the advent of Christianity and Islam.

The translation of the word 'secular' as dharmanirpeksha has caused some confusion, appears somewhat negative and creates an impression that it negates something. Secondly, dharmanirpeksha has been taken to mean that it is concerned about or indifferent to religion. We should not ignore the fact that the Indian society is basically oriented to Dharma and has faith in it.

After a decade of the framing of the Constitution, Nehruji thought of this aspect while writing the preface of the book entitled Dharmanirpeksha Rajya (Secular State) by Shri Raghunath Singh MP. Nehruji said that the word Dharmanirpeksha does not fully convey the idea behind the English word 'secular'. Some people think that it is something against religion... **The correct interpretation of the secular state would be that all Dharmas or religious faiths are treated with equal respect.** This way, Nehruji also supported the Sarva Dharma Samabhava...

The question now arises as to why do we have this sharp controversy over secularism decades after the framing of the Constitution.

I feel that had we translated the word 'secular' as Sampradaya-nirpeksha or Pantha-nirpeksha instead of Dharma-nirpeksha, in the very beginning many apprehensions would not have arisen... All agreed that the State should be non-communal...

(Excerpted from Dr. Rajendra Prasad Lecture, 1992)

Muslims and Christians as Targets of Cultural Nationalism

T.K. Oommen in The Hindustan Times, 7 January, 1998

Cultural integration obtains when everybody within the polity is not simply in it but of it. It is a situation which imparts a sense of belonging to all citizens wherein the distinction between the ins and the outs is done away with. Viewed thus we have to travel a long distance to achieve cultural integration in India. One of the main obstacles in achieving cultural integration is the persisting tendency to characterise the followers of some of the religious faiths as 'outsiders'.

... Religions which are believed to be products of conquest (Islam) and colonialism (Christianity) ... are dubbed as 'alien' religions... They are also proselytizing religions. Further, their numbers, particularly that of Muslims, are so large that they have considerable political clout. It is important to note that being proselytizing religion. Muslims and Christians of India are primarily converts from native peoples and that too mainly from Adivasis, Dalits and Dravidians who are .. pre-Aryan... At any rate, pre-conquest Islam and pre-colonial Christianity existed in India. Thus Islam is 13 centuries and Christianity is 20 centuries old in India.

Indian Muslims and Christians do not constitute cultural communities in that they do not have a common language or adhere to the same lifestyle... Muslims and Christians are not races. They do not occupy a common geographical space; they are not 'regional' communities. They are born, live and die in different parts of India and speak a multiplicity of languages. What is, however, common to them is their religion which they share with fellow Muslims and Christians all over the world. Therefore, to identify religion as the sole basis of their identity is incorrect and illogica... To stigmatise Christians, three false ideas were invented and propagated. First, conversion to Christianity was motivated by material considerations... Second, Christians did not effectively participate in the anti-colonial struggle as the colonisers were also Christians... Third, ... some Christians are secessionists and hence anti-national. The fact is that the Indian Christians have not claimed any part of India as their exclusive homeland...

The case of Indian Muslims is more complex. They are held responsible for the partition of India. But three facts are important here. First, the allegation that Muslims were responsible for partition is applicable only to Muslims of North India, particularly of UP. Second, a substantial section of the Muslims were vigorous participants in the anti-colonial movement. Third, at the time of partition only a small section of Muslims from ... India migrated to Pakistan; the vast majority stayed back.

The fact that India has two Muslim majority states as its immediate neighbours makes the situation more difficult for Indian Muslims. The continued contentions between India and Pakistan about Kashmir render the Muslims in India an object of instant suspicion... The problem of Indian Muslims is basically political. But in order to construct them as an object of hatred which is politically useful, they are characterised as culturally different from the rest of the Indians, particularly the Hindus. The point is that culture is not an important basis of distinction between the different religious communities of India... We need to know the different layers and levels of culture... One may distinguish between cultural universals, specialities and alternatives. Cultural universals are shared by the entire humanity. But within this universe one can speak of cultural differences across civilizations and societies. In all societies there is an elasticity of permissiveness at the individual level in regard to dress, food, and style of life in general. Cultural alternatives indicate the individual variations in cultural practices within cultural universes, that is, societies and civilisations. If a sufficient number of individuals follow similar alternatives they come to constitute a cultural sub-group.

Cultural specialities are identity markers of particular cultural groups - religious, linguistic, tribal etc. What distinguishes Indian Christians and Muslims ... is their cultural specialities. Cultural specialities of religious groups are their beliefs and rituals... Social rituals are shared by those who belong to the same linguistic community. There is hardly any social ritual shared by the entire Indian population. That is, the cultural groups which practise the same social rituals are Maharashtrians, Punjabis or Tamils and not Hindus, Muslims or Christians. Thus, a Maharashtrian Muslim or Christian shares most of his social rituals with other fellow Maharashtrians and he shares his canonical rituals with the fellow community spread all over the world.

To invoke religion as the sole identity marker ... is to misrepresent their identity by ignoring all other aspects - social, economic, political and cultural. The majority of the Hindus in India know this but are often silent. But a section of militant - communal Hindus deliberately choose to highlight one element from the identity - set of Muslims and Christians. This is deliberate, false and mischievous. This should be exposed, questioned and resisted.

... The proportion of cultural speciality practised by Indian Muslims and Christians is very limited and in fact increasingly diminishing. This is evident from the changing dress pattern, dietary practices and social rituals. Thus, the degree of cultural integration, save the religious beliefs and rituals, is steadily increasing. In fact,

(Contd. on Page 89)

Surendra Mohan
On Changing Political Scanario

... The Congress(I) (has) suffered desertions in a number of States... Most of them are from the forward castes. It is no surprise that a large number of them have joined the BJP emphasising its particular social character; but a similar movement is not taking place among the OBCs, and the Scheduled Castes...

Worse is the case of the OBCs. Not only were the aspirations of a broadbased social justice ignored by the successive leaders of the OBCs, power ... introduced several negative tendencies among them. The most important were divisions on the basis of communities and sub-communities, and personal jealousies. These tendencies afflicted the forward castes too for long, but now when they are faced with the strong consolidation and assertion of the downtrodden they are trying to close ranks.

The fact that these castes are still holding the levers of power in the bureaucracy, the professions and in business and industry makes it obligatory for them to fight for retaining the status quo which the status quoits parties like the Congress and the BJP popularise in the name of stability. This ... misleads the middle classes among the non-forward caste groups also.

However, the consciousness that if politics continues to be in the driving seat, then the numerical strength of the OBCs, the SCs, STs and the religious minorities could pose threats to their privileges makes them resort to several devices. Liberalisation and privatisation of the economy are among them...

Unfortunately, in the alternative constituency, which goes by the name of social justice and secularism, there is no such serious, considered and long-term thinking on either these issues or the political strategies. There is a reverse process...

Divisions are giving the BJP a clear field to rule and reestablish the hold of the forward castes. The BJP wishes, however, to be quite sure that it grabs this opportunity. Hence, it has introduced an admirable flexibility in its tactical line. Not only has it adopted total permissiveness in its political alignments making common cause with all and sundry, it is busy jettisoning its social image that the religious minorities have always shunned...

These changes in the policies of the BJP will remain cosmetic unless its basic philosophy as dictated by the RSS does not change. While the top leadership is confined to the forward castes, more so the Brahmins, the umbilical cord with the RSS, which has other offspring such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, apart from a network of Saraswati Shishu Mandirs and Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Dharma Samsads is still quite strong. The Chaturvarna and Manuvad are still the accepted ethos of the Sangh Parivar. The hold of the industrialists and traders as also the princes is no less strong. Under the circumstances, it is difficult for the party to broadbase its electoral constituency substantially... The party's real effort is to create a wave in its favour in order to win the psychological war so that the floating voter will turn to it...

Nikhil Chakravartty
On Coalition Based on Defections

This disillusion (among the) masses ... is phenomenal. For one thing, they were not used to a perpetual state of coalition politics. There is a lurking interest today to return to one-party rule. For that purpose, there is a reluctance on the part of the Congress leadership to repudiate one-party (and to) hold out hopes of a resumption of the Congress rule... This is nothing but fond hopes... There is not the ghost of a chance to go in for a one-party rule. Coalition politics has just become inescapable. ...

... The present government had the United Front, buttressed by the Congress to ensure a majority in the Lok Sabha... Even in the selection of the United Front Prime Minister, the Congress President had a hand...

This ... every (tremor) within the Congress party could be felt in the United Front. After the experience of UP (the BJP had) hoped that a similar act would be repeated at the Centre... Such a possibility was spelt out by Kalyan Singh and later on, though indirectly, by A.B. Vajpayee. This would have been disastrous ... as it would shaken the very roots of the Indian politics...

... This does not mean that within the Congress there are no elements which are not inclined towards the BJP. The fact of the matter is that they themselves would not like to take the initiative for such a repudiation of the Congress stand against the BJP.

... It was not expected of the Congress to get a chunk of the BJP (but) hoped to get a slice of the United Front...

The fact of the matter is that those who would go over, would be virtually guilty of defection, even if it were called by another name... In the murky atmosphere created by corruption ... a member of the Lok Sabha would hardly hold on his own... A fresh election ... is a costly business, but the Indian Constitution can provide no other solution to the thorny question when an elected MP chooses to shift his allegiance from one party to another. **(Source: The Mainstream, 6 December, 1997)**

BJP: Election-eve Offer to Muslims

L.K. Advani's Speech at BJP's Muslim Youth Conference, New Delhi, 4 December, 1997

... Indian politics (has been) sought to be defined and developed in the past 17 months - namely, that the BJP is a communal party which is anti-Muslim and anti-minorities. (This is) the biggest fraud ... perpetrated on the people of India and on the entire parliamentary democratic system of India by the self-styled defenders of secularism...

There could not be a more nauseating example of trickery and deception in a democracy... This propaganda by these fraudulent, power-hungry pseudo-secularists...

... If defending secularism, even the wrong way in which they understand and practice it, is what was most important to them, why did (Congress and UF) fall apart? After all, "defence of secularism" was the sole basis on which the United Front was formed and the Congress had extended unconditional support to it. Why, then, did the Congress withdraw support to the UF Government - not one but two governments in a span of 17 months?

This clearly shows that their advocacy of "secularism" and their shrill noise about defending Muslims from the BJP was bogus and hypocritical...

I have, therefore, no doubt that the people of India - and especially the Muslim people of India - have now fully seen through these cheats... All the right-thinking Muslims know that the BJP is not a hypocrite. We do not think something and say something else. We do not speak one thing and do something else. What is in our mind is on our tongue, and what is on our tongue is in our action.

...

India became free because of the struggles and sacrifices of brave and idealistic young men like Ashfaqullah Khan...

... May you take inspiration in this mission from martyrs like Ashfaqullah Khan. But may you also seek inspiration ... from public figures like the scientist Dr. Abul Kalam, who has deservedly been honoured with the nation's highest civilian title "Bharat Ratna". May your role models be young achievers like Mohammed Azharuddin and A.R. Rehman, who make every Indian proud with their talent.

The BJP believes that India is 'One Nation, One Culture and One People'. This is what our opponents oppose us for, and this is what they say proves the BJP to be anti-Muslim and anti-secular. But they never have explained how. Isn't Indian one nation? Those who believed in the two-nation theory caused the Partition of India and created Pakistan...

... Today there are (more) Muslims in India than in either Pakistan and Bangladesh. Does that mean that, even after Partition and Freedom, India continues to comprise two separate nations - Hindus and Muslims? The proposition is both absurd and dangerous. Does that mean that, after Partition. India is a nation only for the Hindus and that Muslims live here only at the sufferance of the Hindus? The proposition is equally absurd and dangerous... India was, is and always will be One Nation, in which people professing different faiths and people belonging to different castes, races and linguistic communities will have and equal place, equal voice, equal rights and equal responsibilities.

What unites these ... diverse communities into a single national community? It is neither religion nor economy nor the political-administration system. Rather, it is our national culture. This point is either misunderstood by some people or deliberately misrepresented by others. For example, the BJP supports the demand for the construction of a magnificent temple at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya not only because the religious sentiments of the majority community are associated with it, but also because Shri Ram is a great symbol and source of inspiration of India's national culture (and) belongs to every section of India's population including Muslims. ...

When the BJP says 'One Culture' (it also) recognise the cultural diversity of India. There is no country on the face of this earth which is more culturally diverse and rich than India. But all these sub-cultures of region, religion, race, caste and language find their harmonising and unifying expression in India's national culture. ...

What is the meaning of this oneness? The answer was provided by Archbishop J. Arlappa of Hyderabad who stated at a function early this year: "I am a Christian by faith, Indian by nationality and Hindu by culture".

... The religion of Islam and the community of Muslims have also made their own unique and rich contribution to India's national culture. We see this contribution in the diversity of India's architecture, music, arts, literature, science, artisanry, food, language and spirituality. The BJP unequivocally recognises this Muslim contribution to India's national culture. For example, Urdu, the language spoken by most Indian Muslims, is an Indian language. We would like it to grow...

... Who can say that we are not 'One People'? The BJP brooks absolutely no discrimination among the people of India on the basis of their caste, creed or ideology, the only common obligation on all being adherence to the spirit and commandments of the Indian

Constitution. Muslims are a part and parcel of India. We seek their welfare and progress as much as we seek the welfare and progress of any other community in India. This is not a new realisation for us, nor are we saying this just to endear ourselves to the Muslim community...

... We genuinely believe everyone who is an Indian to be 'blood of our blood and flesh of our flesh'. Events like the one in Coimbatore recently pain us deeply. Communal riots are a blot on the culture and civilisation of India. Irrespective of whose blood is spilt in such riots, it is the Indian blood that is spilt. The BJP is committed to the goal of building a riot-free and violence-free India... The youth has a special responsibility to fight fanaticism, fundamentalism, communalism and terrorism ... regardless of which brand they surface under. Communal harmony and Hindu-Muslim amity should be the mantra of Indian youth...

During my Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra, I had issued an appeal to Indian Muslims, urging them to understand Cultural Nationalism and forge heart-unity with their Hindu brethren... "The BJP is interested in, and will sincerely strive for, a qualitative change in the relationship that now obtains between our party and India's Muslim community. The very thought of excluding such a large section of Indian population is repugnant to us".

Muslims in India are victims of many problems such as poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, and even less-than-proper representation in the political affairs of the nation. To a nationalist party like the BJP, it is a matter of deep concern that a community as big as Indian Muslims should be suffering from so many disabilities. We are unequivocally committed to the welfare and progress of Indian Muslims, because our slogan is: "Justice for All. Appeasement of None".

(During) the past five decades ... successive governments of the Congress and other self-styled secular governments indulged in blatant tactics of appeasement in order to get their support, but did precious little to improve the lot of common Muslims. The BJP is not opposed to the minorities, but to minorityism ... practiced by the Congress which has, in fact, hurt the interests of the minorities themselves. ....

(Source: The BJP Today, 16-31 December, 1997)

BJP on Personal Law

Advani's Views

"If the BJP is voted to power, not only Muslim law, even Hindu, Christian and other laws would be changed suitably within the constitutional framework," he told the media in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh...

Shri Advani denied having said that the controversial Kasi and Mathura issues would continue to be in the party's agenda for the coming Lok Sabha poll.

"These issues were never in the party agenda. The BJP would not dilute its policies on the Ayodhya issue and uniform civil code", he added. ...

(Source: The BJP Today, 1-15 January, 1998)

Vajpayee on Common Civil Code

The BJP will launch "a national debate and a campaign of awareness" on the question of a common civil code... "Hindu law will not be imposed on any section of society". "Political parties have not seriously tried to convince our Muslim friends that a common civil code does not mean something that is anti-Muslim... There are practices under the Hindu law also that need to be modified or amended".

(Source: The Times of India, 8 January, 1998)

Advani's Promise of Tickets to Muslims

The prospect of becoming the country's mainstream political party places an inescapable responsibility on our Manifesto to mirror the concerns and aspirations of every section of Indian society - especially, dalits, tribals, backward classes and other weaker sections of society. Our Party unequivocally champions the cause of every section of our national family having its due share in satta (power), sampatti (prosperity) and sammaan (social status). These concerns have always been central to the BJP's philosophy. But at no time in the past was the situation so supportive as now for us to expose the limitations of our adversaries' advocacy of 'social justice' and to advance our own superior and more sincere espousal of the same noble concept on the basis of samajik samarasata.

Our list of candidates should fairly reflect the social composition of Indian society. **We should make added efforts to identify deserving and winnable candidates from among religious minorities, especially Muslims.**..

(Source: The BJP Today, 1-15 January, 1998)

Best Wishes and Cordial Greetings
For the Id-ul-Fitr
To all our Subscribers and Readers

BJP: National Executive, Bhubaneswar Resolution (Extracts)

The National Executive ... views the coming mid-term general election as an unique opportunity for the people to elect a Government that is purposive, believes in implementing people-oriented policies and is confident of providing the nation with able leadership...

Let the 'mandate of 1998' be a mandate for a stable Government and an able Prime Minister, both of which the BJP alone can ensure...

... The correct response to the destablising politics of the Congress and the UF would be for the people to vote overwhelmingly against both of them and thus punish these wreckers of democracy.

.. The ISI's vicious activities have spread to new geographical areas and are posing a threat to national integrity. By seeking to pamper separatists in Jammu and Kashmir, the Gujral Government has emboldened those who have been waging war against the Indian state and given a fillip to their murderous activities... In the east, infiltrators continues unabated.

... The National Executive is confident that the BJP is the only party which will occupy the political space that is being rapidly vacated by the other parties...

The moment has arrived for the BJP to play its destined role - to provide leadership to a nation betrayed by pretenders; to provide good governance ... to revive the spirit of optimism, opportunity and oneness...

This is the turning point in post-independence India's history, a point from where India will embark upon its journey into the next millennium... We pledge to build ... society free of fear and hunger and a nation confident of facing internal and external security challenges. We pledge to usher in an era of social harmony where the weaker sections shall be able to live in peace and dignity, where the honour of women shall be protected, where the youth shall be active participants in the sacred task of nation-building ... where the genuine social and economic problems of the minority communities shall be taken care of by a responsive and responsible state.

(Source: The Organiser, 4 January, 1998)

RSS: G.S. Seshadri on Hindu Nationalism

Hindus have never demanded exclusive concessions for themselves. They have stood for the common benefit. ...

It is not the question of Muslim or Hindu interest. In fact there is only national interest. And Hindu interest is national interest. Hindus only demand that there should be no discrimination on the basis of religion and such other factors. But certain Hindu elements inherent in Bharatiya tradition should be upheld. **(Source: The Organiser, 11 January, 1998)**

BJP: Views of Atal Bihari Vajpayee On General Elections

The BJP-led coalition will be stable, because the largest party (BJP) will be sharing power with allies...

Even leaders of the minority communities treat the BJP with respect. The old charge against the BJP that it is non-secular no longer holds good. India is a Hindu majority country where every caste, creed, and religion has equal rights. No BJP leader denies this fact. Nor does anyone challenge our secular credentials any more. Of course, we believe in Hinduism because it is a commonwealth of all religions.

... Of course, it is true that there was not even a single Muslim member amongst BJP Lok Sabha members in the past. We want to field Muslims this time. But such decisions are ultimately dictated by the winnability factor. Wherever we find Muslims BJP members having good winning potential we shall field them...

... Whatever I am, it is because of the party to which I belong. **(Source: The Times of India, 7 January, 1998)**

BJP: A.B. Vajpayee's Views

... The minorities are realising that their economic and social backwardness is entrenched by vote-bank politics. Also, the absence of communal tension and lack of discrimination in BJP-ruled states has made more people see us differently.

Article 370 was meant to be a temporary feature.

To us, the Uniform Civil Code does not mean the substitution of personal law of the minorities with that of the majority but the availability of equal rights for everyone. However, both these are emotional issues and opinion building would be essential before any progress is possible. **(Source: The India Today, 29 December, 1997)**

BJP: Views of Kalyan Singh On Election Strategy

The larger section of Muslims do realise that BJP regimes have always ensured riot-free environment everywhere. You could see our track record. Never has there been any riot during the course of BJP rule, whether in UP or in any other state... A good chunk of Muslims including Shias supported the candidature of Atalji even at the last elections, because they realise that today's economic prosperity among Muslims is attributable to the opening of doors for employment in Gulf countries, that was Atalji's gift to Muslims when he was the external affairs minister in 1977.

BJP has certainly not left its Hindutva line, but ... there are other even more vital issues that cannot be ignored. But let it not be misconstrued that we are going to compromise on our principle of ensuring justice to all and appeasement of none.

(Source: The Sunday, 4-10 January, 1998)

Saeed Naqvi
On BJP's Impact on Muslims

A question is being asked whether Muslims will vote for the BJP - not en masse, but possibly in driblets. In other words, has the untouchability quotient of the BJP declined as far as the minorities are concerned?

There are two reasons why this question is being asked. First, because of the mass defection of the minorities from their traditional haven, the Congress. Specifically on account of the Babari Masjid fiasco in December 1992. Secondly, the moderate image of itself being projected by the BJP.

Contrary to the settled opinion in some Muslim circles, it is not an easy question to answer. The fact of the matter is that the minorities have traditionally feared the BJP. Since 1992 they have been angry with the Congress. But the manner in which the BJP has been packaged for the stalls on this occasion is certainly an improvement on all previous efforts at salesmanship. Unfortunately for the party, anger with the Congress does not necessarily translate itself into minority votes for the BJP. There are other aspirants for these votes...

There is another complicating factor. Just as the acceptability of the BJP has increased, however marginally, the anger with the Congress has dissipated itself partly because of the passage of time, and, decisively on account of the change in the party's leadership... (To come back to) the essential question ... the answer must be a resounding "no" for the current round of electioneering, largely because the window dressing the party has engaged in has been seen by the minorities as just that: Window dressing. It will have to spell out a well-defined policy towards the minorities and sustain it until the elections next century before the Muslims turn to it as a party with which their future is secure....

(Source: The Pioneer, 11 January, 1998)

Zafar Jung's Views
On BJP's Overtures

... Despite (its) persistent propaganda, the saffron gentry has yet to furnish any credible historical and archaeological evidence to prove the existence of so-called "Ram's birth place" which Babar is alleged to have destroyed... In one of his recent historical works S.R. Sharma mentions that "there is no evidence of his ever having destroyed a Hindu temple or otherwise persecuted the Hindus on account of their religion".

However, truth and transparency are the prime casualties of a fascist movement and nationalism the last refuge of a scoundrel. That the BJP's nationalism is not only exclusive and anti-Muslim but essentially an attempt to impose a decadent social order, has been established by the aversion to the Hindutva movement of a large segment of the Hindu population itself, forcing a rethinking in the BJP camp.

Advani's address ... to the so called National Muslim Youth Conference is merely an Orwellian doublespeak and can at best be described as an election ploy to garner the votes of liberal Hindus. Further, Advani's offer to speak to VHP on the issue of Mathura and Kashi is not only a gimmick but also ridiculous given the face that the Mathura temple-mosque controversy was amicably resolved by the Shahi Idgah Trust and Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sangh of Mathura through a written agreement signed on October 18, 1968.

It would be suicidal on the part of Muslims to take chances with the BJP given its track record. Moreover, any conciliatory gesture on the part of BJP, real or imagined, is not likely to succeed until its 'honorary foot soldiers' in the press stop indulging in falsification and untruths about Muslim history, their society, culture and religion.

(Letter to the Times of India)

Lok Shakti: President R.K. Hegde's Views
On BJP's Record

... BJP when out of government and when in charge is different. It is on its best behaviour when in power and many of my Muslim colleagues in Maharashtra have told me that there have been no problems with the BJP-Shiv Sena combine government.

(Source: The Times of India, 16 December, 1997)

Shahabuddin's Letter to Hegde, 17 Dec., 1997

In your interview (Times of India, 16 Dec.,1997) you have certified that "the BJP, when in power is on its best behaviour" and have given the example of Maharashtra.

Even in Maharashtra, the Joshi Government, has abolished the Minorities Commission, tried its best to sabotage the Sri Krishna Commission of Inquiry into Mumbai Riots, December, 1992 - March, 1993, cut down the grant-in-aid to the state Urdu Academy, failed to notify the new Wakf Act, 1995 and establish Wakf Tribunals, captured Muslim shrines and declared them as Hindu shrines (e.g. Baba Malang Dargah near Bombay), throw Muslims on the street in Mumbai in the name of slum clearance and denied them rehabilitation, withdrawn criminal cases against Bal Thackeray and Sarpotdar related to riots as well as insult to Islam, terrorised Muslim youth by killing even innocent people in so-called encounters.

What is important is to realise that the objective of the RSS-BJP-Shiv Sena is not to exterminate Muslims but to terrorise them into Hinduisation. This is being done by Kalyan Singh Government in U.P. which has made Sanskrit compulsory from class III, apart from Hindu and English, leaving no room for Urdu, the Mother Tongue of Muslim children and introduced Hindu rites and customs in schools in the name of moral education, purged text books of all positive references to Islam and Muslims in India and stuffed them with stories about Hindu gods and personalities and Hindu myths and legends. This is cultural and linguistic genocide - contrary to the letter and spirit of the Indian Constitution and the UN Convention. Do you approve all this?

Amulya Ganguli's Report on Uma Bharati

... BJP's fiery propagandist Uma Bharati (in) her recent interview in Panchjanya, a magazine propagating the Sangh Parivar's views, makes clear (that) **there has been no dilution of the BJP's stand at all. In fact, there is even an implied threat that if the Muslims do not learn to live in amicable terms with the Hindus, they may suffer.**

... To a question whether the Muslims want to be friendly towards the BJP because they believe that the party is coming to power, she said that the Muslims may have realised that they cannot live in "Hindustan" if they are in conflict with the Hindus. According to her, their feeling of insecurity increased when the saffron flag began to flutter over the demolished Babari "structure".

She further said that the Muslims were also told by RSS chief Rajju Bhaiya at a recent convention that **if a count is taken of the number of policemen in each thana, it will be clear that the police will not be able to protect those who earn the enmity of the Hindus.**

"Only Hindus can give the guarantee for the protection of Muslims. And this can only happen when they establish friendly relations with Hindus". Clearly, in her view, such friendliness, and not the rule of law enforced by an impartial administration, is necessary for the safety of Muslims. Or else...

Ms. Bharati scoffed at the question whether the BJP had softened its stand to woo the Muslims. "The question does not arise", she said.

"All our issues have remained as they were. The Muslims have accepted us as we are... If they accept Advani and Uma Bharati as they are, what is your problem?" Apart from anything else, there is no mistaking the emphasis on "us" and "they" in her references to Hindus and Muslims as two distinct communities, recalling the two-nation theory.

As always, the Sangh Parivar seems to be pursuing a two-pronged strategy. While Mr. Vajpayee is projecting the Parivar's moderate face ... the hard-liners are making sure that there is no retreat... The purpose may be both to reassure the Parivar's traditional vote bank, who may feel uneasy about the wooing of Muslims, and to ensure that the BJP itself does not deviate from the Hindutva plank...

BJP: Views of Uma Bharati

... The Muslims have themselves realised that the issue is equality and not appeasement. The issue is barabari (equality) and not Babari. The Congress has always played upon Muslims fears that they will be victimised by the Hindus but most of them can now see through the gameplan of leaders like Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Amit Sharma on BJP's New Line on Muslims

There are few among the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh who believe ... Vajpayee, when he promises security for all, including religious minorities if the party assumes power at the Centre.

"He (Vajpayee) is not even taken seriously by his own partymen. They gave similar assurances before the demolition of the Babari Mosque but what happened?" asked Zafaryab Jilani, convenor of the Babari Masjid Action Committee. ...

"It has become a practice among Sangh Parivar leaders to say one thing one day and to issue another opposing statement the next day. One of the senior BJP leaders said that the Kanshi and Mathura shrines were not on their agenda but he was made to eat his words the next day", said Jilani. ...

In keeping with its overall political strategy, the BJP is trying hard to project a less threatening image and to dilute its hitherto strong stand on religious minorities.

Prominent Muslim leaders, however, see the BJP's attempts to come close to the community as a move aimed at creating confusion on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections ... so that the Muslims may not vote en masse in favour of any party.

... Former vice-president of the UP Congress Committee Amar Rizvi has ... floated a Forum for Minorities and has claimed that he would work for the BJP provided it come out with a definite programme for overall uplift of Muslims. "We do not think the BJP is untouchable... We will support that party which assure real benefits to the minority community," said Rizvi.

But Rizvi's contention .. was countered by Mohammed Sulaiman, state chief of the Indian National League, "Muslims can never forgive those who demolished the Babari Mosque"...

(Source: The _____, 12 January, 1998)

Panchjanya on Muslim Problem

"As long as the Muslims are not politically defeated, the problem will not be solved. Only after such a defeat will it be possible for Muslims to mingle with us. Without understanding the root of the problem, there have been efforts for Hindu-Muslim unity through politeness."

It is not surprising that because of this policy, the Hindus have developed an inferiority complex. That will be wiped out if these disruptive forces are politically defeated. This will give a chance for the growth of nationalistic masculinity.

Defeat leads to introspection. When Muslims will ponder over their defeat, they will get to know the truth that the Indian tradition is one because their ancestors were the same and Mother India is also their mother.

Six Reasons Why India is Afraid of the BJP

Hindutva

... The ideological basis for the Advani-led party which has played a major role in the BJP's rapid growth since the mid-'80s now has to be tempered with a policy of "selective emphasis". In UP, for example, it will be played up ... while Hindutva in general and the Ram temple in particular are likely to be outweighed by local issues in, say, Kerala... The ideology is seen as exclusivist... And perhaps even an upper-caste one, despite efforts of the RSS-BJP think tank to overcome this with gestures...

Minorities

... The BJP wants the Muslim vote. The problem is, how? The Vajpayee way of "social coalitions" and making appropriate gestures? Or the Advani way of "we are unrepentant for what we stand for because it is not communal and we are willing to convince the minorities of this"? The latter seems to be prevailing. But the minorities seem unwilling to fall in with the emerging `middle-class consensus' on giving the "BJP a chance". The scars of the Babari Masjid demolition have not healed, the emphasis on a uniform civil code has upset many and the call for an end to "minority appeasement" rankles. Significantly, divisions between the Christian community and the Sangh Parivar in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have hardened attitudes.

Kashmir

The BJP's stand Jammu and Kashmir is a problem for many, despite the dichotomy in the party. The hardliners ... are clear that the 'official' position of all political parties, including the BJP, that the whole of Kashmir is India's should be reflected on the ground - in conjunction with a ... demand to scrap Article 370, a stand endorsed by nearly the entire leadership... Officially, the BJP line is that military intervention in the Valley and an attempt to reclaim Pakistan-occupied Kashmir should not be shied away from.

Cow Slaughter

Along with Akhand Bharat, this has been on the RSS agenda since its inception... Of late, the BJP has revived the "gau hatya virodhi andolan" by bestowing upon it a `Bharatiya', as opposed to Hindu, conceptual colour... Even those who are taken in by the BJP argument due to its symbolism, may justifiably feel that the state should refrain from intervening in the dietary habits of the populate.

Women

In an organisation dominated by a distinctly male ethos, where the "moral authority" over the party is wielded by lifelong bachelors ... gender is a problem. And a big one... The ... feminist argument, especially in urban India, that the Sangh looks upon women as "either mothers or daughters" does strike a chord. The controversial defence of sati by BJP vice-president Vijayaraje Scindia and the more recent terming of the newly-crowned Miss World Diana Hayden as `shameless' by ... a BJP MLA ... are cases in point.

Economy: ... FICCI and CII are backing the BJP, counting on continued support for liberation... The BJP seems committed to the Bombay Club stand that there should be protection for Indian business while opening up the economy... Avowed liberalisers feel it is idle daydreaming to think one can have a free market economy with protectionist overtones. And swadeshi is one of the core beliefs of the RSS. Witness the opposition to mega-projects by the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) (which) has made it clear that opposition to liberalisation is complete...

(Source: The Outlook, 15 December, 1997)

VHP's Action Plan and Hindu Agenda

The Annual Meeting of VHP's Governing Council and Board of Trustees, held in New Delhi on December 23-24, unanimously decided to evolve favourable atmosphere for a pro-Hindu Government at the Centre, and for this purpose the sants associated with the VHP would launch an extensive awareness campaign throughout the country from January 15 to February 7.

The VHP has prepared a Hindu agenda, consisting of five basic points of national importance, for this election...

The five-point agenda includes: enacting a law banning the slaughter of cow and her progeny besides declaring it a cognizable offence so as to close down all the mechanised slaughterhouses in the country; removing all the hurdles in reconstruction of temples at Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi, and the hand-over of all these places to Hindus respectfully; ban on religious conversion by enacting a law; stopping interference of several State Governments in management of Hindu maths, temples and akharas and; ensuring the free flow of Ganga as well as making it pollution-free.

... The sants would perform the Ram Mahayajna at 7000 places in the country... The Board of Trustees called upon the voters to vote for such party or alliance that would be able to effectively combat anti-national forces.

The VHP workers warned the Government not to make efforts to divide the Hindu society on the basis of caste.

The VHP thanked the Jain acharyas for declaring that Jains were inseparable part of Hindu society...

(Source: The Organiser, 4 January, 1998)

Amulya Ganguli on BJP's Prospects

... While most parties exercise a great deal of caution while admitting new members, the BJP now seems to revel in the fact that everyone likes it so much...

The BJP's compulsions is being so uncommonly broad-minded are, of course, obvious. It is driven, first of all, by a keen desire to shed its 'untouchability', a label which it acquired after the Babari Masjid demolition... The stigma had hurt it very much. Secondly, it seems to have realised that it is now or never. If the party misses the bus in 1998, it may never make it to the Centre. Hence, the desperation to get to the seat of power by any means, by aligning with whoever is willing, irrespective of his background.

... After the ... "coup" in Uttar Pradesh, the party seemed to have suddenly discovered the elixir of power - defections - which it coyly termed as evidence of the "affection" felt for the BJP... The party's present stand, however, does not make either political or electoral sense. It is difficult to understand how the BJP can expect to gain by associating with such elements as the imperious lady from the south famed for the money she spent on her son's marriage, or with the Congress(O)-Janata Dal-film hero-Lok Shakti leader from Karnataka, or with a political novice in Orissa, whose only claim to fame is that he is his father's son.

Although such tie-ups are not uncommon in Indian politics there has always been a vague ideological rapport guiding them. In the BJP's case, such rapport is evident in its alliance with the Shiv Sena. Even where it entered into an agreement with, say, the Akalis or the Samata Party, these were seen as mainly local arrangements motivated by a common anti-Congress or an anti-Laloo stand. It is something else, however, to extend this policy to the national plane and be totally undiscriminating in one's choice of allies.

Even if the purpose is clear ... the damage to the BJP's reputation can be considerable. What is immediately obvious is that the risk it has taken by its unalloyed opportunism can undo all the patient work which the Sangh Parivar, with the RSS at its head, has been doing all these years to build up a reputation for probity and austerity. Worse, it is a one-way street. The lost name cannot be recovered later. If the BJP does miss the bus, it will rue for ever the slippery path it took in the hope of attaining power... The Jan Sangh had little hesitation in being a junior partner in the non-Congress alliances of the sixties and seventies and even merged itself in the Janata Party in 1977. There was no sign of its great devotion to Ram then or to Hindutva alias cultural nationalism...

The crushing defeat in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections induced second thoughts in the BJP about persisting with its vacuous policies of integral humanism or Gandhian socialism, it did not take any hasty step apart from endorsing the VHP's Ramjanmabhoomi agitation... The party remained non-controversial enough to be a part of the second Janata experiment at the Centre in 1989.

Although Advani's rath yatra of 1990 led to the BJP's estrangement from its former allies in the non-Congress camp, the party's relatively clean image persisted... Even if the BJP's success in spreading this impression is ascribed to its mastery of subterfuge, such deceit still had a vaguely ideological motivation...

What has happened now is the worst thing that can happen to a party, for it has deliberately thrown away what is known in today's terminology as its "Unique Selling Point (USP). The party's action is all the more inexplicable because corruption still remains one of the most potent factors in Indian politics in influencing the choice of voters...This is all the more so because corruption has now been compounded by the criminalisation of politics... But if the mere quest for power can make it throw all norms to the winds, what will power itself do to the party?... The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi ... the Babari Masjid demolition and the BJP's current precipitous fall from its self-proclaimed ideals, taken together, can pave the way for the BJP's return to the periphery.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 5 January, 1998)

Khushwant Singh on Vajpayee

There is general consensus that the man most fitted to be the next Prime Minister of India is A.B. Vajpayee... He is personally above communal prejudices and has never been known to make statements that would hurt the religious feelings of any community. ...

Vajpayee is a; far-sighted statesman and is not known to compromise his principles for immediate gains... **There is only one minus point in Vajpayee's curriculum vitae - the political party over which he presides, it is tarnished with anti-Muslim and anti-Christian prejudices.**... He does not share these prejudices. Soon after the destruction of the Babari Masjid, at a small party he read out a poem he had composed on his birthday, 25th December. In no uncertain terms it expressed deep anguish over what had happened at Ayodhya and explained his silence through a refrain, "Have I really become old?"... It did show that he realised that although India is a predominantly Hindu, it is not a Hindu but a Secular State in which other religious minorities expect equal treatment. I hope...he will distance himself from men and women who have given Hindutva an ugly image. **(Source: Hindustan Times, 27.12.97)**

Mohit Sen on BJP, Party Without Ethics, Morality or Ideological Stability

The sudden switch in strategy which yielded some immediate gains for the BJP ... has drawn two kinds of adverse comments. One is that the BJP has suddenly turned amoral like the rest of the parties. The second is that it has begun to imitate the Congress. Both comments are misplaced and mistaken.

One of the myths about the RSS-BJP combine was that it was party of morality that based its policies on principles. The party had a mechanism of enforcing discipline to an extent. It had an ideology of a perverted interpretation of the connection between Hinduism and Indian nationalism. But above all, it was a party that believed in seeking power for its own sake. The one god that was worshipped above all others was the god of power. To propitiate that god and to attain that objective any means was permitted and used. Since the path to power was the use of power, the means became the end.

Mysteriously Death of Upadhyay

It was this moral ruthlessness that distinguished the Jan Sangh, the first incarnation of the BJP, from the Hindu Mahasabha. It was this ruthlessness, too, that enabled it to take over and practically decimate the Hindu Mahasabha. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was no match for Guruji Golwalkar when it came to a tussle for power...

On Nazis and Fascists Path

The late Madhu Limaye told all who cared to hear that ... the unscrupulousness of Nazis and fascists was something picked up from textbooks. He had had first-hand experience when he was a leader of the Janata Party, which included the Jan Sangh. The manner in which its leaders plotted and manipulated against the other component of the Janata Party horrified him. The BJP has not departed from the practice of its predecessor. It has carried forward that tradition.

... The internal conflicts in the BJP now have turned uglier. The clash between Vajpayee and Govindacharya is only a trailer of the film that is in the making. The former is the butt of the slander campaign of his more RSS-inclined colleagues. The charge is his personal ambition to be Prime Minister...

The BJP is no less amoral than other parties (but) more ruthless... The BJP believes that as matters now stand it may even become the ruling party at the Centre. Even if this were to happen the BJP would face a debacle: the debacle of its identity.

The debacle is inherent in its identity. Recent events have only brought this out into the open. The BJP cannot come to power on its own, least of all, at the Centre. It also cannot be itself and yet be part of a coalition. The reason is its false belief that communalised Hinduism can be the basis of State and society in India. It further falsely believes that it can camouflage this belief in the guise of cultural nationalism.

As far as State and society in India are concerned, it is secular nationalism that has been and remains the norm. Communalisation is an eruption and aberration. Indians of different religious belief have fought with and killed one another on several occasions. But they have settled down after these negative interruptions to once again being good neighbours. Religion does form an important part of our lives but not in a divisive or demonic manner. It occupies a large part of our space but not all of it. Though integrated as a people, our lives are loosely woven, a many-hued mosaic.

Certainly, Hindu dharma has played a large part in making us so. But the biggest shaper has been the process of the making of ourselves as a nation. It has not been the process of the melting pot which is said to have made the US a nation. Nor is it an ordained or imposed identity as ... in the Soviet Union. It has been shaped by accretion, reaching a critical point through our national revolution and the winning of the national state.

Behind the cacophony ... are two strong themes. Both concern the survival of India... One is the continuation of ... the nation State. The other is the substitution of this state by an ideological-denominational State, by a theocracy... This is at the heart of the present struggle for India. **(Source: The Anti-Corruption, 21-28 December, 1997)**

BJP's Double Speak

BJP leaders are trying themselves in knots in trying to distance themselves from the party's Hindu image... In Lucknow the other day, Mr. Vajpayee is reported to have said that the BJP has no commitment towards the Hindu agenda of the VHP. However, everybody knows that the VHP is a part of the RSS Parivar, just as the BJP is. One could, therefore, legitimately ask: If Mr. Vajpayee does not believe in the VHP's agenda, why is he in the BJP? ...

BJP has turned double-speak into a fine art. It says one thing to one section of the population and quite another to other sections. It is ready to do business with multinationals, but at the same time speaks in Swadeshi accents. Mr. Advani went on a 56-day anti-corruption yatra, and with weeks entered into an alliance with Jayalalitha... Mr. Vajpayee, on the other hand, has said that his party is prepared to do business with any party or group for the sake of winning the coming poll.

(M.K. Saini's Letter in The Times of India, 13 January, 1998)

Dileep Padgaonkar
On BJP's Historic Opportunity

... This is without question a defining moment in Indian politics. Sooner than later it is bound to change the political complexion of the country... Symbolically at any rate, (the BJP) can now boast of a pan-Indian presence.

... The BJP's geographical spread has gone hand in hand with the expansion of its social base...

... To function as a truly umbrella organisation - as the Congress once did - the BJP will still need to make a big effort to win over the Muslim minority. A token presence of Muslims in its list of candidates will not be good enough. Nor can this presence consist of the most backward looking elements of the Muslim community...

This also pre-supposes the shedding of BJP's exclusivist rhetoric. At the recent meeting of its national executive ... L.K. Advani ... accepted without reservation the plurality of India's culture, pointedly kept away from controversial issues such as Ayodhya, the uniform civil code and the scrapping of Article 370... Atal Behari Vajpayee was even more forthcoming on the need - and indeed the duty - to protect all religions.

To pooh-pooh this development would be an act of political irresponsibility. It is nobody's case that the BJP has overnight emerged as an avatar of pristine secularism. But not to take note of its shifting ideological stance - even if this is under electoral compulsion - would be akin to committing a terrible mistake...

... Why deny the BJP the chance to attempt something similar? The party is bound to face opposition from within to its efforts to reorient hindutva in the direction of pluralism. But if its leadership holds firm and acknowledges that not only is India pluralistic but that each Indian is a bearer of multiple identities, not only the BJP but the country's political system as a whole could effectively tackle majority and minority communalism and casteism... The Congress began as a movement, turned into a party and ended up as a cabal. The BJP appears to be moving in the opposite direction: from a coterie to a cadre-based party and an electoral machine to a movement... It is endeavouring to recast Indian nationalism in another mould by going away from a narrow and retrograde definition of what constitutes the basis of the national community towards another more flexible and open definition...

... The Constitution ... should remain the sole reference. (It) is a document which is at one and the same time deeply Indian in its texture and yet pre-eminently modern. It is a reservoir of ideas and ideals that lends meaning and substance to democracy. ...

... On the question of cultural nationalism ... it is vital that every community acknowledges what it admires and respects in the cultural contributions made by another community. If credit is given where credit is due, the danger of looking at other people in terms of stereotypes should decline by and by.... The BJP ... a long way to go before it establishes its credentials as a pragmatic, modern and humane political formation which has discarded its baggage of prejudice and ... insecurity.

(Source: The Times of India, 29 December, 1997)

Neena Vyas
On BJP's Early Starts

... The long queue of those jostling to get into the BJP is becoming longer by the day, and those waiting include all kinds of characters - those who had calculated that they would not get the ticket from the Congress, others who saw no hope of winning on the Congress ticket ... some Muslims who see a grand chance of even becoming ministers at the Centre since there is a dearth of "good" Muslim candidates in the BJP and, of course, the evergreen opportunists...

In two quick successive blows, the BJP succeeded in creating for itself openings in Orissa (21 Lok Sabha seats) and Tamil Nadu (39 seats) where it had none...

The BJD has already announced some sort of an understanding with its ally, Samata Party... In West Bengal, the BJP has won half the battle, with Mamata Banerjee virtually asking for and getting the expulsion orders from the Congress. Now the party is sitting pretty waiting for Banerjee to walk into its parlour.

The big advantage is that in some of these major States where its existence was negligible, the BJP has been given a credible political platform... Right from Assam to Tamil Nadu across all the States on the eastern coast plus Karnataka, the BJP held only seven seats (six of these in Karnataka), over a spread of 200 Lok Sabha constituencies. There was hardly any hope that it would fare any better in the 1998 elections. But suddenly, with the help of alliances, this region has been opened up. ..

Even with the help of its new partners, the BJP may find it difficult even to cross the double digit figure...

The real battle for the BJP will be in the Hindi heartland and the western belt of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The important question is, will the BJP be able to hold on to what it has here? Will it keep its 52 MPs, even if it does not add more, in Uttar Pradesh, and its 28 in Madhya Pradesh, not to speak of Haryana and Rajasthan? ... In Maharashtra, there are rumblings of a grand anti-BJP alliance and in Gujarat, the party has been caught unawares with more than a possibility of a simultaneous Assembly elections.

The race has not even begun, the parties are just getting ready, waiting for the whistle to blow. But the main advantage for the BJP is that it has been practising hard, and it has already won the first round of heats for the electoral olympiad by creating a favourable climate. But will it be able to sustain its campaign till the last vote is cast? In the marathon electoral event of 1998, will the player with an early start emerge the winner?...

(Source: The Hindu, 29 December, 1997)

Neerja Chowdhury
On Limits to BJP's Swing

Two political trends evident in 1997 were the decimation of the Congress and the metamorphosis of the BJP into another Congress. ... The BJP, the party likely to be closest to striking distance of a majority, is talking about getting to power by hook or by crook. Suddenly, Jayalalitha's corruption cases have become less unsavoury. It was not the BJP's fixers or even its second rung leadership which talked about splitting the Congress; it was the top leaders of the BJP (who) boosted that 40 Cong. MPs were ready to cross over to the BJP...

BJP leaders openly admitted that power was the raison d'etre for the jumbo cabinet of Kalyan Singh with every defector, including history sheeters, getting a ministry. They justified it on grounds of realpolitik to show that the BJP could manage 'raj kaj' as amorally as the Congress had done over the years. How is the party different from the BSP which calls itself an "opportunist" force, utilising every opportunity in the naked pursuit of power for the dalits, regardless of anything else?

The truth is that the top leaders of the BJP are now tired men, who have struggled for decades and now want somehow to get to power.

With power as its core ideology now, the BJP's bubble may burst sooner than later. It may not take as long as it did with the Congress, which had been shaped through the rough and tremble of the freedom movement and held together, despite the three splits, by its legacy. It also had a long experience of family rule which also kept the party, a feudal outfit, together.

In the last five years, the BJP has been the biggest beneficiary of the Mandal mantra and has used it to get effect in UP and Bihar to widen its base without alienating the upper castes. In UP it has the support of two of the three major OBC communities, the Lodhs and Kurmis, and a sizeable section of the smaller backward castes which add upto 26% of the state's population. In Bihar, with Samata party on its side, it has made inroads into the Kurmi-Koeri vote bank. ...

The RSS and its front organisations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad may go along with the decision to put their programmes on the backburner as a part of a tactical withdrawal by the BJP to project a more acceptable face. But ultimately, they too will assert, as will the upper castes who see in the BJP on opportunity to regain their lost power... It remains to be seen to what extent it accept the secular agenda and where this leaves the party with its mentor - the RSS. There is a logic of ruling a vast and diverse country like India with its 110 million Muslim population which no mainstream party can afford to ignore. ... At the start of 1998, we have a power on the upswing which is unlikely to survive for long, facing the same dilemmas asthe party it is seeking to displace. And the power that is on the decline is showing no will to revive. This will spell instability for the nation...

(Source: The Indian Express, 29 December, 1997)

Saroj Nagi
On BJP's Psychological Warfare

In a calculated attempt to cultivate an atmosphere and try and get about two dozen seats in this fashion, the BJP has resorted to the policy of indiscriminate inductions into its fold. ... Although the BJP leaders claim that there is a "pro-BJP; wave waiting to be created", such inductions also indicate that the party is attempting to shore up its flanks and numbers to deal with a situation in case the anticipated "groundswell of support" does not materialise. In the process, the party has preferred to gloss over the rumblings that have begun within the organisation at the new comers striking it rich where an assured ticket is concerned, while those who have put in a life-time's efforts are being side-lined. The implications of the dilution in ideology and image are also being considered hazardous by this section.

... Leaders consider it an imperative part of the strategy to achieve three broad objectives.

The first is to score a psychological victory with the "decimation" and "disintegration" of other political parties ... and contrast it with the "rapid growth" and popularity of the BJP. The inductions would also signed a burial of political untouchability...

Secondly ... induction of such leaders would not only help the party add these seats to its kitty but could also carry influence in neighbouring constituencies and fetch them additional seats...

(Aptly) the BJP views as the effect of the induction of Muslim leaders like Aslam Sher Khan (Madhya Pradesh) or Ayub Khan (Rajasthan) with considerable interest. Clearly diluting its hardline stance on issues that could inflame Muslim passions - Ayodhya, Article 370 of the Constitution or Uniform Civil Code - the BJP is, in a painstaking exercise, desperately trying to signal its willingness to accommodate them.

(Contd. from Page 76)

other mosques in future as well. In the past this party had a record of massacres of Muslims. This party and its outfits are vomiting poison against the Muslims every day. This party had perpetrated mass massacre of Muslims just after demolition of Babari Masjid. In Varanasi, the reign of terror was let loose by Kalyan Singh on the eve of his first term as Chief Minister of UP.

Millions of other right minded Indians feel that the nation would meet disaster if the BJP come to power at the Centre. **(Source: The Radiance, 4 January, 1998)**

Bhaskar Roy

On BJP's Electoral Strategy: Moderate Face

... The demolition posed two problems for which the BJP did not have an answer. So long as the disputed structure was there it helped the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its allies to make emotive appeals to the Hindu constituency to remove the 'mark of humiliation'. But, with its disappearance ... the campaign lost its raison d'etre, its belligerence - and, its relevance. The second question was that of the "magnificent temple" in the place of the mosque which the saffron brigade had promised to construct.

As a political party, the BJP was more susceptible to the pulls and pressures of public opinion. It could not afford to be seen as at war with the judiciary and Parliament. Within a year of the demolition, the BJP had lost elections in three of the four states where it had been in power - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. In Rajasthan it managed to form the government only by wooing independent MLAs.

The BJP strategists did read the electorate's message correctly and clearly. And in no time, the party persuaded the Sangh parivar to shelve the agitational programme on Ayodhya. It is indeed ironic that the party (has) tried its best to leave the disquieting memories of the demolition behind.

Chasing the ambition to rule from Delhi, the party looked for ways to expand its electoral base and made efforts to accommodate newer segments of society. It tried to absorb the Mandal message and sought to project it as part of the Hindutva agenda.

For these elections, the party is projecting the moderate face of Vajpayee... It wants to enlarge its base by aligning more regional outfits representing diverse shades of social reality. So it has left the most contentious areas of conflict out of its agenda. In fact, both Vajpayee and Advani have sought to woo the Muslims asking them to give the BJP a chance.

The BJP is clearly also the most cohesive of the three main groups in the fray. It is spared the contradictions and chaos of the United Front and the Congress. However, the party is a victim of India's geopolitics. It's supposed identification with the Hindi heartland seems to stand in the way of its spread both in the east and the south. Even if it achieves the same level of success in its strongholds as in 1996, it is unlikely to gain a simple majority in the 12th Lok Sabha. The party's only hope lies in its ability to woo ... disgruntled segments of the Congress and the UF. Its move to dilute the Hindutva image is intended to enhance its acceptability...

(Source: The Times of India, 7 December, 1997)

On BJP's Confident Steps Towards Power

... Convinced that its time has come, the BJP - like any party ambitious to rule - is keen to leave behind the areas of conflict it had so strenuously developed for almost half a century.

To the run-up to the 1989 elections party president L.K. Advani himself took part in the Ram shila pujan. Party activists along with their Vishwa Hindu Parishad comrades, conducted the asthi kalas yatra (processions with urns containing the ashes of those supposedly killed in police firing at Ayodhya).

Remind the BJP's Prime Ministerial choice Atal Behari Vajpayee of this macabre street show that was performed to the blaring of Sadhvi Ritambhara's shrill rhetoric of anti-Muslim tirades on tapes and repeated war-cries of Jai Shri Ram, perhaps he will be embarrassed. He might even feign ignorance.

True, he himself was detached from that heady phase of temple activism. But that was 1989 when the party was searching for an avenue to regain its relevance in Indian politics from the it of a two-member presence in the Lok Sabha. Since then the BJP has crossed many a milestone and clearly come a; long way. "We will give adequate representation to the minorities and women", Mr. Vajpayee told the newspersons at the conclusion of the BJP's national executive meeting in Bhubaneswar...

According to him, a BJP government will not reverse the economic reforms but is sure to put a "human face" to it. And on issues once close to the BJP - say Article 370 bestowing special status on Jammu and Kashmir or the Ram temple at Ayodhya - negotiations will be the approach. The effort is to project a party which is responsible, broad-based and acceptable to all shades of society like the Congress at its best.

In fact, along with the changing image of the party, the profile of the crowd around it too has changed. Even a few years ago the colour of this crowd was distinctly saffron - those committed to the RSS school of thought and the Rambhakt's - the supporters churned out by the Ayodhya campaign. Not any more. The new surge is essentially middle-class ... businessmen, professionals and government employees who are worried over the prospects of a stock-market crash and blame political instability for it...

Looking at the faces in the new BJP crowd, one cannot escape a sense of deja vu - a feeling of having seen them before ... somewhere else. The class of ticket-seekers and ... influence peddlers ... has now sneaked into the BJP tent.

(Source: The Times of India, 24 December, 1997)

BJP's Old Reliable

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 30 Dec., 97

... Advani ... is back to the Ayodhya plank... As the BJP's star election campaigner he cannot avoid references to the basic goals of Hindutva. At Bhubaneswar ... Advani carefully omitted to mention the three shrines and also the two older hobby-horses of the BJP such as Article 370 and the Uniform Civil Code. Instead, he projected the BJP as a party which was keen to fill the political space vacated by the Congress... The psychological gain to the party, of course, is indisputable, but already Advani may be thinking that the BJP may have to place its reliance on the old reliable - Sangh Parivar's agenda on the temples.

The campaign to project ... Vajpayee as Prime Minister is based on his greater acceptability among the political parties all over India, but within the BJP there is still a strong section which would be loath to give up the Hindutva plank and Advani may be looking at this segment of the party when he says that the building of a temple in Ayodhya is very much a part of the BJP's political agenda... Advani should stick to its Bhubaneswar stand both for the good of his party and that of the country. Ayodhya ... still contains germs of violence which can damage peace in society.

Boost for BJP

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 15 Jan.,1998

The BJP has reasons to be happy about the outcome of the UP Vidhan Parishad elections. The party has captured 25 of 39 seats for which elections were held. The performance of the ruling party is by all means impressive though few would agree with Chief Minister Kalyan Singh that the result was a referendum on his 100 days in office. Unlike parliamentary or assembly by-elections or civic polls which often reflect the public mood, Vidhan Parishad elections cannot be a barometer of people's electoral preference. The electorate in this case consisted of elected representatives of Panchayats and municipal bodies. Local bodies were constituted in 1994 during the tenure of Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav as Chief Minister. All the same, the BJP is bound to flaunt its performance during the election campaign and seek to derive some mileage out of it. Whether the sops announced by Mr. Kalyan Singh to the local bodies on the even of Council polls were instrumental in the BJP putting up a creditable performance is difficult to answer. When the UP Government announced its decision to allocate Rs. 250 crore as grants for the local bodies on December 24, the Election Commission took the Government to task and deferred the polls by two weeks. Even though Mr. Kalyan Singh's decision to allocate over 10 per cent of the State's total revenue to local bodies was in line with the recommendations of the State Finance Commission, his objective was to reap electoral

Rallying Around BJP

Editorial, The Times of India, 24 Dec., 1997

... In the first phase of the run up to the general election the BJP is clearly ahead, of both the Congress and the United Front, in winning friends and partners. In state after state, the party of Hindutva is being assessed afresh and there is growing reluctance to dismiss it as "communal", and for that reason "untouchable". The BJP's loss of untouchability with the very announcement of elections is a landmark, which may turn out to be as significant as the poll outcome. One plausible reason could be that the BJP, more than the UF now, or the National Front-Left Front earlier, is perceived as a credible and effective counterpoint to a Congress party in the decline. Another reason could be that regional forces are still strongly inclined to join hands with a party spread over many states than be limited to other regional parties... Another stalwart of the `secularist-centrist' forces, Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde is also canvassing that no party is wholly communal. While the collapse of the secularist-communal divide as an unbreachable line has been so far in favour of the BJP, it cannot ignore the risks involved in being all things to all people.

This new-found appeal ... has made the BJP sweep all contentious issues, such as Ayodhya and Article 370, under the carpet... Vajpayee, the party's most liberal face, was at pains to point out that Swadeshi and Ram Mandir were important but not the principal issues in this election. That the Ayodhya dispute would be resolved through negotiations is the revised position... The message from Bhubaneswar is that the BJP's thrust should be on meeting the electoral challenge by forging alliances with different parties and putting on hold the matter of ideological coherence and its "distinctive ethos". Such dilution of its Hindutva drive, the loss of the `communal' taint may be comforting to present and potential allies. The more disturbing question is how the Sangh Parivar would reconcile to this in the post-poll scenario. Should the BJP succeed in reaching office ... the VHP and Bajrang Dal may not remain restrained from reviving not only the Ayodhya issue but also the demolition of mosques in Varanasi and Mathura. The BJP's core constituencies, discreetly dormant now, may not be so accommodating to the party's new allies once the election is over. The ideological dilution ... may actually sow the seeds of discord leaving the BJP trapped between its parliamentary obligations and primeval pressures.

The results have come as a setback to the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. The SP had to concede over a dozen seats to the BJP whereas the BSP had to face a total rout... Whether the adverse Council poll results would force the anti-BJP forces in UP to enter into some broad informal seat adjustments remains to be

BJP: Congress(I)'s Questions to Atal Bihari Vajpayee

* Are you a full-fledged RSS member and do you subscribe to its ideology?
* Do you agree with the late RSS chief M.S. Golwalkar that the minorities cannot become citizens of India and can remain only as honoured guests?
* Do you agree with Mr. Golwalkar's opposition to the introduction of a common civil code?
* Should VHP leader Ashok Singhal be prosecuted for saying than Ayodhya would be repeated if the Muslims don't hand over Kashi and Mathura to the Hindus.
* Do you subscribe to the image that you are just a mukhota (mask) and a loudspeaker of your party?
* Article 370 was introduced in the Constitution of India when your leader, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, was a member of the Nehru Cabinet and he agreed to the introduction of Article 370. Do you disown your leader, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee?
* You have an alliance with Akali Dal. Do you support the Anandpur Sahib Resolution?
* Your spiritual guru, Guru Golwalkar, had in a famous interview to a Marathi daily defended and justified Chaturvarna, the caste system, which he said is essential for the survival of Hinduism. Do you agree?
* Do you deny that in 1942 you apologised before a magistrate for your participation in the 1942 Quit India Movement?
* Do you accept Mahatma Gandhi as the father of the Nation? **(Source: The Statesman, 11 January, 1998)**

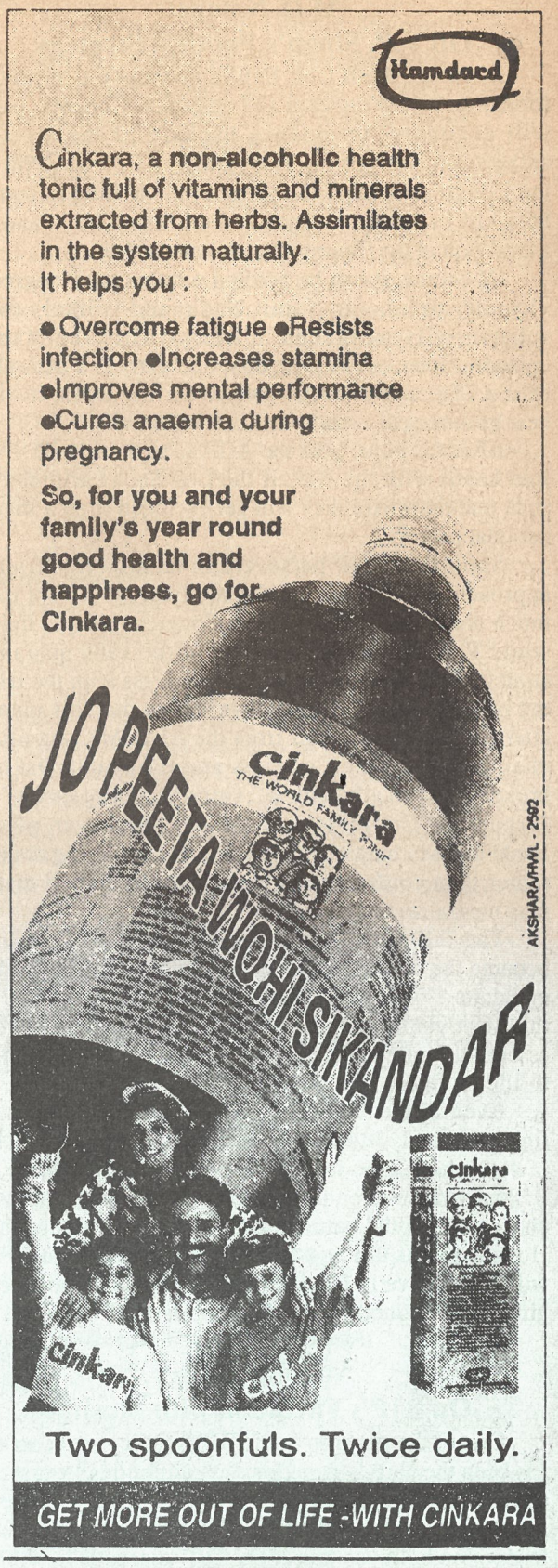
Sonia Gandhi on BJP

... Describing the Bharatiya Janata Party and its associated political groupings as the "forces of hatred", Mrs. Sonia declared that India was once again threatened by the same forces which had demolished the Babari Masjid in 1992.

She recalled how just a month before he was assassinated, her husband, Rajiv Gandhi, had told her that "if ever an attempt was made to touch the Masjid, he would stand in front of it and they would have to kill him first. Such was the power of his dedication to a secular India.

She claimed that like all right-thinking Indians, she too was outraged and devastated when the Babari Masjid was demolished. "Our India is threatened today by the same forces which inflicted these wounds on us. We cannot realise our dreams if the energy of our people is wasted on senseless conflicts, communal tension and strife," she said.

... "The forces of hatred have not only taken the lives of Mahatma Gandhi and two Prime Ministers, but also of thousands and thousands of our people. This must not continue to happen. India's march towards progress must be guided by reason and compassion", she declared. ...



M.D. Nalapat
On V.P. Singh's Political Strategy

... In the 12th Lok Sabha attempts at ministry-formation by the regional and other non-Congress parties will encounter turbulence because of the electoral antagonism between the TDP, DMK, AGP and CPM with the Congress. Unless the Congress is willing to commit hara-kiri in Kerala, Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and AP, a coalition at the Centre may still elude them.

Of course, it can be pointed out that the Congress is virtually defunct in Tamil Nadu, and is likely to get substantially weakened in Bengal after the Mamata episode. However, despite this, that party is a natural foe of the TDP and the AGP, while for the DMK it can at best be a tactical - rather than a natural - ally.

After the polls, both the AGP as well as the TDP may join hands with the BJP, if the Lok Sabha arithmetic is such that otherwise they will get excluded from a share in national power.

Should the BJP persevere in its minority-friendly approach, the regional parties are likely to accept it as a much more desirable ally than Congress party... Indeed, while V.P. Singh tried a repeat of the 1989 quarantine strategy, this time replacing the Congress with the BJP in the isolation ward, events have shown that this time the attempt has failed. Apart from the AIADMK, significant chunks of both the Congress and the Janata Dal have broken away to ally with it... Only "minority factor" still favours the Congress over the BJP. However, placing Kashi and Mathura on the back-burner and using dialogue rather than confrontation to resolve the Babari dispute may neutralise this as well.

The BJP probably needs 200 seats on its own to become the nucleus of a viable combination. Should the moderate "Vajpayee" strand in its approach continue into the next year, then this "viability quotient" (which essentially reflects its acceptability as an ally) may move to 180 - a figure well within reach.

Even in the 1998 poll, should the BSP and the SP fight separately in UP, and the Bihar electorate reject the ... view that Laloo is blameless in the fodder scam, the BJP may close in on this figure... Thus, in the "alliance" phase of the 1998 battle, the BJP is still the front-runner. However, it is not end-December but end-January that will be decisive in fashioning the outcome of an election gifted to the country by the Sonia-Sitaram Congress.

(Source: The Times of India, 25 December, 1997)

Andalib Akhter
On BJP's Flirtation with Muslims

One of the changes in the BJP's policy in recent days has been the party's flirtation with minorities. A sustained effort is being carried out by the party to negate the perception that BJP is anti-Muslim... The party's top leadership believes that if the BJP succeeds in winning over the Muslim votes, it will be in position to form the next government. But recent trends show that the Muslims cannot be easily convinced any more by any party or individual...

Indian Muslims do not clamour for any special or privileged position. They do not wish to be pampered. All they expect is that they should be treated as equal and honourable citizens of this country and their legitimate rights, enshrined in the Constitution, are safeguarded. If the BJP is really interested in Muslim votes, it should come out with a concrete formula for the welfare and betterment of the community.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 19 January, 1998)

JD: Beginning of the End
Editorial, The Indian Express, 12 Dec., 1997

The Janata Dal seems to be on a self-destructive course. If the present trends are anything to go by, it may end up as an also - ran in the next elections. This has grave implications for the United Front, needing as it does a party which has an all-India appeal to carry conviction with the masses. Thus any sign of the Janata Dal's disintegration will immediately raise doubts about the UF's ability to stage a comeback to power. It is as good as losing a match even before it has begun. The party's predicament stems not so much from the departure of Laloo Prasad Yadav and his supporters in Bihar as its loss of identity. This is a major setback for a party which gave the country four Prime Ministers, albeit for short periods...

... The desperation with which the party has called upon prodigals like Laloo Yadav and Ramakrishna Hegde to come back into its fold is a reflection of its utter helplessness. The situation in Karnataka,, where the party could not retain the seat Deve Gowda vacated after he became Prime Minister, and Orissa, where a vertical split has struck yet another nail in its coffin, is not dissimilar...

Needless to say, few will shed tears over the eventual disintegration of the Janata Dal...

JD: A Dying Party?
Editorial, The Hindustan Times,12 Dec., 1997

The Janata Dal (has) a self-destructive streak... The Janata Dal seems to prefer shrinking itself to extinction... Today's JD has (no) national level leaders who could win specific States for the JD...

... Hegde cannot be faulted for describing the Janata Dal as a party "diseased and dying". The most grievous blow to the party is the refusal of Laloo Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal to return to the parent party. The only bastion of the Janata Dal will thus be lost because of the myopic mulishness of a few anti-Laloo diehards... There was a time when the nation thought that the large centrist space in Indian polity being vacated by the Congress would be filled by the Janata Dal. It now looks as if the space would remain a vacuum.

Vote for UF, Defeat BJP & Congress
CPI(M): Central Committee Communique, Calcutta, 21-22 December, 1997

The country has been forced into a mid-term election due to the disruptive stance of the Congress in insisting on the baseless demand of the ouster of the DMK from the Union Government...

... The Congress party which learnt no lesson from its past record will have to pay a heavy price for this folly.

The Central Committee denounced the shameless efforts of the BJP to induce defections using money and blandishments of office to try and form the government at the centre. The BJP which became infamous for its forming the defector-criminal jumbo ministry in Lucknow, has now openly come out in support of corrupt practices. The BJP has become synonymous with unethical opportunism and unprincipled power-mongering. The BJP is desperately seeking allies in its pursuit of power at all costs. The combination of Hindutva and corrupt opportunism is the most reactionary alternative before the people. It represents the big business, feudal elements and landlords who wish to see an authoritarian set-up which keeps the people divided on religious sectarian lines.

The Congress presents a picture of political bankruptcy and decay. Whether it be compromise with communalism, economic reforms at the behest of the IMF-World Bank, or its record of corruption, the people are bound to reject such a party... Stability requires commitments to secularism, national unity, federalism and pro-people economic growth. Only the UF can provide such a stable government. ...

The Central Committee calls upon the people:

* To elect the UF with a majority to form the central government.
* To defeat the BJP and the Congress...
* To strengthen the representation of the CPI(M) and Left parties...

RJD: Election Manifesto, 1998 (Extracts)

Social Justice: Our goal is to provide justice and equity to all those who have been denied it, irrespective of caste and creed.

Secularism and Human Rights: We are committed to a democratic and secular India where the rights and dignity of all people are guaranteed. We will ensure that the protection of the state is made available to all, specially the downtrodden. We will see that police stations are set up in those areas where the population is vulnerable so that security and protection is provided without delay.

SCs, STs and Minorities: ... In keeping with our goal to provide equity and justice to all, we will work for the uplift of religious and ethnic minorities by providing better education and employment opportunities in a secure environment.

J&K: ... The issue of J&K is a domestic issue that we will attempt to settle with negotiations and winning over the hearts of our estranged brethren.

No Defmation of Tamils, Please!
DMK: Views of M. Karunanidhi

It is the Congress party which has concluded that the DMK is guilty on the basis of an interim report. If an interim report is conclusive proof, then why is the report of the Thakkar Commission which inquired into the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi being ignored... If the LTTE was not anti-national during the time of Indira Gandhi, MGR and Rajiv Gandhi, and was deserving of support, weapons, ammunition, training, facilities and 30 camps in Tamil Nadu even during the height of the conflict with the IPKF, how can it be said that the DMK "gave tacit support"? How can the terrorist activities of the LTTE, whose militants were given all and every kind of support by the Congress in government, become a basis to demand the ouster of the DMK from the United Front? There were camps in Dehra Dun and RK Puram in Delhi for training and equipping the LTTE members. The RDX they used came from what was issued to the Indian Army. So who are the guilty? Who are the real culprits?

That under DMK rule, Tamil Nadu became a haven for the LTTE is wrong and totally false propaganda by the Congress... The Jain Commission has indicted every Tamil in Tamil Nadu when it says: "The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi would not have been possible without the deep nexus of LTTE operatives with the Tamils of Tamil Nadu..." It is not the DMK but all the people of Tamil Nadu who are the accused... It is strange to accuse a whole people or a whole party of a plot to kill any one. This is outrageous... This is a deliberate plot by the Congress to defame and discredit the DMK. It is unjust and inhuman and against all tenets of law and political conduct. Nobody with a conscience will accept or support such outrageous slander.

All the Tamils of Tamil Nadu who have been "indicted" will respond magnificently to this challenge. The falsehoods of the Congress will create a surge of sympathy among the people for the DMK.

(Source: The Times of India, 22 November, 1997)

CPI(M): Views of V.S. Achuthanandan

... As far as our party is concerned, we have always taken a conscious political line to support and protect the minorities, which we will continue in the future. But our approach to the protection of minorities is different from the one taken by Congress and others.

We do not think that having electoral alliances with some minority parties is necessary for protecting minority interests. Whenever we came to power, our governments have consistently taken administrative and legal actions which helped the minorities in their social and economic development.

This has happened since 1957 when we relaxed the strict rules regarding building of places of worship of minority community to the land reforms which benefitted all these sections. ...

(Source: The Indian Express, 13 January, 1998)

Andhra Pradesh: Congress Dominant

The electoral battle would be essentially between the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Congress. The Third Front is yet to take off and the BJP continues to be confined to a few isolated pockets in Telengana.

The Congress seems to be in a resurgent mood... All the groups and faction leader have converged to display unity. The coming together ... leaders has created great enthusiasm among the rank and file and galvanised the party. The Congress hopes to encash the electorate's disenchantment with the Naidu Government's policies such as the cut in rice and power subsidies, overall increase in prices, power cuts and the closure of a dozen-odd public sector undertakings.

In the 11th Lok Sabha, the Congress had 22 seats and the Telugu Desam 17. The TDP president, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, is giving final touches to his campaign strategy. The main problem with the ruling party is the incumbency factor and the discontent within the party... Left parties of late have started criticising his government for its anti-people policies...

There are apprehensions of large-scale violence during the elections. While the outlawed Naxalite outfit People's War Group has threatened to disturb polls in Telengana, in Rayalaseema the escalation of factional fighting is expected.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 8 December, 1997)

Orissa: JD's Shift Towards BJP

The Janata Dal leaders favouring an alliance with the BJP in the State won the first round of their battle by forcing the party to pass a resolution to ensure a one-to-one fight against the Congress during the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. ... Although the resolution did not directly seek an open alliance with the BJP, the move appeared to be aimed at having some understanding or seat adjustment with it. A five-member committee led by State JD president ... would persuade its high command to allow the State unit to formulate its own electoral strategy keeping the ground realities ... in mind. If the central leadership turned down their request, the leaders would meet again to decide their future course of action...

The resolution said "It is historical necessity to defeat the most corrupt Congress party in the elections. To achieve this objective, the JD being a major political party resolves to make all out efforts to avoid the division of non-Congress votes."

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 8 December, 1997)

T.N. Nair on Kerala Scene

A source of worry for the Congress is the position of the Muslim League, which has been drifting away from the UDF leader and coming closer to the LDF. Though the League is divided on the question of reviewing its ties with the Congress, it may have to stay in the UDF if the LDF persists with its policy of not having any truck with communal parties. ...

State BJP president C.K. Padmanabhan ... claims that his party is fully prepared for a mid-term poll (and) hopes to send at least one MP to Delhi, either from Kasaragode in the north or Thiruvananthapuram in the south. But there is little chance of the BJP winning it...

Akali Dal-BJP Advance in Punjab

The Akali Dal is likely to perform 'no better' than what it did in the 1996 Lok Sabha polls. The Akali Dal-BSP alliance had won 11 of the 13 seats in the State. However, the alliance was a short-lived one, and the Akali Dal found a new partner in the BJP, despite ideological differences between the two.

As of today, the contest will be primarily between the Akali Dal-BJP combine and the Congress. The BSP, which has always remained unpredictable, could tilt the balance as the state has a fairly large Dalit population.

The BJP, which failed to open its account in the last elections, is expected to be the gainer because the party is a partner in the government. The BJP has considerable influence in urban constituencies like Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Amritsar. The contest could become interesting if Prime Minister I.K. Gujral decides to contest from the Jalandhar seat. The Akali Dal has publicly said that it will welcome Mr. Gujral's entry into the Lok Sabha from the State. However, the BJP leaders think otherwise. ... As far as the Left parties are concerned, it is still to be seen how they form a secular front to effectively take on the Akali-BJP combine...

Himachal Pradesh: BJP vs Congress

The BJP continues to be caught in its own web of internal squabbles... It is not the four Lok Sabha seats which the BJP is bothered about. The speculation about the Virbhadra Singh Government seeking a fresh mandate, almost a year ahead of the scheduled polls, is worrying the BJP. The Congress appears to be prepared to face both the Lok Sabha and the Assembly polls. However, ... former Congress leader Sukh Ram has floated his outfit after leaving the Congress.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 9 December, 1997)

Karnataka: Triangular Contest

The Congress is reckoned as the favourite to bag the maximum number of Lok Sabha seats, with the Janata Dal expected to be the big loser. The BJP is assessed to remain more or less in the current position.

In the 11th Lok Sabha, the JD had 16 seats, the Congress 5, the BJP 6 and the Karnataka Congress Party one.While the Congress has until now displayed a picture of unity among the top leaders, the JD bracing to face anti Government votes that have become the bane of any political party in power. The exit of Mr. S. Bangarappa from the Congress may affect the party's prospects.

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president Dharam Singh has ruled out an alliance with any party. If the Congress does not alter its stance, the Lok Shakti may team up with the BJP in which case the alliance may fare better than expected especially in the State's northern belt.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 8 December, 1997)

Qaumi Ittehad Committee: Statement

On the question of holding talks with the BJP, the Committee decided to open dialogue with them provided they explain their viewpoint on the following:

1. Reconstruction of Babari Masjid.
2. Acceptance of the guarantees to religious, linguistic minorities as provided in the Indian Constitution.
3. Assurance to preserve the Muslim Personal Law.
4. Release of TADA detenus.

Jawed Habeeb Mohd. Qamar Kazmi Mohd. Mian Mazhari Yasin Akhtar Misbahi Ibn-e-Hasan

Shahabuddin's Reaction, 2 January, 1998

"The newly formed Muslim Ittehad Committee which is the latest brain-child of the prolific Javed Habeeb, formerly a Member/Spokesman of the All India Babari Masjid Action Committee and presently the self-appointed Convener of the Qaumi Mushawarat Committee is reported to have decided on 29.12.1997 to hold `open dialogue' with the BJP, provided they explain their viewpoint on:

1. Reconstruction of Babari Masjid
2. Acceptance of guarantees to religious, linguistic minorities as provided in the Constitution.
3. Assurance to preserve the Muslim Personal Law.
4. Release of TADA detenus.

The Muslim community has long been well aware of the viewpoint of the BJP - which is the political front of the RSS - on all matters of Muslim concern, not to speak of the all important question of its survival in India as a religious community.

In formulating the questions the Committee has totally ignored the ideology and the track record of the Sangh Parivar and of the BJP. Moreover, the examiner has decided in advance to grant full marks to the examinee and has, therefore, set such question that the examinee may not face any difficulty in passing a fake test! The BJP may well say that they have always been prepared to rebuild the Babari Masjid outside the dharmic limits of Ayodhya. The real question is: is it prepared to restore the original site of the Babari Masjid to the Muslim community for its reconstruction?

The BJP of course swears by the Constitution, otherwise it will not be registered as a political party. It, however, reservese the right to amend it or to interpret it. Today it can easily reply to the second question: 'Yes', by all means. The real question is how the BJP interprets minorities rights e.g. Does Article 30 apply only to religious institutions? Do Muslims, as a community, benefit from Articles 15(4) and 16(4)? Can the state acquire a Wakf property which is per se religious, like a Masjid? The BJP will say: We have no immediate plan to abolish Muslim Personal Law. But will it commit itself to no change in Muslim personal law except at the request of the Muslim community.

And finally on the release of TADA detenus, the BJP would innocently reply that we are not opposed but it is upto the courts. It should be asked whether it is in favour of all on-going cases under TADA being withdrawn, with prosecution, if necessary, under the IPC?

The real problem is that the BJP believes in the ideology and philosophy of Hindutva whose objective is ultimate Hinduisation of the Muslims and other religious minorities under the banner of Cultural Nationalism or 'One Nation, One Culture'. While the whole world is moving towards multi-culturalism, the BJP confuses unity with uniformity and integration with assimilation, equates Nationalism with Hinduism and Indian Culture with Hindu Culture. Indeed it rejects Hindustaniyat or Bharatiyata. The Muslim Ittehad Committee's "open dialogue" is no more than a deceitful smoke-screen for a `basement bargain' with the BJP in the personal interest of its members. **In opening a dialogue, the Committee is ab initio gifting to the BJP what it lacks - respectability in the eyes of the Muslims whose votes it so ardently needs to reach Delhi.**

The Committee represents no one but its rootless members and the organisations under its umbrella have no existence except on paper or carry any credibility in the community. **The Muslim community should, and shall indeed, reject these agents of the BJP masquerading under the banner of Muslim Ittehad Committee with the contempt they deserve.**

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind: Central Advisory Council's Resolution, 20 December, 1997

The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind shall continue its tireless striving to mobilise the public opinion for its objectives of maintaining the democratic pattern, containing the rising pace of violence and fascism promoting community amity and fighting for due rights of backward sections and women of the country. In view of the mid-term Parliamentary elections in March 1998, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind shall make concerted efforts so that:

i) The politics in the country be ... clean and based on moral values, and be free from criminals, and only such candidates emerge elected as are true well wishers of the country and men of integrity.

ii) The fascist trends and communal hatred in the country effectively come to an end, and every cultural, linguistic and religious community enjoy full protection;

iii) The democratic system thrive in the country, every individual and community irrespective of their sects and faiths enjoy human rights, every sort of oppression and exploitation come to a naught, and the oppressed sections of the society get their due rights...

iv) The Jamaat (through) contacts with such political parties as are against communalism and fascism and are standard-bearers of democratic values, shall convince them not to fight against one another and to divide ... constituencies .

v) The Jamaat shall also try to convince such political parties to field only such candidates as are against communalism and fascism, are not charged with any criminal offence, and are known in their respective constituencies as good and upright persons.

Insaf Morcha: National Convener Shahabuddin's Statement On Bukharis Softness towards BJP,

27 December, 1997

"The Muslim community is shocked and surprised by the clean chit given to the BJP by Shri Syed Abdullah Bukhari and indication of support in the coming election. His son Shri Ahmad Bukhari is reported to have stated that if the BJP adopts the "right approach" towards the Babari Masjid, "we" can also soften "our stand towards BJP in the present political circumstances". Ahmad Bukhari has also said that Muslims are disappointed with the performance of the secular parties which have taken their votes by harping on the fear of the BJP coming to power. **These statements smack of political opportunism. Having supported practically all other parties one after the other, the Bukharis have now turned towards the one so far left out: the BJP.**

If it is wrong for secular parties to secure Muslim votes out of fear of the BJP, it is no less wrong for the BJP to secure Muslim votes out of their disappointment with the former.

The Babari Masjid is not the only problem Muslim Indians face. Even then the Bukharis should first spell out what they consider to be the "proper stand", the BJP in their view should take on the question of restoration of Babari Masjid site to the Muslim community.

Finally, the real issue is Hinduisation, propagation of Hindutva in the name of Cultural Nationalism or "One Nation, One Culture". This implies nothing but steady assimilation of Muslim Indians in the Hindu fold and the erosion of their religious identity. This is why modification of the Secular Order, the introduction of the Common civil code, the substitution of Urdu by Sanskrit and introduction of Hindu rites in schools, deletion of Article 30 of the Constitution, relating to minority educational institutions, conversion of Masjids into Mandirs, deprivation of Muslims from representation in the political, administrative and economic systems are on the Sangh agenda and, therefore, the BJP agenda. Are these issues not important in the eyes of the Bukharis? Is the track record of the Sangh Parivar no longer relevant?

Whichever party they may vote for, the Muslim and other secular voters must see through the network of deception spread by Advani and Co. and their agents, avoid the emotional trap and support secular candidates."

Bukhari Refutes Soft Corner for BJP

I am a man of firm convictions. My attitude is very much known regarding the BJP. I not only take it as a communal party but as a fascist organisation. BJP is enemy No. 1 of the minorities in general and of the Muslims in particular.

By no stretch if imagination it can be inferred that I have any soft corner for BJP and towards its leaders, who had demolished Babari Masjid which had left a paramount scare on the psyche of the Muslims of India. Even today its leaders are (speaking of) demolition of the

(Contd. on Page 68)

Saiyid Hamid's Advice

... A cross-observation of the situation party-wise and state-wise should precede the determination of voting preferences. There is no such thing now as political untouchability. We have only to ensure that **our voting pattern**, which in the present situation has got to be flexible, **should not in any case or in any state end up by strengthening or returning to power anti-secular and communal masquerading under a cultural garb.**...

We should be able to make serious calculations about election prospects. The question now arises as to who will do it. The requirement suggests the constitution of a small think-tank whose analyses should be conveyed to the electorate from time to time...

We have to scan the parties and their performance and choose a few parties or fronts for appropriate and studied support. **Blind support to any one party throughout the country should be ruled out as impractical and inadvisable.** Our allegiance should be claimed by secular parties or parties that may align themselves with them...

... Our support had better be based on open-eyed pragmatism and hard-boiled national and community interest...

The number of Muslims in the Lok Sabha has declined alarmingly. The leeway ought to be made up... (But) it is not head count that we are after. ...

... We should prepare not a charter of demands ... but a common minimum programme (to) be disseminated widely in order to educate the voters...

A candidate should be supported on the basis of the (secular - editor) party to which he belongs and not on the strength of his individual credentials.

(Source: The Nation and the World, 16 January, 1998)

Shahabuddin's Proposal

I compliment you on your enlightening analysis in your editorial "Electoral Strategy for Indian Muslims" in your esteemed journal's issue of 16 January, 1998.

While agreeing with you that blind support to anyone party throughout the country should be ruled out, I feel that for the same reason, support to anyone party even within the same State, particularly large States, should be ruled out.

So finally, the secular voters have to decide at the Constituency level, if more than one candidates are fielded by secular parties/formation, to vote for the strongest among them, irrespective of religion, caste or party label, who can defeat the candidate fielded by the BJP or its allies.This would indeed be in the best interest of both the country and the community.

If there is a one-to-one fight between the BJP and any secular party/front in any Constituency, the secular voter faces no problem. What needs to be emphasized is that every vote matters and, therefore, the secular voter must cast his vote. United and massive voting for one secular candidate in every Constituency can alone stop the Hindutva Rath from reaching Delhi.

(Letter to The Nation and the World, 12 January, 1998)

Views of RSS Chief Rajendra Singh

Prof. Rajendra Singh called upon the Muslim society to forego its claim on Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura, and maintained, that the issue was not so complicated that it could not be solved through dialogue. He said that the issue was closely connected with the century-old beliefs of Hindus. **(Source: The Organiser)**

RSS: G.S. Seshadri
On Ayodhya Movement

Hindu interest remained neglected for a long time. The RSS picked up the thread and resuscitated the national spirit... **This resurgent spirit of national assertion finally found a historic expression in the Ayodhya movement.**

The Muslims seem to be perturbed by the VHP demand for the liberation of Mathura, Kashi and the rebuilding of the temple at Ayodhya. Let the Muslims, for a moment, forget VHP, RSS, etc. Year after year, millions of ordinary Hindus from all over the country visit these places ... and see before their eyes the desecration of their holiest places. They naturally feel humiliated... They (ask) as to why the present generation of Muslims should identify itself with the barbaric invaders of the past. **How can they gain the confidence of the Hindus this way?**

(Source: The Organiser, 11 January, 1998)

BJP: Views of Uma Bharati

The issue of Ram mandir remains. The fact is that there cannot be a movement for the construction of a temple... The movement for destruction is complete, the mandir will now be made once the governments in Delhi and Lucknow are the same. You see, you cannot have movement with everyone carrying a bag of cement or a; brick each. It is the work of government and once we come to power in Delhi we will build the temple in the same place.

... The Imam of Kaba had recently come to India and he has said that there should be no dispute on the issue as according to him the structure in Ayodhya could not have been a Masjid. I am personally writing to the Imam to request him to head a committee of experts from fields of history and theosophy to determine the issue once and for all... The BJP was (earlier) making efforts at educating the masses about the real issue of minority appeasement. Now they have seen the truth for themselves. Vote of such bogus issues like secularism can lead only to unstable governments...

(Source: The Indian Express, 3 January, 1998)

Advani's Offer - Not at Face Value

... Going by past experience, Advani's statement cannot be taken at its face value. Notwithstanding his good intentions, it is likely that some sections in the Sangh Parivar would rake up the issue at a later stage. To prevent such a thing from happening, I suggest that the BJP, VHP, RSS and all others concerned should jointly file an affidavit to this effect with the Supreme Court. On their part, the Muslim leaders should also give an undertaking to the Supreme Court that they withdraw all claims to the ... Babari Masjid or the site where it once stood. They should not consider it to be too high a price to buy peace in our motherland.

BJP ON BABARI MASJID QUESTION
A.B. Vajpayee's Views - I

Regarding Ayodhya, our efforts will be directed at settling the dispute through dialogue and the legal process. Kashi and Mathura are not on our agenda. Full stop. The BJP and the RSS are independent organisations with separate identities. The Sangh does not interfere in political matters. **(Source: The India Today, 29 December, 1997)**

II

... So far as the question of mandir vs. mosque is concerned, it will be a part of our manifesto. That there was a temple at the disputed Babari Masjid site is now being accepted by one and all. Even the Imam of Qaba had said that a temple should be allowed to be built at the site. So far asthe question of rebuilding the mosque is concerned, we shall consult all parties and communities to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution.

(Source: The Times of India, 7 January, 1998)

L.K. Advani, 4 December, 1997

... In 1989 ... I stated "If Muslim leaders abandon this claim, I offer to mediate on their behalf and talk to the VHP leaders and find an amicable solution to the Kashi and Mathura disputes". My proposal was ridiculed by some prominent Muslim leaders. I did not pursue the matter any further.

Today, I ... recall what I had said then... This time I would like them to take an initiative. If Muslim leaders - not belonging to the BJP - were to declare that they respect the wishes of Hindu society to have a magnificent temple constructed at Ram Janma Bhoomi and will withdraw all claims to that site, I am willing to help Muslims have a fruitful dialogue with the VHP so that the Kashi and Mathura disputes are sorted our amicably."

(Source: The BJP Today, 16-31 December, 1997)

Kalyan Singh

Barring a few misguided Muslims the larger section is aware that no mosque was demolished in Ayodhya. It was a structure where no namaz had been offered since 1935. Muslims also know that Hindus had been offering prayers before the deity of infant Lord Ram inside that structure for decades, and they are also convinced that the temple will continue to remain there for all times to come. We have no intention of playing the Ayodhya card at all in the coming elections. But I would not be surprised if our opponents and critics will make the issue alive, though I am sure that will go only to BJP's benefit.

(Source: The Sunday, 4-10 January, 1998)

BMMCC: Reaction to Thackeray's Proposal Shahabuddin's Statement , 14 January, 1998

Shri Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena President, has proposed that a national monument should be constructed on the Babari Masjid site and the Hindus and Muslims should be given plots elsewhere to build the Ram Temple and a Masjid.

Shri Thackeray's statement wholly demolishes the assertion by the Sangh Parivar that the Babari Masjid site is the birth site of Shri Ram Chandraji and, therefore, unique and special and that the proposed Ram Janambhoomi Mandir must be built on the Babari Masjid site.

As for the Ram Mandir the Muslims have no objection, and never had, to the construction of yet another Mandir in Ayodhya, **so long as it is not built on the Babari Masjid site.** Indeed they had offered a part of the disputed Wakf land, east of the Babari Masjid, to save the Masjid. It is this land on which first the Shilanyas was done and then the concrete platform was constructed, in violation of the status quo orders.

As for another Masjid, there are almost a score of Masjids already in Ayodhya. The Muslims do not need another. However, a Masjid standing next to the Ram Mandir will be an expression of national reconciliation and integration.

Regarding the proposed national monument Shri Thackeray has not clarified its nature. The Babari Masjid was a small Masjid, with plinth area of about 80' X 80'. Today on this site stands a "make-shift temple" which was unlawfully constructed on its debris. The first step is to remove it, demarcate the site and mark it with an inscription saying: "On this site stood Babari Masjid which was built in 1528 and was demolished in 1992". This would serve as an adequate monument to the tragic events, till there is a final settlement.

To sum up, Shri Thackeray's statement may well serve as a starting point for fresh consideration by all concerned of the issues involved in the Babari Masjid question, if the Sangh Parivar, and particularly the VHP, agree.

Vajpayee's Response

BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee said on Wednesday that **he welcomed the suggestion by Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray to build a national monument at Ayodhya. He added that the supported any attempt to arrive at an amicable solution to the vexed issue.** ...'

(Source: The Times of India, 15 January, 1998)

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Citizens Committee for Secular Action: Report on Dharna in New Delhi

Babari Mosque was deliberately demolished on 6th December, 1992 by the forces unleashed by the Sangh Parivar... This was a willful exercise in deceit for simultaneously (with assurances) clandestine planning was going on to attack and demolish the 'mosque'. Values of truth, Constitution, Rule of Law and tolerance were brushed aside. All this was done in the name of 'Hindutva'. But this event is a blot on Indian Culture. ...

5 years have passed but neither the guilty have been punished nor the victims have been paid due compensation... 35 organisations organised a sit-in (Dharna) in New Delhi on Saturday, 6th December, 1997, 10 AM to 2 PM near the Supreme Court, under the auspices of the Citizens Committee For Secular Action ... to press the following demands:-

1. Punish the guilty involved in demolition and subsequent communal violence.
2. Pay adequate compensation to the riot victims.
3. Expedite the work of the Enquiry Commission appointed for probing the demolition and the riots following it.

Demolition Anniversary: PMS's Protest March

The People's Movement for Secularism organised a march on December 6, 1997, to remember and protest the demolition of the Babari Masjid ... and to reaffirm our commitment to secular ideals. About 300 people from a number of organisations as well as individuals, all sharing a common commitment to democracy and secularism, participating in the march... The police threatened to arrest the demonstrators (including school children) if they did not disperse immediately, ostensibly ... to prevent a clash with the Bajrang Dal...

We strongly protest at this equating of the Bajrang Dal and the PMS for the record of PMS demonstrations in the past five years has proved our peaceful credentials, while the Bajrang Dal has amply shown its cynical disregard for both democratic ideals and human lives.

Since the PMS stood its ground and refused to disperse, the police finally agreed to an alternative route, following which the demonstration marched to Delhi Gate and culminated in a cultural programme at the end of which an outline of the Babari Masjid was made with candles. We pledge to continue to contribute to the struggle of the Indian people in defence of secularism.

(Source: The Times of India, 9 December, 1997)

Supreme Court on Contempt Case

T. Deen Dayal, Appellant v. High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Respondent.

DR. A.S. ANAND AND K. VENKATASWAMI,JJ.

Contempt of Courts Act (70 of 1971), Section 14 - Contempt petition - Pending before High Court - Direction by Supreme Court for its disposal at an early date giving specific time...

(Source: AIR 1997 Supreme Court 3451)

Seema Mustafa On Demolition and Natinoal Politics

... The demolition continues to cast a shadow on politics and polity. It is also an event that no political party, except of course, the malignant Parivar, wants to talk about in case it is compelled to take positions that go against somebody's or the other's grain... Babari Masjid and the politics of communalism go on the backburner, to be resurrected only for possible votes with the result that the scars remain and so does the anger, resentment and a sense of deep hurt. ...

The temple exists in Ayodhya. It was set up just after the mosque was destroyed. Puja is offered at the site but this is an embarrassing fact which no one wants to talk about... There can be neither a temple nor a mosque until the court gives its verdict. But that would mean removing the temple set up under Narasimha Rao's watchful eyes at that time, and which political party can take a stand on this? After all politics and ideology are not expected to go together, the chasm widening as the years go by, and the fact that the site is in the possession of those who have distorted religion for petty politics is a; fact which unfortunately cannot be wished away by simply ignoring it.

The BJP leaders have now come out with a deal. Catching hold of the highly purchasable mullahs, they kicked off their election campaign with a convention of Muslims in Delhi... "You give up Ayodhya," said the wise leaders of the BJP, "and we will persuade the VHP to give up Mathura and Kashi." One is not going to waste even a line assessing this proposal...

(Source: The Asian Age, 6 December, 1997)

Rajindra Puri On Gandhi's Views on Hinduism

Do (Mahatma Gandhi's) views of Hinduism ... square with the notions of Hinduism held by those who demolished the Babari Masjid, those who justified that act by drawing attention to the alleged destruction of temples by Muslims in Kashmir, those who hypocritically regret the demolition as an unfortunate accident and blame the Central Government for it but refuse to accept their own responsibility, those who refused to perform crime, and those who, finally, continue to threaten a repeat performance of the demolition (at) other mosques in Kashi and Mathura?

(Source: Letter in The Indian Express, 4 October 1997)

A Letter in The Hindustan Times

... The horrific Islamic sins against Hindus (cannot be washed away) by making wild and false accusations like destruction of hundred of Buddhist/Jain temples. **The Hindus have not destroyed even a single mosque during the last 1200 years in this country. And now can they destroy their own Buddhist/Jain temples? After all the Jains and Buddhists are an integral part of Hindu society and will remain so forever.**

M.V. Kamath on Demolition as Expression of Hindu Self Respect

... The Masjid was a standing insult to Hinduism... The building of the Masjid was a political gesture, shorn of any semblance to spirituality. There was no reason why a Masjid should have been built in Ayodhya of all places - just as there was no reason why other Masjids should have been built in Varanasi and Mathura - if it were not to emphasise that Islam was the ruling power in North India and the Hindus had better lug it

... **The Babari Masjid hurt Hindu sentiments and this was openly and publicly expressed. Demolition of the Masjid was an act of self-respect on the part of the Hindus.**.. What would, indeed, have been "shame-faced" is if the Hindus had **taken resort to demeaning ways of demolishing the Masjid.**.. An affront to Hinduism must be brought down openly and in broad daylight, for all the world to know.

What is disdainfully called "Hindu nationalism" is the cry of a **people who have long been kept out of power and are now seeking to assert themselves.**..

The BJP's nationalism is not exclusivist or anti-Muslim... **Ayodhya was a necessary act, even as it was a painful one.**.. **The future belongs to the BJP and Hindu nationalism.**..

(Source: The Times of India, 22 December, 1997)

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Times of India, 1 January, 1998

M.V. Kamath's article "Reclaiming Ram's Birthplace"; (TOI, 22 Dec.,97) strikes one immediately as "deja vu". There is not an idea, not even a word, more than what Mr. Kamath has been articulating through his numerous columns in various papers over the last few years. Indeed he reminds one of two well-known proverbs "Mudda'i soost, Gawah chust" and "Uzr-e-gunah badtar uz gunah". In his euphoria he goes beyond the VHP's brief although his basic thesis remains the same. Built in Ayodhya, the city of Rama, the Babari Masjid was an insult to Hinduism, and hurt Hindu sentiments and its demolition was an act of self-respect and, therefore, necessary. He also appreciates that the demolition was done in broad day light.

Mr. Kamath wants Muslims to acknowledge the fact of "Islamic invasion of Hindu territory". Everyone acknowledges this fact. But Babar was not the first Muslim invader. Oudh was under reported invasion since the 11th Century. Babar took Ayodhya from the Pathans, not from the Hindus.

There is no record of any Muslim conqueror constructing a victory memorial in Ayodhya or elsewhere. But in every age, places of worship have been constructed and other religious acts have been performed as thanksgiving. An element of political assertion may also be present. So it is today when the Sangh Parivar seeks to destroy Masjids, but on a false premise. Post-1947 India belongs to all Indians and not to the Hindus alone.

It is surprising that Mr. Kamath sees nothing demeaning in blatant violation of the assurances given to the Parliament, the Allahabad High Court, Supreme Court, the Executive and the National Integration Council. He also does not see any deception in securing access to the Babari Masjid on the plea of worship and performance of rituals. The Kar sevaks did not announce their real intent of demolition in advance nor did they openly force their way through the security cordon. They came stealthily and they succeeded because of the collusion of Narasimha Rao and Kalyan Singh governments. They came because they knew that they were not going to face any bullets!

Hindu sentiments have been systematically inflamed by the Sangh Parivar since 1983. No such sentiments existed for 364 years. Babari Masjid was not on the public agenda during the Freedom Movement or since 1947, until 1983.

The Parivar has no faith in the judiciary. It rejected the Krishna Iyer-Rajiv Gandhi formula and continues to 'formally' boycott the title suit proceedings in the Allahabad High Court.

The Sangh Parivar is yet to prove to the satisfaction of a judicial or quasi-judicial authority that Ayodhya is indeed the birth site of Ram, that the birth site lies within the Babari Masjid site and that a commemoration temple standing on the site was demolished to build the Babari Masjid in the place.

Misuse of History

... Kamath's 'Reclaiming Rama's Birthplace' ... is the predictable reaction of a chauvinist...

Kamath believes that Rama's temple was demolished by Muslim invaders. He and other like-minded people have blocked themselves from all the contrary evidence which archaeological and literary sources provide... While discussing acts of demolition by Muslim rulers, we should not miss the context and nature of the mediaeval polity. If we go on interpreting and using history for the purpose of settling scores from the past, we will be reduced to a nation of warring tribes.

(Vikram Kumar's Letter in The Times of India, 9 January, 1998)

R.S. Sharma: Urban Decay in India and Ayodhya

Archaeology of Ayodhya:

A minor excavation at Ayodhya in 1969-70 showed that the site was occupied in NBP times. The upper levels of the NBP phase brought to light six terra-cotta human figurines grey in colour, and two Ayodhya coins. It also yielded some iron objects. Although there was a massive brick structure built in several phases at Kubera-Tila. It has not been dated; perhaps it belonged to the Kusana period.

Excavation at Ayodhya in 1979-80 shows evidence of town planning in the late NBP phase when we find terra-cotta ring wells and structures of baked bricks. After the end of this phase we get a baked brick wall of the Sunga period and a part of the house-complex of Gupta times. The 'typical' Gupta pottery is also found . It is stated that "occupation continued through the Sunga, Kusana and Gupta periods to medieval times", but the elements that continued after the Gupta period are not mentioned. In post-Gupta days the site was evidently neglected. ...

Ayodhya in Sanskrit Literature:

The Kavyas are more concerned with court life, and hence do not reflect the widespread decay of towns. Nevertheless a few literary texts contain faint echoes. Valmiki's description of Ayodhya when Rama left for exile gives clear hints about the condition of a deserted town. Apart from the absence of the din and bustle of a busy life, we find that carts and chariots do not ply in the streets, sacrifices are not performed, and commodities are not adorned with flowers and garlands to attract customers. The shops are devoid of merchants, who feel worried on account of the end of their trade. We learn that very few shops and markets are open, and the merchants do not know what to do. Ayodhya faces a similar plight in the Raghuvamsa, after the death of Rama. Its roads and streets, palaces and water tanks, and gardens and orchards are deserted, and the town goddess bemoans her fate. The Raghuvamsa belongs to Gupta times although the Ramayana could be of an earlier period...

Ayodhya in Decay in 8th Century AD:

Taxila, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Pataliputra, Ujjayini and Pratisthana or Paithan appear as important towns in the Kuvalayamala. In addition to these Champa, Mithila, Kausambi Sravasti, Hastinapura and Bairat appear as important towns in the Samaraicca Kaha, but leaving aside of Mithila, which cannot be identified and appears as a town in the Ramayana of Valmiki, archaeological and other sources show that **these towns were in a state of decay in the eighth century.** In the Samaraicca Kaha some towns are called city states, which label could fit those towns that issued coins between 200 BC and AD 200. No town did this in the eighth century or in the following two centuries. Nor is there any other indication to show that city states existed in the early medieval period. ...

By comparing Al-biruni's list of towns in northern and western India with that of Kusana and pre-Kusana towns, K.A. Asharfyan points out that the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages was marked by the disappearance of many ancient towns. Those which survived suffered decline and underwent a gradual transformation of their socio-economic structure. Asharfyan identifies twenty-two important pre-Kusana towns, which cover not only northern India but also parts of central and western India according to our scheme...

... Out of these only five towns, namely Ayodhya, Mathura, Pataliputra, Ujjain, and Varanasi appear in Al-biruni's text. Most of these existed as religious centres, which ... developed when towns lost their urban character. Thus the process of the decline and disappearance of ancient towns is very clear.

... According to Ashrafyan a study of the list of Al-biruni's northern towns known from ancient Indian sources shows that ancient towns had either disappeared or were in a state of decline.

It will be seen that Indian literary evidence for urban decline of Gupta and post-Gupta times is not strong... Indigenous texts are not totally bereft of references to urban decline. What is far more important, inscription and foreign accounts broadly corroborate the decline indicated by excavations. ...

The Gupta empire in India was larger than each of the two kingdoms, and yet its cities and towns show the general trend of decline. Proceeding from east to west and north, Pataliputra, Vaishali, Katragarh Chirand, Khairadih, Manjhi, Varanasi, Kausambi, Sringaverapur, Ayodhya, Hastinapura, Mathura, Atranjikhera, Sonkh, Purana Qila, Noh, Ropar, Sanghol, etc, show symptoms of decline... Apparently the Guptas and their contemporaries were not capable of giving towns the scale of support which they had enjoyed earlier.

The second phase of urban decay appears after the sixth century, and its beginning synchronizes with the fall of the Gupta empire... The archaeological decline of 'Buddhist' towns after the sixth century is generally attested by the account of Hsuan Tsang and by the lack of such seals and inscriptions as mention artisans and merchants either collectively or individually. It is also confirmed by decreasing attention given to traders and craftsmen in literature...

BJP: Vajpayee On Article 370

The BJP had been opposing Article 370 because it had given a special status to the state of J&K. The article had been inserted as a temporary measure in the Constitution. Instead of giving special status to any state, we want to treat all states on an equal footing.

The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court had now been extended to J&K and Article 356 was applicable to it. That was why Article 370 was no more so important, even though it continued to be viewed as a "psychological barrier". The question of autonomy had to be decided not in the context of J&K alone, but in an all-India context... We have not much to discuss on Kashmir (with Pakistan). The only point which requires settling is that one-third of Kashmir which Pakistan continues to occupy. **(Source: The Times of India, 8 January, 1998)**

J.N. Dixit On OIC's Stand on Kashmir

The Organisation of Islamic Conference Summit's Teheran Declaration expressing concern about human rights violations in J&K and urging the umma to give support to Kashmiri Muslims (have elicited) the standard Indian reaction. ... The OIC Contact Group on Kashmir has been continued with Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Niger as members. Nawaz Sharif justified this at the summit by calling Kashmir the world's "hottest flashpoint".

Our foreign policy should take into account that: (a) despite the resumption of the Indo-Pakistan dialogue, practical rationality in Pakistan in discussing Kashmir should not be expected; (b) while references to Kashmiri in the OIC discussions and declaration should be noted, they only repeat OIC pronouncements since 1990 and portend no collective action against India by the 55-member OIC; (c) there is no intense interest or unanimity in the OIC membership on the Kashmir issue. The declaration is an expression of a general proforma consensus, animated by ... Islamic solidarity rather than (adoption by) individual member countries (of) operational anti-India policies; (d) we should not accuse Iran of reneging on assurances (which) has been part of such consensual declarations on Kashmir in the past. But this has not really affected bilateral relations. We should of course have no illusions; Iran would sympathise with the Muslim cause everywhere in terms of the ideology of its revolution; (e) the approach to counter the OIC's orientation on Kashmir should be endeavours at representation there and ... let citizens from Kashmir participate in OIC meetings... Several Kashmiri organisations have criticised the Teheran declaration for ambiguity on Kashmir. ...

The OIC membership is not united in its approach to and political differences, and differing and contradictory equations with different power centres...

... So a demonology of monolithic OIC pan-Islamism creating a confrontationist atmosphere in international relations is factually incorrect and illogical as political prognosis. The OIC is a forum of countries sharing a religious and general ideological orientation in which each member seeks to further its interest through a collective instrumentality.

(Source: The Indian Express, 25 December, 1997)

Awami National Conference (G.M.Shah): Statement, 29 December, 1997

... It is the time to start an unconditional dialogue with the leaders of the state and ponder on all the suggestions that may be put up by these leaders. When any kind of agreement is arrived at, then the leaders of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir should be invited for a round table conference to give the solution a final shape, thus ushering in an era of peace, stability, tranquillity and prosperity in the whole state. This would help people in reaping the benefits of long denied freedom in thought and the deed. This fact should always been kept in mind that Kashmir problem is directly and exclusively the problem of the people of the state... And thus only that solution will be lasting which will be acceptable to all the regions of J&K state...

Gandhiji on Partition of Kashmir, 27 December, 1947

... A proposal was being mooted then that, like the Indian nation, Kashmir too should be divided into two. Bapu was absolutely certain no such sharing of the territory of that State cut into parcels should be made: nor could there be any question of inviting a third party to intervene, and perhaps carry out such a division... The Mahatma said, "It is being said that we should invite someone to arbitrate between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. How can this be?"...

Gandhiji was ... emphatic in wanting the Kashmir issue to be settled bilaterally as a dispute strictly between ... India and Pakistan... Gandhiji observed, "There is a large preponderance of Muslims in Kashmir. Jammu does not have very many Muslims. There should be no partitioning of the State. If we start the process again here, where will it end? It is enough, and more than enough, that India has been cut into two. The fact is that Pakistan has invaded Kashmir. Indian troops have gone there as defenders at the express invitation of the Maharaja of the State, and of Sheikh Abdullah, who is the real leader of the Kashmiri people. Muslims in their thousands are devoted to him. He is the Lion of Kashmir. I shall advise Pakistan and India to sit together and decide this matter. If they are interested in a settlement, where is the need for an arbitrator?"

Gujral's Three Language Formula

43. The Three-Language Formula enunciated in the National Policy Resolution of 1968 provided that: (a) in Hindi-speaking areas, the Three-Language Formula should be Hindi, English and a; modern Indian language (preferably one of the Southern languages); and (b) in non-Hindi speaking areas, Hindi, English and the regional language. Several permutations, and combinations have been introduced by the various States at the implementation stage. It has created many difficulties for Urdu speakers. it is, therefore, considered necessary that in any formula that is worked out it should be ensured that students are able to study their mother tongue as well as the official language of the State. The Committee has, accordingly, suggested that the modified Three-Language Formula should provide:

(i) **in Hindi-speaking States**
   (a) Hindi (with Sanskrit as part of a composite course);
   (b) Urdu or any other modern Indian language excluding (a); and
   (c) English or any other modern European language.

(ii) **in non-Hindi-speaking States**
   (a) Regional language;
   (b) Hindi;
   (c) Urdu or any other modern Indian language excluding (a) and (b); and
   (d) English or any other modern European language.

44. The Three-Language Formula, at present in vogue in A.P. with a degree of success, may also be adopted as an alternative by the non-Hindi speaking States for Urdu speaking population.

The formula is:

(a) Urdu and Hindi (a composite course);
(b) Regional language;
(c) English or any other modern European language.

Care should be taken to ensure that the Hindi course in the Hindi speaking States, and the regional language course in the non-Hindi speaking States are somewhat different and simpler from the course for those whose mother tongue is Hindi in the former and the regional language in the latter. Likewise in both Hindi as well non-Hindi speaking States, the Urdu course should be slightly different and simpler for those whose mother tongue is other than Urdu.

45. ... We are keen that the students whose mother tongue is Urdu should learn Hindi and those whose mother tongue is Hindi should get an opportunity to learn Urdu... The Committee noticed that the National Policy Resolution is not being followed in the Centre's own schools, viz., the Kendriya Vidyalayas or in schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education. We feel that it would be unwise to continue with the non-implementation of the Centre's own directives in its own schools and would recommend that non-adherence to the concept of the 3-Language Formula in the Central Schools on the plea of transferability of pupils should not be allowed to continue any longer. It would, therefore, be necessary in all Central Schools also to apply the 3-Language Formula strictly, as laid down in the National Policy Resolution.

Shahabuddin's Letter to Prime Minister Gujral, 18 December, 1997

I find that the recommendations relating to Three Language Formula by the Gujral Committee provides a slot for Urdu as the **Second** language for those whose Mother Tongue in Urdu, in marked deviation from the National Policy Resolution of 1968. But in my view, neither is in accord with the letter and spirit of the Three Language Formula as originally adumberated in 1961 which laid stress **on the Mother Tongue as the First Language**. Since the position of a language in the Formula not only indicates the sequence in which the students learn it but also the relative weightage thereof, and therefore, the comparative proficiency therein, the Formula needs to be recast for both Hindi and non-Hindu States.

The Gujral Report itself recognises the "many difficulties for Urdu-speakers" and the need to ensure study of the Mother Tongue but the recommendations make no mention of the Mother Tongue at all and does not take into account the high level of proficiency in the Mother Tongue a student should have by the end of school instruction.

Over the years, Urdu-speaking children have been deprived of the opportunity to learn their Mother Tongue under one pretext or the other. To my mind this is essentially because the importance of teaching and learning the Mother Tongue has been lost sight of - both in theory and in practice.

I, therefore, suggest that the Formula be recast on the following lines:

Hindi-speaking States:

1. M.T. for all, without any pre-condition or numerical limits.
2. Hindi for non-Hindi-speaking students and any other MIL spoken in the State for Hindi-speaking students.
3. English or any other MIL or any Classical Language (Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian).

For non-Hindi-speaking States:

1. M.T. for all (except Urdu-speaking children) and Urdu-Hindi composite course for Urdu-speaking children.
2. Hindi for non-Hindi speaking students and Principal Language of the State for those whose M.T. is otherwise.
3. English or any other MIL or any Classical Language (Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian).

The teaching of the Mother Tongue as the First

(Contd. on Page 84)

Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu's Memorandum to PM, 21 Nov., 97

Urdu has continued to be indifferently treated in the land of its birth. The report of the Committee for Promotion of Urdu (1975) constituted by Government of India, has virtually been shelved. In consequence, there is acute dissatisfaction, boarding on alienation among the Urdu-speaking people. They had high expectations from the United Front to whose empowerment they made a wholehearted contribution. They are feeling disenchanted. We do hope that the UF will not follow in the footsteps of the earlier governments in taking them for granted and feeding them with promises.

We, therefore, urge upon (you) with all the anguished emphasis at our command, to consider the recommendations contained in the Report and have the long overdue Government Resolution passed on it... The salient recommendations in the order of importance relate to: a) education, b) use of Urdu for official purposes, c) its projection in the media. We would, therefore, press for immediate action on the following points...

1. "Population of 10% or more in any concentrations of linguistic minority are to be taken as the basis for the provision of primary education through the mother tongue in that area. One third of the total number of pupils, studying through the minority language at the primary level, should be taken as moving on to the next stage of education and this proportion should form the basis for provision of educational facilities at the secondary level. The existing 10:40 and 15:60 formula should be abandoned".

The provision made in the Education Code of Uttar Pradesh with indecent haste in the wake of independence to the effect that Hindi alone would be the medium of instruction is anti-education and should be removed forthwith.

2. "On the basis of estimates made, it may be presumed that two-thirds of the students leaving primary schools would be desirous of moving on to the next stage of education. Urdu medium sections in the existing schools should be provided on this basis and Urdu knowing teachers appointed in anticipation of students offering Urdu as a medium. One Urdu medium higher secondary school should be opened for every group of eight to ten primary schools".
3. Three Language Formula should provide:

(i) In Hindi-speaking States
   (a) Hindi (with Sanskrit as part of a composite course)
   (b) Hindi or any other modern Indian language excluding (a); and
   (c) English or any other modern European language.

(ii) In non-Hindi speaking States
   (a) Regional language
   (b) Hindi
   (c) Urdu or any other modern Indian language excluding (a) and (b)
   (d) English or any other modern European language.

4. Special arrangements should be made by State Governments particularly in UP, Bihar and West Bengal for training of Urdu teachers.
5. State Governments must ensure that all Urdu text-books are made available in the market well before the beginning of the academic session.
6. Facilities for use of Urdu for official purposes should be provided in all concentration of 10% and above down to tehsil, block and ward level.
7. Frequency of Urdu Radio programmes ... should be stepped up... Development features and national programmes should be broadcast in Urdu also.

In the past, Urdu has suffered grievously because the executive of Government's policies relating thereto has been tardy, apathetic, listless and sometimes even adverse. It is, therefore, submitted that the implementation ... should be closed monitored by the authorities at various levels (and) the representatives of the intended beneficiaries are associated withit... It is suggested that, where necessary, funds should be provided by the Centre to the concerned State GovTs. ...

A fair and firm Urdu policy would remove the grievances and frustration of the Urdu-speaking population which number about 30 million (despite under-enumeration). It will also have a very reassuring and morale-boosting impact on another about 90 million people who are deeply attached to this language... Effective steps for promotion of Urdu will also greatly help the growth of Indian culture...

Saiyid Hamid Jagan Nath Azad Raj Bahadur Gaur
M. Afzal S. Rehman Kidwai Khaliq Anjum & 3 others

(Contd.from Page 83)

Language should begin in class I; the teaching of the Second Language, in class V and of the Third Language at class VII. In classs V and VI, the Ist and 2nd language should receive equal teaching time and weightage. In classes VII to X, all three Languages should receive equal teaching time and weightage.

The medium should be M.T. compulsorily upto class VI. From class VII onward, it should be the Principal Language of the State in all government schools. Private schools established and managed by the linguistic minorities may be given the option of having M.T. as the medium right upto class X.

The State government should establish adequate number of primary, middle and high schools in all parts of the State, in accordance with the nationally accepted norms, on the basis of the population of the Panchayat, the Prakhand/the Town and the Zila so that linguistic minorities enjoy equal access to government schools at all levels. In determining the number of primary/middle/high schools in Muslim concentration areas, the number of Maktabs and Madarsas, should **not** be taken into consideration. Beyond middle schools, separate schools for boys and girls should be established if girl education is to be promoted, among the Urdu-speaking population.

UP: Introduction of Sanskrit and Hindu Rites in Schools Shahabuddin's Letter to AIMMM,

17 December, 1997

The All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushwarat (AIMMM) should formally take note of the order by the Government of UP:

a) to banish instruction of Urdu, even from the primary level by introducing Sanskrit, as compulsory language, in addition to Hindi and English from Class III, thus leaving no room for Urdu.

b) to introduce as compulsory Hindu rites of worship like Pooja and Archna of Mother Ganges and Bharat Mata and Vande Matram as Salutation for registering attendance.

This is apart from objectionable contents in the text books of history, social studies and Hindi which denigrate role of Islam and Muslims in India and focus on Hindu myths and legends and Hindu gods and personalities.

All this amounts not only to Hinduisation but cultural, linguistic and social genocide against the letter and spirit of the Indian Constitution and the universally accepted norms for treatment of minority groups laid down in international convention.

I, therefore, suggest that the Mushawarat should, in cooperation with All India Deeni Talimi Council, challenge the constitutionality of the orders as well as ask the Muslim community in UP to withdraw its children from all government schools en masse.

This may duly be placed on the agenda for the coming meeting of the Working Committee.

Allahabad High Court On Writ Against Minority Institutions

Imran Abbass and another, Petitioners v. Catholic Diocese of Lucknow and others, Respondents.

JAGDISH BHALLA, J.

Constitution of India, Articles 12, 226 - Minority educational institution - Unaided, unfunded and not managed by government - Not agency or instrumentality of State - Writ against - Cannot be issued.

The Cathedral Educational Society which runs the Cathedral School a private minority institution unaided and not managed by Government is neither an agency nor instrumentality of the State so as to come within the expression "state" as contemplated under Article 12 of the Constitution. Writ Petition challenging expulsion of student from such school is not maintainable.

(Source: AIR 1997 Allahabad 351)

Punjab and Haryana High Court on Public Accountability of Private Institutions

Miss Ravneet Kaur, Petitioner v. The Christian Medical College, Ludhiana and another, Respondents.

Constitution of India, Articles 29(2), 14, 226, 32 - Scope - Private educational institution - Is not immune from judicial surveillance of Supreme Court and High Court - Denial of admission by such institution on any grounds specified in Article 29(2) - Aggrieved person can seek writ for enforcement of his right either under Article 32 or 226.

On a plain reading of the provision in Article 29, it is clear that a private educational institution is not immune from judicial surveillance of the Supreme Court or the High Courts. The Constitution cannot be interpreted to mean that there are two sets of rules for the same game. It is only right that every Institution which is charged with a public duty follows the mandate of Article 14. It cannot act arbitrarily, treat equals unequally and make or follow rules that are clearly violative of the prohibitions embodied in Part III of the Constitution. In fact, Article 29(2) contains clear indication that even a private institution which is receiving aid from the State cannot discriminate on grounds of religion, caste etc. Thus, there cannot be a dichotomy - a division of the institutions performing public duties into two strongly contrasted classes.

The private institutions performing public duties supplement the State's effort. They are partners with the State. The private and Governmental institutions are the two sides of the same body. The right side cannot smile when the left side is pinched.

A private educational institution receiving aid from State funds may not be a 'State' as defined in Article 12. Yet, article 29(2) confers a fundamental right on all citizens not to be discriminated against in the matter of admission to such an institution on grounds only of religion, caste, language or any of them. If a citizen is denied admission by such an institution on any of the grounds specified in Article 29(2), can it be said that the aggrieved person cannot seek a writ for the enforcement of his rights either under Articles 32 or 226 on the ground that it happens to be a private educational institution? Certainly not.

A citizen can invoke the right to equality in the matter of admission on merit even against a private medical college affiliated to a University. This right "without a remedy will become a mere adornment ... as writ in water". It is not so.

(Source: AIR 1998 Punjab and Haryana 1)

Naseem A. Zaidi
On Excellence or Reservation

... A case is advocated for reservation of jobs for the community in government services on the ground of religions...

Quality of educational output is more important than support in a few jobs. Under the New Economic Policy, with the increased emphasis on privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation, while job opportunities in the public sector are shrinking, they are fast expanding in the private, cooperative and external sectors. Muslims holding professional degrees are getting jobs in private corporate sector, multinational corporations, the Gulf countries, and some very bright students get opportunities in advanced countries. Though securing a few higher public services gives a psychological satisfaction of sharing power, yet there is an apprehension of decline in the quality of educational output... According to a comparative study of the Muslims on the one hand, and SCs, STs who enjoyed the facility of reservation in jobs since the last 45 years on the other, it was revealed that pass percentage at the graduate level for the Muslims was 51 while it was only 35 in case of SC and ST candidates. For B.E. and M.B.B.S. degrees, pass percentages for SC and ST candidates were 33 and 35 respectively against the general average of 59 and 62 for both the courses respectively. The percentage was much lower than those of the Muslim candidates for these courses...

... Failure of achieving desired objective in Kerala was observed in 'India Today' (November 30, 1994): "Over half a century of affirmative action notwithstanding, Kerala's Muslim community, which comprises 22% of the State's population in under represented in the State's bureaucracy. A report by the State Legislature Committee on the welfare of the backward classes found that the Muslims held just 8% of the government jobs in the State, well short of 12% reserved for them".

"Hence unless a vigorous effort to educate Muslims on a massive scale is undertaken, even if reservation for the Muslim is accepted, it will take decades before it could cure the disease"...Reservation in favour of the Muslims on the basis of religion is a highly emotive issue, and some communal political parties in search of such sensitive issue may exploit the situation resulting in the communal divide and a backlash from the majority community. This situation will be highly unfavourable for the Muslims, competing for jobs in private sector.

Reservation attaches a social stigma with it... Reservation has not helped in solving the problem; its trial in other parts of the country is not advisable.

... Excellence in school level education is the most called-for-necessity to lift the Muslim community from ... state of backwardness...

(Source: The Azad Academy Journal, 1-31 December, 1997)

Joint Resolution of
National Women's Organisations

1. This Convention (on 19 Nov., 1997) of Members of Panchayats and local bodies organised by the National Women's Organisations, congratulates and expresses its solidarity with the approximately one million women who have been elected to the panchayats and local bodies in different states of India through the provision of one-third reservation...
2. This Convention asserts that the experience of the majority of women elected at the panchayat level has laid the foundation for ensuring a wider role for women in the political process. The experience leads to the logical demand of extension of the one third reservation to state assemblies and parliament...
3. ... This convention reiterates the understanding of the national women's organisations that women of any particular community should get at least one third of any reservation benefit that the community may get. Since there is a constitutional provision for reservation for SC and ST candidates all states assemblies and in parliament, the present Bill ensures that women of these communities will get one third of those SC/ST reserved seats. As far as OBCs are concerned, at present there is no constitutional provision for such reservation of seats in any state assembly or parliament for OBCs. Nor has this demand ever been raised (sic). In many state assemblies without any reservation, persons belonging to backward communities make up the single largest group. however if in the future such a reservation on the basis of caste is made, then women of those particular communities will automatically get one-third reservation...

   This convention demands that the Bill should be accepted as it is.
4. This Convention also expresses its opposition any move to dilute the percentage quota below one third...

Shahabuddin's Letter to BBC, 7 January, 1998

I am writing this to protest against the screening of a telefilm on the life of the Holy Prophet by Channel 4 of the BBC on the occasion of the Christmas, although the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, London, had drawn your attention to the objectionable feature of the film

I request you not to telecast this film or release it to other TV stations without such cuts and changes as may be proposed by the Committee or by a group of eminent Islamic Scholars such as Dr. Zaki Badawi, Director of the Islamic Centre, London.

Central Wakf Council: Composition

1. Union Minister in charge of Wakf, ex-officio — Chairperson
2. Maulana Asad Madani, President, Jamaitul Ulema. Hind, 1, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002. — Member
3. Maulana S. Nizamuddin, General Secretary, All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Phulwari Sharif, Bihar. — -do-
4. Mr. Zahedulla Meccai, 49, Khazi Street, Basavanagudi, Bangalore-560004. — -do-
5. Prof. Shafi Haider, Village Parwaha, PO: Andauli, Distt. Sitamarhi, Bihar. — -do-
6. Dr. (Mrs.) Najma Heptullah, Deputy Chairperson, Rajya Sabha, 4, Abkar Road, New Delhi -110011. — -do-
7. Mr. K.M. Alaudeen, President, Pudur Muslim Jamath, 4, Lal Bahadur Shastri Street, Ilayangudi PMT District, Tamil Nadu. — -do-
8. Mr. K. Moidin Kutty Haji (Alia Bava Haji) "Darussalam", Ezhoor, Tirur - 676 101. — -do-
9. Mr. M.A.A. Fatmi, MP, 14, Windsor Place, New Delhi-110001. — -do-
10. Mr.Munnavar Hasan, MP, 40, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi-110011. — -do-
11. Mr. C.M. Ibrahim, Union Minister for Civil Aviation, 22-A, Akbar Road, New Delhi-110011. — -do-
12. Chairman, State Wakf Board, A.P. — -do-
13. Chairman, State Wakf Board, W. Bengal — -do-
14. Chairman, State Wakf Board, Bihar — -do-
15. Justice V. Khalid (Retd.), 158, Secretariat Colony, Chennai-600 010. — -do-
16. Justice A.S. Qureshi (Retd.), C/1, Tagore Park, Paldhi, Ahmedabad-380009. — -do-
17. Mr. Salman Khurshid, ex-MP, Gulmohar Avenue, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025. — -do-
18. Hakeem Abdul Hameed, Hamdard Nagar, New Delhi-110062. — -do-
19. Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, Dept. of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-110025. — -do-
20. Mr. Ghulam Abdul Qadir Alvi, Sajjada Nasheen Khanqahe Faizur Rasool, Baraon Shareef, Dt. Siddarth Nagar-272153. — -do-
21. Maulana Abdul Razzak, Amir-e-Shariat & Sadar Jamiatul Ulema, Tarjume Wali Masjid, Motia Park, Bhopal-462001 (MP). — -do-

Andhra Pradesh High Court On Mutawalli of Wakf

Mohammed Sulaiman and another. Appellants v. The Andhra Pradesh Wakf Board and another, Respondents.

KRISHNA SARAN SHRIVASTAV, J.

Wakf Act (1954), Section 42 - Appointment of Mutawalli - Power of Board exercise of - Successor Mutawalli named in wakf deed - Appointment of any person as Mutawalli - Not provided under Section 42.

The power of appointment of Mutawalli can be exercised by the board only when there is no one appointed under the terms of deed of Wakf and when the right of any person to act as Mutawalli is disputed, provided, there is an existing vacancy in the office of the Mutawalli of the Wakf.

Such appointment shall be made for such period and on such condition asthe Board may think fit is indicative and suggestive of the fact that it is not a regular appointment of a Mutawalli that is contemplated by Section 42 of the Wakf Act. There is no provision in the Wakf Act for appointing a person as Mutawalli under Section 42 of the Wakf Act if there is a successor named in the Wakf deed.

(AIR 1997 Andhra Pradesh 387)

CPI: Statement on Jaipur Firing

The Central Secretariat of the Communist Party of India strongly condemn the unprovoked police firing in Jaipur killing six persons... Reports indicate that, the police and administration under the influence of the BJP government has taken a total anti-minority attitude and continuing brutality in the name of enforcing the curfew and other prohibitive orders...

It seems that the BJP government in the state is interested in vitiating the communal atmosphere on the eve of the Lok Sabha poll...

The dispute over encroachment of waqf land is pending since long... The administration has deliberately ignored it. It actually patronised the illegal encroachment...

The firing was totally unwarranted and resorted to without any warning (and) targetted Muslim protesters...

The CPI urges upon the state government to take punitive actions against the ... Collector and police officials responsible...

(Source: The New Age, 21-25 December, 1997)

Notes

On Bhopal Rubats in Makkah and Madinah

The Bhopal Rubat in Makkah is a five storey building located in Shamia and was constructed with the compensation for the demolition of original Bhopal Rubat and subsequent acquisition of its site by the Makkah Municipality... Pilgrims from M.P. who are granted exemptions by the Rubat authorities in India are accommodated in this Rubat... The present capacity as scrutinized by the Makkah Municipality during Haj 1996 is 148. The present Nazir is Mr. Mohd. Saleh Abdus Samad Saati... This Rubat is being managed efficiently.

The Bhopal Rubat in Madinah is a multi-storied building at Shar-e-Sittin and is fully functional under the Nazarat of Mr. Mohd. Zahir Usmani... The capacity is 230... Since the duration of stay in Madinah is 8-9 days only, two batches of 230 pilgrims each stay during pre and post Haj periods... Thus raising the capacity to 960. This is also one of the best managed Indian Rubats...

(Source: CGI, Jeddah)

On Tonk Rubats in Makka and Madinah

The former princely family of Tonk (Rajasthan) had constructed three Rubats in Makkah and two in Madinah.

Makka: All the three Rubats in Makkah were declared unsafe by the Municipality and demolished. The present status of Rubats at Makkah is as under:-

Nazirs of the Rubats have been able to reconstruct two multi-storied buildings on the vacant plots. These are called "Qasr Al-Aqeeq" at Shamia and "Qasr Al-Muddah" at Harratul Bab. These Rubats, however are not being used to accommodate the pilgrims. The Nazirs Amin Dehalavi and A. Razzak Dehlavi have rented out these buildings to some companies. Out of the rent from these buildings, they accommodate only 224 pilgrims at Makkah. According to them, the balance of the rent is being used for repayment of the construction cost...

The Nazirs ... do not at all cooperate with the CGI, Jeddah or even divulge any information...

Madinah: The two original Rubats in Madinah were demolished for extension of the Haram-e-Nabwi. The Nazir Amin Dehlavi has got two new buildings constructed out of the compensation.

The first is a five-storied building with modern amenities, including a lift. It has a capacity of around 500 but the number of pilgrims can be increased upto 1000, in a phased manner.

The CGI, Jeddah, has been requesting the Mutawalli in India and the Nazir ... to agree to accommodate 1000 pilgrims ... but neither has responded.... The second Rubat has been constructed in "Sammania" and has become partially operational since Haj 1997. During Haj 1997 the Nazir (is reported to have) mis-utilised it by lodging outsiders and not Indian pilgrims...

RECONSTITUTION OF HAJ COMMITTEE

Shahabuddin's Letter to Prime Minister, 27 December, 1997

The Haj Committee whose term expired in 1996 continues to function, on one pretext and the other. Ostensibly a case has been made out that there is a legal lacunae in the Haj Committee Act, 1959 and that a Haj Committee once constituted, continues to remain in office, beyond its normal term of 5 years, **till its successor Committee is constituted.** This lacunae has been utilised for indefinite and unlimited extension of the Committee while it should have been reconstituted in 1996 or even in 1997 by amending the Rules or even the Act itself. But this was not done. As a result a "defunct" and "lame-duck" Committee under a Chairman (who is a nominee of the Government of India on the Committee) whose efficiency and integrity have come under a cloud has been permitted by the Ministry of External Affairs to manage Haj 1997, and now even Haj 1998!

I believe that the MEA has all the nominations from various authorities and is in a position to reconstitute the Committee under the 1959 Act. Still the Committee is not being reconstituted. This is nothing but political patronage to suit the Chairman and not at all in accord with the interest of the pilgrims or the wishes of the Muslim community. Since the new Haj legislation on Haj management is not likely to see the light of the day for another year, I request once again that **the Government reconstitute the Committee forthwith.**

Shahabuddin's Letter to Mutawalli, Tonk Waqfs Harmain Sharifain,17 December, 1997

The 5 Tonk Rubats in Makka and Madina which were demolished have been replaced by:

2 buildings in Shamia and Haratul Bab in Makka which are under the Nizamat of Amin Dehalavi and Mr. A. Razzak Dehlavi. But these buildings have been rented out commercially and the Nazims rent other buildings to accommodate 224 pilgrims. I would be grateful to be informed whether this arrangement is within your knowledge, whether the two buildings have a capacity of only 224 and whether their rent is being fully utilised for the pilgrims and 2 buildings in Medina under the Nizamat of Amir Dehalvi. I am told that one building is being underutilised as it can serve upto 1000 pilgrims but only 500 are accommodated. The second building is operational since Haj 1997 but it is not being utilised for Indian pilgrims at all but for outsiders. I would be grateful if you would be kind enough to let me know if you are aware of the situation.

I would request you to ensure fullest possible utilisation of these Rubats for pilgrims from Tonk, Rajasthan and other parts of India and to instruct the Nazims to cooperate and coordinate with the C.G. of India, Jeddah in this regard.

Sreedhar Pillai on Hindu Munnani's Shadow over Tamilnadu

... In a state where Muslims have generally kept a low profile, militant fundamentalists have taken over the community's leadership. Muslim militants are suspected to have masterminded the bomb blast in trains...

In March this year, the Tamil Nadu police had seized a huge quantity of explosives from a house at Kodungaiyur, a Madras suburb... Police ... felt the motive behind the stockpile was to set off serial blasts in important places.

In the five years since the demolition of the Babari Masjid, Tamil Nadu has suffered several devastating bomb attacks. The first was an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the film director, Mani Ratnam, by a Muslim fundamentalist group that was upset with his depiction of Muslims in his film Bombay. Then, in July 1995, several parcel bombs went off in different places, killing the wife of a Hindu Munnani (HM) functionary... Again, that very year, the HM head office in Madras was blasted. Earlier, in 1983, the state headquarters of the RSS had been blown up with RDX explosives. And all these attacks were believed to have been carried out by members of Islamic fundamentalist organisations such as Al-Umma, Tamizhaga Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK), and the Jehad Committee of Palani Baba.

The rise of Islamic militancy in Tamil Nadu coincided with the growth of Hindu fundamentalism spearheaded by HM and the Sangh Parivar. The Hindu backlash had, in turn, been provoked by a large-scale conversion of Dalits into Muslims in the souther Tamil Nadu districts through the early 1980s. These conversions were believed to have been inspired by liberal offerings of Gulf money and a proselytising Muslim clergy. Hindu diehards ... banded together to stem what they imagined was a rising Islamic tide. Since then, Tamil Nadu often experienced an underlying tension, but it's only in the last four years that communal ties have repeatedly snapped with gruesome outcome.

When Jayalalitha came to power, her government was considered to be more pro-Hindu than Kalyan Singh's in Uttar Pradesh. The HM saw her as their own representative. And the way Jayalalitha flaunted her faith did much to alienate the Muslims.

.. Kerala also played a role in propping Muslim militancy in Tamil Nadu. It has sent wave of Muslim activists from Malappuram - a Muslim-majority district in Kerala...

According to Tamil Nadu police intelligence, many Kerala activists migrated to Coimbatore and set up shop around Kotaimedu, the city's Muslim ghetto. The police also claim that some of them had received training in the use of explosives from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and were ready to work for Muslim fundamentalist organisations in Tamil Nadu...

The fundamentalist groups are determined to preserve the sanctity of their faith and practices, and have struck viciously against any violation of the Islamic social code by Muslims. On 30 June, they targeted a seedy Muslim-owned hotel in Madras, called Light of Asia, for serving liquor. Likewise, Hotel Imperial and Hotel Lucky - also in Madras and owned by Muslims - were bombed for staging cabarets and discos...

Meanwhile, Hindu organisations are holding the DMK responsible for the rise in Muslim militancy...

Tamil Nadu today is a vicious breeding ground of the communal virus hitherto unknown. Decades of sectarian harmony that had been ensured by Muslim leaders such as Qaid-e-Millath Mohammad Ismail now appear to have come to an end with younger and less educated leaders setting a different agenda for the community. And if the drift is allowed to continue ... the communal chasm may become too wide to bridge.

(Source: The Sunday, 28 December, 1997 - 3 January, 1998)

Mumbai Massacre Cases (December, 1992-January, 1993)

1.	Total No. of Cases Registered		2267
2.	No. of Cases Finalised:		
	a)	Closed as True but Undetected	1368
	b)	Closed as False	2
	c)	Closed as Neither true nor False	3
		Total	1373
3.	No. of Cases Prosecuted:		
	a)	Convicted	8
	b)	Acquitted	30
	c)	Pending Trial	854
		Total	892
4.	Unknown		2

(Source: Mumbai Police Affidavit to Bombay High Court)
(Courtesy: Indian Express, 16 December, 1997)

(Contd. from Page 57)

the cultural specialities of the linguistic communities are more elaborate and persisting than those of religious communities... But the irony is that the religion-based cultural specialities are magnified and utilised to mark out the religious minorities.

A set of cultural traits are attributed to Muslims and Christians whether they practise them or not (e.g.) polygamy in the case of Muslims. This imagined identity is then invoked to stigmatise and castigate them. To get over the difficulty they are advised to Indianise even as they share most of the cultural practices of the rest of Indians. Some Muslims and Christians ... defensively declare that they are Indians first and Muslims or Christians second. This creates a false dichotomy between Indian citizenship and religious identity... In reality there is no hierarchy of loyalty but only contexts of identity.

Pyare Lal: Gandhi's Encounter with the RSS

The head of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh also called upon Gandhiji. It was common knowledge that the R.S.S., as it was called for short, had been behind the bulk of the killings in the city as also in various other parts of India. This these friends denied. Their organisation was for protecting Hinduism - not for killing Muslims. It was not hostile to anyone. It stood for peace.

This was laying on a bit thick. But Gandhiji, with his boundless faith in human nature and in the redemptive power of truth, felt he must give everybody a chance to make good his bona fides. It was something that they did not glory in wrong doing. They should issue a public statement, he told them, repudiating the allegations against them and openly condemn the killing and harassment of the Muslims that had taken place and that still was going on in the city. They said Gandhiji could do that himself on their behalf on the strength of what that had told him. Gandhiji answered that he would certainly do that but if what they were saying was sincerely meant, it was better that the public should have it from their own lips.

A member of Gandhiji's party interjected that the R.S.S. people had done a fine job of work at Wah refugee camp. They had shown discipline, courage and capacity for hard work. "But don't forget," answered Gandhiji, "even so had Hitler's Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini." He characterised the R.S.S. as a "communal body with a totalitarian outlook."

A few days later, the RSS leaders took Gandhiji to attend one of the rallies they were holding at the sweepers' colony. He had seen some of their literature. The theory propounded therein was that the Hindus were the original inhabitants of India. The late Lokamanya Tilak was wrong in his thesis that the Arctic circle was the original home of the Vedas and the Aryans had migrated from there into India through the north-west. It was not the Aryans, they asserted, who had come in from outside. It was the Arctic that had shifted from India where it was originally situated when the Vedas were composed! "Quite long ago it (North Pole) was in the part of the world ... called Bihar and Orissa at present." India, therefore, belonged to the Hindus and all those who had not assimilated or been assimilated by Hindu religion and culture were aliens and could only claim the rights of minorities. Under the pernicious influence of the Congress "the idea was spread ... for the first time ... (that) the Nation ... was composed of all those who happened to reside therein ... We began to class ourselves with our old invaders and foes under the outlandish name - India - and tried to win them over to join hands with us in our struggle ... (and) completely lost sight of our true Hindu Nationhood in our wild goose chase after the phantom of founding a `really' democratic `State'."

In welcoming Gandhiji to their rally, the RSS leader described him as "a great man that Hinduism has produced". Gandhiji replying observed that while he was certainly proud of being a Hindu, his Hinduism was neither intolerant nor exclusive. The beauty of Hinduism as he understood it was that it absorbed the best that was in all faiths. If Hindus believed that in India there was no place for non-Hindus on equal and honourable terms and Muslims, if they wanted to live in India, must be content with an inferior status, or if the Muslims thought that in Pakistan Hindus could live only as a subject race on the sufferance of the Muslims, it would mean an eclipse of Hinduism and an eclipse of Islam. He was glad, therefore, he said, to have their assurance that their policy was not of antagonism towards Islam. He warned them that if the charge against them that their organisation was behind the killing of the Muslims was correct, it would come to a bad end.

In the course of questions and answers that followed Gandhiji was asked whether Hinduism did not permit the killing of evil-doers. If not, how did he explain the exhortation by Lord Krishna in the second chapter of the Gita to destroy the Kauravas?

The reply to the first question, said Gandhiji, was both 'yes' and 'no'. One had to be an infallible judge as to who was the evil-doer before the question of killing could arise. In other words **one had to be completely faultless before such a right could accrue to one . How could a sinner claim the right to judge or execute another sinner?** As for the second question, granting that the right to punish the evil-doer was recognised by the Gita, it could be exercised properly by the constituted Government only. **"Both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru will be rendered powerless if you become judge and executioner in one. They are tried servants of the nation. Give them a chance to serve you. Do not sabotage their efforts by taking the law into your own hands."**

(Extracts from Pyare Lal's Gandhi: The Last Phase)

On the Eve of National Day in January 1942, Gandhi delivered an important message:

"What conflict of interest can there be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice or the use of public conveniences? The difference can only be in religious usage and observances with which a secular state has no concern".

Elizabeth G. Olson on Hatred on the Internet

The World Wide Web site of a group called the Charlemagne Hammerskins opens with an image of a man in a ski mask, carrying a gun and standing by a swastika. A click on a button blow labelled, in French, "Access for sub-humans" yields a picture of what appears to be a concentration camp, accompanied by a not-so-veiled threat: "Be assured, we still have many one-way tickets for Auschwitz.

The skinhead site is hardly the only one vilifying various ethnic groups. There are many more and most target blacks and Jews, but they are not only ones. One site, based on a computer in Sweden and purporting to belong to a group called Radio Islam, is devoted to questions about the reality of the Holocaust and features caricatures of evil-looking figures with black beards and exaggerated noses, wearing Stars of David.

The hatred that drips from these and other such Web sites, of course, exists independent of any technology and occurs in all media. Indeed, the photographs, monographs and cartoons on many sites are taken from other media, mostly print. But for a group of conferees who met in Geneva in November under the sponsorship of the UN Human Rights Center, the question was how to apply different countries' legal prohibitions against hate speech to this new medium. Michael Schneider, head of the Electronic Commerce Forum in Bonn, which represents German Internet service providers, said there had been several cases in which German authorities had demanded that providers eliminate sites or face prosecution. But he said Internet Service providers cannot control content. "They are nothing more than carriers".

Agha Shahi of Pakistan, the meeting's chairman, said sites that promote racism violate a global treaty against racial discrimination. The 148 countries that signed the pact "are under obligation to enact measures to eliminate it, he said. The United States has signed the document, but has said it will not pass laws infringing free speech.

... How to balance ... "the two most powerful revolutions of the 20th century, those of human rights and information technology." ... The Internet "enables the instant marketing of hate and mayhem", said ... Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. The number of hate sites has nearly doubled to 600 in the last year, he said; he has catalogued 300. There are at least 94 sites promoting a racial hierarchy that would classify people by skin colour, religion, ethnicity and even preferred language. He counts 87 neo-Nazi sites, 35 white supremacist sites and 51 sites espousing terrorism. It is impossible to determine who is responsible for hate sites, most of which are based on computer servers in the US.

The divergent histories of the United States, with its tradition of free-speech guarantees, and of Europe, with its .. legacy of genocide and its recent history of ethnic strife in the Balkans (are) evident... Americans ... argue that the Internet cannot be regulated; others (seek) ways to ban offensive sites and punish their sponsors.

With laws varying from country to country, border-jumping is one way to avoid accountability for hate messages. Hate site sponsors also can change service providers or take.... **(Source: The Week, 21 December, 1997)**

India: Muslim Periodicals in English

S.No.	Name	Address	Yearly Subscription	
			India	Abroad
1.	Islamic Voice	64, Richmond Road Bangalore - 560025 Phone: 5544483; Fax: 5574815	Rs.90	Rs.500
2.	Radiance Viewsweekly	Abdul Fazal Enclave Jamia Nagar, Okhla New Delhi - 110025.	Rs.250	US$ 50
3.	Young Muslim Digest	No. 332, CSO, Ist Floor, Darussalam, Queen's Road, Bangalore - 560052	Rs.70	Rs.450
4.	The Nation and The World	Indian Publication Limited, A-13, Ist Fl., Nizamuddin West, New Delhi - 110013.	Rs.175	Rs.990
5.	Muslim India Monthly	33, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi - 110001.	Rs.110	US$ 20

Tele-Serial

On Maharana Pratap during Election

I- Shahabuddin's Letter to Prasar Bharati, 17 December, 1997

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting had informed the Lok Sabha on 20.11.1997 that DD-1 and DD-2 channels are to telecast programmes on great personalities and named Buddha, Rana Pratap, Shankaracharya, Gandhiji and Ahilyabai Holkar. I feel that the selection should be more broad based.

May I suggest Ashok, Akbar, Sirajud Daula, Tipu Sultan, Abul Kalam Azad and Subhash Chander Bose. In my view a list should be finalised in advance so that there is no criticism later.

II - Shahabuddin's Letter to Prasar Bharati, 27 December, 1997

It has been reported that the telecast the serial on Rana Pratap will be made with effect from January, 1998 and this cover the election campaign. One can imagine its exploitation by the Hindutva forces for generating electoral support for the BJP. I request that the telecast be deferred to after the General Elections.

III - Prasar Bharati's Reply, 5 January, 1998

... The telecast of this serial was approved and slot allowed much before I received your letter. In fact the serial is on the air. But you may rest assured that no communal overtones would be allowed to creep into it.

(Source: Mr. S.S. Gill, Chief Executive, Prasar Bharati's Letter No.23/CEO/23/98 dated 5 January, 1998 to S. Shahabuddin)

Pakistan: Victory or Defeat for Jinnah?

T.N. Madan in The Hindustan Times, 25 December, 1997

... The events of 1947 signified the defeat of the political goals of (Gandhi and Nehru but) they both recovered from their defeat; Gandhi through his martyrdom, and Nehru through his long stewardship of the new nation state and his commitment to the ideals of secular democracy... Jinnah too was one of the defeated men of 1947 and that his death a year later came too soon for him to shape his recovery...

Jinnah's political career may be divided into two parts, each ending in defeat. The first covers the years 1904-1934, and takes us back to the time when he was a prominent nationalist who was also concerned about the problems of the Muslims arising from their general backwardness. The second period begins with the adoption of the goal of independent Muslim states in the subcontinent by the Muslim League in 1940 and ends in 1948 with Jinnah's death.

... Leaders like Badruddin Tyabji, the third president of the Indian National Congress, saw no necessary conflict between specific Muslim interests and the broader national goals.

Jinnah started his political career following Tyabji's vision of the future. His active association with the Congress began in 1904, two years before the founding of the Muslim League. When the League put forward the demand for separate electorates, he did not approve the idea. Although he won election to the Viceroy's Legislative Council from a Muslim constituency in Bombay in 1910, he opposed the extension of reservation to local level bodies. It was another three years before he joined the League, but once he did so, he quickly emerged as one of its principal leaders.

In his presidential address to the League in 1916, Jinnah spoke of 'affairs' of our common secular existence and of 'the new appeals of territorial patriotism and nationality'. He aspired to be, in his own oft-quoted phrase, the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. His efforts to build bridges across the cleavage of religious identities had their most notable success in 1916 in the form of the Lucknow Pact that he worked out together with Motilal Nehru... The Pact, called the "highpoint of Indian nationalist unity", was however, never implemented. This failure presaged a characteristic pattern in Jinnah's political career: his victories were never total, but always truncated. ...

(Gandhi and Jinnah) first met in 1915 but the confrontation between them began in 1919, when Jinnah expressed alarm at Gandhi's strategy of non-cooperation and cautioned him, in the context of the Khilafat agitation, against mixing politics and religion...

(Confrontation with Gandhi) unexpected by Jinnah, put paid his ambition of becoming a successor to Gokhale. He was a checkmated if not defeated man at 44, but by no means finished. He retained his position as a prominent leader of the Muslims, whom he continued to tell that they were Indians first and only then Muslims, and that 'swaraj was an interchangeable term with Hindu-Muslim unity'. In 1930 he attended the Round Table Conference in London and acted as the spokesman for the Muslim delegates. Sensing a feeling of alienation, he stayed back in London, but his self-chosen exile did not last long. He was persuaded to return home and to Indian politics in 1934.

At Jinnha's invitation, Muhammad Iqbal had presided over the annual session of the Muslim League in 1930, and mooted the idea of 'a Muslim India within India'... When the fully articulated idea and name of Pakistan were proposed in 1933, he ignored these also. In 1936 he appealed to his followers to follow the path of Hindu-Muslim reconciliation and cooperation with the Congress. A year later Iqbal wrote urging him to recognize the importance of religion in the making of politics in India. There is no record of a reply from Jinnah..

The resolution calling for the establishment of independent Muslim majority states in India adopted by the Muslim League in 1940 ... did not come from the chair (Jinnah was the president), but was moved by A.K. Fazlul Haq, the Bengali leader, Jinnah was no longer his own master; he had been appropriated by a political upsurge among the Muslims, as their spokesman he was articulating their aspirations, rather than telling them as he used to, what these should be. In any event, when Pakistan finally came into being... Jinnah himself described it as 'moth-eaten and truncated'.

It is indeed arguable that 1947 was not the year of Jinnah's final victory, for a second and more important reason. Addressing Muslim legislators in April 1946 he said explicitly that what they were aiming at was not a theocratic state. He elaborated this principle in his presidential address to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly at its inaugural session on 11 August 1947...

...So distressed was the Pakistani leadership, including Liaqat Ali Khan, with Jinnah's speech that they insisted that he read from a written text ... two days later on the eve of the birth of the new nation. In other speeches that foliowed, appropriate references to the principles of Islam were included. **The ideological defeat was a more serious blow than the loss of territory for 1947 to be hailed as the year of Jinnah's triumph.**

Other problems, including Kashmir, but above all his terminal illness, robbed Jinnah's alleged year of victory of public or personal sense of satisfaction... When Sri Prakasa, the Indian High Commissioner, told him that (his house in Bombay) would have to be taken over by the Government of India, he replied: 'Tell Jawaharlal not to break my heart. I have built it brick by brick... I look forward to going back there'. He never did.

U.S. Strategy Zeroes on Central Asian Oil

... For sometime, evidence has been emerging that the US is 'supporting' the Taliban. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are widely believed to have bankrolled and armed them at the behest of US. Leading American oil companies, like UNOCAL, have been discussing oil/gas pipeline deals with the Taliban. ... Despite an incessant barrage of abuse ... in almost all the media of the US and Europe. ...

In the euphoria following the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union the plight of the mainly Muslim Central Asia has received scant attention. The six Central Asian republic bordering on Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan have population of over 45 million; and for the first time, since the communist pogroms of the 1920s they are 'free' to choose their destiny. Stalin's pogroms, tolerated by the NATO alliance under the Yalta accords, resulted in the deaths of ... over 10 million in the Central Asian republics.

A crude system of exploitation was imposed on these countries which made them subservient to Russian interests. Transport of precious resources like oil and gas and receipt of imports was all directed through Russia. All manufacture was subject to receipt of key components from the Russian republics. Every penny of value added was monopolised by the Russians under an insidious system of transfer pricing.

The present rulers of the Central Asian countries were the very same people who sat on the Soviet politburo and facilitated the massive pillage. They have changed colours and are now quite willing to do Washington's bidding! The Russians, who want to perpetuate the same system of exploitation, are desperately trying to link up in an alliance of convenience with countries like Iran, to preserve the status quo.

... US support to the new republics is conditional upon toeing the American line on relations with Israel, limiting links with Iran and trying to inch Russia out of central position in the resource flows to and from these countries.

There has also been a deliberate policy to contain the resurgence of Islamic forces in the Central Asian republics and their forging of ties with the Muslim world. Trade, cultural, transport and other links are monitored and their development frustrated if they do not meet these objectives...

Writing in the International Herald Tribune (10 May 1997), former US secretary of defence Casper Weinberger notes: "As the West celebrates the apparent expansion of NATO into Central Europe, Russia is making a concerted bid to achieve a strategic victory of its own: dominance of the energy resources in the Caspian Sea region...

The stakes in the Caspian are enormous. There are reportedly up to 200 billion barrels of oil and natural gas in the region. Azerbaijan alone could produce as much as 2 million barrels a day by 2010... Moscow has struck a strategic bargain with Iran, the other player in this drama'.

Oil and gas in the Caspian region is now channelled mainly through pipelines to the Russian Black Sea ports. The most viable routes would be through Iran and the Gulf. There are also possible routes through Turkey for the western Central Asian States and Afghanistan/ Pakistan for the eastern Central Asian states.

Russia would obviously like to keep the existing arrangements to enable it to maintain its stranglehold on the economies of the Central Asian republics. American oil companies are clamouring to make a killing from the vast resources, and exclude everybody else. They are trying to put up consortia for pipelines through Georgia and Turkey and through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the US has exempted swap arrangements with Iran by US oil companies from its much vaunted embargo on Iran... This allows US companies like Chevron to muscle in and keep other players at bay. At the same time, the US has frustrated Iran's attempts to join consortia and offer the most viable route to the international markets for Central Asia's energy resources.

With the Afghan strategy ... apparently in disarray, the US is concentrating on the western front. Some of the woes of Necmettin Erbakan can be linked to this strategic US objective....

For Turkey to play a role in the Central Asian equation, Washington's attitude to Armenia will have to change. An armed and funded Armenia can easily scupper the best laid plans for pipelines through Georgia and Turkey...

As the scramble for energy resources of the Central Asian republics gets under way, all aspirations of these long suppressed peoples are subject to greed of the 'free' world. The Central Asian republics, together with Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan would witness a lot of changes to accommodate 'the long-term security interests of the USA' in Casper Weinberger's ... words.

Rarely has one seen such stark linkage between politics and the economics of greed. The quest for representative government has struck a rock in Algeria, reached an impasse in Turkey, has been forcibly thwarted in Central Asia and will be stifled in all other countries of the region...

(Source: The Impact International, July, 1997)

Chronology of the Month

(16 December, 1997 - 15 January, 1998)

NATIONAL POLITICS

Sangh Parivar: BJP: *National Executive meets in Bhubaneswar to chalk out electoral strategy. President Advani's speech and Political Resolution avoid controversial issues, Babari Masjid Dispute, Article 370, Uniform Civil Code etc. Promises tickets to religious minorities (**19 Dec**). Vajpayee vows against religious discrimination (**20 Dec**). Seeks to enlarge vote base and opts for alliances (**21 Dec**). G.S. denies diffusion of Hindutva ideology (**25 Dec**). Advani reiterates consensus approach to reassure Muslims (**31 Dec**) assures allies participation in coalition government on basis of common programme (**7 Jan**).

*BJP bags 25 out of 38 seats in election to UP Council (**13 Jan**). *BJP announces over 205 candidates with only 1 Muslim (**12 Jan**). Advani to contest. *Vajpayee claims over 200 seats for BJP and 35 more for allies - far short of magic figure of 272 (**15 Jan**).

*Some Congress ex-MPs join BJP including Aslam Sher Khan, R. Kumaramanagalam, D.S. Bhuria, some leave BJP to join Congress/SP (**26 Dec**). Ram Dhan joins BJP (**12 Jan**).

*BJP-Samata agree to 32-22 division in Bihar but without joint campaign (**11 June**). Fernandes emphasizes ideological differences on key issues.

*BJP ties up with AIADMK to find foothold in Tamil Nadu (**17 Dec**).

*On expulsion from Congress, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress negotiates with BJP for alliance in W. Bengal (**22 Dec**).

*BJP and R.K. Hegde's Lok Shakti decide to share seats in Karnataka (**8 Jan**).

*BJP and AIADMK enter into electoral agreement for Tamil Nadu.

*BJP leaders engage in constant double speak on Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura and on Personal law. One denies Mathura and Kashi are on agenda; another reiterates resolve to change **all** personal laws and to construct Ram Mandir on Babari Masjid site.

*BJP's overtures to Muslims make little impact. After initial opening, Ahmad Bukhari and Javed Habib fall silent. Shahabuddin calls upon secular voters not to be misled by BJP's agents. Advani wants 'direct talks' with Muslims, Vajpayee asks Muslims to change mindset (**8 Jan**) asks Muslims not to fear BJP (**10 Jan**).

RSS: *Advises BJP not to replace RSS men in front organisations on eve of election; expresses concern at motive and quality of new entrants (**4 Jan**). Holds regional conclaves to guide BJP's poll campaign (**7 Jan**); Chief supports BJP's endeavour to seek power (**10 Jan**); defends BJP against charge of changing ideology (**12 Jan**). Sees election as opportunity to transform society (**13 Jan**).

Congress: *Kesri calls on secular forces to close ranks to defeat BJP (**22 Dec**). Campaign Committee plans to expose BJP (**23 Dec**). Calls on BJP to clarify stand on Babari Masjid and Article 370. Calls on Muslims to help Congress (**28 Dec**). Scindia flays BJP and repeats apology for demolition (**12 Jan**). Responds to Muslim organisation conclave. *Congress decides to have state level alliance. Fails to rope in Jayalalitha and Hegde. But negotiates with RJD (Laloo) in Bihar, RJP (Vaghela) Gujarat, BSP in Punjab and MP, JD and RPI in Maharashtra, TUJS in Tripura and S.P. in UP. IUML agreed to remain in UDF in Kerala.

*Mamata Banerjee in W. Bengal and J.N. Mishra in Bihar quit Congress.

*Sonia Gandhi decides to campaign for Congress (**29 Dec**). Launches campaign in Sriperumbadur (**11 Jan**). Denies plan to take over party presidency.

CPM: *Decides to participate in UF-LF Government after election (**22 Dec**). Identifies BJP as 'greater danger' than Congress (**22 Dec**). G.S. Surjeet criticises UP Government for failure on many fronts and sees possibility of post-poll understanding with Congress (**8 Jan**).

Janata Parivar: JD: *Plans to contest 120-150 seats, meets strong resistance from SP in UP as well as in other states. Deve Gowda denies possibility of coalition with Congress; JD organises Dalit Rally in Lucknow to flex muscles at SP (**5 Jan**). Paswan speaks of adjustment with Congress but Deve Gowda denies softness towards Congress (**12 Jan**). *JD nominates Gujral for Jalandhar, despite open Akali sponsorship with BJP's acquiescence (**11 Jan**).

SP: *Several Yadav leaders in UP from Congress, BSP and BJP join SP (**27 Dec**). Ex-M.P's D.P. Yadav , R.K. Rai, Rana Veer Singh, join SP (**2 Jan**). Mulayam rules out alliance or understanding with Congress (**19 Dec**). Agrees to extend support to Congress in Maharashtra (**29 Dec**). Agrees to support Congress in States where it is in direct fight with BJP (**28 Dec**). Welcome Sonia Gandhi's decision (**29 Dec**). Concedes possibility of seeking Congress support to keep BJP out of power (**13 Jan**). *Agrees to support Congress in States where it is in direct fight with BJP (**28 Dec**). Welcome Sonia Gandhi's decision (**29 Dec**). Concedes possibility of seeking Congress support to keep BJP out of power (**13 Jan**). Agrees to support Congress in States where it is in direct fight with BJP (**28 Dec**). Welcome Sonia Gandhi's decision (**29 Dec**). Concedes possibility of seeking Congress support to keep BJP out of power (**13 Jan**). *In a bid to obtain national party status for SP launches campaign in Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan (**21 Dec**). *Rules out alliance with BSP in UP (**28 Dec**). *Declares himself in race for PM-ship (**29 Dec**). *SP to contest all UP seats though it gets only 11 out of 38 seats in UP Council (**13 Jan**). Criticises Deve Gowda (**7 Jan**).

Release first list, without consulting JD or UF (**15 Jan**). Mulayam criticises Gujral for accepting AD help for Jalandhar (**7 Jan**).

BKKP: *President Ajit Singh rules out negotiation with BJP for adjustment in UP (**29 Dec**), later opens negotiation (**10 Jan**).

JD: *Seeks reconciliation with Laloo Pd. Yadav; unable to pay price (**21 Dec**). Orissa JD splits and major faction called BJD negotiates with BJP.

RJD: *Laloo attacks BJP and seeks common front with Congress (**26 Dec**). Declares JD dead; tries to float new Secular Front and fails (**28 Dec**); reiterates pact with Congress to defeat BJP (**13 Jan**).

*Forms Jan Morcha, with SJP (Chandra Shekhar), BSP (Kanshi Ram) and JMM (Soren) (**5 Jan**). Invites RJP (Vaghela), GNLF (Ghising), Ajit Singh (BKKP) and LS (Hegde), Congress(I) refuses to join Morcha (**25 Dec**). UF dismisses JM as 'conglomeration of non-existent parties' (**6 Jan**).

*3 RJD Ministers finally quit Gujral Government (**9 Jan**). *RJD issues manifesto (**15 Jan**).

SJP: *Chandra Shekhar flays BJP and Congress stability plank (**4 Jan**).

BSP: *EX-C.M. Mayawati rejects any alliance or adjustment in UP, wants to fight all 85 seats (**17 Dec**). Though Kanshi Ram admits that SP-BSP together can wipe out BJP (**22 Dec**). Ilyas Azmi and 3 other ex-MP's quit (**25 Dec**). Criticises Laloo for advocating tie-up in UP (**27 Dec**). Rules out patch-up with SP (**27 Dec**). Kanshi calls BJP 'devil No.1' (**3 Jan**).

IUML: *Forms Muslim Front (MJM) with AIMIM (AP) and AIMM (UP).

Election: *Denies franchise to over 3.5 lakh minority voters in Assam (**5 Jan**). Shahabuddin protests. AASU urges further deletion (**10 Jan**).

*EC rejects Shiv Sena's fake election (**24 Dec**).

*EC asks States not to change OBC lists (**18 Dec**).

*Government raises L.S. expense ceiling to 15 lakhs (**31 Dec**).

*EC decides not to recognise splinter groups except after contesting one election (**24 Dec**).

*Announces programme in 4 phases on 16 February to 7 March with counting on 8 March.

*BJP gives top priority to delimitation of constituencies (**13 Jan**) and to amendment of Constitution to prevent frequent election (**14 Jan**).

Judiciary: *Despite controversy, President decides on advice of C.J.I. to appoint Justice M.M. Punchhi as next Chief Justice.

*SC gives free hand to CBI to prosecute officials (**18 Dec**).

Scams - AH: *CBI records appeal against bail to Laloo (**16 Dec**). Director CBI overrules. *J.N. Mishra permitted by SC to visit Bihar.

Urea: *Former P.M. Narasimha Rao's relative chargesheeted (**26 Dec**).

Noida Land: *Mrs. Advani listed as illegal allottee by CBI. Advani denies it (**13 Jan**).

Medical Admission Scam: *CBI files chargesheet against ex-Tripura CM Majumdar and ex-Union Minister Rasheed Masud (**11 Jan**).

KASHMIR SITUATION

Political Development: *C.M. Farooq Abdullah continues NC's association with UF (**23 Dec**).

*Ex-C.M. G.M. Shah to align his Awami N.C. with BJP. Supports trifurcation of state (**29 Dec**).

*Prominent J&K leaders including Shabbir Shah join APHC in asking for tripartite talks (**29 Dec**). APHC decide to boycott L.S. poll.

Heritage: *700 year old historic shrine of Hazrat Ali Hamdani gutted in Tral; State government orders inquiry (**17 Dec**).

Insurgency: *Low level of violence registered except several bomb blasts in Srinagar and other places in the Valley.

*Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba admits loss of 350 of its Pakistani fighters (**12 Jan**).

Indo-Pakistan Talks: *Pakistan makes proposals to resolve procedural difficulties (**18 Dec**).

*Pak F.M. Gauhar Ayub considers Kashmir as core issue and holds India responsible (**27 Dec**). *Pakistan charges India with stalling talks (**1 Jan**). *Pakistan P.M. Sharif hopes to revive talks (**5 Jan**).

Foreign Reaction: *OIC Summit adopts Resolution in support of Pakistan stand, asks India to receive OIC Special Mission. India condemns it as intervention in internal affairs (**10 Dec**). Hurriyat leaders invited as True Representatives of People of Kashmir not permitted by GOI to attend.

BABARI MASJID AND RELATED QUESTIONS

Judicial Proceedings: *Liberhan Commission examines Pramahans Ram Chander Das (**6 Jan**).

VHP: *Maintains that it shall keep Mathura Idgah and Varanasi Masjid on its agenda, even if BJP requests it to drop them (**16 Dec**). Rejects any idea of compromise (**19 Dec**). Appeals to voters to elect a 'pro-Hindu Government'. VHP adopts 'Hindu' agenda including construction of temples in Ayodhya, Mathura and Varanasi on Masjid sites (**25 Dec**). VHP denies dilution of stand on Ayodhya (**26 Dec**). Asks Muslims to give up claim on Kashi and Mathura or be ready to face 'Ayodhya-like' humiliation (**29 Dec**).

*S.P. UP demands arrest of Singhal for inciting communal frenzy (**30 Dec**).

BJP: *BJP's double speak on Masjid issue become apparent. *Advani places Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura on the BJP agenda (**26 Dec**). Denies it (**27 Dec**). BJP clarifies that Kashmir and Mathura are not poll issues but reiterates commitment to construct Ram Temple on Babari Masjid site (**29 Dec**). Promises to remove impediments by legislation (**29 Dec**). Katiyar wants Muslims to be taken into confidence before construction (**2 Jan**). Uma Bharati reiterates BJP's commitment on Ayodhya and threatens Muslims (**8 Jan**).

*BJP leaders falsely attribute to Imam of Haram, Mecca, that he advised Muslims to surrender Babari Masjid.

Shahabuddin clarifies to Vajpayee.

Thackeray Proposal: *S.S. leader Thackeray proposes construction of national monument on Babari Masjid site with Mandir and Masjid on other plots in Ayodhya (**9 Dec**). Vajpayee considers it one of several suggestions to resolve dispute. Singhal criticises it as creative of confusion and dissatisfaction. BJP dissociates itself from proposal (**9 Dec**). Thackeray reiterates proposal (**13 Jan**). UF advises BJP to accept Thackeray proposal. So does George Fernandes (**11 Jan**).

*BMMCC considers it a starting point for fresh consideration of all issues by all concerned. Asks Thackeray to spell out nature of monument (see statement)(**14 Jan**).

OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST TO MUSLIMS

Muslim Organisations: *A.I. Milli Council asks Muslims not to be deceived by BJP's liberal and tolerant mask (**8 Jan**).

*Jamiat-ul-Ulema—i-Hind reacts strongly to BJP's stand on uniform civil code (**4 Jan**).

*Shahi Imam's Council reiterates Muslim demands (**17 Dec**). Naib Imam asks Muslims not to vote for parties which seek support by frightening Muslims of BJP. Speech reported as soft and generally supportive of BJP (**26 Dec**). Shahabuddin reacts strongly (See statement).

*Qaumi Mushawarat Committee and Islamic Council of India agree to negotiate with BJP (**29 Dec**). Shahabuddin denounces main movers as BJP's agents (**2 Jan**).

*Majlis-e-Ulema-Hind advises Muslims not to waste their votes but support a secular party.

*JIH advises Muslim to vote for winning secular candidates.

*AIMMM appeals to all secular forces to defeat communal and fascist forces (**7 Jan**).

Haj: *Case filed against Haj Committee in MRTPC, notice issued (**27 Dec**).

*Haj Committee holds Conference, Chairman Salamatullah accuses E.I., Riyadh and CGI, Jeddah, of mismanagement and non-cooperation. MOS stresses need for new Act.

Shia-Sunni Dispute: *International Conference of Shia Ulema demands removal of ban on Muharram procession in Lucknow, non-interference in Muslim personal law, better management of wakfs and reservation for Muslims in public employment.

Reservation: *National Unity Campaign demands reservation for minorities in public employment and legislatures (**12 Dec**).

*Rajasthan Government withdraws circular on 'creamy layer' (**1 Jan**).

Terrorism: *Repeated bomb blasts occur in Delhi, latest, close to police headquarters; finger point at organised Kashmiri or Sikh terrorists.

*Bomb blast in Chennai owned by Islamic Defence Force (**10 Jan**).

Urdu: *Ghalib Institute and Ghalib Academy observe 200th birth anniversary of Ghalib (**27 Dec**).

*Army called out in Jaipur after police firing kills 6 (**16 Dec**). Congress leaders Scindia and Azad seek CM's resignation (**17 Dec**). Abdullah Bukhari visits Jaipur, meets CM, praises BJP (**25 Dec**). CM assures fencing of all graveyards (**27 Dec**). Curfew lifted (**27 Dec**).

Communal Violence: *Civil Judge, Delhi, awards compensation to Sikh shopkeeper for loss of goods of trade in 1984 riots (**17 Dec**). 2 more sentenced to death for 1984 riots (**23 Dec**).

*Clash in Kanpur over construction of wall of Masjid; 4 injured, police fires to disperse mob (**9 Jan**).

*Clash in Mundgod (Karnataka) over graveyard (**22 Dec**).

Human Rights: *NHRC awards compensation for custodial death of Muslim youth due to 'contributory negligence' of police (**4 Jan**).

Education: *Delhi Assembly passes bill for take-over of Tibbia College founded by Hakim Ajmal Khan (**1 Jan**).

*AMU teachers on token protest strike against maladministration (**15 Jan**).

*UP Government introduces compulsory worship of Bharat Mata and singing of Vande Mataram etc. in all primary schools (**2 Jan**). Muslim leaders protest. Shahabuddin advises joint action by all Muslim organisations.

Other Minorities: *Sikhs observe birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh (**4 Jan**). *World Sikh Council, formed in 1995, appoints ex S.C. Judge Kuldip Singh as President. *Delhi Government considers ban on book by Sikh Youth leader on 1984 Massacre. *Unauthorised Gurudwara on public land in Ghaziabad demolished (**7 Jan**).

*Vice President Krishan Kant hails Jain's contribution to India and services to humanity (**31 Dec**).

*Jamnagar Christians reclaim church graveyard in army Cantonment (**22 Dec**).

*Church accuses Bihar Government of dithering on CBI probe in Dumka incident. Upset over killing of priests in Bihar (**22 Dec**).

Muslim World; Pakistan: *SC removes C.J. SA Shah (**23 Dec**). P.M. Sharif's nominee Rafiq Tarar, a former SC Judge, elected President.

*24 Shias mowed down in Lahore graveyard (**11 Jan**). Shias hold protest demonstration. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claims responsibility (**12 Jan**).

*Official Iftar parties banned by P.M. Sharif (**14 Jan**).

UK: *UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs participates in Islamic Summit as invitee; protests against BBC film on Holy Prophet.

Algeria: *Massive and frequent massacres in Algeria cause worldwide concern. UN SG, EU and OIC condemn massacre. UN & EU offer to send observers to study situation. Algeria government refuses (**11 Jan**).

Obituary: *Rasool Ahmed Siddiqui, ex-Minister M.P., 50, passes away (**24 Dec**). *Scholar Kabir Kausar, 74, passes away in Delhi (**29 Dec**). *Nurul Islam, ex-MP (LS) from Dhubri, Assam, 67, passes away (**31 Dec**).

*Mohd. Ahmad, 98, National League leader, passes away in Delhi (**8 Jan**).