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REPRESENTATIVES OVERSEAS

U.K. Dr. Roohi H. Majid
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P.O.Box 11447
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Muslims, the 1998 Elections and the BJP Government

In 1998 General Election, the Muslim Indian noted to his dismay that neither in the Congress, nor in the UF or LF, nor in any of the other secular parties, a Muslim face was to be seen at the policy-and-decision making level, that no secular party fielded adequate number of Muslim candidates in all, or even from the so-called Muslim concentration constituencies, and that many of those nominated for the record were unknown characters and unlikely to win, that the secular parties have also taken care not to put up as candidates Muslim Indians, whom the leadership may find it difficult to control or manage. Thus generally 'wrong' Muslim have been put up from 'wrong' constituencies. Muslim Indians have once again less than 5.4% representation in the Lok Sabha, 28 in all and that too from only 8 States/UTs, a Deprivation Rate of nearly 60% and find that they are virtually without any effective presence in the Lok Sabha.

Even an analysis of the Manifestos of the secular parties shows that Muslim problems and issues of Muslim concern have been glossed over. It must be added to the credit of the INC (even though many accuse it of hypocrisy) that its manifesto gives maximum expression to Muslim aspirations. Even so, on the question of Babari Masjid, having apologised for its government failing to prevent its destruction the Congress Manifesto fails to state what it propose to do to undo the illegalities - the occupation and the demolition and the construction of a temporary mandir on the site.

Muslim Indians stand marginalised politically, indeed they stand outside the political arena. But even if they are not subject of politics, with 1/8 of the population, they continue to be its object. In 1998, they have moved a step or two towards tactical voting, constituency-wise, for the strongest candidate of a secular party or the other. Had there been an alliance or adjustment among the secular parties and had the secular party, assigned a Muslim concentration constituency, fielded a suitable Muslim candidate, the division of secular votes (including the Muslim votes) would have been avoided. This would have added substantially to the strength of the secular forces in the Lok Sabha. As it is, the BJP and its allies have won, ironically, most of the Muslim concentration seats in the country. Unless there is a secular alliance or a strong secular party emerges which is equally strong all over the country, both of which appear to be impossible in the foreseeable future, or unless all secular parties enter into a limited understanding with each other on Muslim concentration seats and permit each other to field one Muslim candidate in each of them or alternatively unless the Muslim Indians evolve a political command - it may not be a political party - which commands the confidence of the entire community, which negotiates with the secular parties on their policy, programme and candidatures, specially in respect of the constituencies of Muslim concentration, the Muslim Indian shall remain a politically deprived, under-represented community, with all its dire consequences for the Nation and for themselves.

The General Election, 1998, has once again resulted in a hung Parliament and in a fractured mandate but with the BJP and its allies as the largest formation. They have formed the central government but it will neither be stable nor durable. For one thing, the BJP and its allies may not reach the magic figure of 273; they are presently struck at 264. Supposing the TDP sticks to its stance of neutrality and its new-found ideology of 'equidistance between the secular and the Hindutva formation', that will give it what Pramod Mahajan has called a 'working majority'. In the likely event of all constituent parties, 17 in all, and the independents participating in the Government, this will give the Vajpayee government not only a safe-passage across the vote of confidence barrier but a lease of life of reasonable duration but if some of them like the TC of West Bengal and the BJD of Orissa choose to stay out and extend support from outside, the stability and durability, longevity and credibility of the Vajpayee government will be as doubtful as his own popularity and ability are not. Every party, nay, every legislator, independent or belonging to a party with strength of 3 or less, shall have a veto and make increasing demand on the central government, whatever the National Agenda.

Already rumblings are audible within the Sangh Parivar and who knows the hard core of the Sangh Parivar may find it a matter of conscience to pressurise the Vajpayee government to throw up the towel or even have itself voted out, rather than permit its ideology and its true vision of Hindu India be sullied or eroded. It is argued that since the BJP has dropped Muslim-baiting as a political tactic and jettisoned, some of its old favourites - the construction of Ram Janambhoomi Mandir on the Babari Masjid site, the introduction of a uniform civil code and the deletion of Article 370 of the Constitution it now belongs to the mainstream. Such tactical reversal to relieve the pangs of secular conscience troubling the Samata Party, the BJD, the Shiromani Akali Dal, the AIADMK etc. should not be a matter of comfort and happiness or satisfaction to the secular forces. As Bhandari, the Vice President of the BJP and a Pracharak of the RSS since 1946, stated in a TV interview, these objectives have not been abandoned; they have been put on the back-burner to accommodate and take the allies along, form the government and implement other important objectives and policies enshrined in its Manifesto. The underlying idea is that if, by virtue of its performance in office, the BJP will secure a majority of its own in the next round, then these 'abandoned' objectives can be taken up and implemented. Thus it is clear that while the BJP may have changed its 'chehra' and 'chal' there is no change either in its 'chintan' or

'charitra'. The BJP as the political front of the RSS remains wedded to the concepts of Hindutva, of Cultural Nationalism, of Hindu Nationalism; the leopard has not changed its spots, whatever the allies may like to believe and try to make others believe.

The BJP is not living in a dream world; nor its aging leaders - long steeled in the fire of struggle for a cause - have become power hungry. Nor are they practising realpolitic, as in UP and may be later in the Centre, merely to capture and stay in power by inducing splits and defections in other parties, by offering ministership as the price and by admitting criminals to their ranks, by cohabitting with the corrupt, **without a hidden agenda**.

The hidden agenda has always been the real agenda since their first induction into the power structure in 1977 and they have learnt that one day in power is more valuable than a year in the wilderness to promote the Cause, and even to compromise the innocent so that they can never leave the charmed circle without a visible mark of recognition, with the consciousness that having supped with the devil, they have found it tasteful.

Let me make one more point: In adopting the tactical retreat on the ideological front, the BJP has indeed taken to politics of deception; it stands convicted of having deceived and betrayed those who voted for it in 1998 on the basis of its manifesto. Secondly, it has launched Operation Deception to secure the 'honourable' support of many of its allies who have perhaps willingly entered the parlour, knowing what it entails and acquiesced in playing the role assigned to them, with a 'clear conscience' through the device of 'National Agenda'. The BJP will also be deceiving the electorate in the next election, which, as V.P. Singh pointed out, may be held in not to distant in future, by appealing to them on their record in office but committed to implement what they have apparently abandoned during their term in office.

To placate its willing allies as well as its unwilling core-cadre, the BJP has to practise double-speak which it has mastered. It has gone beyond it; to say one thing in public to its allies and another to political supporters and absolutely another to its core-cadres and to its 'mother' in private. The BJP has indeed made a fine art of the ancient principles of governance; it is using 'sam, dam, dand, bhed' - persuassion , purchase, stick and deciet - all in good cause; each as the situation demands, and as the interlocutor deserves.

No surprise that many people still regard the BJP not a national mainstream party but a political party under the distant control of the RSS which has a 'civilising' mission and which is prepared to work and wait for the new dawn. No surprise that some people still consider the BJP as essentially anti-democratic, semi-fascist, anti-secular and communal, narrow-minded, revanchist, chauvinist and obscurantist, committed to Hindu Rashtra and Brahminwad.

The 'Hidden Agenda' of the BJP is the total Hinduisation of the Indian society and polity - the assimilation of all non-Hindu religious identities, the submergence of all linguistic and cultural diversities, the transformation of the Indian State into a Hindu state.

Hinduisation of the Indian state and society will be achieved not by declaration of India as a Hindu state but by gradual and steady subversion of secular norms, by introduction of Hindu symbols, by re-writing of the textbooks, by elimination of Urdu from the school system, by non-recognition of minority institutions, by depriving non-Hindu from due and proportionate share in distribution of investment inputs and the output of development process, by limiting their representation in the legislatures, the judiciary and the executive, by applying majoritarian pressures through the administrative machinery on non-Hindu masses, by utilising official mass media for the propagation of Hindu religion and culture and for brain washing of the people, specially the young.

This explains why, despite the protestations of loud-mouths like Katiyar or Singhal or even Uma Bharati, behind the scene there is a meeting of mind between the RSS hierarchy and the BJP leadership. First they form the government, make the necessary concessions, even take U-turns, then they use state power to change the shape and order of things gradually and steadily. After all in a developing society, the state is the most effective instrument of change and pressure through its financial resources and control of intelligence, education and information and the bureaucracy. That is why the Vajpayee government will hold on to the Ministries of Finance, Home, Education, Information and Broadcasting.

The Vajpayee government would have served its purpose, as the 1977-79 record of integration of the erstwhile BJS in JP and participation in the JP government shows, if it succeeds in infiltrating the administration and the judicial machinery and the mass media and the security forces, in placing its trusted people in critical positions, in giving a majoritarian and communal twist to school education, in Hinduising Muslim children through the introduction of worship of Bharat Mata, Ishwar Vandana, Sanskrit and 'moral' instruction, by widening the gap between the educational and economic level of the Muslim Indians and most of the people, by psychologically conditioning them into docile surrender to the seemingly unstoppable wave of Hindutva. Thus they would have promoted the RSS vision, even if, after a year or two, when the contradiction between the BJP and its allies become unmanageable they demit office. The foundations built will remain to be further built upon by their sympathisers within the administration and in the rank of their successors, till they win the 'final' and take charge of the country, with no one to stand in their way.

New Delhi,
1 April, 1998

(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

People's Democracy on 'Appeasement' of Muslim Indians

The propaganda that the Muslim minority is pampered because of which the Hindu majority is deprived of its share in income, education, social recognition, etc., is as false as the Sangh Parivar propaganda on population. Let us take the date on education.

Table I will show that far from being pampered, Muslims in India are a discriminated minority.

According to a survey conducted by the Planning Commission for 1987-88, the average literacy rate for the Muslims was 42 per cent, while the national average was 52 per cent. In the case of women the situation was worse. Only 11 percent Muslim women were literate compared to the national average of 39.42 per cent.

Table I

Number of Persons Currently Attending Educational Institutions Per 1000 Persons by Age Groups, Sex and Religion, 1990

Rural India

	Household Religion	Age Group 0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24
Male	Hindu	88	763	832	561	210
	Muslim	48	560	636	348	113
Female	Hindu	77	707	746	424	96
	Muslim	35	521	536	193	43
Total	Hindu	82	736	791	497	155
	Muslim	42	541	590	276	79

Urban India

	Household Religion	Age Group 0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24
Male	Hindu	26	535	669	377	84
	Muslim	14	421	566	269	70
Female	Hindu	22	406	413	123	15
	Muslim	13	328	370	88	12
Total	Hindu	24	474	552	261	48
	Muslim	14	377	475	182	39

(Source: "Sarvekshana", National Sample Survey, 43rd Round, 1990)

Tables 2 and 3 show that Muslims in the lower income brackets are much larger in number than the majority community. A high-power committee headed by the late Dr Gopal Singh submitted a report to the Minorities Commission in 1983.

This revealed that throughout the 70s the Muslim community found placements in jobs and educational institutions much less than the qualified and eligible sections of their population.

Table 2

Community-wise Break-up of Income (Gopal Krishna Study)

Community	Income upto Rs.250	between Rs.251-700	Above Rs.700
Muslims	51.1	29.7	13.2%
Non-Muslims	44.5	25.9	29.6%

Table 3

Community-wise Break-up of Jobs and Professions

	Percentage of Muslims	Adequacy level (of and eligible Section)
Engineers	2.0	1/6
Doctors	2.5	1/5
IAS	2.86	1/4
IPS	2.0	1/6
ITOs	3.06	
State Class I	3.3	
Banks	2.18	
Private Enterprises	4.08	

In the "Garibi Hatao" decade of the seventies, of the total bank loans given for poverty alleviation programmes, Muslims received on 3.76 per cent. According to The Economic Times (December 21, 1992) the decline in the community's relative economic strength was between 20 and 25 per cent.

A similar situation emerges in relation to the Muslim share in civil services. As in any other employment avenue, Table 4 shows it is lower than the percentage share in population.

Table 4

Civil Service Examination Results

Year	Public Employment Total No. of selected candidates	SC	ST	Muslim	%of Muslim
1982	845	128	70	14	1.5
1983	814	129	71	10	1.2
1984	814	129	71	10	1.2
1985	790	131	74	11	1.2
1986	855	128	74	10	1.2
1987	817	130	62	14	1.7

Likewise, of the total 415 High Court judges on January 1, 1992, only 29 were Muslims i.e. 6.99 per cent.

(Source: The People's Democracy, 8 March, 1998)

Ashutosh Varshney on BJP's Need to Win Trust

... Why is Hindu nationalism an object of considerable suspicion? Why is it that a majority could still elude the BJP? While many have inched closer to the BJP, why do so many others still believe that it is a loose cannon?

My ... hypothesis is that at the deepest level, the idea that India's national identity is Hindu and that Hindutva should be everyone's culture in India is profoundly disturbing, not simply for the intellectuals but also for the masses. The problem has two parts.The first is by now conventional wisdom. The idea of Hindu unity is threatening to the lower caste parties and large proportion of lower castes themselves. It effectively means that the way India's lower castes have historically been treated by the upper castes is only a social, not a political issue.

This is absurd, for Hinduism may be externally and doctrinally tolerant, but internally it has been quite intolerant. Lower caste issues of dignity are real and have a national spread. Lower caste resentments will go up or down - perhaps down in this election - but they will not disappear. It's too serious a matter for millions of lower caste Indians. Dignity is not something only upper castes can claim to have.

Second, a large number of Hindus - quietly going about their lives, not participating in mobilisation, but no inclined towards the lower caste parties either - remain unpersuaded. Those who are mobilised often receive a lot of political attention, not those who stay back in their homes. But the latter also vote. As a result, there is often a gap between political mobilisation and election results. The Ayodhya movement was arguably the largest movement in recent years but the BJP did not come to power. Mobilised numbers can be an inaccurate indicator of electoral strength.

Deep inside their hearts, large proportions of the quiet, unmobilied, Indians are not ready for an ideology, however moderate its political practitioners may have become, that all religions and diverse groups of Indians must 'assimilate' to a Hindu centre which, furthermore, would be defined by an organisation like the BJP, RSS or VHP.

India's minorities - linguistic, religious, caste or tribe-based - have made remarkable contributions to India's culture, life and history. To deny that is to cause undue bitterness and rancour. Millions of peace-loving Indians are happy with the nation's many diversities and the syncretism of its culture.

One may, of course, ask: Is India's culture really syncretic? The question is relevant for both elite and popular culture. ...

... It is neither Hindu nor Muslim, but highly syncretic. Non-Muslim minorities have also shaped the India we know. The Sikhs have been the heroes of our armed forces; Indian Christians have made major contributions to education; and Parsis have been among the nation's leading industrialists.

It is pointless to deny, as some scholars do, th India's history has witnessed bitter struggles betwe Hindus and Muslims, but it does not follow that the have been no constructive exchanges between them Hindu nationalism amounts to a highly selective a dangerous retrieval of India's past.

It clearly hurts the Muslims, but my main hypothes is that it also upsets the deeper, everyday equilibrium people's lives. When millions of Hindus and Muslims a locked into daily relationships of business, work, a neighbourhood, to make such a lot of fuss over who is true Indian can only generate suspicion, disquiet a unease.

Indian culture is not Hindu; it is simply India Hinduism is undoubtedly a large component, but it is n synonymous with Indian culture and civilisation. That why Nehru used the term "Indo-Muslim" to characteri Indian culture, and Gandhi, a Ram Bhakta, never calle India Hindu. Gandhi was a Hindu and a nationalist, b not a Hindu nationalist.

In a similar vein, others have used the term 'salad bowl', 'mosaic', or 'thali'. Such conceptualisatio does not devalue the contributions made by minorities t India's history and culture. The 'melting pot' - th conception that all minorities must melt into the Hind pot - does.

... The core of the (Hindu) ideology stands fo bigotry, bitterness and narrow-mindedness. And th moderation of BJP leaders does not quite neutralise th visceral mean-spiritedness of RSS and VHP cadres.

To overcome these suspicions, Hindu nationalist will have to work harder. How about ... apology fo destroying the Babari mosque.

Your aim should not just be alliance-building, bu winning the trust of millions who remain sceptical... Fo great political leadership, there is no substitute fo generosity of spirit.

(Source: The Hindu, 26 February, 1998)

Bihar: Votes and Seats, 1998

Party	Votes Polled	Seats
BJP	23.54	19
Samata Party	16.02	11
RJD	26.29	17
Congress	7.4	5
JMM(S)	3.01	0
JMM(M)	0.48	0
RJP	0.97	1
JD	8.86	1
SP	2.12	0
BSP	0.54	0
CPI (M)	8.42	0
CPI		0
CPI(ML)		0
Total	97.65	54

Bhaskar Roy on Bipolar Politics

The most significant message emanating out of the rough and tumble of the general election is that the Indian electorate in its collective wisdom has endorsed a two-party system to dominate the country's political scene. By the time the dust settles down and the din dies, the real import of the current elections will stand out to be a strong desire of the people to clear the canvas of the political riff-raff. The voters in almost every part of the country have disapproved of a scene cluttered with multiple choices and made it clear that their preferences would largely swing between the two major poles.

The people have taken this stunningly seminal decision primarily in the context of their respective states. If the voting patterns are any indication, the electorate has identified the two major contenders and confined their preferences to this either-or option edging out the smaller and weaker players in the field.

In certain cases, perhaps getting wind of the new exclusive, scrutinising attitude of the electorate, the political parties had already made strategic local alliances. The BJP has reached the threshold of power ... because of the crucial pre-poll alliances it had struck. The party's own growth seems to have hit a plateau with a less than 10% increase of its seats tally. The Congress on the other hand has stopped miles away from Raisina Hill chiefly because of its inability to win important allies in the states. In the only state where the party succeeded in roping in friends, it has posted spectacular results. Indeed the experiment in Maharashtra where alliances with the Republican Party and Samajwadi Party have paid rich dividends - is going to be a model for the Congress wherever it fights elections in the coming days. These poll tie-ups have proved mutually beneficial to the extent they complemented both partners... The Indian voters - wiser by experience and tired of the crowd and cacophony on the scene - set out on a corrective mission telling and teaching the politician how to make adjustments to the new need. The haze on the horizon, he decided, has to be cleared.

This is an entirely new phenomenon and quite unlike anything that has happened in the past. The golden Congress era of one-party domination continued till the end of the eighties except for the two-and-a-half-years of the Morarji Desai Govt. There is no doubt that if the present trends continue the country will have a two-party system - more clearly at the state level to begin with.

In this bipolar scenario, a clear choice is now available .. between a robust conservative party heading a group of important allies with their own base and appeal in different parts of the country, and a liberal-democratic platform recognised by strong regional and left-of-centre forces as a proper counterfoil to the newly revived conservatism.

The two major blocks - the BJP and Congress - have shifted their positions - either as a matter of strategy or in recognition of the new reality - and shed much of their past prejudices... The BJP had consciously made an effort before the elections to dilute its Hindu revivalist image. The party moved away from its Hindutva agenda...

Propelled by the ambition to capture power at the Centre the party ... decided to project a softer and more moderate face - as much in the genial face of A.B. Vajpayee as in announcing its new priorities. The party's detractors called the whole exercise a sham, a mask hiding an essentially intolerant face...

The Congress too made an attempt to remove its past ambivalence on issues like Ayodhya and its commitment to the underprivileged. If the BJP's journey has been from the far-right to the centre, the Congress has turned a little leftward... In the future electoral scenario, these two forces - Indian counterparts of a conservative party and a liberal-democratic outfit with a lurch to the left - are likely to play the pivots. The smaller players are likely to come to be consigned to the fringes.

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

BJP: Government Formation in U.P.

BJP and Allies	March, 1997	Oct.ober, 1997	February, 1998
BJP	175	174***	174
Samata Party	2	2	2
Lok Tantrik Congress	-	22*	20**
Jan Tantrik BSP	-	13*	18
Rebel JD	-	3*	3
Rebel SP	-	-	1*
Rebel SJP	-	-	1*
Independents	-	9	8
BSP	67	54	48
UF			
Samajwadi Party	110	110	109
BKKP	8	8	8
JD	7	4	4
Congress(T)	4	-	-
CPM	4	4	4
CPI	1	1	1
SJP	1	1	-
Congress & Allies			
Congress	33	15	15
Independents	13	4	5**
LCP (Rebel)	-	-	2**

* Defectors from Congress/Congress(T)/BSP/JD/SP/SJP, apart from Independents.
** 2 LC and 1 independent separated from BJP later.
*** 1 MLA died.

Khushwant Singh's Advice to Sangh Parivar On National Agenda

Now that the Sangh Parivar has emerged as the more acceptable alternative to rule the country, those of us who have been consistently opposed to it (amongst whom I count myself), I venture to offer a few suggestions to make it more acceptable to people who share our view. I can assure them that our opinions do matter. If they are acceptable to the Parivar they can count on our support.

Our first and strongest reservation is against their attitude towards religious minorities, chiefly Muslims and Christians. We do not accept their assurance that breaking mosques at Varanasi and Mathura are not on their agenda. The wording "not on our agenda" smack of lordly condescension. They must give a categorical assurance that never again will they allow the destruction of a place of worship, whatever be its historical background. And not fool the people by using expressions like "disputed structure" or dhancha (edifice) to justify acts of vandalism.

Another item on their manifesto is total ban on cow slaughter. This too is unacceptable to Muslims, Christians and tribals who are beef-eaters. The matter should be left to the different States to decide for themselves. If they feel that they should respect Hindu sentiment against slaughter of kine, it would be a happy solution. If they do not, no Central law should be imposed on them. It will not be possible to enforce it on an unwilling people...

The Parivar has also declared it will abrogate Article 370 giving special status to Jammu & Kashmir. This was a solemn undertaking given by the Government when the State acceded to India. Succeeding Central governments are honour-bound to stand by the commitment and there should be no abrogation until the people of Jammu and Kashmir agree to it... The Parivar should put this matter on the shelf for the time begin.

The Parivar is in favour of having a uniform civil code. I am entirely in its favour but advise it to first win over support of the more enlightened sections of the communities concerned before legislating on it.

Many leaders of the Parivar have strongly criticised Christian missionary presence in the country. Some foreign missionaries who had spent the best part of their lives working among tribals totally neglected by others have been expelled. This is unfair and smacks of ingratitude towards people who have given us the best of schools, colleges and hospitals. If Hindu, Muslim and Sikh missionaries have the right to convert people to their faiths, so have the Christians who do much more in the way of social service than all other communities put together. If our new rulers wish to gain our support, they must give serious consideration to the points I have made. If in the flush of victory they brush them aside, we will continue opposing them till we bring them down.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 7 March, 1998)

BJP: Politically Untouchable Still

After three Prime Ministers at the Centre in the las 18 months, two failed experiments of UF-Congres coalition and more than a year since it formed a shortlived Government at the Centre, the BJP appears to be where and what it was when it started off - a political untouchable. Even the all-pervading fear of having to contest an unwanted election ... failed to induce one-third of the Congress MPs to come out of their party and join forces with the BJP... MPs chose to go by party discipline in opting for elections over a BJP-led Government, even if it was with Vajpayee at the helm...

Despite the edge the BJP and its allies have over the others, it does not seem at present that they would be able to get a simple majority in the next Lok Sabha, given the fractured polity and the segmented vote banks.

To exploit the advantages it has over others and to reach out to new social sections, geographical areas and political groups, the BJP needs to restructure its strategy.

Even if the BJP-led combine has its slogan of offering a stable, credible and corruption-free government ready, it realises that without a social, geographical and political breakthrough it could one again lose out in the power game.

The need to look for a formula was signalled by Advani when he raked up and linked the Ayodhya issue with the Mathura and Kashi controversies. Although the last two are not on the party's agenda, in resurrecting an old proposal he appears to have brought it to the forefront.

... With the Babari Masjid already demolished, the formula could be as much a non-starter today as it was earlier. But in the process, it has indicated that while the BJP was willing to negotiate between the Muslim and the VHP on the issue, it was also possibly keeping its powder dry on re-emphasising Hindutva, if necessary.

Along with this, although many in the combine believe that the post-electoral scene this time may work in their favour in the concern to ensure a longer life for the next Lok Sabha, the psychological exercise at conveying signals of winning friends is on... The BJP is desperately trying to signal that it is not politically untouchable.

Lok Sabha 1998: Muslim Representation

Party	Total MPs	Muslim MPs	Percentage
INC	140	7	5
CPM	32	4	12.5
RJD	17	3	18.0
SP	20	3	15
BSP	5	2	40
IUML	2	2	100.0
NC	2	2	100.0
MIM	1	1	100.0
BJP	177	1	0.56
SAP	12	1	8.3
UMFA	1	1	100.0
WBTC	7	1	14.3

CPM Weekly People's Democracy On BJP's Social and Caste Base

It has been generally believed that the BJP is a party of the upper castes. This, it seems, is a development which made it a party of the dwija castes - ever since the implementation of the Mandal award and he upper caste vandalism which followed it. it is further said that this consequence came about because the BJP became a champion of the upper castes and, to protect their interests, it ... opposed the Mandal report... all this led to a rapid expansion of its social support and this largely, though not entirely, came from the savarnas... However, in accepting all this, what has not been known at all is the class base of the BJP support.

The BJP, while being an upper caste party, is much more an upper class party, and in a more consistent way. If we divide the electorate into four class categories of very poor, poor, middle classes, and the rich and then look at the BJP's support base (as the Centre for Study of Developing Societies does on the basis of survey data collected in 1996 after the parliamentary elections), we get some extremely revealing pictures. Though its support is always higher among the upper castes, it systematically goes up even among the other castes and even among the tribes as the income levels of those who make up these social groups go up.

Even among the Dalits ... the support for the BJP grows up more and more as the income goes up. Among the SCs who are very poor, about 11% support it, compared to 19% of the poor. When we look at the middle classes among the SCs, the support goes up to 25%. But what is really surprising is that about 41% of the tiny section of the rich among the Dalits, support it.

the story is the same everywhere. Let's look at the upper castes. As high as 29% of the very poor among them support the BJP; among the poor it goes up to 45 %; climbs to nearly 50% among the middle classes, and shoots up to as high as 57% of the rich among the upper castes. The remaining 43% of the rich voters among the upper castes get split among all the other parties including the Congress...

Among all the caste groups, the shift of votes in favour of the BJP is least pronounced in case of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). But (the shift) is quite steady, though not dramatic. Let's look at the figures: 24% of the very poor among the OBCs vote for the BJP; it goes up to 26% in case of the poor, to 31% in case of the middle class OBCs, and climbs to 35% in case of the rich OBCs.

... 19% of the very poor of the tribals vote for the BJP; the poor support it to the extent of 25%; 25 % of the middle classes too support the BJP. But, then, the party has the support of 44% among the rich who form a very small fraction of the tribals. *(Contd. on Page 168)*

Hasan Suroor On the Left and the BJP Threat

... The Left has sought to justify its touch-me-not attitude toward the Congress(I) by invoking its official line - laid down by the CPI and CPI(M)'s highest decision-making bodies - of keeping "equi-distance" from the BJP and the Congress(I)...

At one stage, the Left looked like going to the elections with its "line" intact but the build-up of the pro-BJP "atmosphere" ... appears to have forced a rethinking in the Left parties, and there is now a tacit acknowledgement that it is more important to defeat the BJP than to expend energy on a party which, more or less, is down and out.

Though the "hardliners", especially in the CPI(M), are still against any "compromise" with the Congress(I), a more realistic view taking place is that all efforts be made to prevent a division in the anti-BJP vote even if it means tactical support to the Congress(I) in areas where it alone is in a position to defeat the BJP. There would be no formal understanding with the Congress(I) but where it is directly pitted against the BJP or its allies, the Left would not come in its way.

Senior Left leaders privately acknowledge that the political situation has radically changed since the line of "equi-distance" was adopted... There is in fact a fear in the Left circles that the collapse of the Congress(I) is bad news for the secular/centrist forces as much of the political space vacated by it would be occupied by the BJP. It is this realisation that has forced the Left to take a hard-headed view of its "Congress strategy" for the elections.

Meanwhile, the issue of the CPI(M)'s participation in a U.F. government ... is wide open again...

Behind the CPI(M)'s thinking are two factors. First, its realisation that it cannot expect to play the arbiter at the Central level if it continues to remain outside the government.

Second, the pressure its functionaries exerted on the leadership, asking it to grab the levers of power but the most important is the realisation that even the talk of participation will help the party retain its grip on the swelling ranks of younger functionaries who often put exercising power before ideology...

Nationwide, the Left's campaign would focus on political stability, the "danger" posed by divisive forces and its own commitment to give a human face to economic development.

As of now, the Left is the only U.F. constituent which seems to be in a position to retain its tally if not improved upon it, and in the event of a "hung" Parliament, its role would be crucial...

(Source: The Hindu, 11 January, 1998)

Prakash Nanda on Muslims and the BJP

... Muslims have always been an importnat factor in Indian politics... Mindless opposition to the BJP does not serve the interests of the Muslim community. The BJP may find it difficult but no impossible to come to power sooner or later without the Muslim vote, given its otherwise sound base. Many electoral studies have proved that Muslims alone cannot ensure a party's ultimate victory or defeat.

Now, imagine a situation when the BJP is in power, but because of "the attitude of untouchability" towards the party, the 125-million strong Muslim community refuses to be a part of the decision-making process. This is a scenario which, perhaps, explains the repeated appeals of the BJP functionaries to the Muslims for a change of heart...

The question that arises is: Should the Muslims continue to repose their faith only in the non-BJP parties just because they are said to be "secular" and avoid the BJP just because it is perceived to be "communal"? Because apart from the dubious "fear" of BJP's "communalism", there is nothing concrete that the Muslims have against the BJP.

It is a well-established fact that more anti-Muslim riots have been engineered in the Congress-ruled states than in states under the BJP. One often hears that this is a diabolic design on the part of the BJP to tell the Muslims, "vote for us if you want safety to your life and property or else face the consequences". This is ... weak argument. One can counterargue that communal riots are caused by the non-BJP parties just to perpetuate the myth of BJP's communalism and prevent it from coming to power.

It is indeed time that the Muslims went beyond their passive role as a; vote-bank of some select parties. They need to be much more active politically to be a decisive factor in the country's decision-making process. And for this to happen, they must participate to emerge as an important force within all major political formations, including the BJP...**(Source: The Times of India, 18 Feb., 1998)**

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Times of India, 21 February, 1998

Apropos Shri Prakash Nanda's plea to the Muslims not to shun the BJP (TOI, 18 Feb) he has based himself on wrong assumptions. Muslims are not playing a 'passive role as a vote bank of some select parties'. The facts are otherwise. In different States and sometimes in different Constituencies of the same State, the Muslims are voting for different secular parties or formations. Some of them are also active politically in the ranks of different political parties but also universally they reject the secular credentials of the BJP as they view it as a majoritarian, communal party committed to the concept of Hindu Rashtravad and to the ultimate objective of the assimilation of religious and cultural minorities within the Hindu fold.

So, Mr. Nanda's plea is not likely to fall on receptive ears.

Taran N. Khan on Trends in Muslim Politics

... On February 7 ... Muslim intellectuals ... condemned the BJP (and) declared that they would work to consolidate the Muslim vote and ensure tactical voting against the BJP and its allies.

The strategy is simple in every identified constituency, the secular candidate most likely to defeat the BJP is selected... Opinion leaders then mobilise Muslims and other voters to vote en bloc in favour of that candidate...

Regardless of the eventual outcome this action ... strikes at the very crux of the problem facing the Muslim electorate - its disorganised ... nature. One of the important reasons for constituencies repeated returning BJP candidates despite having significant Muslim population is "splitting" ... amongst the non-BJP votes... This lack of coherence and cohesiveness in voting gives the BJP the cutting edge, particularly in eastern UP, when the Muslim vote is significant but important.

In this context, other parties also manipulate the Muslim 'vote bank' by cashing in on their insecurities. The new strategy aims to change this. By organising their scattered electoral strength and throwing it behind a chosen candidate, the community leaders are sending out certain important signals to all parties. That they recognise their strategic importance and are no longer willing to squander it.

Thus, the Muslim intelligentsia now claims to be capable of mobilising the community in a self-determined direction. What's more, the movement has been towards progressive and liberal values, not separatist or reactionary... They resent the projection of orthodox mullahs ... as the legitimate voice of the community... Simultaneously, they refuse to distance themselves from their cultural and religious identities to prove their secular credentials and progressiveness.

This unapologetic self-awareness, coupled with a fierce commitment to secularism speaks volumes for their new found confidence ... is the propelling force behind the movement for change... By consciously preferring to support secular candidates, regardless of their religion over the Muslim identity, they are transferring voters' affiliations from ties of community to considerations of secularism and unity.

The movement is indicative of an ... immensely significant phenomenon - that there is tremendous enthusiasm at the grassroots level to defeat the sectarian forces; that the BJP's propaganda of 'moderation' has not fooled the Muslims... The first priority of the community is to halt the BJP's advance.

(Source: The Times of India, 2 March, 1998)

Party-wise Lok Sabha Results, 1998

BJP and Allies	**249**		
BJP	178	ADMK	18
Samata	12	BJD	9
Akali	8	Trinamul	7
Shiv Sena	6	PMK	4
Lok Shakti	3	MDMK	3
JP	1	HVP	1
Congress & Allies	**169**		
Congress	145	RJD	17
RPI	4	IUML	2
KCM	1		
United Front	**96**		
CPM	32	SP	21
TDP	12	CPI	9
JD	6	RSP	5
TMC	3	AIFB	2
Others	**21**		

State-wise Lok Sabha Results, 1998

State	Total Seats	I BJP	II INC	III UF/LF	IV Others
A.P.	42	4	22	15	1 (MIM)
Assam	14	1	10	-	2
Bihar	54	28	23	1	1 (RJD)
Gujarat	26	19	7	-	-
Haryana	10	2	3		5 HLD 4 BSP 1
J&K	6	1	1	2	
Karnataka	28	16	9	3	-
Kerala	20	-	11	9	-
M.P.	40	30	10	-	-
Maharashtra	48	10	38	-	-
Orissa	21	16	5	-	-
Punjab	13	11	2	-	-
Rajasthan	25				
Tamilnadu	39	28	-	10	1
UP	85	61	-	20	4 BSP 1 SJP
W. Bengal	42				
Delhi	7	6	1	-	-
Lakshadweep	1	-	1	-	-
Others	22				
Total	**543**	**252**	**167**	**98**	**21**

(not including 1 in Bihar and 1 in HP)

Ziya-us Salam on Electoral 'Fatwas'

... The base of Imams is shrinking and the Muslim masses are increasingly becoming politically conscious. The Imams have no business guiding the Muslims in voting pattern. The messages from the pulpit have lesser relevance. Imams have been largely marginalised. The voter is making his own decision and it not influenced by fatwa or decree. People are cynical of the wisdom or validity of such decrees. The Imams have exceeded their brief and jurisdiction. People see through changes in attitudes and preferences on the eve of elections.

In the past ... what used to happen was that the religious leaders used to sense the common mood and give their diktat in adherence to that. What Imams said used to conform to popular feelings. In a sense Imams became the mouthpiece of social current. They are shrewd judges of political pulse. ...

Political leaders ... made a political assessment. And realised that Imam's political base is shrinking. Their clientele is limited...

CSDC Post-Poll Survey, 1998 - Muslism Voting

By and large, Muslim votes are equally divided between the Congress and the UF. Sonia's apologies to Muslims for the destruction of the Babari Masjid may have stemmed the flow of Muslim voters away from the Congress but have not won it any additional votes. The Left Front and Samajwadi Party helped the UF obtain a large amount of support from the Muslim population but much less than the majority of Muslim vote they had last time. The BJP front has increased its support among Muslims by about 3 per cent compared to the 1996 elections. However, its degree of support among Muslims continues to be low, and owes a great deal to alliances with parties seen as more secular (such as) in West Bengal ... with the Trinamool Congress.

(Source: The Indian Today, 16 March, 1998)

Performance of Political Parties Lok Sabha Elections, 1998

	Seats Won		% of Votes Polled	
	1996	1998	1996	1998
National Parties				
BJP	161	178	20.29	25.41
Congress	140	140	28.80	25.75
CPM	32	32	6.12	5.22
CPI	12	9	1.97	1.74
BSP	11	5	3.64	4.67
JD	46	6	8.08	3.21
Samata	8	12	2.17	1.78
Recognised Parties				
SP	16	20	7.00	4.95
AIADMK	-	18	0.64	1.82
TDP	16	12	2.97	2.79
DMK	17	6	2.15	1.46
RJD	-	17	-	2.68
Akali Dal	8	8	0.76	0.83
Trinamul	-	7	-	2.46
TMC	20	3	2.19	1.42
BJD	-	3	-	1.01
Other Parties	47	53	6.94	10.65
Independents	9	6	6.28	2.15
Total	**543**	**535**	**100.00**	**100.00**

1998 Lok Sabha
Muslim Representation Party-wise break-up

	Total Muslims	INC	SP	RJD	CPM	Others
A.P.	1	-	-	-	-	1 (MIM)
Assam	2	1	-	-	-	1 (UMFA)
Bihar	6	2	-	3	-	1 (Samata)
J&K	3	1	-	-	-	2 (NC)
Karnataka	1	1	-	-	-	--
Kerala	2					2 (IUML)
W. Bengal	6	1	-	-	4	1 (TC)
UP	6	-	3	-	-	1 (BJP)
						2 (BSP)
Lakshadweep	1	1	-	-	-	--
Total	28	7	3	3	4	11

Note: 1) No representation in Gujarat, Haryana, MP, Maharashtra, Punjab, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu or in any U.T. (except Lakshadweep)

2) No representation in CPI,, FB, RSP, JD, TDP, AGP, TMC, DMK, AIADMK, MDMK, AD, SS, Lok Shakti, BJD, RPI.

Lok Sabha: Level of Muslim Under-Representation

	Lok Sabha Seats				
	SMP as % SP	Total	Due Muslim Share	Actual 1998	Level of Under-Represen-tation
India	12.93	543	68.70	28	60%
U.P.	17.33	85	15-16	6	72.50
W. Bengal	23.61	42	10-11	6	45.45
Bihar	14.81	54	8	6	25%
Maharashtra	9.67	48	5	0	100%
Kerala	23.33	20	4-5	2	50%
Assam	28.43	14	4	2	50%
A.P.	8.91	42	4	1	75%
Karnataka	11.64	28	3	1	66%
J&K	64.18	6	4	3	25%
Gujarat	8.73	26	2	0	100%
Rajasthan	8.01	25	2	0	100%
M.P.	4.96	40	2	0	100%
Tamil Nadu	5.21	39	2	0	100%
Others		72	2	1	50%

1998 Lok Sabha: Muslim Deprivation Rate

	Population			Lok Sabha Seats			% of
	Total	Muslim	%	Total	Muslim	%	Depri vation
States with Muslim Representation	456.614	79.666	17.48	292	28	9.59	45
States without Muslim Representation	359.556	25.889	7.20	251	0	0	100

Lok Sabha 1998: Muslim MP's

Name	Party	Constituency
Abdul Hamid**	INC	Dhubri (Assam)
A.B.A.Ghani Khan	INC	Malda (W. Bengal)
Shakeel Ahmed*	INC	Madhubani (Bihar)
Tariq Anwar	INC	Katihar (Bihar)
C.K. Jaffer Sharief**	INC	Bangalore (Karnataka)
P.M. Sayeed	INC	Lakshadweep
Mufti Mohd. Sayeed**	INC	Anantnag (J&K)
Abul Hasnat Khan*	CPM	Jangipur (W. Bengal)
Hannan Mollah	CPM	Uluberia (W. Bengal)
Moinul Hassan*	CPM	Murshidabad (W. Bengal)
Zahedi Mahboob	CPM	Katwa (W. Bengal)
Mohd. Shahabuddin	RJD	Siwan (Bihar)
M.A.A. Fatmi	RJD	Darbhanga (Bihar)
Taslimuddin	RJD	Kishanganj (Bihar)
Shafiqur Rahman Burq	SP	Moradabad (UP)
Rizwan Zaheer Khan*	SP	Balrampur (UP)
Saleem Iqbal Shervani	SP	Badaum (UP)
Akbar Ahmad Dumpy*	BSP	Azamgarh (UP)
Arif Mohd. Khan	BSP	Bahraich (UP)
E. Ahamed	IUML	Manjeri (Kerala)
G.M. Banatwalla	IUML	Punani (Kerala)
Omar Farooq*	NC	Srinagar (J&K)
Saifuddin Soz**	NC	Baramulla (J&K)
Sultan S. Owaisi	MIM	Hyderabad (AP)
Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi*	BJP	Rampur (UP)
Abdul Ghafoor**	SAP	Gopalganj (Bihar)
A.F. Golam Osmami*	UMFA	Barpeta (Assam)
Akbar Ali Khandoker*	WBTC	Serampore (W.Bengal)

* Elected for First Time.

** Elected as MP in the past, not in 1996.

Lok Sabha Election, 1998: BJP's Muslim Candidates

Andhra Pradesh	Nandyal	Jafar Ali Khan
Bihar	Kishanganj	S. Shahnawaz Husain
J&K	Srinagar	A.R. Kabuli
	Baramulla	Deen Mohd. Cheeta
UP	Rampur	Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi
W. Bengal	Malda	Muzaffar Khan

(All lost except M.A. Naqvi in Rampur, UP)

1998 Election: Muslim Party-Changers

Name	Party Changed From	To	Status
Aslam Sher Khan, ex-MP	Congress	BJP	No ticket
Abrar Ahmad, ex-MP	Congress	BJP	No ticket
Rizwan Zaheer	BSP	SP	Won
Arif Mohd. Khan	Indp.	BSP	Won
Iliyas Azmi	BSP	JD	Lost
Anwarul Haq	RJD	JD	Lost
Arif Beg	BJP	Congress	Lost
Mustafiz Ahmed	JD	Congress	Lost

Mandate of the Lok Sabha Poll

Editorial, The Mainstream, 7 March, 1998

... The results have not come as a surprise since several opinion polls before the elections had predicted a hung Parliament... The UF constituents have on the whole come a cropper having barely crossed the 100-seat mark...

The three major highlights of these elections are: (a) the failure of the BJP and its partners to secure an absolute majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha despite strenuous effort (and the massive publicity drive...) to project the BJP front as the most viable formation capable of providing a 'stable government with an able Prime Minister...; (b) the incapacity of the Congress to achieve a breakthrough in terms of preventing the BJP from winning more than 235 seas with the help of the 'Sonia factor'...; (c) the virtual liquidation of the Janata Dal from the Indian political landscape. At the same time it is not possible to ignore the other significant features of the poll outcome like the remarkable sweep of the AIADMK-BJP alliance in Tamil Nadu almost reversing the clean sweep of all the 39 seats by the DMK-TMC-CPI front in the 1996 elections, and the stunning reverses that the BJP and its ally Shiv Sena suffered in Maharashtra...

Throughout the election campaign which by all accounts was bereft of any substantive issue... the BJP went to town with one specific slogan - that of stability... The Congress also took the cue from the BJP with Sonia Gandhi asserting that only the party she was campaigning for could provide the much necessary stability. Questions like 'stability for what and for whom?' being conveniently ignored, both the BJP and the Congress gave the impression that by stability they mean one-party centralised rule... Only the UF provided a different kind of stability to our polity as was brought out by its 18-month rule at the Centre...

It is a different matter that the importance of this kind of stability for our country was not effectively highlighted by the UF leadership in the course of the campaign...

... Even before the electoral process was set into motion and BJP changed its tactics and went all out to befriend those who had not been close to it in the past. As a result of such an endeavour it was able to rope in quite a few Congress personalities ... into the party on the one side and forge poll understandings, alliances or seat adjustments with several regional outfits... Of the 250 seats won by the BJP front in these elections only 170 have been secured by the BJP alone, the remaining 80 odd seats coming from its allies which are definitely strong regional parties of consequence... The success of the BJP at the hustings signifies in reality the triumph of federalism and does not necessarily imply a return to one-party rule at the Centre.

Much has been written about the anti-incumbency factor... Only the factor failed to work at all in Punjab, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi.

But the factor was in operation in full force throughout the country against the United Front because of its lack-lustre performance at the Centre. Moreover, the UF's failure to publicise even the modest achievements of its government cost it quite dearly... The electorate's refusal to endorse the BJP's activities in the two States it has been in power for quite some time - Maharashtra and Rajasthan - establishes the hollowness of its claim of providing a stable, viable and effective government at the Centre. This had earlier been provided also in the collapse of its government in Gujarat where it had a two-thirds majority in the State Assembly but could not hold on to that majority.... Of course, in Maharashtra, it was (a) the unity of Dalits and Muslims reflected in the RPI-Congress-Samajwadi front, and (b) the organisational capability of Congress stalwart Sharad Pawar which played a key role in ensuring the defeat of the Shiv Sena-BJP combine. At the same time the bJP suffered in a large measure due to the arrogance of power...

The elections also revealed that the Sonia factor could not work wonders for the Congress... The party's failure to win a single seat in its once impregnable bastion of UP and its dismal record in Bihar - the two most populous States of the Hindi heartland - were a clear testimony of Sonia's inability to checkmate the saffron advance (which was sought to be arrested only by Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party in UP and Laloo Prasad Yadav's RJD in Bihar... All the Sonia proteges - Arjun Singh, Satish Sharma, N.D. Tiwari, Shiela Dixit - suffered humiliating defeats, the only exception being K. Natwar Singh... In fact the Sonia campaign in some States also indirectly helped the BJP to consolidate itself. Basically it was the disunity in the ranks of the anti-BJP, secular forces which provided to be a boon for the BJP all over the country...

The Left ... has itself to blame for its poor poll performance. Once again it remained confined to its pockets of influence...

Overall, what cannot be lost sight of is the significance of the BJP's progress from its two-seat strength in the Lok Sabha in 1985...

Whatever the reasons for its electoral success, the BJP has been given the mandate to form a government at the Centre even if it has failed to secure absolute majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha. The fractured nature of the verdict does not convey the electorate's confidence in either the Congress or the United Front; rather, larger sections of the people have reposed that confidence in the BJP. The country has had the experience of minority governments... There is no reason why there cannot be a similar minority government headed by the BJP at the Centre. To subvert the mandate in the name of checking the advance of the Sangh Parivar and fighting its communal ideology would actually result in strengthening the RSS hardliners... The UF has a bounden responsibility to abide by the democratic verdict... That will help them restore their image ... and win back the public confidence they have lost at present.

Rajindar Sachar on 1998 Elections

... There are certain fundamental issues involving human rights, democracy, and the integrity of the country, which aspirants to power have treated with utter contempt. The BJP ideologues are quite open in saying that if the party gets a majority on is own, it will pursue its agenda of Hindutva, Its agenda consisting of Ayodhya, a common civil code and the repeal of Article 370 (special status for J&K) remains unaltered - the very issues which go against the multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-polar heritage of our country.

The demolition of the Babari Masjid was a tragic event. I have always maintained that December 6 should be observed as a National Repentance Day in token of our collective shame. It is, however, amazing that the Congress(I) should think that it can absolve itself by a mere verbal apology, considering that Rajiv Gandhi had got the doors of the mosque unlocked and also performed 'shilanyas' in preparation for the 1989 general elections. That Rajiv Gandhi was prepared to lay down his life to prevent the demolition by blocking the entrance to the mosque against the BJP-led hordes is revelation to me, because no such indication was given either by him or on his behalf at a special meeting of the National Integration Council, attended by me and which had been called by V.P. Singh, immediately before the start of Advani's Rath Yatra at the end of 1990, notwithstanding my suggestion that all the political parties form a human chain around the mosque.

Mrs. Sonia Gandhi was supposed to have offered an apology for Operation Bluestar, and to the thousands of victims of the 1984 Delhi riots. It is hard to accept that it is genuine... Talking of apologies, what about offering one for the worst onslaught on the Indian democracy, i.e. 1975 Emergency... **(Source: The PUCL Bulletin)**

Shekhar Gupta
On Respecting Electoral Mandate

... The most consistent feature of yet another fractured verdict is a marked popular preference for a BJP-led coalition and that, even in terms of personal charisma, the predominant national choice is Vajpayee... In post-Mandal India coalitions have come to stay and that the voter is reflecting a more federal approach by giving clear verdicts in each state. The resulting rainbow coalition - irrespective of which colour dominates it - is what he would prefer and it is time our politicians acquired the maturity and sagacity to live with such politics. After two shameful failures, Indian leaders have been given yet another chance to prove equal to the task.

Vajpayee's real challenge lies in this... There is also a reaffirmation of the fact that regional parties constitute one of the more resilient features of our politics... Strong regional parties would make coalitions inevitable. The challenge for our politicians is to build a healthy, workable consensus with them. This would necessitate putting old party and ideological agendas on the back burner...

Neerja Chowdhury on 1998 Election Results

... For the first time in 50 years, a non-Congress party has emerged as an all-India formation (and) as an alternative to the Congress. While many factors - A.B. Vajpayee's image, the disadvantage of incumbency and desire for stability, among others - are responsible for the party's impressive gains ... its pre-poll alliances gave it the cutting edge during the campaign.

The performance of the AIADMK-led front (of which the BJP is part of) in Tamil Nadu has turned out to be the biggest surprise of the polls. The BJP's alliance with Ramakrishna Hegde in Karnataka, Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, and with Lakshmi Parvathi in AP have made the party more relevant nationally. Its understanding with the Akali Dal has yielded a rich harvest for both ... in Punjab.

Conversely, the Congress could conceivably have ended up with a very different tally had it allied with regional parties in different states. The success of the Maharashtra experience, which has come as a major setback to the BJP, only underscores this point. Till Sonia Gandhi came on the scene, the Congress High Command was negotiating with several regional parties with a view to evolving some kind of an arrangement with them. Hut the process came to a halt abruptly. Hegde is on record saying that talks were on with the Congress. But once Sonia Gandhi made it clear that she would be campaigning extensively, Sitaram Kesri suddenly stopped taking Hegde's call.

Kesri had an excellent equation with Jayalalitha and had attended the wedding of her foster son, in the teeth of opposition from the local Congress. But the talks with the AIADMK supremo fell through after several rounds of discussions conducted by emissaries like Vijay Bhaskar Reddy. She struck up a friendship with the BJP instead.

In the Hindi belt, an arrangement with Laloo Yadav's RJD was about to be finalised which might have benefitted both the parties... Given a push, a tie-up with Mulayam's SP might have come through in UP. The BSP too was keen to align with the Congress in MP...

Secularism, indeed, is a strong enough cause for parties to bury their differences to counter a communal threat. But no such sentiment was evident when Kesri put his personal insecurities above secularism to pull down H.D. Deve Gowda's government. or when the unholy "Jain Gang" of Arjun Singh, Jiterdra Prasada, N.D. Tiwari and others dumped I.K. Gujral... Or when ... the Left and even the Janata Dal, so supremely arrogant, kept the Congress out of the coalition... If they now sound so hollow as to be giving secularism a bad name they have only themselves to blame.

... Today, the voter has defanged the communal forces by offering them power with such equivocation and has actively put the BJP on notice by punishing it in all the states it rules. He will be watching closely as the party changes and evolves to pass the new test before it...

(Source: The Indian Express, 5 March, 1998)

A. Surya Prakash on Congress Performance in 1998

In 1996, the Congress .. secured 28.80% votes and 140 seats in the Lok Sabha. In 1998, the party ... got 25.74% votes and 141 seats in Parliament. The party's vote share has, therefore, dropped by a significant 3% over the past two years, even though it managed to hold on to its seats in Parliament.

Ms. Gandhi campaigned for the Congress in 137 parliamentary constituencies but the party won just 51 of them. Even more significant is the fact that though she campaigned in 56 Congress-held constituencies, the party lost 29 of them. Of them, 22 went to the BJP.

... One cannot overlook ... in Maharashtra the socio-political alliance, brought about by Sharad Pawar.

... Her campaign has been something of a disaster in the northern and eastern regions. Even in the south, the family's presence in the campaign failed to enthuse voters despite a strong anti-incumbency wave in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Results show that unlike in the past, the voters were not swayed merely by the presence of the Nehru-Gandhi clan in the campaign. The party has done well only in states where it has a strong and credible leadership - like in Maharahstra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Kerala.

On the other hand, despite her strenuous efforts, the party's performance was pathetic in states like Uttar Pradesh (85 seats) and Tamil Nadu (39 seats), where it drew a blank, and West Bengal (42 seats), where it bagged just one seat. In Bihar (54 seats), despite its alliance with Laloo Yadav, the party secured just five seats.... In these four states, which account for 220 seats in parliament, the Congress won just six seats! Ms. Gandhi had campaigned for 39 seats in these states...

The South: The Congress bagged just 39 of the 139 seats in the south... Ms. Gandhi campaigned in 34 constituencies. The party won 14 seats...

East and North-East: ... She campaigned in six Congress-held constituencies in Orissa, where the party was decimated. On the other hand, Narasimha Rao, who was denied a party ticket, campaigned in just one constituency -Behrampur - and the party bagged it. ...

Ms. Gandhi visited 24 constituencies in the East. Only six of the seats went to the Congress... In the North-East, Ms. Gandhi visited three constituencies in Assam and one in Meghalaya. The party won all four.

The North: The northern region has proved to be Ms. Gandhi's waterloo. The party won only five of the 120 seats in UP, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh. ...

The West: ... In Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa ... of the 44 constituencies that Ms. Gandhi visited, 22 went to the Congress...

Thus, while Ms. Gandhi enthused the Congress workers and ensured party unity, she has not been able to enthuse voters. its support base has shrunk further from its 1996 level to a dangerously low of 25.74 per cent.

The 1998 results also lead to few other inferences:

Ms. Gandhi could not revive the electoral fortunes of the party in states where it is non-existent or where it has been displaced by local mutations of the Congress (Example: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal).

Ms. Gandhi could not contain an anti-incumbency wave against her party (Example: Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh). Ms. Gandhi could not help her party cash in on an anti-incumbency wave in a non-Congress state when a third-party was in the fray (Example: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Gujarat and, to an extent, Andhra Pradesh).

(Source: The Pioneer, 15 March, 1998)

Bhavna Vij
On Vadra's Saffron Connection

... The Vadra family farm in Bagarpur, 12 km from Moradabad, hosts a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-run school and occasional shakhas.

Vadera Farm has a tastefully done-up farmhouse, a swimming pool - and Saraswati Shishu Mandir, a school run by the RSS. Om Prakash Vadera, the family patriarch and the uncle of Robert Vadra, donated the school to the RSS in 1995. "I am the permanent chairman of the school", he says.

Priyanka's father-in-law Rajendra Vadra is also associated with the school. "Rajendraji is a regular visitor", says Principal...

An employee of the school says that even Priyanka had visited the premises when she had come to the farmhouse before her marriage...

Among the photographs on the walls of Principal's office are that of the RSS founder Hegdewar and Golwalkar. Copies of Panchjanya, the RSS mouthpiece, lie prominently on the principal's table. The school has on its roll around 270 children from nursery to class VIII from nearby villages. All teachers are committed RSS workers. In the evenings, the school premises once again come alive with ... exta-curricular activities. "It is a chance for the Hindus to come together play together and think together", says Singh.

RSS shakhas are sometimes held in the school premises. On other occasions, the children and neighbouring youth hold the shakha at the government primary school nearby...

(Source: The Indian Express, 9 March, 1998)

Situation Report: Indian National Congress

Coomi Kapoor in The Indian Express, 8 March, 1998

The media was starry-eyed, Congress workers euphoric and the BJP cadres disheartened by the entry of Sonia Gandhi into the 1998 electoral campaign. Not for a long time had any politician attracted such huge crowds and evoked so much interest...

But despite the hype and hoopla and despairing grumbles from the BJP camp about the naivete of the Indian voter, it is a moot point whether the enthusiastic and curious crowds at Sonia's rallies converted into votes for her party.

On the basis of available evidence, there is nothing to suggest that Sonia halted the BJP's progress...

Poll statistics show that the BJP increased its vote share by five per cent, and along with its allies its vote share went up 10 per cent. In contrast, the Congress vote share has fallen by nearly three per cent. The number of parliamentary seats won by the Congress has remained the same at 140. The BJP's seats have gone up by 17. While the increase of seats by the BJP and allies has gone up by 54 seats from 1996.

A pre-poll hypothesis was that Sonia's visit to an area would swing many borderline constituencies in favour of the Congress...

According to a pollster's calculation of the 130 odd constituencies which Sonia visited during her hectic 34-day tour covering 60,000 km, the Congress in 1996 won 50 seats and 49 seats this year.

Some 22 of the winning seats are in Rajasthan and Maharashtra ... where there was also an anti-incumbency mood at work.

Elsewhere in the country, a number of sitting Congress MPs lost their seats this time despite Sonia visiting the region.

In Delhi, Sonia addressed a huge rally ... but the BJP increased it seat tally (even) Chandni Chowk ... was wrested by the BJP from a two-term sitting Congress MP.

In Uttar Pradesh, Amethi ...the family fiefdom was wrested from the Congress's Satish Sharma by the BJP. sonia held rallies at Rampur and Shahjahanabad but the incumbent Congress MPs from the two constituencies were defeated by the BJP.

Hyderabad was one of Sonia's first rallies where the media marvelled at the crowd response, nevertheless the Congress did not retain the Secunderabad seat. Sonia held a rally ... Mallikarjun's Mahboobnagar constituency, but he lost his seat to the Janata Dal's Jaipal Reddy.

In Rajasthan, Sonia addressed a rally at Udaipur but Girja Vyas, the two time Congress MP from here lost to the BJP. Sonia spoke to a rapturous audience in Calcutta but the four Calcutta seats held by her party last time voted for the Trinamool Congress and BJP combine...

If the Congress lost its last few seats in UP, Sonia cannot be blamed since the party was on a weak wicket. By the same token, it would be unfair to attribute Congress successes in Maharashtra and Rajasthan to Sonia factor, since both were largely bipolar contests and the BJp was handicapped by an anti-incumbency mood...

In Karnataka, the Congress lost in most of the areas Sonia visited except for Bangalore and Raichur...

Perhaps, the best state to judge the impact of the Sonia blitzkrieg would be tiny Haryana where there was a clear swing against the state government of Bansi Lal who was in an alliance with the BJP. Haryana voters in the past have differentiated between an assembly election and a parliamentary poll in their voting patterns. But this time, the biggest beneficiary of the anti-Bansi Lal mood was not the Congress but Om Prakash Chautala's regional HLD party. Sonia held rallies at Faridabad, Kurukshetra, Sirsa and Rohtak. The BJP won Faridabad, the HLD won both Kurukshetra and Sirsa and incumbent Congress MP Bhupinder Singh Hooda defeated an ageing Devi Lal by a mere 500 odd votes.

While Sonia's contribution to the Congress may not be measurable in terms of seats and votes, there is unanimous agreement that without here entry into the campaign, the then demoralised Congress would have slid further downward... whatever were Sonia's gain for the Congress, they were perhaps ore at the expense of the UF than the BJP.

Apology and More
Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 26 January, 1998

... By denying him the Congress ticket for the forthcoming election for having failed to prevent the destruction and by apologising for the party's failure to prevent the tragic events that led to the demolition, the Congress has evidently decided to make a clean break with its hesitant past in this respect and follow a clear-cut, even aggressive, political line...

... The Congress has decided to launch a no-holds-barred assault on what it evidently considers its main adversary. A foretaste of the line of attack was also available from Mrs. Sonia Gandhi's speech on the previous day when she ascribed Mahatma Gandhi's assassination to the atmosphere of communal hatred which, according to her, is once again endangering the country's integrity.

Faraz Ahmad on UF's Swan Song and Janata Dal's Extinction

... The electoral debacle of the UF, an alliance of regional parties professedly committed to secularism, social justice and federalism, is in effect a defeat of the third alternative. In 1996, when the Left together with the regional parties led by the Janata Dal, decided to form the UF to give the country a government despite a fractured mandate, most political observers laughed it away as a loose unprincipled conglomerate of regional satraps, with nothing in common but a lust for power...

... The UF Government during its 18-month tenure did some good work... It did provide a "clean government"... And yet the Front got a solid drubbing. Future analysts may attribute several reasons for the failure of this experiment, but the fact is that it could not meet the aspirations of its voters. For instance, the UF Government remained busy in disproving its critics and endear itself to the class in whose perception there are only two parties - the BJP and the Congress. This section ... is not willing to give any space to any other encroachers on their territory. And encroacher the UF certainly was in the sense that the voters who gave the UF over 190 seats in 1996, were opposed to both the Congress and the BJP and had expected the Front to be different from both.

The Front, however, kept balancing itself in being half-Congress and half-BJP. The oft-repeated slogan of fighting the "communal forces" was brushed under the carpet during its 18 months in office, what with the first UF Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda paying obeisance to leaders like Bal Thackeray and the second UF Prime Minister as well as their mascot Ram Vilas Paswan seeking the BJP and its allies' help to win their seats.

The Front's other raison d'etre was federalism... Even the Left parties, earlier screaming hoarse about implementing the Sarkaria Commission report, rescinded on their commitment.

And above all, social justice ... became a dirty word for most Front leaders. One senor leader said, "We were never for social justice, our stress is on social change"...

Despite all the efforts to put up a semblance of unity by Front leaders, the fact that they were divided and confused on the basic issues, reached home...

Alternatively ... the UF and the Congress come together again. For, as former Prime Minister V.P. Singh has said, in a fractured mandate any party which can mobilise the numbers has an equal right to rule. However, the Front and the Congress apparently have too many problems to come together and if it is done it will be too cosmetic to carry any conviction. ...

The emerging scenario is that while the regional parties of the Indo-Gangetic plains professing social justice, are gathering under the Congress umbrella, their southern and north-eastern, counterparts are seeking BJP cover. Thus whether the Vajpayee Government stays in power or falls sooner or later, the UF is all set to be doomed. And historians can well sit down to write the epitaph for federalism.

(Source: The Pioneer, 12 March, 1998)

The Janata Dal, the flagship of the UF, have been wiped out from the political map of the country in the 1998 general elections... Since the party had significant presence only in three states of the country, with Karnataka being the main hope this time, the trends this time hint at total decimation of JD. Amid the ruins, the few survivors in the Dal ... were former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda ... and I.K. Gujral who carries the stigma of winning on Akali-BJP support.

The other Dal heavyweight ... S. Jaipal Reddy, has returned to Parliament, not on the strength of his party but for the blessings of A.P. Chief Minister Naidu.

Another Dal stalwart Ram Vilas Paswan has been propped up by the BJP-Samata combine in Hajipur... Party President Sharad Yadav himself has lost to his betenoire Laloo Yadav.

Of all the three states, the party expected to perform best in Karnataka, as in Bihar... Deve Gowda is being punished by the voters for trying to take the Dal in his own hands, to which he was an outsider till very lately.

In Orissa, the Dal was identified solely with late Biju Patnaik and even under him the party had got only four seats in 1996, of which he won two himself. With Biju dead, the party had all but finished in Orissa...

After his demise, the Dal split and the people of Orissa found in the BJD-BJP alliance a new alternative to the Congress..

That left out Bihar, once the strongest fortress of the Dal. There it looked invincible till ... Laloo Prasad parted company and floated his Rashtriya Janata Dal against which the Dal, the Left fought on all seats. The doom was writ large on the wall.

Moreover, its performance under the Deve Gowda-Ram Vilas Paswas-Sharad Yadav trio did not cover itself with any glory on the twin issues with which the party was identified — social justice and secularism.

... Sharad Yadav may be reduced to another ... Subramaniam Swamy, just holding on the electoral symbol 'wheel' and distributing tickets all over the country... As for Deve Gowda, he may have to retire to Hassan for good and Paswan might have to look for greener pastures elsewhere.

(Source: The Pioneer)

Situation Report - Uttar Pradesh

In a sharp political polarisation in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP (57), its ally, the Samata Party (2) and an Independent they backed together bagged 60 of the 85 Lok Sabha seats, while the Samajwadi Party got 20, the BSP 4 and the SJP 1 (Chandra Shekhar in Ballia). The Congress(I), which till a decade ago was the main party in UP, seen as the home-State of the Nehru-Gandhi family, was totally rejected by the electorate in 1998 and the JD and the Left parties fared no better.

This time there was no saffron wave... The party's slogan was "stable government, able prime minister"... It paid dividend... The BJP was able to retain as many as 39 of its old seats, while losing 11 to the SP and 2 to BSP.

The BJP won 18 new seats, while the Samata Party opened its account with 2 seats. The Congress(I) and the Congress(T) between them ... lost to the BJP. ...

BJP's victory in Rampur this time is ... remarkable, since the constituency has the highest percentage of Muslim voters in the state (42%t) and all the main parties including the BJP had fielded Muslim candidates there. The BJP's new MP is a young activist and a votary of building a Rama temple at Ayodhya for which he had offered Kar Seva in 1990, inviting the ire of his community. The Cong(I) candidate, Begum Noor Bano (was defeated). ...

Among the BJP casualties are Vinay Katiyar, former Bajrang Dal chief, who lost in Faizabad to the SP's Mitrasen Yadav and Lt. Gen. Prakashmani Tripathi in Deoria. The BJP also lost Kheri, Hardoi, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Kannauj, Jalesar, Bijnore (SC), Mohanlalganj, Gonda, Bahraich, Balrampur and Chail.

The SP's losses included Amroha, Kairana, Etawah, Aonla, Barabanki, Dumriaganj, Bansgaon (SC), and Mirzapur... The seats of Fatehpur, Banda and Shahabad were wrested by the BJP from the BSP. The BSP in turn wrested Misrikh (SC) and Bahraich from the BJP and Azamgarh from the SP. The only seat the BSP retained out of the 6 it won in 1996 was Akbarpur (SC) by slender margin (with) Ms. Mayawati... The party lost Saidpur and Sambhal to the SP. But, the biggest setback for the BSP came in Saharanpur where the party chief Kanshi Ram, lost by a big margin.

Mulayam Singh has demonstrated that all other constituents of the UF do not matter in UP. The only seat he left to any constituent was Varanasi - to the CPI(M). With all other constituents of the UF wiped out and the BSP managing to secure only 4 seats, 2 on the personal appeal of its candidates - Arif Mohammed Khan in Bahraich and Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy" in Azamgarh, **the SP has emerged as the sole challenger to the saffron party in UP.** (The Hindu, 4 March, 1998)

The BJP ... has won most of the seats where Muslims constitute a sizable chunks of the electorates, particularly in western Uttar Pradesh. ...

The BJP wrested the three Muslim-dominated seats at Rampur, Amroha and Kairana of western UP, conceding only Bijnore (SC) to the Samajwadi Party...

... The other constituencies with a large number of Muslim voters which returned BJP candidates are Saharanpur, Amroha, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Kairana, Aligarh, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Farrukhabad, Khurja, Muzaffarnagar, Ghaziabad-Hapur, Khalilabad and Machhlishahr. The party lost Moradabad by a slender margin to the SP and in Sambhal, only the personality of Mulayam Singh Yadav could ensure SP victory.

In Lucknow ... in the Muslim-dominated Assembly segment of Lucknow (west), Vajpayee polled 96,534 votes against 56,893 by Ali.

Vajpayee polled the highest number of votes in UP - a record 4,31,734 against 2,12,612 by Muzaffar Ali...

(Source: P.K. Roy in The Hindu, 5 March, 1998)

Western UP

The BJP has swept the entire Meerut, Saharanpur, Garhwal and Kumaon division of UP wrenching the Lok Sabha seats from ... **Ajit Singh in Baghpat, Narian Dutt Tiwari in Naini Tal, Satpal Maharaj in Pauri Garhwal** and holding on to **Saharanpur by defeating the BSP supremo Kanshi Ram.**

In Moradabad division, the BJP put up an excellent performance by wresting **Rampur from Begum Noor Bano** of the Congress and .... **Amroha from the SP.**

The Samajwadi Party won three seats in Moradabad division with **Sambhal (Mulayam Singh Yadav), Moradabad and Bijnore.** ... That the Samajwadi Party candidates were runners up in most places indicates the near total polarisation of Muslim votes in its favour. The BSP, another keen contender in the political arena seems to have polled a good percentage of Dalit votes making the divisions on the caste and communal lines complete in this part of the State, feel political observers...

(Source: The Hindu, 4 March, 1998)

(Contd. from Page 166)

Also ... this election was not for government-making in the State. It was for making a Government at the Centre. And in this, the primary concern of the Muslims was to prevent the BJP from coming to power. "The AGP cannot check the BJP even if it wins all the 14 seats in Assam. It is the Congress(I) which can do it..."

Thirdly, the atrocities committed by security forces on innocent people on mere suspicion on course of anti-insurgency operations, had alienated large sections of the rural masses from the ruling party. ...

Situation Report (Contd.)

Uttar Pradesh

The 1998 Lok Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh has turned out to be a straight combat between arch rivals BJP and the SP... The way the two major players have wiped out most of the others looked quite unbelievable. A whopping 5.7 per cent swing for the BJP and a 6.7 per cent increase in the SP vote have ensured this. Computer calculations on the basis of votes polled by top three candidates in each seat reveal that the gains of the BJP have come about mainly at the expense of the Congress.

The SP, on the other hand, has performed remarkably because of the poor showing of its UF partners and the Bahujan Samaj Party. Though the BSP gained 1.9 per cent votes, it lost two seats over 1996, while the Congress lost nearly 4 per cent votes from the paltry 8.14 per cent it polled in 1996. That these elections have proved to be an exclusive BJP-SP affair is proved by the way these parties have clinched seats from each other. **Though the saffron party has gained five seats as compared to 1996, it lost its hold on 15. The party could retain just 37 of the 52 seats. Of these 15 seats, the SP has grabbed 13 whereas the BSP has snatched the remaining two. Similarly of the 11 seats lost by the SP, nine have a saffron flag flying now. The SP lost one seat to the Samata Party and another the BSP. Apart from the SP, the Congress has contributed to the BJP's 20 new seats, losing all the five seats it held. Three BSP and two Congress(T) seats were also captured by the saffron party. The BSP could retain just one of the seats it captured in 1996. Similarly, the SP could also retain just five of the 16 seats it won in 1996.**

The number two and number three positions shared also proved that the BJP and the SP have dominated the elections. **BJP candidates came second in 22 constituencies, whereas they were pushed to the third place only in four. The SP was second-seed in 37 contests and its candidates were third in the race for 18 seats.**

The Congress was nowhere to be seen. Its candidates came second in just six constituencies whereas they were placed third in five other seats...

(Dilip Awasthi in The Pioneer)

West Bengal: BJP-TC Surge

While maintaining a brave front over retaining its 1996 tally of 33 seats in the face of an anti-incumbency wave in most parts of the country, the Left Front in West Bengal is deeply worried at the massive thrust by the Wet Bengal Trinamul Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)...

The CPI(M) may have added one more seat to take its total to 24 by **wresting the Jangipur seat from the Congress, but the fat is that in at least 16 seats, the combined vote of the Trinamul, BJP and the Congress had exceeded the winning margin of the Left Front candidates.** This has set the alarm bells ringing in the Left camp.

While it was more or less known that the voters in Calcutta and the neighbourig districts like Howrah, Hooghly, North 24-Parganas and South 24-Parganas would be **swayed by anti-establishment sentiments roused to a feverish pitch by Mamata Banerjee**, the results showed that **the Left base has started eroding elsewhere too.** In seats like Hooghly, Diamond Harbour, Krishnagar, Nabadwip and Contai, **the winning margin of the CPI(M) candidates had sharply dropped** and the party candidates won just because the contest was triangular.

More than the Trinamul occupying the space occupied by the Congress, the CPI(M) is concerned over the emergence of the BJP. Sharing seats with the Trinamul and focusing on 13 seats against 41 in the last election, **the BJP not only wrested the prestigious Dum Dum seats from the Marxists, but also pushed the Congress to third position in Krishnagar, Burdwan, Bolpur, Durgapur, Bankura, Bibhum, Katwa, Berhampore, Joynagar, Arambagh and Midnapore.**

... With the panchayat elections due in the State sometime around June this year, the ascendance of the BJP and the Trinamul is a cause of concern for the Left camp. To a sizeable section in the Congress, any form of cooperation with the Leftists at the national level would further endanger the party's prospects in the panchayat election in the near future as well as the Assembly elections three years from now.

Meanwhile, the stunning success of the Trinamul has created confusion in the Congress ranks and it is being speculated that a large-scale exodus from the Congress to the Trinamul ... cannot be ruled out.

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

(Contd. from Page 176)

Ibrahim was relieved from the Information portfolio in the hope that he would be given an important post in the Janata Dal... The Kannada section of the newspaper disappeared on June 8. Subsequently, the Urdu section was also wound up last week...

Bohra (had) joined Ibrahim's bandwagon after quitting his post as State BJP Minorities Wing President, following the promises held out by the Union Minister. When contacted, Bohra told The Pioneer that he was planning to start an Urdu eveninger...

(Source: The Pioneer)

Situation Report - Bihar

The alliance led by Laloo Prasad Yadav has got a severe drubbing from the BJP-Samata Party combine in the state.

In fact, the BJP could manage only a marginal increase of 1 seat as compared to its tally of 18 in 1996. The Samata Party's tally, on the other hand, has gone up from 4 (in 1996) to 10 this time.

The RJD and allies could prevent a split in their vote only in north Bihar. However, the left parties, which had won four seats in the last elections, have been routed. Apart from this, the Samajwadi Party, which had won one seat in Bihar last time, has also drawn a blank.

While the BJP candidates won a number of seats in the tribal belt, the candidates of its alliance partner - the Samata Party - (won) most of the seats in central Bihar...

... The RJD has captured most of the seats in north Bihar... Wresting three seats from the BJP and one from the Samata Party, the RJD's overall tally in the region remained eight.

(Source: The Times of India, 6 March, 1998)

The election results from Bihar, apart from establishing that Laloo Yadav has retained his clout, have shown clearly that the JD as well as the CPI are decimated ... but could ensure the victory of the Congress(I) candidates in a couple of constituencies in Northern Bihar - Madhubani and Begusarai. ...

The CPI was mauled in a similar fashion in Balia and Jehanabad constituencies... While in Balia, the CPI candidate could secure only the third position - the RJD wrested the seats and the BJP came number two - in Jehanabad the party finished a poor fourth... Significantly, the CPI(ML) could secure three times more than the CPI's vote share. It is clear that the CPI has lost its base to both Laloo and the CPI(ML) all over Bihar.

While all these establish the fact that charges of corruption against Laloo Yadav and his consequent isolation in Bihar's politics have hardly affected his political clout, there are far more significant signals that the election results from Bihar convey. These are the social realignments ... in the state, in other words, a realignment of caste groups.

... Janata Dal (once) represented the aspirations of two important social groups in the Hindi heartland - the Rajputs and the Yadavs and a section of the Muslims - against the Bhoomihar-Brahmin-Dalit combination who were with the Congress(I) at that stage.

The alignment changed fast and the Rajputs sided with the Bhumihars protesting against Mandalisation... This new social alliance - essentially the upper castes - found the BJP a shade better than the Congress(I), whose fortunes wee declining and in the churning that took place in Bihar, the BJP could establish itself as the only force against Laloo Yadav's Janata Dal, and the Samata Party joined the anti-Laloo combine; the 1996 elections were fought on these lines and Laloo took a beating.

This, however, has been reversed. Laloo Yadav has managed to retain his clout even in the changed situation and a substantial section of the Rajputs were brought over to the Laloo bandwagon by none other than the symbol of "Rajput pride" Anand Mohan Singh... The Rajputs have once again joined the battle against their traditional rivals, the Bhumihars.

This was also borne out by the Congress(I) victory in Begusarai... This realignment of caste groups - the return of the Rajputs to his side helped Laloo Yadav retain his 16 seats in this election and enabled the Congress(I) to add Madhubani and Begusarai to its tally in North Bihar in addition to Katihar in the North-East.

Meanwhile, the political discourse in the Southern districts - the Jharkhand area - being entirely different and caste-based alignment being alien there, Laloo Yadav has never been able to establish any base for himself. That perhaps explains the virtual sweep ... by the BJP.

(V. Krishna Ananth in The Hindu, 7 3.1998)

Dalit politics underwent a tremendous change in the ... Lok Sabha elections, so much so that it overrode the backward politics and shaped the victory of many stalwarts, and at the same time, left its hitherto champions in political oblivion. The Left parties, which had been winning the elections with the support of the Dalit vote bank and a section of the intermediary castes, have been wiped out ...reflecting a definite change in their stance towards them.

It has also brought to the fore the inner contradictions among the Dalit leadership and their dependence on the party in power. Earlier it was the Congress which ruled the country for over 40 years with their support and ...(later) the so-called champions of social justice led by Laloo Prasad Yadav became their sole leader. ...

The split in the JD leading to the formation of the RJD effected a shift in the Dalit vote bank... Though RJD chief Laloo Yadav tried to make up for his loss in terms of the Dalits with the powerful Rajputs in certain pockets, his nominees in many other constituencies had to suffer because of the disenchantment of the Dalits. The election results established beyond doubt that ... Yadav and his erstwhile allies - the CPI and CPM - were no longer favourites to the (Dalits).

Yadav is himself responsible for distancing the 23 per cent consolidated vote bank from his fold by launching vituperative attack on Paswan, who wielded a considerable clout among the Dalits, at least in Bihar, even since his emergence on the national political scene. Apparently, it was an error of judgement on part of Yadav to take the Dalit vote bank for granted especially...

... **The tactic understanding between the Samata-BJP and the JD worked and the Dalits in lieu of the support its leader had from the other sections reciprocated in other constituencies by supporting the saffron brigade.**

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 9 March, 1998)

Situation Report

Andhra Pradesh

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) lost seven seats in the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections because it fell short of a mere 50,000 votes. The silver lining for the TDP is that its voteshare has gone up by nearly one and a half per cent. But this is nothing compared to the BJP which has stolen the vote pie in AP. The party not only surprised everybody by winning 4 seats but also by polling 18.53% of vote (up from nearly six per cent in 1996). This means that it has become almost the third alternative and people are willing to test it.

The number of Assembly segments, where the TDP got the majority of the votes, has dwindled considerably. It had won as many as 225 seats in the 1994 Assembly elections. Today it is down to coughing up a majority only in 98 seats. If the present trend continues, the TDP's performance in the next Assembly elections will be as bad as that of the Congress in 1996.

The Congress which has retained 22 Lok Sabha seats, has also a cause for concern in the Assembly segments. In 1996, it had a majority in 148 seats. This time it is down to 137 Assembly segments.

Here again the BJP is the clear winner. The party, which has only three members in the Assembly, has got a majority in 33 segments. This means it is all set to emerge as a major state player.

The increasing popularity of the BJP is not due to its communal or religious appeal... Given that nobody wanted elections, its slogan of able leader and stable government caught on. People were also heard talking about giving it an opportunity at least.

The TDP's two Leftist allies, CPI and CPI(M) have more or less retained their share of popular votes. But the CPI(M) has lost its only seat, Khammam, to the Congress. The CPI has retained both Nalgonda and Bhadrachalan. The CPI has increased its vote percentage from 2.3% in 1996 to 2.5% this time. But the CPI(M)'s vote share has gone down from 2.91% in 1996 to 2.88%.

But it is the TDP (NTR), led by Lakshmi Parvathi, has suffered the most. The party, which had won nearly 10.5% of vote last time is now down to mere 1.2% as it contested only three seats. **It came second only in the Srikakulam constituency,** behind the ruling TDP. While the BJP has benefited considerably by entering into an alliance with it, Parvathi has not got much in exchange.

Another interesting aspect of the Lok Sabha results is the way that TDP and Congress have snatched each other's seats. The Congress has wrested the TDP seats of Ankapailly, Nasrapur, Eluru, Machilpatnam, Tenali, Bapatla, Narsaraopeta, Hindupur and Nagarkunool. it also snatched Khammam from CPI(M), the TDP ally.

Maharashtra

Within the surprise of the Congress(I) taming the tiger of the Shiv Sena and the BJP in their own domain, Maharashtra, are many other amazing facts.

The BJP-Shiv Sena combine had together held 33 of 48 seats of the State ... but now the Congress(I) has the same number of seats and the alliance a mere 10. With the RPI bagging our seats - not a single one reserved for Scheduled Castes - it had contested with the Congress(I) support, the anti-saffron axis has 37 seats. The BJP-Sena combine has been totally wiped out in Vidarbha and most of the Marathwada regions of Maharashtra.

The Muslim constituency of the electorate was by and large dominated by the Samajwadi Party and the Congress(I) benefitted immensely from its alliance with it. But all three candidates of the Samajwadi Party lost at the hustings, indicating the one-way traffic of the vote transfer.

The BJP has been reduced to just four seats from the 18 it held and the Shiv Sena to 6 from 15. The victory margins of the combine have also been reduced. The saffron brigade, not only lost its previous gains but also yielded its traditional urban base.

The biggest jolt it got was in Mumbai, not just a bastion but the power house of the Shiv Sena and the BJP and also their largest base in the State... BJP veteran Ram Naik, won the seat for the fourth consecutive term and yet the margin of Naik shrunk to a mere 55,000 votes from 2.56 lakhs in 1996... Shiv Sena's Mohan Rawale ... retained his South Central Mumbai seat by only 153 votes as against 58,600 votes last time.

In North West Mumbai, Madhukar Sarpotdar, the Sena's group leader in the Lok Sabha, saw his margin down to 20,000 from the earlier 88,400...

The Congress(I) and its ally grabbed as many as 18 seats from the BJP-Sena alliance with moderate to heavy margins and five seats with small margins. The party, however, substantially improved its winning margin in eight seats which it had held earlier...

(Source: The Hindu, 7 March, 1998)

The TDP on the other hand has wrested seven seats which were thought to be Congress citadels. They include Parvatipuram, Amalapuram, Mahbubnagar (wrested by TDP's ally Janata Dal), Nizamabad, Peddapally (SC), Siddipeta (SC) and Hanamkonda.

The BJP seems to have eaten into both. it wrested two seas, Rajahmundry and Secunderabad, from the Congress and Karimnagar and Kakinada from the TDP.

It finished second in Nalgonda and Medak, the first CPI stronghold and the second a Congress bastion. ...

(The Pioneer, New Delhi)

Situation Report

Tamilnadu: Shockwaves of Coimbatore Bomb Blasts

... With the results out, both Karunanidhi and his TMC ally, G.K. Moopanar, and other leaders of their front were quick to admit that the blasts had played a vital role in tilting the scales in favour of the AIADMK-BJP combine. While the DMK-TMC leaders were earlier picturising the BJP as the party which sought to usher in communalism with all its ugly manifestations into the State, the average voter saw the BJP in the post-blasts situation as the victim and not the aggressor.

After all, the public meeting venue in Coimbatore where BJP president Advani was to address a meeting at 4 p.m. on February 14 was one of the targets.

The pattern of victories of the AIADMK-BJP front in a vast area around Coimbatore - nearly a dozen constituencies in western Tamil Nadu - reveals a high degree of sympathy and support for this front after the explosions.

Privately, the DMK-TMC camp, prior to the blasts itself, was not hopeful of getting more than 25-28 seats of the 39 in Tamil Nadu. However, the explosions meant that another dozen seats were lost. An indicator of the blasts fuelling an AIADMK-BJP victory in that belt are the high margins of victory. ... In the ultimate analysis, the few successes for the DMK-TMC camp have come in the non-western sector. Almost all of them were achieved along the eastern coast...

The results have shown a very sharp geographical divide - the west and the south almost fully passing into the hands of the AIADMK-BJP front and the DMK-TMC camp having something to cheer about only along the eastern coast which is the farthest distance from the impact of the blasts. ...

The election scenario in Tamil Nadu has in the past revealed a North-South divide with the DMK generally performing well in the North and the AIADMK and the Congress in the south. This is the first time that a polarisation has set in along the west too, influenced largely by the blasts. If the Sriperumbudur blast in May 1991 helped the AIADMK and its then ally, the Congress, to a sweep in the elections, the blasts in Coimbatore and the fear psychosis created by raids and discoveries of more bombs in other parts of the State helped the AIADMK again in 1998 - this time with the BJP as its beneficiary.

The BJP, which began the election campaign with the hope of at least securing the Nagercoil seat this time (if came a close second there in the 1996 elections), ironically lost the Nagercoil constituency but won the Coimbatore and Nilgiris constituencies on the western side comfortably, apart from Tiruchirapalli in central Tamil Nadu where Advani, fresh from his visit to Coimbatore on that fateful day, addressed a public meeting along with the AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalitha.

(Source: R. Rangaraj inThe Indian Express, 13 March, 1998)

J&K: Warning to NC

The parliamentary elections results in J&K seem to have delivered a warning to National Conference to revert to honour its promises or opposition may further accelerate negativism among the people about the Government and the party. The party has won two out of the 4 seats, the results of which have been declared so far. It has retained its supremacy in Srinagar and Baramulla, but the losses in Jammu and Anantnag have lessened the sweetness of the victory.

The results from Kashmir Valley clearly revealed that the party has lost several of its strongholds in the valley. Particularly worrying for the ruling party is the victory of former Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in Anantnag. This victory is viewed as a big blow to the Government and it has inherent potents of disturbing the political applecart in this sensitive border state...

It is for the first time since 1975 that Congress on its own has won Anantnag seat. The 1975 marked the return of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to the mainstream politics after a gap of 22 years. In 1977, Congress had won the seat in alliance with National Conference...

Farooq's party had won 14 out of 16 Assembly segments in Anantnag and Pulwama districts forming part of this South Kashmir Parliamentary constituency. In fact the number was 15 as CPI-M candidate from Kulgam had also won with the active support of NC... Now it has lost in 11 out of 16 segments, which is largely attributed to three factors: neglect of South Kashmir as regards representation in the State Cabinet..., (choice of a) non-party man as a candidate and disheartened workers...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 11 March, 1998)

Assam: AGP Rejected

The ruling Asom Gana Parishad has been completely routed. The opposition Congress(I) with its ally, the UMF, bagged 11 of the 14 seats, while the BJP and the ASDC won one seat each. Independent captured the Bodo-dominated Kokrajhar seat.

It has been an unmistable verdict against the ruling AGP. In fact it has been a double defeat for the AGP. In eight of the 11 seats won by the Cong(I)-UMF combine, the BJP, which has emerged as the main rival of the Cong(I), relegated the AGP to the third position.

Several reasons have been put forward for the debacle suffered by the AGP. The first is the party's total failure, in the last 21 months, to do any development work, even repairing the National Highways which are in a pitiable condition.

Secondly, this time the party lost whatever support it had gained from the minority community in 1996, with the Muslims voting almost en masse for the Cong(I) The reason ... was explained (is that) the AGP government had done nothing for the Muslims: they did not get even a peon or a chowkidar's job...

(Contd. on Page 162)

Neena Vyas on Birth Pangs of the BJP Government

... Labour pangs (have been) experienced by the BJP in full measure... This is not the government that the BJP wanted - and it will necessarily be an unwanted child. And senior BJP leaders are candid about the fact that this coalition experiment is a "necessary evil" that would pave the way for a "full-fledged BJP government at the Centre... The BJP leaders wee visualising a situation in which the party could get a majority on its own. They were then talking a different language. At the party's Bhubaneswar conclave, the BJP president L.K. Advani, saw a "tidal wave" in favour of the party and said it would not surprise him if it got a majority on its own.

... The BJP leaders did not see any need for a common minimum programme with the allies. One senior leader said, "The allies could come and join the government on the basis of the BJP's manifesto or, if they preferred, they could give support from outside, or even sit in the Opposition if they so wished." It was a clear signal that the allies would have to join a BJP government on its terms. There would be no question of accommodation of their point of view. ...

Midway through the election campaign, it became increasingly clear that far from getting a majority on its own, the BJP would have to struggle to get a bare majority even with its 14 alliance partners, some of them cobbled together on the eve of the elections by taking in the "left overs" from the Congress(I) and the JD. And it was then that Advani and Vajpayee began admitting that a common minimum programme would be needed.

As it became clear that the BJP would not only have to lean heavily on its allies but also have to garner some more support to reach even a bare majority ... the party leaders ... looked as if they were being readied for the slaughter house rather than a coronation, and they began talking of mutual accommodation.

Over the last decade which has seen the BJP spread its wings to different parts of the country and record a phenomenal growth, the party has been selling what it described as its USP - a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, scrapping of Article 370 ... and a uniform civil code among other things. And ... in a 'national agenda' for a possible BJP-led government, the party was ready to abandon all its pet issues.

Corruption was its "big issue" earlier but the party learnt to turn a blind eye to it... The latest stance is that "the BJP cannot apply its own strict policy to its allies. "For the last two years, it has described the United Front Government as a "khichdi (hotch potch) government, and i is how leading a government no better placed to take firm decisions.

The BJP party structure is such that Mr. Advani will continue to call the shots and he, in turn, will have to take the RSS leadership into confidence on all major policy decisions. In addition, there will be the pulls and pressures from the allies. Mr. Vajpayee ... cannot brush them aside and pretend that he would be a Prime Minister with full authority.

For the moment, the BJP has faced a problem from one of its allies, the AIADMK, but others cannot be too far behind. And when Ministry-making actually takes place, there will be a lot of heartburning in the BJP camp itself...

(Source: The Hindu, 15 March, 1998)

H.K. Dua's Plea to BJP to Abandon Hardline

The ... parliamentary polls have thrown up a new challenge before the country... Whether the nation can meet the challenge will ... depend on the ability of the leaders of political parties to learn lessons from past mistakes, particularly those that brought about the dissolution of the 11th Lok Sabha, the collapse of three governments in just 18 months and patently an avoidable election...

Vajpayee is aware of the complexities of the task ahead of him in managing a coalition of as many as 17 groups of different persuasions, but the Congress and the United Front - or whatever is left of it - will be ill-advised in adopting a confrontationist approach...

Whatever the limits of the mandate of the BJP-led alliance, the Congress and the United Front have clearly been rejected by the electorate...

The country has already played a high price for political parties' - including the BJP's - choosing to follow anti-Congressism over the years. It should not be made to pay for the Congress and the United Front deciding to follow a blind anti-BJPism now. Such an approach will add more tensions in politics, detracting attention from national tasks requiring all-party cooperation. ...

The BJP has been spurned by other parties because of its fondness for Hindutva and what is described as "cultural nationalism". The demolition of the Babari Masjid alienated a chunk of countrymen from the party. Whatever the compulsions - electoral or otherwise - the party is now choosing to shelve such divisive issues... The country should welcome the party's adaptive inclination to give up the politics of the extreme and come to the middle of the road where pragmatism more than passions are the best guides. Pushing the fundamentalists back to hardline positions can hardly be considered wise or politically correct. ...

(Source: The Times of India, 11 March, 1998)

NCM: National Conference of State Minorities Commissions and Boards

New Delhi, 31 July-1 August, 1997

As part of its Independence golden Jubilee Celebrations 1997-98, the NCM held at Vigyan Bhawan a two-day National Conference of State Minorities Commissions and Boards. Among the invitees were eight State Minorities Commissions, two State Minorities Boards and representatives of all other State Governments having no such bodies ... State Governments of Maharashtra and Jammu & Kashmir participated. The Conference was inaugurated by Welfare Minister Shri B.S. Ramoowalia who assured all possible freedom and Government help to NCM in its work. In his key-note addresss NCM Chairman Prof. Tahir Mahmood explained the history, background and legal basis of the National and State Minorities Commissions and declared that:

"If justice to and equality of all Indians irrespective of their religion and language are part of Nation's conscience, then the NCM and its State counterparts are surely Nation's conscience-keepers."

The Conference finally passed four specific Resolutions and took several other decisions stated below:

Resolutions

A. All religious and linguistic communities of India, including the majority and the Minorities ... must live in perfect harmony, respecting each other's religion, culture, language, traditions and Constitutional and legal rights, without allowing themselves to be affected by any feelings of ill-will, bias or prejudice against each other.

B. All Indian citizens ... must meticulously discharge all the Fundamental Duties enshrined in the Constitution, especially those relating to promotion of peaceful co-living and common Indian brotherhood and protection of the composite cultural heritage of India.

C. The U.N. Declaration on Minorities 1992 and all the Constitutional provisions and Legislative measures of India relating to the rights of Minorities - especially those relating to or affecting their social, economic and educational rights - must be fully respected and implemented in ... letter and spirit by the Central and State Governments and all administrative authorities and public servants in the country.

D. ... All institutional arrangements relating to numerically weaker sections of the society must be strengthened by the concerned Governments. As part of this exercise, the necessary recognition, powers, facilities and funds must be provided by the ... and Finance Corporations and Minorities Welfare Departments of Governments.

Decisions

(i) State Minorities Commission should be set up in the States where (these do not exist). Minorities Boards of Assam and Gujarat should be elevated to the status of Commissions.

(ii) Chairpersons of State Minorities Commissions should be made ex-officio Members of State Human Rights Commissions wherever they exist.

(iii) Non-statutory State Minorities Commissions should be given legislative charters. ...

(iv) All State Minorities Commissions shall adopt NCM Rules and Regulations with necessary verbal changes. ...

(v) Each State Minorities Commission shall appoint Consultative Councils for Chairpersons and Honorary Advisors in the Districts.

(vi) Quarterly Reports on Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme by the State Governments, required under law for NCM, shall involve State Minorities Commissions. They shall pursue the matter with State Governments and ensure their regular and punctual submission. ...

(vii) Minorities Development and Finance Corporations (MDFCs) must be set up in all States/UTs - and all MDFCs, existing and future, must work in ... consultation and collaboration with the National and State Minorities Commissions.

(viii) All concerned authorities must strictly follow the ... Guidelines issued by the NCM and the Central Government regarding recognition and monitoring of educational institutions of the Minorities (established under) Article 30 of the Constitution.

(Source: NCM Newsletter, Winter 1997)

(Contd. from Page 153)

However, Muslim votes are an exception to this general pattern. Muslim vote for the BJP is class-neutral but exhibits a slightly erratic pattern. Only two per cent of the very poor among the Muslims vote for the BJP; among the rich also only two per cent of the votes go to that party. But about three per cent of the poor vote for it; among the middle class Muslims the BJP support is nearly four per cent. All this goes to show the fear and apprehensions the Muslims have with the bJp due to the general perception among them that the latter is a Hindu chauvinist party...

Given all these figures, it is time to more seriously analyse the class character of the BJP as well as to look

NCM: Recommendation to Include State Minorities

Chairman of the National Commission on Minorities (NCM) Tahir Mahmood has recommended that the commission's jurisdiction should be extended to the Hindu minority in the militancy-torn state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Dr. Mahmood said that NCM Act could be adopted by the state assembly. He made the recommendations after the massacre of Kashmiri Pandits near Srinagar recently.

In his recommendation, Dr. Mahmood has said that the state government has said that the state government should set up a minority commission, and if it was not in a position to do so, it should ratify the Parliamentary legislation "so that we are able to take the state under our jurisdiction to protect the interests of minorities there."

... "There is a general feeling that minority in this country means Muslims. This is not correct. There are other minorities as well. When we speak of majority and minority, these are numerical expressions"...

"Like many other Acts, NCM Act is also not applicable in J&K. Also, according to the NCM Act, Hindus are not an identified minority. This mindset needs to be changed".

He stressed that the minority status is not a status to be conferred by the government. This is only a recognition for the purposes of exercise of power residing in us. Therefore, we try and look into the interests of minorities at the state-level as well.

Dr. Mahmood's recommendation for bringing Kashmiri Hindus under its jurisdiction, if accepted would go a long way in correcting the commission's image as well.

"Generally , there is a feeling that NCM is meant for looking after the interest of the Muslims, appeasing the Muslims and securing for the Muslims something which is not due to them. This is mot amusing, shocking, and surprising in my personal opinion". ...

"This perception that we have been looking after the interest of only the Muslim community is baseless. We have been bringing out the newsletters which are edited by me. In them, we deliberately put into all the major decisions and actions taken, just to tell to readers, that we are catering not only to the interest of Muslims but of other minorities too".

"States cooperation in protecting the rights of the minorities was must. Expressing concern over non-renewal of state commission's terms in Maharashtra and Rajasthan, he said the Centre should immediately release funds to set up the regional NCM...

(Source: The Times of India, 5 March, 1998)

NCM Meetings and Major Decisions July, 1997 - February, 1998

Since June 1997 the Commission has had the following meetings:

Fifth meeting	:	17 June 1997
Sixth meeting	:	22 July 1997
Seventh meeting	:	26 August 1997
Eighth meeting	:	30 September 1997
Ninth meeting	:	27 October 1997
Tenth meeting	:	2 & 3 December, 1997
Eleventh meeting	:	9 February, 1998

... Since July 1997 the following major recommendations have been made:

(i) Constitution of a Former Judges' Committee by the Union Home Ministry for reviewing all cases of TADA detenus and recommending proper action.

(ii) Provision of facility by the U.P. Government to the Members of the State Legislature to take oath in their mother tongue including Urdu.

(iii) Arrangements for tabling of Commission's Statutory Recommendations promptly in Parliament or the State Legislature, as the case may be, as early as these are made, in terms of sub-sections (2) and (3) of Section 9 of the National Commission for Minorities Act 1992.

(iv) Proper revision of the Haj Committee Act 1959 and streamlining of official arrangements for Haj pilgrimage.

(v) Effective arrangements for payment of adequate compensation to all the victims of all riots - irrespective of religion - in accordance with the Delhi High Court Ruling relating to victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots of Delhi.

(vi) The Commission considered the complaint received from the Muslims of Coimbatore regarding the recent communal carnage in the city and decided to send its own investigation team to Coimbatore after the forthcoming elections.

(vii) The Commission expressed dissatisfaction on the reluctance of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to have a joint meeting with it todiscuss matters of common interest and deputed the Vice-Chairman to further pursue the proposal with NCSCST.

(viii) Expressing dissatisfaction over the reported move of the University Grants Commission to stopgrants of the Minority Educational Institutions pending settlement of the disputed issue of reservation for SC/ST candidates among the teachers/students in those Institutions, the Commission directed its office to seek from the UG full details of the law, if any, which enabled the UGC to take such a step.

(Source: NCM Newsletter, Winter 1997 and Vol. II, NO. 1)

India: Muslim Population, States, in Descending Order of SMP as % of SP

India Total(TNP) : 816.170 Muslim (NMP) : 105.555 Average % : 12.93

State	State Population: TSP in million	TSP as % of TNP	SMP in million	State Muslim Population (SMP): SMP as % TSP	SMP as % of NMP	Cum. % of NMP	Cumulative Average Muslim %
State Population above 0.5 million/upto 50% of national average							
J&K	7.784	0.95	4.996	64.18	4.73		64.18
Assam	22.414	2.75	6.373	28.43	6.04	10.77	37.65
W. Bengal	68.078	8.34	16.076	23.61	15.23	26.00	27.93
Kerala	29.099	3.57	6.788	23.33	6.43	32.43	26.88
UP	139.112	17.04	24.110	17.33	22.84	55.27	21.89
Bihar	86.375	10.58	12.788	14.81	12.12	67.39	20.16
Karnataka	44.977	5.5	5.234	11.64	4.95	72.34	19.20
Maharashtra	78.937	9.67	7.629	9.67	7.23	79.56	17.63
Delhi	9.421	9.44	0.890	9.44	0.84	80.40	17.47
A.P.	66.508	8.91	5.924	8.91	5.61	86.01	16.44
Gujarat	41.310	5.05	3.607	8.73	3.42	87.43	15.92
Rajasthan	44.006	5.39	3.526	8.01	3.34	90.77	15.35
Tamilnadu	55.859	6.84	3.053	5.47	2.89	93.66	14.56
M.P.	66.181	8.11	3.283	4.96	3.11	96.77	13.72
Haryana	16.464	2.01	0.763	4.64	0.72	97.49	13.53

Percentage of Urban Muslim Literates with Urdu Medium Education, 1990-93

Education Level	Uttar Pradesh		Bihar	
	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim
Primary	29.4	8.2	0.8	1.2
Middle	9.3	7.7	0.8	0.4
High School	3.1	2.5	0.5	0.2
Hr. Secondary	2.4	2.9	0.2	0.7
Graduate and +	7.0	10.5	0.5	0.2
Others	7.4	7.8	2.5	--

(Source: Ahmad Aijazuddin, 1994-96, Muslims in India, Vol. I-IV)

Percentage Distribution of Urban Female Literates by Education Level, 1990-93

Education Level	Uttar Pradesh		Bihar	
	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim
Primary	34.7	55.6	42.5	56.5
Middle	18.8	19.2	24.5	20.5
High School	18.1	16.7	18.4	11.9
Hr. Secondary	11.0	4.9	6.2	3.0
Graduate and +	15.6	2.8	8.4	4.5
Others	1.7	0.6	1.2	4.7

(Source: Ahmad Aijazuddin, 1994-96, Muslims in India, Vol. I-IV)

Average Size of Family, Sex Ratio, Percentage of Female Age Group 0-14 Years (Urban) 1990-93

State	Avg. Family Size		Sex Ratio		%age of Female Pop (0-14)		%age Female Population (0-19)	
	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim
Bihar	5.0	5.5	856	892	38.5	43.9	45.7	52.2
Rajasthan	4.9	5.7	913	933	38.8	44.2	48.1	53.2
U.P.	5.0	5.6	850	860	40.4	46.2	49.7	55.7

Sex Ratio: Total and Muslim Population, 1991

States	Total	Muslims	
		Rural	Urban
India	933	945	905
Assam	923	942	865
Andhra Pradesh	972	950	874
Bihar	911	950	874
Karnataka	960	965	942
Kerala	1036	1023	1057
Maharashtra	934	964	874
Uttar Pradesh	879	922	891
West Bengal	917	947	802

(Source: Census of India 1991, Series I India Part IV B(II) Religious Table C-9)

1991 Census: Comparative Female/Male Ratio

India	403,367,630/435,216,358	=	927
Hindus	357,252,833/330,393,888	=	888
Muslims	48,964,692/52,631,365	=	930
Christians	9,791,354/9,848,930	=	994
Sikhs	7,649,236/8,610,508	=	889

Urban Work Force Participation Rate 1992-93

	UP		Bihar	
	M	F	M	F
Hindus	46.3	2.8	48.1	5.2
Muslims	46.2	2.7	47.0	2.8

Incidence of Urban Child Labour, 1992-93

	UP		Bihar	
	M	F	M	F
	0.60	0.65	1.23	5.19
	2.93	19.16	2.63	4.35

Joint Statement onTerrorism, Media &Youth
New Delhi, 10 March, 1997

"As responsible citizens, we unreservedly and unequivocally condemn all acts of terrorism as a crime against humanity and hold no brief for the terrorists, whatever their religion or motives

If, indeed, some Muslim youth have taken the terrorist path we remind them that Islam does not permit violence against the life, honour and property of innocent persons, that terrorism or violence cannot solve any problem, that violence only aggravates social tensions and gives rise to an ever-expanding spiral of mutual confrontation.

We, however, find that press reports as well as official statements at the highest level have linked the recent bomb blasts in various parts of the country with the ISI and the police authorities have released the names and even photographs of alleged culprits which are Muslim names. Together they convey the impression as if the Muslim Indians are permitting themselves to be used by the ISI for disruptive, subversive and terrorist activities in India.

We feel that such premature publicity has a negative and vicious impact on the mass mind and the social environment; it may exacerbate communal tension and add to the burden of distrust and suspicion that the Muslim Indians bear.

We, therefore, request the authorities to be cautious in their statements and name the alleged culprits only after a prime facie case has been established on interrogation and investigation and when it is decided to prosecute them.

As for the role of a foreign agency, we request the government to take the people into confidence and pursue such allegations to their logical conclusions.

We also submit that the nation and the community owe it to themselves also to study in depth the causes, circumstances and factors which transform normal youth into terrorists and even into foreign agents and make them commit acts of senseless violence, and to take remedial measures before frustration turns into psychosis.

Syed Shahabuddin
National Convener,
Insaf Morcha,

Saiyid Hamid
President
Association for Promoting
Education & Employment
of Muslim Youth

Shafi Moonis
Gen. Secretary,
AIMMM

By all means fight communalism, but being anti-Congress or anti-BJP is not good.
- Chandra Shekhar, President, SJP

Lakshmi Iyer
On Fundamentalist Upsurge in Tamilnadu

... Serial blasts at Coimbatore are a sequel to the communal flare-up in the city two months ago. The incident witnessed targetted police action against Muslims following the stabbing of a traffic police constable by the Al Umma activists. A mob, instigated by the uniformed men, went on a rampage even after the Umma had turned in the three activists responsible for the murderous assault. ...

Encounters with the Al Umma activists in Kottaimedu ... conjure up the assertion of community ... identity. Interestingly, if the Umma has secured immunity from the law through terror, the Hindu Munani activists have police patronage.

Locals say Kottaimedu is a dangerous area, where only the Umma writ runs. They also point out that even the police does not enter the area. In December, when the police had to hand over the bodies of its firing victims to the Umma, it did not enter the locality, depositing them at the police picket outside Kottaimedu.

Until the police action, the state machinery avoided any confrontation with the Umma because of the DMK patronage to the mafia-like organisation. Its founder, Basha, a timber merchant and one-time TADA detenu, was a realtor.

A visit to Kottaimedu, however, establishes that it is no ghetto, with six entry and exit points and comprising three municipal wards. A busy residential-cum-business centre by the day, the area has a majority Muslim population. To the community, the now-banned Umma is a social organisation that helps inculcate Islamic values among the youth. It also protects Muslims from police "harassment".

So much so that, in December, 600 policemen had reportedly fanned out in Kottaimedu to arrest three Umma activists. The area Muslims insist that Hindus in the neighbourhood are living in peace... Talking to the local Hindu ... suggests that the air is thick with distrust. However, the majority population claims that none of the three temples in the area sustains "as much as a scratch" in times of a riot.

However, the local Hindus differ. "Some of us are moving out of the area. Muslims here have so much money that they are buying our homes", said a local Hindu, claiming that the equation could be altered in Kottaimedu only if the DMK Government was voted out of power...

(Source: The Pioneer, 17 February, 1998)

J.P. Shukla
On Regrouping of Mandir Movement

... The BJP has reasons to be concerned over the efeat suffered by its candidates in all the Lok Sabha onstituencies around Ayodhya. These constituencies had een converted into the bases of karsewaks during their nward march to Ayodhya from places as far off as aranasi, Allahabad and Lucknow in 1990. Rail and bus nks to Ayodhya had then been snapped by the Mulayam ingh Yadav Government and barricades were put on all oads leading to the temple town. The saffron forces ... stablished camps in hundreds of villages in nearby istricts which were used by their volunteers as outposts. he exercise resulted in an intimate interaction between e villagers and the Hindutva activists and subsequently ame to be utilised by the BJP in the elections. All that ow seems to be over. **The party has not only lost aizabad but also of Gonda, Balrampur and Bahraich at had remained its stronghold since then. Akbarpur nd Kaiserganj were two other seats in the vicinity of yodhya where the party has lost...**

(Source: The Hindu, 15 March, 1998)

Eulogy of Demolition is Shameful

... Giving credit and euologising BJP-VHP for the emolition is shameful. It is an act of disgrace. It was a rbaric act perpetrated by BJP and the fanatics religious lunteers... If BJP comes to power it will further create atus between the two major communities of our country d encourage the divisive forces already present in our ciety... As an Indian and Hindu I would like to hang my ead in shame for the demolition by my co-religionist... etter know that there is no historical basis on which he suggesting Babari Masjid as a symbol of barbaric act. ughal emperor Babar was admirer of Indian chitecture, flora and fauna. Babarnama is the testimony this fact. There is no mention of demolition of Rama's mple in his memoir.

Moreover there is no historical truth in the category religious literature. There is no doubt that it has caught e popular imagination. Its popularity is attributed to the ocess of secondary state formation in our history. It was ed as important for the validation of monarchy. It was so used as an important text for the propagation of the lt of Vishu, later emphasis shifted to Ram.

(Source: Mr. Vikram Kumar's Letter in The Times of India)

f demolition (of the Babari Masjid) makes the BJP a communal party, then the demolition of the Golden Temple at Amritsar makes the Congress worse as it used the state apparatus to blow it up.

- George Fernandes, President, Samata Party

Ayodhya
Existed in Afghanistan

In his paper "Historical Rama distinguished from god Rama" presented at the Indian History Congress held recently, Prof. Shyam Narain Pande has said ancient Ayodhya was in fact situated near modern-day Herat ... in Afghanistan...

A retired geography professor from K.B. Post-Graduate College in Mirzapur, Dr. Pande ... said that history of present city of Ayodhya was not older than 800 BC. Contrary to this objective evidence there is a subjective belief that Rama is much older...

The ancient city of Ayodhya had been identified to be located on the banks of the Vedic river Sarayu also known as Haryu or Hari Rud which is modern-day Herat. Thus the search for Ayodhya should be around Herat; he added.

Dr. Pande said evidence from Panini as also from Avesta and Rigveda besides views of eminent historians B.C. Law, A.S. Altekar, P.V Kane, A L Basham, K.S. Kulish, Bhardwaj, Motilal Sharma and Rahula Sankrityayana prove that Rama existed in Afghanistan. ...

Panini in his book of grammar Ashtadhayayi had given a clue that the original homeland of Ikshwakus, the family from which Rama had descended, was in northern Afghanistan. There was an Avestan god Rama-Mwastra (god related to sun and moon - equivalent to Ramachandra), he added...

(Source: The Times of India)

(Contd. on Page 190)

cent attend Muslims schools... Local primary schools ... will undoubtedly have to improve their provision for Muslim children... if they begin to lose pupils to Muslim schools, especially non-fee paying schools, they will also lose money from the government as this is paid per capita based on the number of pupils on roll...

The involvement of Muslim schools in curriculum development as partner ... in the state system makes it more likely for the ideas and teaching methods employed in Muslim schools to be shared among teaching colleagues working with Muslim pupils in non-Muslim schools. Again, this means the majority of Muslim children should be able to benefit from the Muslim schools. In terms of community relations and support for the independent Muslim schools this is a very positive sign.

(The) decision can be described as a landmark. It is the sort of morale-booster Britain's plus-minus two million Muslims need in the wake of quasi-official recognition of 'Islamophobia' and the problems that creates...

S.S. Gill
On Rajiv Gandhi's Communal Tactics

... Rajiv was as free of communal bias as his grandfather. But he had little appreciation of its deadly nature. For him, it was one of the several counters in the game of politics, and he handled it rather casually....

Rajiv Gandhi's handling of the Shah Bano controversy shows his confused approach to the issues...

Nothing exposes Rajiv Gandhi's opportunistic approach to the communal issue as his handling of the Babari Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi dispute. Controversy over the Muslim Women's Bill had not only strengthened Muslim fundamentalism, it also gave a handle to the Hindu chauvinists. Though the Act in no way hurt the Hindus, it was represented as a refusal of the Muslim community to become part of the national mainstream.

During the routine morning briefing one day, Rajiv was informed by his intelligence agencies that the Hindus were much agitated over this issue. Arun Nehru, who was also present, suggested that the Ayodhya issue had been lying dormant for a long time, and it would be a good idea to arrange reopening of the shrine. Then and there the PM rang up Vir Bahadur Singh, CM, UP, to take necessary action. In separate meetings, Muslim leaders were told that as a quid pro quo for the Muslim Women's Bill, the shrine gates will have to be unlocked. This was a deal to which the Muslim spokesmen willingly agreed. Arun Nehru later confirmed to a journalist that Ayodhya "was supposed to be a package deal... a tit for tat for the Muslim Women's Bill." So a petition was arranged to be filed on this issue and the obliging court ordered reopening of the gates in February 1986.

Little did anybody foresee that this thoughtless act of rank expediency would ultimately lead to the destruction of the Babari Mosque in 1992. Encouraged by this victory, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) zealots stepped up their campaign to build the Ramjanambhoomi Temple at the disputed site. A move to bring consecrated bricks from all over the country was launched, and nearly 1,50,000 bricks stacked at the site. As the government felt unequal to the task of containing the Hindu communal onslaught, it made a reckless attempt to extract maximum political mileage from this operation.

Buta Singh, Home Minister, lent his good offices to evolve a face-saving device, and the government went so far as to twist a High Court judgement and misrepresented a part of a disputed plot as undisputed. This was the portion where VHP had decided to lay the foundation stone. The modalities for this strategy were worked out in the office of the UP chief minister. Consequently, the Shilanyas was performed on 9 November. Emboldened by this triumph, VHP leader Ashok Singhal boasted, "If the government thinks it has been bulldozed into allowing the foundation stone laying ceremony, we can bulldoze them further".

To cap it all, Rajiv started his election campaign from Ayodhya with the declaration that 'main Ram Rajya sthapit karunga' (I will establish Ram Rajya). But the entire strategy boomeranged. On the one hand he lost the Muslim vote and on the other he could not dent the BJP constituency. In fact the BJP score in the new Parliament shot up from 2 to 86, and a part of the credit for this spectacular rise must go to Mr. Gandhi, who managed to have the worst of both worlds.

(Source: The Dynasty by S.S. Gill)

RajivGandhi on Shila Nyas, 1989

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Pioneer, 2 Feb., 1998

May I share with you the statement made to me by Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi personally, about two or three months before his tragic assassination that Shila Nyas had indeed been performed on the disputed land in violation of the status quo order of the High Court and that in authorising it he had been misled by Shri Buta Singh and Shri N.D. Tiwari. This statement of Shri Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 merely served to confirm our own conclusion that Shri Buta Singh and Shri N.D. Tiwari had together conspired with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders for performing the Shila Nyas at the eastern edge of the disputed land, but within it in November 1989, just as Shri Arun Nehru was principally responsible for having the Babari Masjid unlocked and converted into a de facto temple in February, 1986.

Shri Arun Nehru, however, stands outside the political arena. Shri Buta Singh has been marginalised but Shri N.D. Tiwari has been rehabilitated as the President of the Uttar Pradesh Congress!

Whether he was BJP mole or acted according to his likes or served his Party in the best manner that he could think of, he is certainly no less responsible for preparing the ground for the ultimate demolition of the Babari Masjid as Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Incidentally, Narasimha Rao is being criticised only for an act of omission i.e. not preventing the demolition. But, there are two other very serious charges against him, which have been lost sight of. He, along with his Home Minister Shri S.B. Chavan permitted the construction of the concrete platform between the Shila Nyas site and the Babari Masjid to serve as the base for the proposed Mandir in July 1992 and the construction of the make-shift temple after the demolition on the Babari Masjid site, when Uttar Pradesh was under the President's rule.

All this explains why the half-hearted but repeated apology by the Congress does not strike a chord in the Muslim ethos.

Asghar Ali Engineer on Police Machinery and the Minorities

The police play a crucial role in maintaining law and order in times of caste, ethnic or communal violence. If they are impartial, it will be easy to restore peace but if they are partial it becomes all the more difficult to bring back normality. In that case the police too become a party to the conflict.

The record of the police and para-military forces, with honourable exceptions, is found to be partial. Policemen are often found to be quite partial and against the minorities, particularly Muslims. There are serious allegations against them in the January 1998 riots in Coimbatore. Though each riot has to be studied in depth to draw proper conclusions, generally the lower level constabulary has nothing much to cover itself with glory. Policemen are part of society and are deeply influenced by what is going on around them. The political atmosphere is highly divisive - communally, ethically and along caste lines. What is being projected in the media is also of a divisive nature. Sometimes politicians - specially those belonging to communal parties and outfits - make highly provocative speeches and their ideas are imbibed by the policemen also.

The Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) organised a one-day seminar on "The Policing and Alienation of Minorities" on January 5, 1998, in collaboration with the Nehru Centre, Bombay. Top police officers from Bombay and outside participated and Mr. Satish Sahney, Former Commissioner of Police, Bombay, coordinated the seminar. An approach paper said, "though the polity has changed significantly after Independence, the structure of the police has not changed significantly. Caste and communal stereotypes continue to dominate the perception of the police personnel. Though criminal tribes have now been denotified, they continue to face harassment from the police force for crimes and petty thefts committed in the vicinity of their neighbourhoods. Similarly, the police personnel are the victims of gender bias as well as the bias against the minorities. This has led the members of the minority communities to believe that the police perceive them as those whose loyalty to the nation cannot be taken for granted. Such perceptions adversely affect impartial policing and implementation of laws".

... "Police personnel are often less sympathetic and insensitive to the protests by the members of the minorities even if their grievances are genuine. The law and order machinery plays its role in dealing with communal riots and in doing so it shapes the outlook of different communities. During tensions, the divide between the communities deepens. On the one hand, the minority community gets alienated from the law and order machinery and, on the other, the majority community considers it its protector. Such biased perceptions of the police by the minorities and of minorities by the Police influence the day-to-day functioning of the system".

How to remedy the situation? Is it necessary to have an adequate number of minorities in the police force through reservation? Are the minorities adequately represented in the force? And if not, why?... In Uttar Pradesh, though the Muslim population was around 16 per cent, its representation was no more than five per cent... (Will) coaching for Muslims on the lines for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (help)? (Will) liberalisation of education for them help?

... Will professionalism, not combined with strong commitment to secularism, become worse when the atmosphere was surcharged with communalism?

Will reservation for the minorities in the police force help? ... (With it) encourage parochial tendencies, affecting competence and professionalism? Is the attitude of the authorities to blame? Was the inadequate representation due to prejudicial behaviour on the part of the authorities...

Mr. S.S. Puri, DIG, Maharashtra, said it was necessary to teach ethics in schools to impart a broader outlook to students, some of whom were future policemen. But he opposed reservation for the minorities, saying it would affect the morale of the force and prove counter-productive. Only competent officers should be recruited. But Mr. V.N. Rai said competence should be judged by the effective control of communal or caste riots. Professionalism, he said, did not mean physical fitness or even being educationally qualified. Impartial behaviour was also an important criterion. Mr. Khote, social activist from them understand different religious and cultural practices... if we give (police) training ... (will) prejudices melt away and with a new approach towards the minorities will develop? ...

(Source: The Hindu, 6 February, 1998)

CPI(M) Demands Publication of Srikrishna Commission Report, 21 February, 1998

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands the immediate publication of the findings of the Srikrishna Commission... The BJP and Shiv Sena have a lot to conceal about their role in the communal riots. The fact that they are delaying the publication confirms their active involvement in one of the worst communal riots in recent years. The CPI(M) demands ... stringent action against all those found guilty.

(Source: The People's Democracy, 1 March, 1998)

Rohit Parihar on Rehabilitation and Reconciliation in Malpura, Rajasthan

Even in Asiya Bano, a young bride in Malpura town in Rajasthan's Tonk district, had overcome the shock of losing her parents in the violence that followed in the wake of the Babari Masjid's demolition in 1992, she would probably have spent her life worrying about how to bring up her four orphaned, school-going sisters. But 25 years old now, she sees brighter days ahead. The Malpura Welfare Society, formed by the regretful people of the town after the rioting, helped her to invest the Rs. 4.4 lakh compensation she got from the government, gave her money to build a house and aided her in completing formalities to get each of her sister a monthly Rs. 375 education assistance from the National Foundation for Communal Harmony...

The riots, which claimed 26 lives in the town, stunned the normally peaceful Malpura, which has a population of 24,000, a third of them Muslims. So, once the frenzy died out, some people - government employees, businessmen and politicians - sat down to discuss how best to help the orphans. Thus was born the Malpura Welfare Society... The society began its job quietly, first ensuring that the kin of the dead got the government compensation and then investing it in the best possible way in order to benefit the children. The society also solicited donations, from which the poorest among the affected - such as Asiya Bano - were provided assistance for building houses. All the while, the members of the association had regular interaction with the victims in which they explained how neither community was to be blamed in isolation for their trauma.

The Malpura Welfare Society again played a vital role when the local administration sought its help in identifying victims for the scholarship scheme of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony... Today, Abdul Khalique Qadri, who had just started going to school when his electrician father was killed, is in Class IV... Salma, then 19, lost her husband Jamaluddin, a peanut seller, to a stray bullet and was left with a three-year-old son Ansar Ahmed and 10-month-old daughter Aneesa... The society got their education assistance, even arrears, cleared...

Now, with the children growing up, the society is fighting to make sure the government fulfils its commitment of providing jobs to them. It has ... taken up the case of Satya Narain, who lost both his parents in the riots and of Shakil Mohammad, 18, who has passed Class XII and is no longer eligible for scholarship...

... **If only there were more such associations in the country today.**

(Source: The India Today, 16 February, 1998)

BJP-RSS Role in Anti-Sikh Riots, 1984

Sonia Gandhi's apology over the 1984 riots resulted in three Delhi heavyweights being denied the party ticket for the Lok Sabha elections, 1998. It was, however, not Congressmen alone who took revenge for Indira Gandhi's assassination. The BJP and RSS's workers were not far behind. Cases of arson, rioting and attempt to murder were registered against several BJP-RSS workers at the Sriniwas Puri police station. In this police station alone 14 FIRs were registered in connection with the 1984 riots. Majority of these cases were registered against BJP-RSS workers during the period 1992-94.

Interesting, among 49 people, who were arrested and later chargesheeted, about a half were BJP workers... All these workers arrested in connection with the 1984 riots and later released on bail.

Ram Kumar Jain, who has been named in FIR No. 315/92 dated June 18, 1992 is a prominent leader. He was charged with rioting, dacoity and attempt to murder.

His residence at Hari Nagar Ashram was reportedly one of the election offices of A.B. Vajpayee when he fought the Lok Sabha elections in 1980.

Jain was the president of the Jain Mahasabha, Ashram area and his name figures in four different FIRs.

In another case, FIR No. 446/93 dated August 4, 1993, Mr. Hardyal Singh Sahani, a resident of Hari Nagar Ashram charged that he had lost his entire property including a cloth house on November 1, 1984. The FIR names 17 persons the largest number in any FIR registered in connection with the 1984 riots. The affidavit lists several BJP workers... Majority of the workers, implicated in these cases are residents of Hari Nagar, Sunlight Colony and Bhagwan Nagar in scuth Delhi.

Walter Fernandes on Communalism and Defence of Human Rights

... Human rights activists are expected to be in the forefront of the defence of every citizen's rights in a secular India. Sadly, more and more of them tend to give a religious bias to human rights. When the victim belongs to a different religion, socio-economic oppression is not an issue, the gender of the person is of little relevance, and the right to be considered innocent till proven guilty is no more a priority.

In the years to come, such atrocities are bound to increase and people with a vested interest are bound to give them a communal bias. Are human rights activists going to take the same stand or fight for the rights for all? It is time those speaking about the rights of the weak got over their communal hang-ups, thought of every citizen as equal and came together to defend these rights.

(Source: The Times of India, 4 February, 1998)

Death of an Urdu Daily

'Alambardar' promoted by Civil Aviation Minister C.M. Ibrahim, has folded up as he was unable to sustain it any longer after he was stripped of the Information portfolio.

Mr. Ibrahim had diverted ... Government advertisements to his Urdu newspaper by misusing his position as Information Minister though the publication was very irregular and had limited readership.

Alambardar, which means flag-bearer, was started by Mr. Ibrahim in 1983 in Bangalore, but closed down two years later. He revived it again in 1995 after he was handpicked by the then Chief Minister H.D. Deve Gowda to head the state unit of the Janata Dal.

Mr. Ibrahim ... used his newspaper to project his image. After he became the Information Minister... Most of the local Urdu newspapers which had existed for decades, were starved of Government advertisements at the expense of Alambardar.

With revenue pouring in, Alambardar turned into a bilingual daily with four pages each of Urdu and Kannada. (It is alleged that) Ibrahim misused his clout as Information Minister to pressurise television film producers to make donations to the Alambardar Publications.

... Abbas Ali Bohra, a builder, who had been roped in by Ibrahim to edit Alambardar, was not willing to run the show as Ibrahim had gone back on his promise to make Bohra an MLC (and to provide funds for the paper).

Sources close to Bohra said he spent up to Rs. 15 lakh from his pocket to sustain the newspaper even after

(Contd. on Page 163)

NCM: Urdu Textbooks Committee

Taking suo moto cognizance of the overwhelming media reports relating to the shortage of school textbooks in Urdu resulting into deterioration of academic standards in the Urdu-medium schools, the Chairman addressed a letter to NCERT seeking a detailed report in the matter. The NCERT sent a reply after a reminder, while in the intervening period the Commission received some formal complaints against those responsible for the production of Urdu textbooks.

The Chairman constituted an "Urdu Textbooks Committee" to examine all aspects of the problem in depth, suggest measures for its solution and co-ordinate the interaction of various bodies involved in the matter. The Committee comprises the following:
Syed Shahbaz Hussain, Prof. Arvind Kumar,Puran Chand, Dr. Hamidullah Bhat, Dr. Rizwan-ul-Haq, Makhmoor Saeedi and Syed Rashid Husain

The Committee had its first meeting in the Commission premises on 16.9.1997...

(Source: NCM Newsletter, Winter 1997)

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Madras High Court on State Aid for Minority Institutions

State of Tamil Nadu and others, Appellants v. The Melapalayam Muslim Magalir Kalvi Sangam, Respondent.

AR. LAKSHMANAN AND S.M. SIDICKK, JJ.

Constitution of India, Article 30(2) - Minority institution - State aid - Minorities cannot be asked to maintain their educational institutions without state aid.

... There is no dispute that the respondent sangam which is a registered society is a minority institution. The said sangam is running a Girls' High School at Tirunelveli and they applied for grant of recognition and approval for standards 6 to 9 to the Joint Director of School Education, Madras, who in turn in his proceedings dated 21.8.1990, granted temporary recognition and approval for standards 6 to 8 from 1.6.1998 to 31.10.1990 with aid and for 9th standard without aid. The school also applied for recognition for 10th standard and the second respondent in its proceedings dated 12.12.1990, granted recognition and approval for the same without aid for the period from 1.6.1989 to 31.10.1991. However, on a scrutiny of the records, it is found that by mistake, recognition with aid for standards 6 to 8 was granted and ... the mistake was rectified by issuing an erratum to the earlier proceedings... Aggrieved by the said order, the school filed the present action praying for issue of a writ of certiorarif mandamus to quash the same and consequently to direct the respondent to sanction teaching and non-teaching staff and also financial aid for the period from 1 6.1988 for the standards 6 to 9 and from 1.6.1989 for standard 10...

Counter affidavit was filed on behalf of the state contending that as a policy decision, recognition has been given to schools both minority and non-minority without aid, due to financial constraints...

Janardhanam, J. following his own judgement reported in Rev. Sr. Margaret Mary v. Government of Tamil Nadu (1993) 2 Mad LJ 303, allowed the writ petition as prayed for.

On 19.7.1996, the Writ Appeal was admitted by the First Bench of this Court... Special Government Pleader (Education) raised the following four points:

1. The learned single Judge has not followed provisions of section 14(I) and (II of the Tamil Nadu Recognised Private Schools Regulation Act.
2. It is for the Government to decide, subject to the availability of the funds in the norms to grant aid to the schools.
3. The granting of aid is not automatic and it has to depend upon the Government order in G.O. Ms. No. 340/Education/dated 1.4.1992.
4. There are about 141 schools including elementary, middle, high and higher secondary schools both minority and non-minority which were given permission/recognition without aid during 1988-89 and 1989-90 and so far the Government has not sanctioned grant to any of the schools which are given permission/recognition without aid during the year 1988-89 and 1989-90.

... A division bench of this court consisting of Nainar Sundaram J., (as he then was) and Somasundaram J., in Roman Catholic Society v. the Government of Tamil Nadu, 1991 Writ LR 130 held that paucity of finance could not be valid ground for denying aid to minority schools and observed as follows.

... The grounds put forth for not granting aid to the minority schools in the present cases cannot stand scrutiny of judicial review and they are totally unreasonable and arbitrary and they brought about the discrimination against the minority schools in the matter of grant of aid and that discrimination comes within the ambit of Article 30(2) of the Constitution.

A constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, while dealing with aid to educational institutions, observed in para 89 thus:

> "The Educational institutions are not business houses. They do not generate wealth. They cannot survive without public funds or private aid. It is said that there is also restraint on collection of fees, the minorities cannot be saddled with the burden of maintaining educational institutions without grant-in-aid. They do not have economic advantage over others. It is not possible to have educational institutions without State aid. This was also the view expressed by Das, C.J. In re Kerala Education Bill, 1957, AIR 1958 SC 956. The minorities cannot therefore, be asked to maintain educational institutions on their own.

Therefore, we are of the view that none of the points raised by the learned counsel for appellants ... merit acceptance... We are, therefore of the view that the minorities cannot be asked to maintain the educational institutions on their own. The citizens of the country have a fundamental right to education which right flows from Article 21. This right is, however, not an absolute right. In other words, every child/citizen of this country has a right to free education until he completes the age of fourteen years. Thereafter, his right to education is subject to the limits of economic capacity and development of the State...

We are in entire agreement with the views expressed by Janarthanam, J., in the judgement reported in (1993) 2 Mad LJ 303, and applying the ratio laid down in the said judgement and also following the other judgements relied on by the learned single Judge... We dismiss the Writ Appeal and accordingly confirm the order of the learned single Judge...

Source: AIR 1998 Madras 91)

A Report on J.D.T. Islam Complex in Calicut, Kerala

JDT Islam Orphanage is a charitable institution established in 1922 for sheltering the victims of Malabar Rebellion of 1921. More than 10,000 children have been fed, sheltered and educated in the institution so far. A good number of them are leading a decent life as Doctors, Engineers, Technicians, Pharmacists, Lecturers, Teachers and in various other fields, in and out of India. Every year a considerable number of them continue their higher studies in various Universities in India and abroad.

The present strength of the Orphanage is 976 out of which 375 are girls. Religious instructions are imparted to every inmate from LKG to Senior Secondary.

The Complex consists of:

1. Orphanage
2. L.P. School
3. U.P. School
4. High School (Both Malayalam and English Medium)
5. An English Medium School (at Malaparamba)

Vocational Higher Secondary School (Recognised by Government of Kerala):

1. Maintenance & operation of Bio-Medical equipment
2. Medical Laboratory Technician
3. Hotel Management and Catering
4. Computer
5. Domestic Nursing

Industrial Training Centre: (Recognised by Govt. of India)

1. Draughtsman (Civil)
2. Electronics Mechanic
3. Refrigeration & AC Mechanic
4. Radio/TV Mechanic
5. Plumbering
6. Wireman
7. Carpenter
8. Welder
9. Stenography(English)
10. Letter Press Machine
11. Computer (DPCS)

Vocational Training Centre:

a. Under the auspices of UNICEF

1. Automobile
2. Welder
3. Electronics

b. Under the auspices of CANADA FUND

1. Armature and Motor Winding
2. Surveying and Levelling.

c. Under the auspices of MHRC - Govt.of India (9 Trades)

Engineering Institute (K.G.C.E.) Recognised by Govt. of Kerala

1. Civil
2. Automobile
3. Electrical
4. Electronics and Telecommunication
5. Radio and Television

NOS (Vocational Courses) No. 5901 (An Autonomous Unit of HRM - Govt. of India

1. Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Technician
2. Electrical Technician
3. Stenography (English)
4. Radio and Television Technician
5. Secretariat Practice (English)
6. Plumbing
7. Typewriting (English)
8. Cutting, Tailoring and Dress Making

National Open School: Plus Two (I&II Group) Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics Additional courses for Computer and Electronics. They can also appear for Entrance Examination of Medicine and Engineering.

Minority Coaching Centre (Sponsored by Government of India) for Pre-examination Coaching/Training for subordinates service Examinations.

Coaching Centre: For admission to Medicine, Engineering courses.

Computer Training Centre: Under the auspices of NCF-NIPCCD (Govt. of India) and LBS Centre for Science and Technology (Govt. of Kerala).

Indira Gandhi National Open University (Calicut Study Centre No. 1403):

1. Master of Business Administration (MBA)
2. Diploma in Management (DIM)
3. Post Graduate Diploma in Financial Management (PGDFM)
4. Post Graduate Diploma in Operations Management (PGDOM)
5. Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management (PGDMM)
6. Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resources Management (PGDHRM)
7. Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE)
8. Diploma in Rural Development (DRD)
9. Diploma in Tourism (DTS)
10. Diploma in Computers in Office Management (DCO)
11. Advance Diploma in Water Resources Management (ADWRM)
12. Advance Diploma in Construction Management (ADCM)
13. Bachelor of Arts (BA)
14. Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)
15. Bachelor of Science (BSc)
16. Bachelor Degree in Library & Information Science (BLIS)
17. Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA)
18. Bachelor of Tourism (BTS)
19. Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP)
20. Certificate Course in Guidance (CIG)
21. Certificate Course in Food and Nutrition (CFN)
22. Certificate Course in Computing (CIC)

23. Certificate Course in Tourism (CTS)

Technically Oriented Arabic College: First of its kind in the world i.e. religious instruction is imparted with technical trade.

Extra Curricular Activities:

a) NCC Scouts Traffic Safety Patrol & Red Cross Unit
b) Senior orphans trained in First-aid, Fire-fighting, Traffic Regulations and Crowd Control, Visit Holy Makkah during Haj (for last 26 years)

Existing Industrial Unit:

1. **Welding and Carpentry** - Manufacturing all required furniture table, chair, almirah, racks, windows and tresses etc.
2. **Printing Press** - A well-equipped press is functioning in order to print materials required for all institutions.
3. **Soap Making** - Inmates make soap for them.
4. **Powerloom** - Manufacturing clothes for the inmates.
5. **Tailoring** - Cloths required for boys and girls are being stitched by themselves.

A New Polytechnic Established (Recognised by Government of Kerala and AICTE)

1. Computer Engineering
2. Electronic Engineering
3. Architecture Engineering
4. Quantity Surveying and Construction Management
5. Automobile Engineering

D-Pharm: 2 year Diploma in Pharmacy (Recognised by DME (Kerala), Pharmacy Council of India and AICTE)

Dental College: Propose to start a Dental College.

Hospital: Three huge multi-storied ultra modern hi-tech specialised buildings are constructed to house "IQRAA INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL AND RESEARCH CENTRE" CALICUT (Sponsored by Iqraa Charitable Trust)

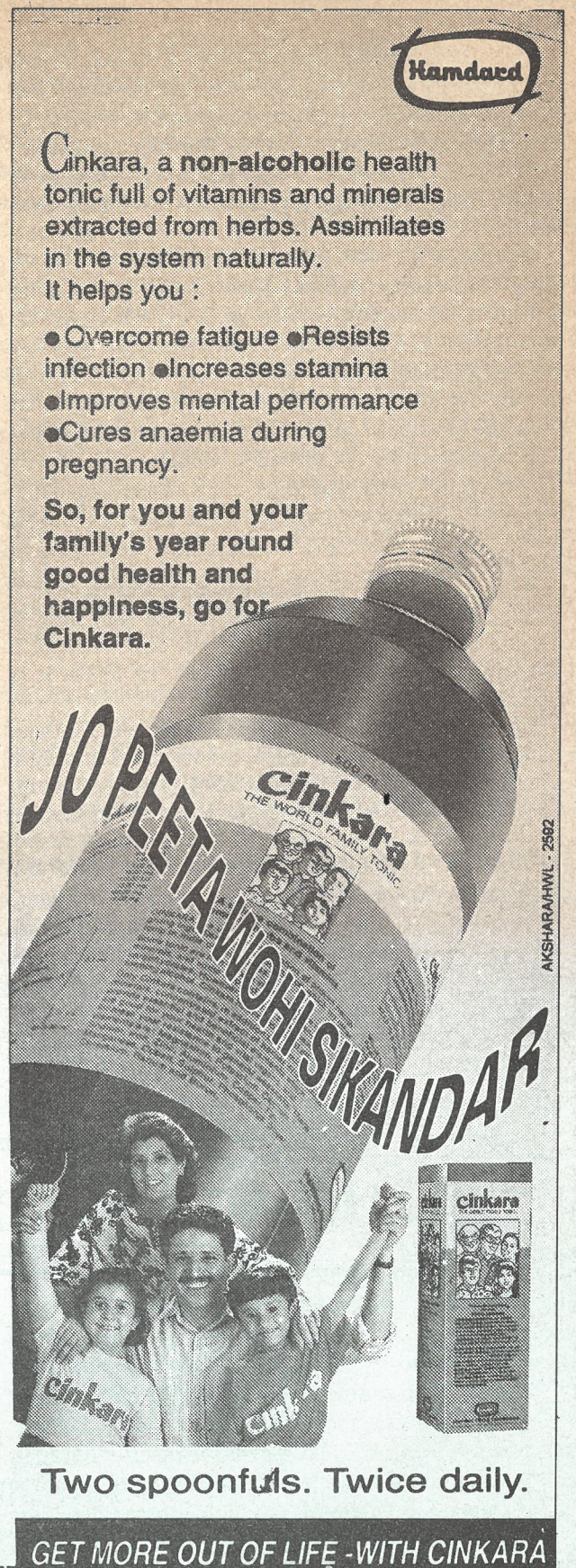
The President of India, Vice Presidents, Prime Ministers, Governors, Central and State Ministers and many distinguished persons from India and abroad have visited the institution and admired our activities. The affairs are managed by Registered Committee consisting of prominent persons from Kerala and outside.

Future Plan:

1. To establish Super Market-cum-Auditorium-cum-Marriage Hall
2. To establish a production unit in order to make institution self-supporting
3. To construct small houses for orphan couples. 5 such houses are under construction. We have 15 acres of land for the same (6,000 Dollars each House)

Donations are accepted:

J.D.T. Islam Orphanage Committee,
Calicut - 673 012, India
A/c No. A 7887, State Bank of India, Calicut



Shahabuddin's Letter to Prime Minister on Haj Subsidy, 19 February, 1998

I surprised by the proposal of the Ministry of Civil Aviation for increasing Haj subsidy to a record Rs.122 crores for Haj 1998 at the rate of Rs.18,000 per pilgrim.

I think it is not in the larger interest of the country and the Muslim community to allow such run-away subsidy.

Normally the Haj Charter fare has been fixed, through negotiation with competitors, at close to 2/3 of the IATA fare in US dollars. It is indeed an extra-ordinary deal that bulk business for 65,000 persons at 100% capacity utilisation should cost more. In 1997, the per capita subsidy was doubled primarily because Air India was permitted to charge regular Delhi-Jeddah-Delhi IATA airfare for charter flights. Thus the loss incurred by Air India in other sectors was compensated by the profit made in Haj traffic to that extent. This year for 1998, the Haj charter fare is said to exceed the normal return fare!

As for the subsidy, it had traditionally amounted to 1/3 of the Haj charter fare. In 1996, for the first time, it exceeded 1/3 and came close to 38.4 per cent. In 1997, it went upto 54.4 per cent. This year, in 1998, it is proposed to raise it to 60.9 per cent.

In my view, Haj being a religious duty only for those Muslims who can afford it, the very concept of subsidy is both religiously and constitutionally questionable. Certainly when it forms 50 per cent or more of the Haj Charter fare, it can no longer be considered a concession but State's financial support for performance of a religious act.

I have long pleaded for abolition of Haj Subsidy. At least, the Haj Charter fare, payable by the pilgrim, can be reviewed every year in steps with the rise in the normal return fare and the fall in the value of the rupee in relation to the dollar.

It did and would make sense to protect the Haj pilgrim against sudden rise in airfare and/or de facto devaluation of the rupee - but no more.

Above all, such an extra-ordinary decision would provide grist for the mills of hatred against the Muslim Indians.

You may kindly recall that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs has repeatedly asked for gradual reduction and eventual abolition of the Haj subsidy.

I would, therefore, suggest that the Haj Charter fare be fixed at 2/3 of the IATA fare Rs. 20,000/- and the Haj subsidy be limited to 1/3 i.e. Rs.6,500/- leaving Rs.13,500 to be paid by the Haj pilgrim. This would be in accordance with the de facto devaluation of the Indian rupee since January, 1997. Considering that the total per capita cost of Haj has increased to about Rs. 75,000/-, an increase of Rs.3,000 in the air fare and should constitute no problem.

With Best Compliments

From

Nalanda Export Pvt. Ltd.

98, Mittal Chambers
Nariman Point, Mumbai-400 021
Tel: 202 3390

Supreme Court

I - On Management of Khanqah (Wakf)

The Intezamia Committee's allegation is that it is managing the Chilla Sharif (Khanqah). There is no dispute that the structure is ancient and of great importance. But it is in bad state of repair. It is adjacent to Humayun's Tomb which has been declared to be a property of world heritage. In our view this Chilla Sharif (Khanqah) should be maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The next question is who will manage it. There is no dispute that the religious activities are taking place in that area. The right of management of this to being claimed by the Intezamia Committee ... and the Delhi Wakf Board. The case of the Delhi Wakf Board is that the Board is incharge of this and they should be allowed to manage this Chilla Sharif (Khanqah).

We are of the view that the dispute between the Delhi Wakf Board and the Intezamia Committee should be resolved by proper proceeding in a court of law. We are not expressing any opinion on the right of management of Chilla Sharif. We direct that having regard to its importance, the Archaeological Survey of India should maintain and preserve it. The Archaeological Survey of India will not interfere with holding of religious functions or offering of prayers at that place.

If the Archaeological Survey of India wants to notify this monument as a monument of national importance of sants to take any special measure for preserving this monument, it can apply to this Court for modification of this Order.

II - On I.T. Exemption for Trusts

M/s Thiagarajan Charities, Madurai, Appellant v. Additional Commissioner of Income Tax and another, Respondents.

K.S. PARIPOORNAN, K. VENKATASWAMI AND B.N. KIRPAL, JJ.

Charitable trust - Income Tax - Exemption - Objects of trust - Main objects of trust were education, medical relief and poor relief - One of objects being to promote etc. rural reconstruction work, cottage industry can also be taken as object to afford 'relief to poor' - objects of 'trust' on basis of such clause held by Department to be enabling trust to carry on business with profit motive - Order denying exemption under Section 11 of Income Tax Act on that ground - Not legal - Income from business carried on by trust for achieving main object of trust - Is exempt under Section 11.

(Source: AIR 1997 Supreme Court 2541)

Tapash Ganguly

On Mosque-Building Spree in W. Bengal

... The faithful in the five districts bordering Bangladesh - Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia and North 24 Parganas - seem to be on a mosque-building spree. Before December 1992, when the Babari Masjid in Ayodhya was pulled down, there were 325 mosques in the 27 police station areas adjacent to the border. A recent survey by a Central intelligence agency revealed that "more than 350" new mosques have come up in the area since then. And new madrasas as well. There were 47 of them in 11 police station areas before December 192. Since then 10 new madrasas have sprung up in just five police station areas. The Central and state government have no clue why so many mosques and religious institutions are being built along the border. Nor have they tracked down the agencies which are ostensibly funding their construction and maintenance. But the intelligence agency knows one thing for sure: a liberal flow of funds from abroad, which it estimates at Rs. 200 crore, is fuelling the frenzied building activity.

It is no secret that some of these institutions have become training centres for the fundamentalists...

Interestingly all the mosques and madrasas have come up within 15 kms. from the international border.

While the sleuths suspect that funds for building most of the mosques have come from abroad, that is not true in the case of the Islipara mosque at Aurangabad. it was built by the owners of the local Pataka Bidi Company, which is the second largest such venture in the country. Though Islipara already had four mosques the owners of the company wanted to build another ... to keep its 1,000-old employees together and to prevent them from taking off under the pretext of offering prayers. Caretakers of the new or renovated mosques say that funds have hardly been a problem. The Al-Mahad-us-Salafi mosque at Lalgola ... was built with aid from the Islamic Development Bank...

The money ... comes from "public donations"... Smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh is a lucrative business in Murshidabad district: unofficial estimates put the annual turnover at Rs. 200 crore.

The politician-police-smuggler nexus is so strong here that government decisions are allegedly implemented only with their approval. it is also alleged that the politicians provide protection to the fundamentalists who in turn encourage infiltration...

According to a census report the highest rates of population growth during 1981-91 were registered in seven border districts: among them 24 Parganas (North and South) recorded 30.8%, Nadia 29.8, Malda 29.6 and Murshidabad 28% when the state average was 24.5%. ...

(Source: The Week, 15 February, 1998)

Khushwant Singh
On Shankarachayar as State Guest

Delhi Government extended an official welcome to the Shankaracharya. In his speech the Shankaracharya said that the word secular. should be expunged from the Constitution. He need not have laboured the point: for all practical purposes barring the Communists, most of our political leaders have deleted secularism from the lexicons. The Lakshman Rekha between politics and religion no longer exists. Religion has invaded the domain of politics and completely swamped it. Thus was have driven the last nail in the coffin of secularism, as envisaged by Pandit Nehru. ...

The need of our times is to revive the Nehruvian notion of secularism. people in politics or holding elected public offices must not publicly engage themselves in religious rituals. nehru never did so and even reprimanded ... President Rajendra Prasad, for inaugurating the renovated temple of Somnath. He did not encourage godmen and tantrics to intrude into affairs of the State. The slide began with his daughter Indira Gandhi. With her people like Dhirendra Brahmachari became a formidable figure. Astrologers and tantrics got into decision-making circles. We had the likes of Buta Singh, Jakhar and Rajiv Gandhi paying homage to Deoraha Baba. We had the likes of Chandraswamy and Satellite Baba performing Yagnas in homes of Ministers and Chief Ministers. And we have the Delhi Government inviting Shankaracharya to be a state guest. ...

Jawaharlal Nehru on Secularism

... Secularism in operation means, "first, separation of religion from the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life, religion being treated as a personal matter; second, dissociation of the state from religion; third, full freedom to all religions and tolerance of all religions; and fourth, equal opportunities for followers of all religions, and no discrimination or partiality on the grounds of religion".

Vajpayee's Denial

... The report says, "Mr. Vajpayee said there was no need to separate religion from the state...". What I actually said was that in India, the state and religion have always been separate and, therefore, there was no question of talking about such a separation.

(Source: The Times of India 3 February, 1998)

Muslims saved my uncle's life in Jhelum. They also helped to bring my mother's jewellery to India. However, as a Hindu in India, it is sad that I and my son should have to sport long, red tilaks on our foreheads at Sanjay's TADA court appearances just to prove that we are Hindus! it is tragic that patriotism should be reduced to this kind of symbolism

NC Leader S. Soz on Secular Order

My attention has been drawn to the remarks made by His Holiness Shankaracharya of Kanshi Kamakoti, Jayendra Saraswati, where in the Shankaracharya has made a categorical plea (Indian Express, 11 Nov., 1997) that the word 'secular' should be dropped as that expression means irreligiosity.

I urge leaders of various political parties, professing Hindu religion, with a commitment to secular values in politics ... to explain to the Shankaracharya that secularism under no circumstances means irreligiosity. We, as a Nation, have accepted the definition of secularism as given to us by Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and other heroes of India's freedom struggle. it has also to be explained to the Shankaracharya that if there is anything that gives India prestige within the comity of Nations, it is India's democracy and its commitment to the secular ethos... There is no substitute set of values that can give us vitality of a forward-looking Nation like our commitment to secularism. For us, secularism is the basis of togetherness and social harmony. For the overwhelming majority of Indians, secularism means equal respect for all religions while the State does not have any role to promote any particular religion. ... Shankaracharya's remarks ... do help one political party, the BJP alone, which he ... may not be aiming... **(Source: The Secular Democracy, December, 1997)**

Shahabuddin's Letter to VHP, 27 September, 1997

I am indeed shocked by the uncivilised and abusive language used by Mr. Sabir regarding Ram Chandraji and Krishnaji and our common motherland and against the leaders of the Sangh Parivar and the Government.

I do not understand his motive but I would like to assure you that Mr. Sabir does not represent the Muslim community in any sense of the term. The use of such a language has nothing to do with Islam, the religion he professes. The Quran expressly prohibits offensive language against the gods of other religions.

I do not at all agree with your interpretation of the events leading to the deliberate demolition of the Babari Masjid or with your justification of this act of medieval vandalism in the twentieth century but whatever be our differences, that will not justify the use of such language. I have personally never shown the slightest disrespect towards Ram Chandraji in my speeches or statements or towards Krishnaji.

I apologise to you on behalf of the Muslim community for Mr. Sabir Khalid's offensive language which must have hurt your feelings and of any civilised person, Hindu or non-Hindu who reads item.

VHP Reply, 5 November, 1997

VHP: Attack on Art Gallery
Protest by Artists and Writers

... When some artists tried to contact BJP's prime ministerial candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee to see if he could help stop the marauding goondas of the so-called Sangh Parivar, his men said he was too busy with the battle for ... Uttar Pradesh to trifle with "local" issues...

In yet another display of their intimidatory tactics, a group of VHP members, led by B.L. Sharma 'Prem' and Raghu Vyas, raised abusive slogans, indulged in physical assault, and threatened vandalism at the Academy of Fine Arts and Literature, Siri Fort area (on 23 February, 1998). this was in continuation of a hysterial campaign whipped up against a lithograph of MF Hussain, dating back t least 20 years, which was included as part of an exhibition ... on display ... over the last ten days. A statement issued by the VHP, which appeared in the press on February 23, had warned that 'if the painting is not removed form the exhibition by 3 PM, Rambhaktas would set the entire exhibition ablaze'.

Well-known painter Jatin Das ... was chased and physically manhandled by VHP activists when he pleaded with them not to indulge in obscene sloganeering.

it is alarming that in the heart of the capital, a gallery under siege is forced to dismount an exhibition. It is also reprehensible that he police force which was present .. did nothing to restraint he marauding ... hooligans...

We, the following, strongly condemn the series of fascistic attacks that have been launched by the Sangh Parivar (of which the VhP is an integral constituent) against freedom of artistic expression, of which today's incident is the most recent. Further, we would like to use this instance to alert the democratic opinion in the country that this is merely a foretaste of thins to come, if intolerant forces such as these are allowed to get anywhere near the seats of political power.

Manu Parekh	Madhavi Parekh	Vivan Sundaram
Ajay Desai	Rekha Rodwittiya	Surendran Nair
Arpana Caur	Ajeet Caur	Harinder Singh
Mrinalini Mukherjee	Ram Rahman	Abul Kalam Azad
Indu Chandrasekhar	Romi Khosla	Bhisham Sahni
Shubha Mudgal	Yashodhara Dalmia	B. Bhattacharya
Utsa Patnaik	Geeta Kapur	M.K. Raina
Praful Bidwai	Alpana Khare	Githa Hariharan
Mohan Rao	K.N. Pakikkar	Prabhat Patnaik
C.P. Chandrasekhar	Rati Bartholomew	Kalpana Khosla
Shabnam Hashmi	Mrinal Kulkarni	Anil Dayanand
Roy Thomas	Johny M.L.	Jai Zharotia
Gopi Gajwani	Mona Rai	Anita Dube
Bose Krishnamachari	Geeta Sen	Nuzhat Kazmi
S. Sawarkar Jasleen	Satish Sharma	Pramaliya Singh
S. Balu Roa	Subrata Kundu	Nupur Sakhuja
Abhimanue V.G.	Manisha Parekh	Jagdish Chander
P.N. Mago	Prithpal Ladi	Pramod Ganpatye
Bobby Kunhu	Giri Skaria	Josh P.S.
Hasha Dave		

(Source: The People's Democracy, 1 March, 1998)

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS

FROM

KALEEM KAWAJA

THE ASSQCIATION OF INDIAN MUSLIMS OF AMERICA

THE ORGANIZATION FOR UNIVERSAL COMMUNAL HARMONY

WASHINGTON DC USA

Gandhi and Hindutva

Anil Nauriya in The Hindu, 8 August, 1997

When India commemorates 50 years of its "Independence, it will be useful to remember that 1997-98 also marks the 50th anniversary year of Gandhi's martyrdom. It is not just another anniversary and provides an occasion for educating a new generation.

The ideologies tainted with Gandhi's murder have remained relatively dormant for several years. Subsequent events - including Lohia's indiscriminate anti-Congressism of the Sixties, Jayaprakash Narayan's indulgence towards the Jan Sangh in the Seventies and Mr. V.P. Singh's tacit alliance with the BJP in 1989 general elections - along with the ideological bankruptcy of the Congress(I), brought the ideologies associated with the assassination to the centre stage of politics.

In December 1995, a Supreme Court Bench delivered a judgment taking a mild view of Hindutva. Some aspects of the record of this judgment, involving BJP and Shiv Sena candidates, make one shudder. It was delivered a few months before the general elections...

The Hindutva ideological assault was directed at Gandhi rather than at anybody else because he and his influence had reduced the Hindutva forces to desperation, when Gandhi fostered feelings of respect for all religions ... even at the cost of his life.

Gandhi sought to create and promote the conditions in which a secular state could exist. Some scholars try to pit Gandhi against Nehru. There was a creative tension between the two. Yet there could hardly have been a politically effective Nehru without a politically potent Gandhi... Nehru separated from Gandhi, is almost like a tree without roots. The BJP, too, in its formulations since 1990-91, has tried to isolate Nehru from Gandhi. With Nehru thus isolated, the "Nehru Model", made, from its point of view, an easier target.

Till the Seventies, the Jan Sangh and it associate groups openly targeted Gandhi. Since the BJP was created in 1980, it has followed a two-fold strategy towards Gandhi. First, it tries intermittently and selectively to appropriate him. It recalls that he spoke of Ram; but it is prefers to forget that he spoke also of Allah and that at least as early as 1909 he spoke of Khuda-Ishwar. It recalls that he spoke of Ram Rajya. But it chooses to overlook the fact that he spoke of it as a non-sectarian ideal state... Nor is the BJP anxious to recall that Gandhi spoke similarly of Khudai Sultanat and the Kingdom of God. ...

The second element in the BJP's strategy has been that, even as it attempts to appropriate a distorted Gandhi, it seeks also to "put him in his place." In this effort, the rival imaging of Swami Vivekananda and of Subhas Chandra Bose is convenient to the BJP and the RSS. Vivekananda died before the birth of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS. There was no occasion for him to comment on these organisations. Bose was no longer around for two years before freedom. Therefor, there was no occasion for a conflict between him and the most feverish years of Hindutva. But appropriation has its limits. The negative historical record of Hindutva apart, the most insurmountable difficulty in its attempt to appropriate Gandhi is the matter of his assassination.

Why, then has virtually no political party woken up to the 50th years of Gandhi's martyrdom? This may be a case of an opportunity almost missed. It is a reminder also of a multiple allegorical assassination of Gandhi...

The Congress(I) evidently does not quite know Gandhi. Nor does the party re-present the tradition of the Indian National Congress of the freedom struggle. That party more or less disappeared in 1969... It is only by default that the Congress(I) is associated in the minds of the people with the pre-freedom Indian National Congress.

When the leaders of the BSP in 1993 accused Gandhi of having supported Varna Vyavastha ... the Congress(I) leadership had neither the will nor the wherewithal to challenge it. Gandhi's repeated statements that caste "must go" and, especially from 1945 onwards, that there was "only one varna today" were perhaps not even known to the Congress(I) members... Since the Congress(I) posed ... as the inheritor of Gandhi's legacy, it was tempting for the BSP to seek to attack Gandhi in a bid to attack the Congress(I). In this, it attacked not the historical Gandhi to whom the Dalits were the "nearest and dearest," as Ambedkar had acknowledged in a warm tribute in the Rajya Sabha on September 6, 1954. In essence, the BSP attacked the Gandhi appropriated by the Congress(I). A false Gandhi was pitted against a fake Ambedkar. The real Gandhi and the real Ambedkar had shown some consideration for each other...

It is also possible that some sections of the Janata Dal (and the RJD that has emerged from it) feel that they have on electoral reason to raise the issues concerning Gandhi's assassination. The Dal is created primarily for winning elections. Gandhi is not sectarian enough to help win votes.

A section of the Muslim middle class has its own peculiar dilemma. It is too close still to the intensive propaganda conducted against Gandhi by the Muslim League prior to Partition... This propaganda has been kept alive by some academic centres belonging especially to the former colonial power... This scholarship seeks justification of the colonial policy. For it, only one nationalist historiography must be attacked and that is the Indian, which it undiscerningly brackets with the Hindutva... This scholarship requires that Gandhi be painted saffron rather than as a representative of the

(Contd. on Page 185)

Jagmohan on Gandhi's Hinduism

... Hinduism, as viewed by Gandhi, is nothing but spiritual secularism and a service-oriented way of life based upon the highest principles of ethics and morality. That was why he was able to assert without any hesitation that his devotion to truth had drawn him to politics and those who believed that religion had nothing to do with politics did not understand what religion meant.

Gandhi's interpretation of Hinduism becomes clear from his reply to the three questions from Dr. Radhakrishnan. The questions were: What is your religion? How are you led to it? What is its bearing on social life?

Gandhi's answer to the first question: "My religion is Hinduism which, for me, is the religion of humanity and includes the best of all religions known to me".

To the second question, he said: "... I am led to my religion through truth and non-violence. I often describe my religion as religion of truth. Of late, instead of saying God is Truth, I have been saying Truth is God. We are all sparks of truth. The sum total of these sparks is indescribable, as yet unknown truth; which is God. I am daily led nearer to it by constant prayer".

To the third question, Gandhi replied: "The bearing of this religion on social life is, or has to be, seen in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion, one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all in life. Realisation of truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in and identification with this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me, there is no escape from social service; there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. In this scheme, there is nothing low, nothing high. For all is one, though we seem to be many."

Gandhi elaborated: "The deeper I study Hinduism, the stronger becomes the belief in me that Hinduism is as broad as the universe. Something within me tells me that, for all the deep veneration I show to several religions, I am all the more a Hindu, nonetheless for it".

... The need for building a healthy India demands that Hinduism, as seen by Gandhi, should not be ignored as an instrument of state policy.

Power can corrupt. But it can also ennoble. It can elevate the wielder to a higher pedestal and transform him into a nobler creature. The tragedy of contemporary India has been that power has largely remained in the hands of those who were seldom inspired by a nobler purpose. And those who have that purpose do not get the opportunity, rather, the system denies it... The ethical foundation of Hinduism, as interpreted by Gandhi (can) provide "an awakened conscience" to an individual and make him an honest, just and compassionate component of society...

Hinduism, as (defined) by Gandhi... It does not go against any other religion. Nor is it incompatible with the constitutional goals of equality, fraternity, liberty and justice...

(Source: The BJP Today, 1-15 December, 1997)

A 'Muslim' Reaction

Arif-ul-Islam on Gandhiji

... Gandhi was an even greater Hindu leader than the highly esteemed Chanakya. He is on record to have stated in the Young India that his "adoption of nationalism cannot be separated from his interest in Hinduism".

Even a great secularist Jawaharlal Nehru could not desist from openly admitting in Discovery of India that "Indian nationalism was dominated by Hindus and had a Hinduised look". In fact, all the nationalist Hindu leaders pursued the policy of "bhaid (deception) throughout the freedom struggle more particularly during the Khilafat Movement and the emotional and simple Muslim leaders, like Mohammed Ali Johar and Maulana Azad could not understand their real intent.

Now after hundred years of pursuance of policy of 'bhaid', the time for the next motto 'dand' (punishment) has arrived which is clear from the demolition of Babari Mosque and the subsequent communal killings.

S.R. Mehrotra's Reply

Arif-ul-Islam's letter 'The Hidden Hindu in the Mahatma (October 16) is not only in bad taste but also misconceived. The character of nationalism in any country is determined largely - though not entirely - by its majority. The myths and symbols of nationalism are almost invariably those of the majority. Where the majority is tolerant and the minority able and clever, the overwhelming impress of the majority may be softened and diluted but it cannot be eradicated.

In the early 1920s Gandhi persuaded a large section of Hindus - even against their better judgement - to support the Muslim demand regarding Khilafat. To describe this, as Arif-ul-Islam does, as "deception" is unfair. Gandhi never made any secret of the fact that he was a Hindu. Only, his Hinduism was not a narrow creed. He interpreted it in the most liberal, Universalist terms "as the religion of humanity and including the best of all religions known to me".

(Source: The Indian Express, 30 September, 1997)

(Contd. from Page 184)

Indian nation. For this, it is necessary for this scholarship to seek to erase the distinction between Gandhi and his assassin. The erasing of this, distinction is precisely the politics of the BJP... To rationalise the colonial policy ... the colonial scholarship presents the entire freedom movement in exaggerated sectarian colours, while minimising the extent to which the movement in fact resisted Hindutva and sectarianism generally. Here there is a triple convergence. The colonial agenda converges with the Hindu communal effort at appropriating the freedom movement as well as with the pre-Partition Muslim communal agenda...

Savarkar ... was acquitted in the Gandhi murder case. But Gandhi's assassin never made any secret of the source of his ideological inspiration.

The distinction between Gandhi and his assassin ... is critical to the survival of Indian society.

BJP's Hindutva more Important than Power
RSS Ideologue Sudarshan in Panchjanya

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has issued a veiled warning to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that it would lose the basic purpose of its existence if it diluted its commitment to Hindutva.

While claiming that the Sangh did not interfere in the day-to-day working of any of its organisations, RSS joint general secretary K.S. Sudarshan ... said it would concern itself in ensuring that the BJP remains firm on its commitment to Hindutva.

He also claimed, in another context, that the biggest problem before the country today revolved round the existing differences on the concept of the nation and whether India should be a Hindu rashtra or not.

... His remarks were aimed at reassuring the cadres that the induction into the BJP and its alliances with other groups would not dilute the party's basic character.

The RSS leader has also, in effect, put paid to assessments that the BJP may dilute its principal planks for the sake of its allies to come to power while lending credence to reports that any BJP-led Government would be ideologically remote-controlled by the RSS.

In a wide-ranging, free wheeling and surprisingly hard hitting interview, Sudarshan recalled that the primary objective behind establishing the Jan Sangh and then the BJP was to ensure a politics of value-based commitment to Hindutva...

"... India will have to present a model of development before the world that is based on Hindu thought. If the BJP becomes the vehicle of this, it will succeed both in India and also help contribute to peace and progress in the world," he said.

If the BJP keeps this vision of its missionary role for the future in mind it would perform a constructive role, he said. "But if it thought it could go ahead on its own and disassociated itself from the fundamental principles and beliefs then its fate would be like that of the Congress," he warned.

... Sudarshan maintained that the new entrants were few in number. Besides ... the basic issue was whether they ... accepted the BJP's ideology or not... He said that any organisation which kept in mind its ideology, forged ahead while one which failed to do so lagged behind.

Rakesh Sinha in Defence of RSS

...An anti-RSS attitude is essentially a part of the Nehruvian socio-political doctrine... The minorities have ... made to believe that they are in danger of losing their religious identity due to, if not Hindu fascism, the hegemonic attitude of the majority community. The Muslims were demoralised as the growth of the RSS was projected as an Indian version of the Nazi ideology. ...

The RSS was formed with the ideology of regeneration of the Hindu nation. The term Hindu, in the RSS vocabulary, has been used in the nationalist perspective as it gives cultural identity to the land and the people. It is not meant either to create a theocratic state or establish the domination of the majority community over the minority... The ideology of the RSS has been that India is one nation and its base is not political but cultural. The presence of various faiths or languages does not make a nation multinational. ...

The term Indianisation of minorities ... is misunderstood as something like the melting pot experience as it seemingly questions the loyalty of the minorities. Golwalkar had used the concept of assimilation, according to which, an individual enjoys full freedom to his Vyakti Dharma (personal faith) and Kula Dharma (duty to ancestors but he or she to be part of a collective national ... society. Diversities in the path of devotion, said Golwalkar, does not mean division in society. This is the most positive way to create a national identity which is also described as the mainstream culture....

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 27 January, 1998)

Yubaraj Ghimire
On RSS Clearance to BJP

Scenting power at the Centre, the RSS **has quietly endorsed the BJP's efforts to go all out and win the numbers game.** The top priority of the Sangh now is that the BJP form the next government and so it has indicated to the party that **it will not oppose "any compromises" which may be needed to form the government.**

The first draft of the "national agenda", a euphemism for the party's Common Minimum Programme ... was approved by K.C. Sudershan, senior RSS leader, who held meetings with BJP leaders Murli Manohar Joshi and K. Govindacharya today.

Sudershan, incidentally ... had strongly criticised the BJP's efforts to downplay Hindutva in its pre-election rhetoric. Now .. the RSS has turned around and approved the party's move to drop the Ram temple, Article 370 and a ban on cow slaughter from the "national agenda".

And when the BJP approached former Union Minister Sukh Ram in Himachal Pradesh for his support in forming the state government, the RSS preferred to remain silent... Sukh Ram figures in the list of "scam-tainted politicians" in the country today. ...

Evidently, topmost on the RSS agenda - as for the BJP - is to form the next government. But on two issues, the Sangh has stood firm. It has insisted that the "national agenda" **include the uniform civil code** - even in a modified form - **and national security with "infiltration of Muslims"** a key component...

But there are apprehensions. According to a ... senior Congress leader who joined the BJP before the elections, the rSS is expected to begin turning on the heat once the BJP forms the government, especially when the Cabinet composition is decided. Officially, though, the party still claims that the RSS is not a factor. Senior BJP leader Thakre said: "The RSS does not decide the strategy for the BJP. Given the present situation, we are busy finalising the national agenda to run a good government. That is what the Sangh expects of us," he said.

BJP's Scientific Temper
Shivanath Jha in the Indian Express, 15 March, 1998

Bowing to the advice of *vaastushashtra* experts, the BJP has shut the main gate to its central office at 11, Ashoka Road, New Delhi. Instead, the second gate, a scant 50 metres from the main gate and which was long in disuse, was opened on March 10.

Party sources said senior leader Dr. Murali Manohar Joshi consulted at least 18 experts on *vaastu* from across the country.. The 'inauspicious' element ... was apparently not the main gate itself; a ten-year-old *neem* tree was identified as the offender.

"Since it was not possible to cut the tree, we decided to close the main gate and requested the visitors to use other one", said one party functionary...

Said another functionary, "Somebody had pointed it out before but when we formed the government no attention was paid .. and Vajpayeeji was out in 13 days", unshakably convinced that things would be different now that this little point about vaastu has been taken care of...

The party had even fixed the most appropriate time ... for swearing in on March 15 between 9.40 am and 10.45 am. Of course, by an apparent oversight, the astrologers had not reckoned with .. Jairam Jayalalitha and her private agenda...

A Muslim Mason: Builder of Temples

... Sheikh Rahim, 55, is a devout Muslim of Dhana village in Sagar district of M.P. who specialises in constructing temples. Being a Muslim is no handicap in his job as Rahim would testify. In fact, he is widely respected by the mostly Brahmin villagers for his skills. And the adoration is reciprocated by Rahim.

The villagers lovingly call him Rahim kaka and consider him a perfect mason. He finds nothing unusual about it. "I have done well in life **because I have the *ashirwad* of the Hindu gods and Allah,**" said the mason...

"Most temples in the area are a tribute to Rahim's skills," said Devendra Tiwari, secretary of Patneshwar Temple Welfare Committee...

Though he is a pious Muslim, Rahim has overcome Islam's aversion to idol worship...

But Rahim's loyalty to his work has not diluted his devotion to Islam. However busy he is, the mason finds time and place to offer the daily *namaz*...

Interestingly, the man who specialises in building abodes for gods does not have a *pucca* roof above his head...

Shahabuddin's Letter on Delhi CM's Appeal for Gau Mata, 11 December, 1997

I have seen the appeal of Shri Sahib Singh, Chief Minister of Delhi for saving the cow as advertisement in several papers.He has asked the people not to "reap the sin" of inadvertent death of "Gau Mata", on swallowing indigestible plastic bags.

It is strange that his appeal has such a religious tone and content.Why shoundn't he try to save all loiter animals from eating the garbage (including plastic bags) and thus inviting their death.Secondly, why should he invoke the concept of "Mata" and "sin" in such a case?Is he appealing only to the Hindus and leaving Muslims, Christians and others free to throw the plastic bags around?

The Government of the Capital Territory of Delhi should not act as if Delhi has Hindu residents only or that it is the Government of the Hindus by the Hindus, and for the Hindus - and for Gau Mata - only.

'Insensitivity in Choice of Metaphor'
A Letter in the Times of India

This refers to the unfortunate analogy that Mr. M.D. Nalapat has drawn in his article, 'Jhatka is better than halal, Mr. Gujral' (October 24). Mr. Nalapat seems to suggest that Jhatka is both literally and metaphorically a bold, decisive approach to "doing what is right". Halal, on the other hand, is represented as a slow, compromising method as a slow, compromising method which drains away the vital fluid and prolongs the suffering of the dying animal (or cause).

We respect Mr. Nalapat's right to his opinion, but he ought to have been more circumspect in his choice of metaphor, given the communally surcharged atmosphere which unfortunately prevails in our country... The eminent writer has involved himself in a classic case of misconception. From the physiological point of view, halal involves the severing of the throat, windpipe and jugular vein without cutting the spinal cord so that the blood, which happens to be an excellent medium for bacteria and micro-organisms, is drained off. If the jhatka method, the nerve fibres enveloping the heart are likely to be damaged, causing cardiac arrest and permitting the animal's blood to stagnate in the blood vessels.

... The end-product of a jhatka is unhygienic, while that of a halal is perfectly hygienic.

If the analogy is applied to the political scenario under discussion, it seems that what the Indian Parliament needs today is a drainage of impurities, effected by a process that is slow but thorough. If anything, it is thanks to several jhatkas that the Union government has become the wavering victim of coalitions and trade-offs today...

Aswini K. Mohapatra on Kurdish Situation in Turkey

The latest incursion by the Turkish Army into northern Iraq has once again focused the ... spotlight on its long-running war with the separatist Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK as it is popularly called after its Kurdish initials. More than 25,0000 troops with air and artillery cover are committed to the onslaught in an attempt to deliver a fatal blow to some 2000 and odd PKK guerrillas using northern Iraq (as base).

Whether Ankara will succeed in its mission to clean up the PKK bases is open to question. However, this foray into Iraq is symptomatic of its military approach to the whole Kurdish issue... Pursuing an exclusively military solution, Turkish leaders hope to stamp out the PKK-led insurgency that has raged in Turkey for more than a decade and taken more than 17,000 lives...

The PKK's terrorist attacks have stretched beyond south-eastern Turkey where it has based its armed struggle for a homeland of 12 million Kurds who make up fifth of the country's total population...

Abd Allah Ocalan, widely known by his nickname 'Apo' who, alongwith a small group of his followers ... launched the Patitiya Karkaran Kurdistan (PKK) in 1978.

Unlike other Kurdish factions, notably the KDP and PUK in Iraq, which have cultivated a following through neo-tribal patronage networks. the (followers) of Apo were drawn exclusively from Turkey's growing proletariat. In fact, the PKK has imbued Kurdish nationalism with the idea of class war. Following the demise of the moderate Left-wing political parties representing Kurdish interest in the seventies, the PKK became the rallying point for the Kurdish collective movement in Turkey's poor ... south-east.

... Kurdistan, the land of the Kurds, was divided during seventeenth century between the Ottoman and Persian Empires , but it enjoyed considerable de facto independence until... After the First World War, when new states were carved our of disintegrating Ottoman Empire. The Kurds ... were also regarded as natural candidates for nationhood.

The design for an independent Kurdistan was on the drawing-board of the victorious allies at the Conference of Serves... The reconstructed Turkish Army overran Kurdish territories in 1922 and a large chunk of Kurdish population was left within the borders of a new Turkish Republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923. Britain and France indirectly awarded themselves Kurdish areas through their client states Syria and Iraq.

Consequently, the Kurds were trapped by the stronger states seeking to maintain the status quo by imposing the homogenising ideology of the 'dominant core'. In Kemalist Turkey, for example, the Turks, who are also a majority, constitute the 'dominant core', which views itself as a historic institutional and symbolic creation and hence, the appropriate hegemony of the state. Obversely, such large ethnic groups as the Kurds who comprise the periphery are subjected to the forceful process of assimilation.

Although the Turkish Republic inherited the social composition of a multi-ethnic empire, the framers of the Republic opted for the French nation-state model, which does not recognise the indigenous minority, ethnic or religious. Indeed, this very nature of the Turkish state is the basic issue in the 13-year-old Turkish-Kurdish conflict. For the Kurdish rebels with their Marxist ideology and separatist aspirations represent a dire threat, not just to the Turkish Government as presently configured, but to the cohesion of the ... nation state itself.

Interestingly, however, the Turkish state discourse has consistently avoided recognising the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question. The issue of Kurds is viewed in terms of reactionary politics, tribal resistance, regional backwardness, terrorism, but never as ethno-political.

... The Turkish authorities even deny that the Kurds exist. They are instead categorised as 'mountain Turks' or the 'Kurdish Turks' and, more important, their language is portrayed as a 'rotten branch of Turkish' though it has distinct Indo-European ancestry.

On the whole, denying the Kurds their separate identity has been the main plank of Turkey's official ideology. So much so that there are no government records or statistics indicating the exact size or geographic distribution of the Kurdish population. Members of the Turkish establishment, however, argue that the absence of distinction between the two shows that there is no barrier to the advancement of Kurds within the state.

It is true that people identifiable as being of Kurdish origin have achieved high office that includes Ministers and Members of Parliament. It is also true that they have secured those positions in the state apparatus only by concealing their Kurdish identities. In contrast, those who do not deny their heritage, like the noted ... sociologist Ismail Besikci, film director Yilmaz Guney and the well-known novelist Yasser Kemal, have suffered the wrath of the avenging state.

In its implacable campaign against "terrorism", Turkey has consciously destroyed the middle-ground of non-violent protest and debate. For example, Ozgur Gundem, a legal Kurdish journal was closed in 1994 after less than two years during which 17 journalists and distributors were assassinated by the

squads. By locking away the leading representatives of Kurdish aspirations on the charge of separatism, and closing down the legally constituted pro-Kurdish organisations like the People's Democracy Party (HADEP), the state has foreclosed a legitimate forum for the Turks and Kurds to re-negotiate the coexistence on which the well-being of the Republic depends.

Worse still, the Turkish establishment, by denying the Kurds political platform at the time when the Turkish Centre-Left is in disarray, has enlarged the electoral space of the Islamist contingent led by the Refah (Welfare) party. Refah may not be a natural partner of Kurdish nationalism, but it has now attracted growing support from the discontented Kurdish peasants, particularly those displaced from their rural (houses) in the troubled east of the country.

Since 1990, the security forcers have evacuated nearly three thousand villages and hamlets apparently with the intention to deprive the PKK guerrillas of any form of shelter and food in the border areas. According to the reports published by the Human Right Watch and Amnesty International, approximately three million people have abandoned their villages on orders from the Army, and half the Kurdish rural habitat has been emptied. The surge of immigration to the nearby towns has already caused social upheaval as the Turkish newspapers and starvation of Kurdish migrants in Diyarbaker and Hakkari towns.

Paradoxically, such a schizophrenic attitude of the state has strengthened the symbolic value of the PKK, the only surviving organisation that upholds the concept of Kurdish identity. If the PKK has emerged as the vehicle for Kurdish aspirations, despite its reputation for brutality, this is not due to its Marxist-Leninist ideology...

Nor is it because the majority of the Kurdish population shares its ultimate goal of establishing an independent Kurdish state. In fact, many Kurds living in most of western Turkey, especially Istanbul and Izmir, are unlikely to abandon their homes to settle in a hypothetical state that would be surrounded by hostile countries. The PKK exists because Kurdish political parties, language and dress, indeed, the very word 'Kurd' have been outlawed. It may not possess resources and the kind of international support required to transform the movement into ... a Kurdish intifada.

All the same the PKK has won a significant political victory by forcing Turkey's political elite, known for their strong mono-ethnic tendency, to acknowledge what President Suleyman Demirel described the "Kurdish reality". More so, his predecessor, Turgut Ozal, broke the Kemalist taboo on Kurds by amending the Constitution to allow "non-Turkish" languages to be spoken, and even published.

Ozal's initiative, though it outraged the establishment, was the first ever sign of a non-military solution to the conflict. (When) he died ... politicians abandoned his pursuit of a political solution in favour of an all-out war.

In the past 12 years of frightful war, which costs Turkey $ 7 to $ 8 billion a year, the Army has achieved precious little save spreading the very nationalism that Ankara wishes to contain. No wonder, the Turkish security forces are now under pressure to show results in the current operation in northern Iraq. But ... Ankara risks bogging down its Army in vicious hostilities.

The 'safe haven' created in northern Iraq by the US-led allied forces after the Gulf War has descended into a state of anarchy following the resumption of armed conflict between the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in 1996. The power vacuum created by an interminable factional fighting among the Iraqi Kurds has benefited the PKK partisans particularly in consolidating its forward base in the northern region of Bahdian close to the Turkish border. Backed by logistic support from Iran and its surrogate, the PUK, the PKK's military activities constitute a veritable threat in the KDP's sphere of influence where a majority of Kurds speak the Kurmanji dialect like their Turkish counterpart.

... The conflict in northern Iraq may appear obscure, but it is deceptively dangerous.

It is currently a political twilight zone, where the regional powers including Turkey compete among themselves to promote their respective geo-strategic interests using the fractious Kurds as natural pawns. In an area famed for shifting alliances, success in the battlefield does not necessarily guarantee long-term security; ongoing conflicts are rather part of the region's status quo. The KDP, for instance, which today acts as an auxiliary force for the Turkish Army, was not long ago aligned with the PKK in its bid to recapture Arbil, the unofficial capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, from the control of the PUK, its arch rival.

In any event, the imperative towards a military solution is itself an expression of weakness rather than strength, for a state unable to achieve consensus politically will remain fragile. Instead of exclusively relying on the Army... Turkey ... should search for a non-military, civilian solution possibly by reviving public debate over the Basque model. Just as in Spain where Catalan and Basque separatist movements have ebbed with greater devolution of power, a measure of cultural and administrative autonomy will satisfy Kurdish aspirations. Until then the Kurdish question will remain Turkey's festering sore.

(Source: The Mainstream, 19 July 1997)

UK: State Aid to Muslim Schools A Landmark & Morale-booster for British Muslims

... On a bright October day in 1983 the Brondesbury College for Boys opened its doors for the first time as Islamia Primary School. Just 13 pupils trooped in that day, totally unaware of the part they were to play in what soon became an issue of international importance. Today, 14 years later, the school - with 150 pupils on roll ... stands on the threshold of the state education system, poised to become Britain's first state funded Muslim school in April, 1998.

Three other Muslim schools have attempted to accompany Islamia through the doors of the state system over the years. Zakaria Muslim Girls' High School in Batley withdrew its own application for voluntary aided status in the early 1990s ... is a likely candidate to re-apply. The other unsuccessful school was Feversham College in Bradford whose voluntary aided application was rejected... A re-application is imminent.

The third school, Al-Furqan Primary in Birmingham, has been more successful and is due to join Islamia as a state school in September. The school's achievement is in many ways even more remarkable than Islamia's given the relatively better resources available to the latter. The school started life as a study group for nursery age children in 1989... Five years ... later, work on the application for state funding began in 1994 and success came in 1997. Al-Furqan benefited naturally from the long and high profile campaign for Islamia.

The decision to fund Islamia and Al-Furqan brings Britain in line with state policy in some other countries like Holland, Denmark and Eire, close to home, and South Africa, further afield, that give varying levels of state funding for Muslim schools along with other denominational schools. Moreover, for the first time British Muslims have been afforded equal status in education, in principle at least. With the two state funded schools catering for around 360 or so pupils out of an estimated 350,000 Muslim children of compulsory school age, there is certainly not equality of opportunity for all Muslim parents and their children. Nevertheless, this is a start and there is now no argument that Muslims are excluded per se from educational choice. In theory, schools 'just' have to fulfil the funding requirements of the DfEE. ...

However, only a handful of Muslim day schools ... are in a position to begin application procedures. For most, in the absence of suitable ... premises...

In the meantime, for most Muslim children in Britain a non-Muslim school is the reality; only around two per

(Contd. on Page 172)

Thomas Abraham On Serbian Repression in Kosovo

... The West fears that the disturbances in Kosovo will spill over to neighbouring Macedonia, and eventually such Albania, Greece and Turkey into a new Balkan conflict that would be far more vicious than anything that happened in Bosnia. The U.S. is particularly worried that Greece and Turkey, both NATO members, will get involved on opposition sides in the conflict and threaten the alliance's cohesion... The West blames (Yugoslavia) for the recent violence.

The present disturbances in Kosovo, which have seen the deaths of between 20 and 40 ethnic Albanians and Serb policemen, were sparked by an ambush ten days ago of Serb policemen by suspected members of the UCK, an organistion that is fighting for independence of the province from... Serbia. The Serb authorities then began a military crackdown against UCK strongholds, forcing the evacuation of several thousand villagers. Serbian authorities said that a prominent rebel leader, Adem Jasheri, was killed in the crackdown. The Serbian action has, in turn, sparked demonstrations by ethnic Albanians throughout Kosovo demanding independence. The flood of refugees has also worried the Europeans, who fear they will have to play host to them.

Kosovo has long been a thorn in the side of Serbia, and in the early 1990s, many analysts thought that it, rather than Bosnia, would be the main point of conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Kosovo has a population that is 90 per cent Albanian, and has grown increasingly restive at being part of Serbia. Demands for independence or merger with neighbouring Albania have grown. The local population is more or less completely alienated from the rest of Serbia, and over the years have declared a "Republic of Kosovo" under a president, Mr. Ibrahim Rugova. They have also formed a parallel system of education in the Albanian language, boycotting Serb educational institutions. At the same time, armed separatist groups have sprung up, the most prominent of which has been the UCK, or Albanian Liberation Army.

Serb nationalists, however, cannot conceive of independence, or even autonomy for Kosovo, which holds a special (historic) significance for them...

... The US has called for strong, united action, but has not specified the precise nature of this action. (UK) has called on Yugoslavia to begin a dialogue with the people of Kosovo to provide greater autonomy. "Repression must stop, and Belgrade must open a political process to provide increased autonomy in Kosovo". President Milosevic himself has rejected expressions of Western concern, and has said that what happened in Kosovo was purely an internal matter.

(Source: The Hindu, 10 March, 1998)

Chronology of the Month

(15 February - 15 March, 1998)

NATIONAL POLITICS

General Election: *General Election held peacefully in 3 phases. Overall turnout reportedly over 60%. Election in Ladakh and Mandi deferred. Poll in Patna countermanded (21 Feb). BJP emerges as largest single party with 174; together with pre-poll and post-poll allies, claims support of 264. INC and allies emerges as second and UF-LF, the third.

Congress(I): *Sonia Gandhi campaigns intensively for Congress throughout country to total exclusion of all other leaders but with mixed results. Campaign focuses on BJP's anti-secular character. *RSS files defamation case against Congress President Kesri (18 Feb). *CWC adopts cautious approach on forming Government (5 Mar). *Kesri announces decision to resign (11 Mar). Working Committee invites Sonia Gandhi to take over. Sonia assumes charge (14 Mar).

BJP: *Vajpayee and Advani campaign vigorously on slogan of stability but end up with dependence on 13, later 17 parties and 5 independents to secure working majority.

*BJP tries to allay fears and apprehensions of Muslims but fails to secure significant electoral support.

*Fields 6 'Muslims' and wins Rampur, UP, seat with NAQVI who is lone representative of community in the BJP-led alliance. *Pins hopes on TDP's neutrality in Lok Sabha for survival. *BJP's use of website for anti-Muslim hate propaganda widely criticised.

AIADMK: *Jayalalitha-led AIADMK and others re-emergence, with 27 seats, takes all by surprise and changes political landscape. BJP successfully pressurised to concede 7 berth in Council of Ministers and to amend National Agenda to embrace 'Tamil' demands. However, BJP vetoes her ally S. Swamy, President, JP.

Rajiv Murder Case: *Government refuses extension to Jain Commission (28 Feb). Final report submitted (7 Mar).

Scams: *Solicitor General of India advises President to sanction prosecution of former Ministers Sheila Kaul and P.K. Thungon in shop allotment case (26 Feb).

*Supreme Court dismisses CBI's appeal against discharge of BJP leader Advani in Hawala Case against (2 Mar).

*CBI chargesheets Thungon in disproportionate assets case. *Delhi H.C. demands Memorandum of Association of Foreign Companies which gave donation to Congress in 1993-94 (17 Feb).

Government: *In order to secure support of national and political allies, BJP promises Coordination Committee and National Agenda, keeping out controversial issues of introduction of Uniform Civil Code, deletion of Article 370 and construction of Ram Temple on Babari Masjid site, all included in BJP's Manifesto and convassing.

*On election as Leader of Parliamentary Group (7 Mar), Vajpayee stakes claim to form government. President Narayanan asks him to produce evidence to support claim of majority (10 Mar). Vajpayee finally submits list of 240 (excluding AIADMK and allies) (12 Mar). President consults leaders of INC, CPM and other UF-LF parties as well as ex-PM's. AIADMK supports BJP in writing (14 Mar). INC-UF-LF alliance having failed to stake claim, President invites Vajpayee to form Government (15 Mar).

UF: *Despite A.P. Muslim's protest, TDP breaks rank and informs President of neutrality between BJP and INC (12 Mar).

*V.P. Singh gives maximum life of 2 years to BJP-led government.

Muslim Politics: *A.I. Muslim Forum, Indian National League, National Loktantrik Party and Muslim Backward Morcha form front in UP to contest all 85 seats and target SP and BSP, rather than BJP (18 Jan). Move fizzles out during election.

*Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi, Abdullah asks Muslims to vote for 'good and honest' candidates and criticises both BJP and the UF; appeal regarded as ambivalent in supporting Congress or BJP (13 Feb).

*Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, A.I. Milli Council, A.I. Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat and Committee for Defence of Secularism, all call upon Muslims to endeavour to defeat BJP by supporting strongest secular candidate in each constituency irrespective of party affiliation or religion.

*A.I. Milli Council remains political situation holds disunity of secular forces responsible for BJP's gain and calls upon them to unite and form government (15 Mar).

Developments in UP: *Governor Bhandari dismisses Kalyan Singh Government and instals L.C. Dy. Leader Jagdambika Pal as C.M. (21 Feb). BJP demands sack of Governor (22 Feb). Allahabad H.C. nullifies Governor's action and reinstates Kalyan Government (23 Feb). SC endorses H.C. Order (23 Feb). President Narayanan expresses displeasure; but neither Bhandari resigns nor P.M. tenders advice to President for dismissal (26 Feb). SC directs trial of strength between Kalyan and Pal in constitution innovation. Kalyan wins (26 Feb). SC endorses result (27 Feb). *Net electoral gain in 2nd phase to BJP estimated at 7%. *Kalyan expands Ministry to include all defectors. *UP Speaker delays decision on defection of 18 BSP members.

KASHMIR SITUATION

Political Developments: *GOI extends ban on JKLF for another 2 years (17 Feb). *APHC leaders arrested for anti-election campaign (25 Feb). Hurriyat-sponsored boycott reduces poll level in Srinagar (28 Feb).

*Pandit community seeks UT status for Valley as condition for return. *BJP leader Vajpayee promises action to occupy POK; Pakistan calls it provocative (26 Feb). BJP G.S. Govindacharya reiterates pledge. Pakistan reacts strongly (6 Mar).

*Elections in Valley and Jammu held almost peacefully; NC wins 2 out of 4 including CM's son Omar Farooq from Srinagar; 1 seat goes to Congress; 1 to BJP **(9 Mar)**.

Insurgency: *2 bomb blasts rock Valley, kill 3 **(20 Feb)**.

Foreign Reaction: *US denies role to 'fix' Kashmir problem but aspires to play mediatory role **(25 Feb)**.

*Russia reiterates pro-India stand but prepares ground for sale of arms to Pakistan.

BABARI MASJID

Sangh Parivar: *VHP President Ashok Singhal demands surrender of Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura and reiterate ban on construction of any Masjid in Ayodhya **(19 Feb)**.

*Sadhvi Rithambara, leader of Durga Vahini, threatens agitation if BJP does not implement 5-point Hindu agenda.

Title Suit: *Special Bench reserves orders on Deoki Nandan Agarwal's plea for transfer of some donations in makeshift temple to him **(28 Feb)**. Witness Rama Shankar Upadhyay denies exact mention of exact birthsite of Rama or alleged destruction of Temple in any religious book.

Foreign Reaction: *Pakistan comments adversely on BJP's manifesto calling for construction of temple over Babari Masjid site; draws attention of UN, OIC and other international organisations **(26 Feb)**.

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN

Terrorism: *Serial bomb blasts in Coimbatore kill 60, injure 100. Tamil Nadu police denies BJP assertion that Advani was target of bomb blast **(19 Feb)**. P.M. Gujral blames ISI **(20 Feb)**. SIM and SIO protest against large-scale arrest of Muslim youth and police atrocities. Al-Umma Founder S.A. Basha detained under NSA **(8 Mar)**. H.C. upholds ban **(10 Mar)**.

*Bomb blast in Mumbai kills 4 **(27 Feb)**.

*Delhi police accuses Laskhar-e-Taiba, Pakistan of funding terrorism; Arrests 4 suspects, all with Muslim names **(9 Mar)**.

*Shahabuddin, Hamid and Moonis condemn terrorism but caution authorities against premature leakage of names of those arrested in press **(See Text)**.

Bombay Disturbances: *Sri Krishna Commission submits its report to Government of Maharashtra **(16 Feb)**. Congress(I), Ulema Council and Milli Council demand publication **(19 Feb)**. State Government promises to table report in next session of Assembly.

Communal Violence: *NCM Committee on Communal Riots assigns task of preparing draft of a bill on Communal Riots to Rajiv Dhavan.

*Ajmer rocked by communal violence **(17 Feb)**; Muslims defying curfew to perform Friday prayer dispersed by force **(20 Feb)**; Khadims sit in Dharma to press for judicial inquiry. Houses searched for weapons; nearly one hundred persons arrested **(21 Feb)**. Ajmer observes total bandh **(22 Feb)**. Curfew relaxed **(24 Feb)**. *Communal clash in Akola **(11 Feb)**; police atrocities reported; Imam of Jama Masjid arrested.

*Communal clash in Firozabad; 10 hurt **(18 Feb)**.

*Tamil Nadu Government appoints Justice Gokal Krishnan Commission to inquiry at Coimbatore riots in December, 1997 **(22 Feb)**.

Haj: *Haj charter subsidy of Rs. 122 crores formally approved, based on regular return airfare for 66000 pilgrims. Shahabuddin protests against profiteering by national carriers and short-sighted gift to Muslim-baiters.

*First batch of Indian pilgrims reach Jeddah **(28 Feb)**. Total number likely to exceed 100,000.

Wakf: *Delhi Wakf Board Chairman asks Government of Delhi for CBI probe into Board's affairs during last 25 years and loss of Wakf land worth more than 2000 crores. CM orders vigilance probe **(8 Mar)**.

*Rajasthan H.C. appoints D.J. Ajmer as Receiver of donations in Dargah for disbursement to Dewan, Khadims and Dargah management in accordance with 1933 Order.

AMU: *Rising tension between Bihari and UP students erupts in violence resulting gun-fight and arson **(17 Feb)**. Students demand resignation of Rector, accuse V.C. of indifference and nominated Union President of involvement. Normalcy restored with mutual understanding **(3 Mar)**. *AMU V.C. rules out election for Students Union.

Urdu: *Urdu translators and Urdu teachers in UP, selected in 1995 and 1996, reported not appointed despite H.C. orders **(12 Mar)**.

Hindu Chauvinism: *VHP organises violent protest against inclusion of M.F. Husain's old painting of Sita in Delhi exhibition **(24 Feb)**.

Renaming of Places: *INTACH's writ petition against renaming of Connaught Place and Connaught Circus after Rajiv and Indira Gandhi admitted. Government pleads competence and custom **(27 Feb)**.

Communal Writings: *Publisher's writ petition against ban on Prof. A. Moghni's book Aurangzeb admitted by Delhi H.C. **(8 Mar)**.

Commemoration: *Jamia Millia Islamia holds Seminar on Zakir Husain to mark birth centenary **(12 Mar)**.

Muslim World: *India and Bangladesh reach understanding to resolve the enclaves issue on basis of free option of citizenship to inhabitants **(9 Mar)**.

*Albania President expresses hopes for closer ties with India **(12 Mar)**. *Wali Khan's ANP breaks off 90 year old alliance with ruling Pakistan Muslim League on renaming NWFP as 'Pakhtoonkhwa' **(26 Feb)**.

*UNSG Kofi Annan to signs agreement with Iraq on further weapons' inspection **(23 Feb)**. Agreement endorsed by Security Council stops US attack.

Indo-Pakistan Relations: *Pakistan F.M. rejects confederation idea and wants conflict-free and tension-free ties with India **(25 Feb)**. *Pakistan blames RAW for bomb blasts in Pakistan **(12 Mar)**.

Obituary: S.M. Yahya, former Finance Minister, Karnataka, 59 passes away **(29 Jan)**. *Noted Novelist Atia Husain, 84, dies in London **(23 Feb)**. *Eminent Scholar Hasan Musanna Nadvi, 87, passes away in Karnataka **(1 Mar)**.

*Scholar and Writer Habibul Haq Nadvi, 60, passes away in Durban, S. Africa.