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Muslim India

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TO SURVIVE INDIAN SECULARISM: MUST BE REDEFINED AS A FACET OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The polarisation between the secular and the anti-secular forces which led to the demise of the 13-day wonder in 1996 brought to the fore the question of re-defining secularism in the Indian context. This has been a perennial debate because there never has been, not even during the Freedom Movement, a complete meeting of mind on the Hindu and the national vision of India. The Founding Fathers of the Republic faced a very difficult situation in framing a Constitution for a country which had been partitioned on the basis of religion and after large-scale communal violence had marked the dawn of Freedom. But steadfast as they were in their nationalist convictions and steeled as they were in the fire of our Freedom struggle in framing the Constitution they withstood the pressures of Hindu Nationalism and gave to the people of India the Constitution whose foundation stone is the secular order.

MEANING OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

The secular order in India was established in the full knowledge by all concerned of the fact that the Indian society is a religious society but multi-religious in character. Therefore, secularism in India is not, and cannot be, anti-religion per se. The Constitution accepts religion as a legitimate social phenomenon and enjoins upon the State to treat all religions with equal respect and not to make any discrimination among the citizens on the basis of their religion, faith or denomination and to maintain equidistance and non-alignment i.e. not lean to any side or show partiality towards it, in case of a conflict of interest between two religious groups. Indian secularism also implies that religious minorities being a weaker section in a democracy, their interests must be protected against majoritarian pressure or injustice by the State and the Government, through all their agencies, and their constitutionally legitimate aspirations must be promoted. The Founding Fathers also knew that the establishment of secular order in a religious society was a historically unprecedented and difficult undertaking. So they defined the secular dimensions of the State. As for the secularisation of the Indian society, they left it to the process of change whose speed will be governed by the internal dynamics of the Indian society and the play of the social forces under increasing pressure of modernisation with the growing impact of science and technology.

Those who raise the question of redefining secularism from the right are motivated to convert the line separating the secular state and Hinduism into a grey zone or to blur it. Those who make the same demand from the left are anxious to expedite the process of secularisation of the society so that the secular State may have a firm and enduring foundation. At this point in time, undue haste or pressure for secularisation may well demolish the structure, we have been painstakingly building over the last 50 years. Therefore, it is essential to make a clear distinction between secularism of the State and the secularisation of the Society in the public discourse against the anti-secular forces.

HISTORICAL FLAWS IN PRACTICE

Having said this, one cannot close one's eyes to the flaws in the architecture and construction of the secular order since independence, in terms of the conduct of the state. The state operates through the government and the administration and the latter are manned not by angels but by men. Over the years the flaws in the architecture and deficiencies in construction led to cracks in the edifice of the secular order have become more and more visible. Many innocent beginning have resulted in widening the gap between secular precept and communal practice. This is primarily because a democratic state tends to act in accordance with, or at least reflect, the cultural ethos of the majority group, if the society is multi-religious or multi-cultural or multi-ethnic. Religious pilgrimage by VIP's with fanfare, the "communal" behaviour of paramilitary forces and police machinery, support to social/cultural organisations engaged in promotion of Hinduism, performance of Hindu rituals at state functions, placement of Hindu idols in official premises and Hinduisation of public education and mass media have become too numerous to be ignored.

This majoritarian form has, over the years, affected the substance of the secular order, 50 years after it was established if one examines whether all religious groups enjoy due participation on equal terms in governance at all levels from the Panchayat to the Union and share power and receive their dues in the goods and services that a state committed to welfare and development renders to the people, one does not have to probe very deep to find that the level of participation of the religious minorities which form nearly 18% of the national population, and particularly of the Muslim minority, which forms its 2/3, is very low in proportion to their population whether it is the legislature, the political or permanent executive, the judiciary or any other field of government activity. The secular state thus fails the essential test of equitable participation by religious minorities which in our multi-segmented and multi-layered society, within the limitations of a sparse but developing economy, functions through social symbiosis

is an essential test, because every social group whatever its identity in terms of religion, language, race, caste, culture and geographical origin relates to the State and to the Government through its representatives in the power structure. Thus persistent under-representation of religious minorities brings into question, at least in the eyes of the latter, the genuineness, the reality and the credibility of the secular state. The final harvest is frustration, discontent and alienation.

ROOTS OF SECULARISM - THE HINDU ETHOS

It is often stated that the Hindu order is per se secular because of the spirit of tolerance which permeates Hinduism. There is a kernel of truth in this assertion because in Dharma the Raja has no "religion". Be has to treat all his subjects alike. But the concept takes it for granted that the Raja himself is a Hindu! This is distinct from the secular concept we have inherited and which we are trying to inforce, as the secular state has no religion and it does not identify itself with any religion.

HERITAGE OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Secondly, our secularism has its roots in the Freedom Movement. One has to read the resolutions adopted at the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress particularly, at the Karachi Session, which defined the Fundamental Rights and guaranteed freedom of religion and non-interference by the State in personal laws based on religion. The Congress went to the extent of limiting the power of the legislature to consider matters of concern and importance to a religious minority only with the explicit consent of the community concerned. In fact, the Congress adopted this as a rule of procedure for itself in order to assure the religious minorities that nothing shall be imposed on them by force of numbers.

Thirdly, we must admit that our secular order has also been inspired by the Western liberal thought which not only gave us representational democracy but was contemporaneous with the ever-widening application of science and technology and the process of modernisation.

ROLE OF SANGH PARIVAR

Throughout the struggle for freedom and more so after indepedence, anti-secular forces, mostly based in Hindu Right and also in Muslim orthodoxy. Obviously, the Muslim orthodoxy had little impact, stood marginalised and was forced to change its tune. On the other hand, the organisations, wedded to the concept of Hindu Nationalism, in particular the RSS and its affiliates, have never given up, indeed they have ever enjoyed full freedom, to propagate their philosophy of history which paints Hindu-Muslim relations in gory colours and posits Muslim Indians as historic adversary and oppressor. The administrative functionaries, therefore, tend to treat religious minorities particularly Muslims with suspicious and distrust. The RSS line of thought which received impetus after the Partition and promotes cultural i.e. religious nationalism based on Hindu identity. Long before Jinnah propounded his brand of religious nationalism, Lajpat Rai and Savarkar had pioneered The Two Nation Theory. **Essentially, Hindu Rashtravad sees Hinduism as Indo-centric and, therefore, equates Hindutva and Bharatiyata. Its concept of the nation-building process is not a mosaic but a melting pot; its objective is not integration but assimilation. It sees unity in uniformity.** What is worse, it proposes to punish the Muslim Indians today for the 'original sin' of Muslim rule and partition. Given the scarcity of goods and services and consequent shortage of supply as compared to demand, inter-group tensions are bound to develop but sometimes they spill over the limits and explode into violence. Here the State machinery often either fails or is partisan in performing its duties. The Hindutva forces have now penetrated in, nay, taken over the governance. But they are not yet wholly free to put their thoughts into action. This may be a transition, they expect more collaboration need funding and even protection while they go about implementing their Hindu agenda.

MAJORITARIAN PRESSURES

What is more important for the ill-health of the secular order is the logic of numbers which applies equally to all political parties even to those who swear by secularism and claim to be the protectors of the religious minorities physically and politically. **Today, no national party and no national leader is in a position to take a firm and consistent stand whenever any issue relating to the inter-religious interface arises. No party is free from the vice of using religion in politics or religious diction in its political discourse.** No secular party can claim to have given due representation to Muslims in organisation or in candidatures. In this sense Hindutva has entered the political arena through the cultural gates.

STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Secular Order will, however, SURVIVE. Because the Indian society is passing through an upheaval, an inner turmoil. Suppressed caste identities are surfacing and demanding their due place in polity, society and economy. They are clamouring for recognition and for equality. Howsoever the Hindutva forces may try to quell this revolt, they cannot silence it. Howsoever they try, they cannot impose the writ of the Hindu heartland over the peripheral regions and marginalised sections of the people. They cannot succeed in blocking or diverting the stream of social justice. Each social group wishes to see its face reflected in the hall of power and its voice heard. This implies not only non-discrimination but proportional representation. Given the

plurality of our society, proportionality has to cover not only the religious minority but also linguistic, cultural, racial, caste and ethnic minorities at every functional level. Politically, therefore, the country is moving under 'ethnic' pressure towards greater democratisation, equitable distribution, decentralisation and federalism. Thus, the battle for secularism has been joined by the battle for accommodating, in the political, economic and social space, all the social groups, whatever their identity.

Secularism must be seen as a facet of Social Justice as one-multi-religious dimension, in a multi-layered and multi-segmented society. Every identifiable group whatever its mark of identity must be assured due space and protected against dominance or deprivation by other groups. Indeed, when there is a definite share for all groups, when there is no ambiance of fear, when there is security for everyone, when there is hope of legitimate share in public employment; education and democratic institutions, people will develop the spirit of cooperation for development. This will strengthen both Democracy and Secularism and Indian Nationalism.

VIGILANCE AGAINST ANTI-SECULAR FORCE

In the meantime, the State and the people have to review secularism in practice and eliminate all vestiges, even if technical, of penetration of religion into State ceremonials and symbols like performance of Puja when ground is broken for development projects, the invocation to the Devas and the Devatas when official functions are inaugurated, the idolisation of Bharat Mata when students assemble in the schools, the performance of pilgrimage at State expense when the VIP's desire to show off their religiosity at state expenses. The State and the people must be ever-vigilant against the personal whims and fancies of their representatives when they operate the State and the administrative machinery. The impression must be changed that the Government has accepted Hindutva de facto even if State has rejected it de jure.

To sum up, Secularism must be defined and the conditions precedent for its survival must be found within the broader context of a multi-ethnic society which emphasises plurality, diversity and multi-culturality. Secularism must be defined as a facet of Social Justice so that the struggle for Secularism joins the mainstream of social change and is not limited to defining Hindu-Muslim relations.

New Delhi,
1 May, 1998

(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

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National Agenda for Governance, (Relevant Extracts)

Eradication of Unemployment: Recognising the right to work of every citizen, the main thrust of the new government will be: 'Berozgaari Hatao' (Eradicate Unemployment)...

Food Security and Price Stability: We will ensure food security for all, create a hunger-free India in the next five years...

Health and Drinking Water: We will ensure that potable drinking water is available to all villages in the next five years. We will strive to achieve 'Health for All' by diverse programme.

Education for All: We are committed to a total eradication of illiteracy. We will formulate and implement plans to gradually increase the governmental and non-governmental spending on education up to 6% of the GDP; this is provide education for all. We will implement the constitutional provision of making primary education free and compulsory up to 5th standard...

Housing for All: ... We are committed to evolving a National Housing and Habitat Policy in consultation with State governments, aimed at providing Housing for all...

Empowerment of Women: We will legislate for the reservation of 33% of the seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women; also institute plans for providing free education for girls up to college level, including professional courses... Entrepreneurs in the small scale and tiny sectors.

Harnessing Yuva Shakti: ... We shall build national consensus for the creation of a National Reconstruction Corps aimed at environmental protection, ecological tasks, reclamation of waste land, including afforestation, and for spreading literacy...

Children: We will present a National Charter for Children. Our aim is to ensure that no child remains illiterate, hungry, or lacks medical care. We will take measures to eliminate child labour. ...

Constitutional and Legal Reforms: We will appoint a Commission to review the Constitution of India in light of the experience of the past 50 years and to make suitable recommendations.

... A Committee will be set up to study the feasibility of treating all 19 languages including in Schedule 8 of the Constitution as official languages. ...

Internal Security: We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens in all parts of the country. For reaching this goal, we will take effective steps to create a riot-free order and a terrorism-free India. ...

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

... We will, therefore, strive to develop national consensus on all major issues confronting the nation by involving the opposition parties and all sections of society in dialogue. We will also try for a consensual mode of governance as far as practicable.

Conclusion: This National Agenda is a sincere and solemn covenant aimed at changing the content and culture of governance of this great nation, freeing it of the triple curses of hunger (bhookh), fear (bhay) and corruption (bhrashtachar), and transforming it into a New

To Build New India, Persons of all Religions, all Regions, all Professions, Must work Together

P.M. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Address to the Nation (Extracts)

... There is but one mantra: Let us work together. If we keep blocking each other, how can the country progress? Let us break out of this destructive habit...

... The politics of negativism and untouchability has run its course. Our mad race to pull each other down by fair means and foul has sullied the image of India in the eyes of the world. It has spread fear and caste and communal divisiveness in society. I sincerely feel that we, as a nation, must give up this harmful path of confrontation.

Ours is an ancient civilization. It has been built on consensus, on persuasion, on not mere tolerance. It has been built on an active and deep respect for the faiths and practices of all.

Our sages, say, "Akashaat patitam thoyam, yad gachchati saagaram, Sarva devam namaskaram, Keshavam prati gachchati". (Just as drops of rain falling on varied places, all gather in streams and flow to the one

Sea, so also all worship leads to the same Divinity). The Tamil savant Thirumoolar proclaims in his "Thirumandiram": "Ondre kulam, Orvane devan" (We are all of one clan, and there is but one God).

In the Indian perspective, this is the only valid meaning of secularism. My Government is unequivocally committed to this concept of secularism.

My colleagues and I have been nurtured in this tradition. We treasure it. It is by this tradition that we shall recreate the spirit which was the hallmark of the Freedom Struggle-persons of all religions, all religions, all professions working together to create a strong, confident, resurgent India...

.. We shall aim, in particular, at equipping the weakest sections of society to participate in this adventure: I have in mind especially members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, of minorities who may be poor.

It has been quite rightly said that many have used these sections as vote banks, but they have left their real problems exactly as they were: inadequate education, malnutrition and the rest. ...

One of the fine accomplishments of the last few years is that relations with almost all our neighbours have improved. My Government will strain every nerve to accelerate this trend. We are determined to be friends with all and precisely because we happen to be the larger country, we shall be all the more sensitive to the aspirations and needs of our neighbours.

That applies to Pakistan as much as to our other neighbours. Our relations have been and are bedeviled by needless tensions.

But our lives are intertwined. I believe that a happy and prosperous Pakistan will benefit the entire subcontinent, India in particular.

Whenever there is the slightest opportunity to improve our relations with Islamabad, my Government will go the extra mile. ...

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah Sarve Santu niramayah Sarve bhadrani pasyantu Ma kashit dukha bhag bhavet!

May all enjoy good health; May all dwell in happiness; May all be blessed by auspiciousness; May no one encounter distress.'

May this Government be an instrument for realizing this ancient prayer of our sages.

Vande Mataram!

With Best Compliments

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President's Address to Parliament, 25 March, 1998 (Extracts)

... All our efforts will be directed at building a New India ... an India where more and more people are gainfully employed; an India where every citizen, irrespective of his caste, creed or faith, feels proud to be an Indian. Secularism is integral to India's traditions. My Government is unequivocally committed to upholding our secular values.

My Government's top priority will be to reach out to the underprivileged and the unempowered... The commitment to progressively step up spending on education to 6 per cent of GDP will be fulfilled...

... My Government believes that children should be in schools and playgrounds and not toiling away their childhood. Apart from implementing the constitutional provision of free and compulsory primary education, Government will introduce a National Charter for Children which, among other things, will ensure that no child goes to sleep hungry...

Government will provide free education to women up to graduation... The pending legislation seeking to reserve 33 per cent seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies will be taken up immediately. A Development Bank, the first of its kind, will be set up for women entrepreneurs.

By synergising legal, executive and societal efforts, the Government will strive for rapid social, economic and political empowerment and uplift of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Minorities... In keeping with its belief that governance must seek to unify rather than divide, Government will strive for social harmony and justice in place of social conflict and injustice. ... The Government will evolve policies to accelerate the construction of housing units and facilitate the participation of private sector in order to ensure that housing for all becomes a reality. ...

... My Government will ... seek ways and means for greater devolution of powers up to the panchayat level...

Government is committed to initiate action to carve out Uttaranchal in UP, Vananchal in Bihar and Chhatisgarh in MP. Delhi will be given full Statehood. ...

Every citizen has the right to feel secure and be free from fear. Government will strive to combat the menace of terrorism, subversion and insurgency that has come to haunt the common man. Violence has no place in a democracy. Differences should - and can - be resolved through dialogue and discussion.

... Renewed efforts will be made to improve bilateral relationships with neighbouring countries without any third party mediation or interference. ...

... The Government proposes to do so, as well as appoint a Commission to review the Constitution and make recommendations so that anomalous experiences of the past are not repeated in the future. ...

... The Official Secrets Act will be reviewed so that we can put in place a right to information law that will enable transparency and integrity in decision making without compromising national security. ...

The Government will ... strive for evolving a consensus mode of governance as far as practicable. Some of the issues on which a national consensus is most urgently called for are electoral reforms; Centre-State relations; population policy ... and effective institutional guarantees for the welfare of the weaker sectors of society while pursuing economic reforms. ...

MHA: Annual Report, 1996-97 (Extracts)

Construction of Border Roads/Border Fence

With a view to prevent infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals into India and in pursuance of the Assam Accord, a project for the construction of roads and fences along the Indo-Bangaldesh border in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and West Bengal was taken up in 1987. Till 30th September, 1996, 1658.35 kms of roads and 629.78 kms. of fences have been completed out of the approved target of 2,784 kms of roads and 896 kms of fences and an expenditure of Rs. 58..10 crores has been incurred on this project. The progress of the Project is periodically reviewed by a High Level Empowered Committee under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Secretary.

Foreigners

According to the reports received from various Missions abroad during the year 1995, 9,99,551 foreigners were granted visas (including 25,125 long term visas) to visit India as against 9,69,369 (including 25,080 long term visas) during the preceding year. According to reports furnished by various State Governments/UT Administrations, 2,04,463 (excluding Pak nationals) stood registered in India as on 31.12.1995 under the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, as against 1,21,923 as on 31.12.1994.

During the period from 1.4.1996 to 31.10.1996, 800 associations were registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 as against 1,297 during 1995-96. Prior permission for acceptance of foreign contribution during the period from 1.4.1996 to 31.10.1996 was granted in 215 cases as against 600 cases during 1995-96. Applications of 862 persons seeking prior permission for acceptance of foreign hospitality were disposed of during the period 1.4.1996 to 31.10.1996 as compared to 1,000 cases during 1995-96.

Cultural Policies for Development

Statement of M.M. Joshi, Minister of Human Resource Development

UNESCO Conference, Stockholm, 30 March-2 April, 1998 (Extracts)

... The importance of culture cannot be emphasised enough. This conference has not come a day too soon. We are happy that international opinion is coming to respect culture, not as a mere instrument of economic growth but as a constituent of human development. We are equally happy that the vision of culture is broadening and encompassing world views, value systems and beliefs.

India, from time immemorial, believes in the idea of unity in diversity, and in the welfare of all beings. In the Indian world view the whole world is a family - Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. In fact, we not only say Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu - let everyone be happy - but also wish shanti - Peace - for all beings, humans, animals and plants, all that is movable and immovable on earth. Further, the central message of our philosophy has been - Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadariti - what learned men speak of as many as essentially one and the same. The Indian world view advocates Sarvadharma Samabhava - respected to all cultures. Non-violence, tolerance, respect for all cultures, conduct of inter-cultural dialogue on an equal footing, equality before law, and equality of opportunity - these principles form the core of the Indian value system; they need to be reaffirmed as the common heritage of mankind.

A major theme of this conference is what has been termed as the challenge of cultural diversity. The background document poses several key questions - how can we forge societies that are truly liberal and multi-cultural, yet possess a shared sense of unity and a corpus of common values? What can the States do to help different cultural communities within them to live together as a harmonious society? Can national identities be so defined, that the diverse communities constituting them, may identify with the country and its self-definition? These are not speculative questions, but issues of high policy; of particular salience in the developing world, where the construction of nation-states has commenced only recently, with the emergence of freedom struggles in the colonial era. As another conference document succinctly puts it, unity and diversity are dialectically related in such a way that unity is embedded in and nurtured by diversity and diversity is located within and regulated by unity. It is for each society to assess the character of this dialectical relationship and to strike its own balance in a manner consistent with the principles of national interests and national ethos which also constitute an aspect of the common heritage of mankind. Culture and development within each national community have to be a part of the context to which they belong. Development, therefore, has to be culture specific and culture has to be the source of strength for a community in its developmental process. In the global context, every cultural identity represents a manifestation of the cosmic world, of the universal human society as envisioned in the mystic opulence of an ancient Indian text... In all humility, I would like to invite you to enter into the spirit of the Indian tradition of handling social diversity and cultural plurality, a tradition which has fostered creative interaction and peaceful co-existence for thousands of years among people speaking different languages, subscribing to different religious faiths and persuasions and practicing different customs and habits.

... Perhaps we need to stimulate debate and discussion in this forum, on the question of how different national cultures can co-exist in symbiotic relationship with each other; and contribute to the emergence of a shared cultural heritage for humankind.

The emphasis of our discussions should be on integrating cultural policies into development plans and programmes. The need of the hour is to recognise and nurture a 'culture of development'... Neither development nor culture can exist in a vacuum, or in separate compartments unrelated to each other. Without the steadfast commitment of the international community to such a culture of development, I am afraid we will have neither development nor culture. Peace is inconceivable without development. Therefore culture of development is a vital element of the culture of peace.

... As far as cultural rights are concerned, my delegation is of the view that they are best left to the relevant treaty body, namely, the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights. This is all the more so as the final objective is to have a body of enforceable cultural rights. There can be no two opinions that greater clarify is needed in the subject as it has been argued that the diversity of cultural rights is not always compatible with a uniform model of human rights. We need to avoid any unnecessary duplication or overlapping between the activities of different UN bodies in this area. We should also avoid creation of new mechanisms in the name of implementing cultural rights. Further while speaking of rights we cannot lose sight of human duties and obligations. Mahatma Gandhi in consonance with India's

(Continued on Page 226)

General Elections 1998: BJP's Gain and Congress Loss

... The "stark realities" that stare the party in the face are as follows: One, until 1998 the Congress could claim that whether or not it came to power in an election, it had the biggest share of the popular vote and no other political party was anywhere near it. This is no longer the case. The Congress' vote share is down to 25.72 per cent and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has 25.38 per cent is now breathing down its neck.

Two, for the first time after Independence, the Congress has lost its perch as the party with the widest electoral support and as the only pan-Indian party. The BJP has now snatched this trophy from the Congress. After the recent election, the BJP has representatives in the Lok Sabha from more states and union territories than the Congress.

Three, since 1989, the vote share of the Congress in parliamentary elections has fallen by 14 per cent whereas that of the BJP has risen by 14 per cent.

... The extent of the downslide can be gauged from the fact that since 1952, the Congress party's vote share has dropped by a staggering 20 per cent.

The trajectory of the BJP curve on the other hand has been almost undirectional. Beginning with a humble 3.10 per cent of the vote in 1952 when it was known as the Jan Sangh, the party made slow progress during the Nehru and Indira Gandhi eras... Since 1952, the Jan Sangh-Bharatiya Janata Party's vote share has improved by 22 per cent. In other words, its gains almost correspond to the Congress party's losses.

... After the recent Lok Sabha poll, there is clear evidence that the country now has two national parties - the Congress and the BJP.

In 1996, the Congress has won seats in 26 of the 32 states and union territories despite its vote share dropping to 28.80 per cent. No other political party could boast of such a wide political base. The BJP, which bagged seats in 12 states and union territories, lagged far behind and was a poor second to the Congress. All other parties, many of them described as "national" parties by the Election Commission, were not in the race at all...

The story is however different in 1998. This time the Congress has won seats in 17 states and 3 union territories where the BJP has picked up seats in 17 states and 4 union territories, which means the latter has MPs from more states and union territories than the Congress. Between 1996 and 1998, the Congress' representation in the Lok Sabha has shrunk from 26 states and union territories to 20 whereas that of the BJP has risen from 12 of these units to 21.

Yet another indicator which shows that it is now a neck and neck race between these two parties is the number of constituencies where each of these parties registered a victory or was the runner-up in the recent election. The Congress contested 462 seats, won 141 seats, and stood second in 157 constituencies. The BJP contested 384 seats, won 180 seats and stood second in 125 others... Between 1996 and 1998, the vote share of the Janata Dal has crashed from 8.80 to 3.20 per cent... The CPI vote share has dropped from 1.97 to 1.74 per cent while the CPI(M) has seen a fall in popular support from 6.12 to 5.21 per cent. The two Communist parties have together dropped just over one per cent of the vote over the last two years. The disastrous performance of the UF in this election could be interpreted as the voters' rejection of the Third Front. The only national party which has withstood the onslaught of the BJP in these elections is the BSP. Its share of the vote has risen ... from 3.64 to 4.66 per cent even though it's seats in Parliament is down from 11 to 5.

But coming back to the Congress and the BJP, what the future holds for each of them will depend on how they read these electoral trends. The Congress cannot hope to recover ground unless it consciously sheds its cultivated opposition to regional parties and coalition politics. There is enough evidence since 1989 to show that it can no longer hope to win a mandate on its own, even if its leader is a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Voters in many states have shown a preference for regional Congress parties which espouse local causes or other regional parties. The Congress will therefore have to go out of the way to assure smaller parties that it is willing to share power with them and is reconciled to the realities of the coalition era.

The BJP, on the other hand, will have to guard against misreading the 1998 verdict as an improved mandate for its core philosophy. A good part of the electoral support that it secured in the recent election can be traced to its strategic alliance with the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, the BJD in Orissa, the Lok Shakti in Karnataka and the Samata Party in Bihar.

Its decision to project a moderate like Mr. Vajpayee as its prime ministerial candidate also helped it to win over new supporters. These alliances can be retained only if the party operates within the ambit of the National Agenda... Any restlessness within the BJP on this score could drive away sensitive alliance partners and throw the party back to the electoral plateau that it hit in the first half of the 1990s.

The 1998 poll has dramatically brought these two parties on par. Where they go from here will depend on the lessons they draw from cold electoral statistics...

(Source: The Pioneer, April 13, 1998)

Lok Sabha Election: Social Analysis of UP and Bihar's Results

Mahesh Rangarajan in The Hindustan Times, 22 March, 1998

... The BJP had been halted by the OBC-led parties of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav. While the Hindutva led forces are the major force in the Hindi heartland, their dominance is far from total.

The implications of these fractures in the polity are far-reaching. Until 1991, it was an axiom of Indian politics that which ever party won the most Lok Sabha seats in UP ruled India. With 85 seats, the State was swept by every single non-Congress formation that came to power as in 1977 and 1989. But the rise of the BJP to the position of the premier party in UP in 1991 was paralleled by the emergence of not one but two alternative platforms. One was the Mulayam Singh Yadav-led group with a base among the minorities and the Mandal classes; the other was the Dalit-oriented Bahujan Samaj Party. In 1996, the two together accounted for over 40 per cent of the popular vote.

The verdict of 1998 is indeed a notable one. The BJP has marginally improved upon its tally of seats. Its share of the vote had been stagnant at about one third since 1991, but this year it increased to 36 per cent. The promise of a new regime helped increase its support.

What is significant is that the OBCs and Dalits, both newly assertive groups have other viable options they can vote for. The Samajwadi Party, while clearly centring its appeal on its secular credentials and its championing of the Mandal platform, has been trying to broaden its social base. Its tally of Lok Sabha seats increased from 16 in 1996 to 20 in 1998. What was significant was that its share of the votes rose from 21 to 30% over the same period. Further ... SP attempted to reach out to the upper castes. It has been helped by the extinction of both the Janata Dal whose base he has largely captured and the Congress.

The Bahujan Samaj Party retained most of its support but still lost in terms of seats... A narrow base, however solid, is not enough to propel it to power. As a result, the BSP has even lost out in terms of its ability to play power broker. Yet, the aspirations of Dalit voters who make up 23 per cent of the electorate in UP are still closely identified with the party. India's most populous State is locked into a situation where the major party still has to contend with two rival formations.

Former Bajrang Dal chief Vinay Katiyar's defeat in Faizabad is perhaps a small sign that the politics of militancy will not pay. Governor Romesh Bhandari's interference in the legislature before the second round of voting helped create a 'swing' of over 7% of the votes for the BJP in the 33 seats in that round. Mulayam Singh Yadav was actually the loser in the aborted palace coup.

In several constituencies the SP and the BSP combined now poll over 55 to 60% of the votes. UP remains a house divided. An unstable polity finds its counterpart in a highly fragmented society. The Mandal classes while organised in terms of political clout and ... productive assets ... lack a strong base in the bureaucracy. The Dalits who have gained access to public sector jobs due to decades of affirmative action still remain a deprived social group in terms of income and land ownership. The tensions between these two groups in the political arena find their counterpart in the agrarian sector. Combined they would probably reduce the Hindutva party to a mere shadow of its present self, but at this moment an alliance is highly unlikely.

In this sense, Bihar had witnessed the emergence of a broad based coalition of the Mandal classes, the Scheduled Castes and minorities by 1991 when the Janata Dal and its allies won as many as 43 of 54 seats in the Lok Sabha. Since then the coalition has been breaking up. The first fissure was among the Other Backward Classes in 1995 when the Kurmis who have a lead over other such groups in access to higher education broke with Laloo Prasad Yadav. The combination of the Samata Party and the BJP had wrested 24 seats in 1996 and was widely expected to do much better. The fragmentation of the JD pointed to a sweep for the BJP-Samata alliance this year. But the bulk of the old JD coalition remained with the former Chief Minister, enabling his alliance to win 23 seats.

... Two major trends are at work in Bihar. one is the continuing consolidation of the large majority of the OBCs and minorities with the RJD. The eclipse of the Congress has made it much easier for these forces to openly align with it. But the reverse trend is equally important. For the first time, the BJP and its ally have emerged as the largest single vote-getter in the State. They polled nearly 40% of the votes. This includes a section of the OBCs in northern Bihar and a large number of non-Christian adivasis in the Chotanagpur plateau... Clearly, tribal movements ... need to reassess their strategies in the struggle for statehood.

The broader implications of the verdict of 1998 in both States is clear. The BJP and allies are in the lead but face dogged opposition. The Mandal ... groups in turn may need a (broader) social agenda than one of reservation... Dalits are able to mobilise as voters but not succeed in gaining a share of power on a stable basis.

The explosive potential of social relations, both in communal and caste terms, remains a matter of deep concern. The Hindi speaking region in general and eastern UP and Bihar in particular, are behind most other parts of India in terms of social indices of development... Such

(Continued on Page 204)

INC: AICC Political Resolution (Extracts)

New Delhi, 6 April, 1998

... The BJP and its allies have been able to cobble up a majority in the Parliament by entering into all sorts of agreements with disparate political elements, who have nothing in common except the desire to assume power... The Congress party is conscious of its role in maintaining a constant vigil to ensure that the BJP Government does not tamper with the basic secular, democratic and egalitarian fabric of the nation. We will discharge this responsibility under all and every circumstances and will not shirk our duty to take any action which the circumstances may necessitate to defend these basic values...

... This is a time for self-introspection and admission of the stark realities... We must also admit that the failure to arrive at certain alliances before the elections has also harmed the party. On the other hand, some sections of the party had also been drifting away from us and we failed to prevent this in time...

... The AICC is aware of the uphill task that faces us to rebuild our party from the grassroots upwards... The induction of youth, womenfolk, representatives of minorities, Dalits and other disadvantaged people at various levels in the organisation is the imperative necessity... The AICC ... gives her full authority to restructure the organisation at all levels to achieve the objective.

The BJP-led Government ... has announced with great fanfare a "National Agenda for Governance"... This is not a "National Agenda for Governance", but in fact, an Agenda to secure the support of the disparate and dissimilar parties to get into the Government. This so-called "National Agenda" is the final manifestation of a series of political somersaults that the BJP indulged in, in the last one year... The BJP, however, tried to convince them that they are prepared to dilute their agenda regarding Article 370, Uniform Civil Code, Ram Janam Bhoomi, Kashi and Mathura.

The third scene was enacted when the BJP went searching for allies ... The same kind of assurances were given to different parties regarding these contentious and divisive issues. Nevertheless the BJP in its Manifesto announced a few days before the elections ... reiterating its commitment to all these issues. The calculation obviously was that, on the one hand, they have secured allies who would give them advantage in the respective states and by reiterating its basic stand on these issues, it would retain the support of that section which had always stood behind it in its sectarian approach. The results of the 12th Lok Sabha elections came as a rude shock to the BJP when it became obvious that it cannot form the government on its own, along with the support of its allies. The "National Agenda" came about as an expedient mechanism to once again bluff the secular forces to somehow ensure a majority in the Lok Sabha. These political twists and turns have served the interests of the BJP temporarily. It must be clearly understood however, that the BJP is not the master of its own house, and ultimately it is the RSS, a fascist organisation which runs the show. It is inherent in the very nature of the political situation that exists, that this political duplicity will, at some point of time reach a flashpoint. The Congress party will have to play a decisive role at that juncture...

... The AICC reiterates and puts on record the irrevocable commitment of the Congress party to the principles of secularism and democracy. The Congress party is prepared to face the challenge of all communal, divisive and authoritarian forces. The Congress party has never in the past and shall never in the future, make the compromise, under any circumstances, with these forces. The pluralistic society of India is the only guarantee of its unity and integrity. The Congress party pledges to safeguard this identity, under all circumstances, and is prepared to make any sacrifices in the cause.

... The three institutions of the Government - the Executive, the Parliament and the Judiciary have well defined Constitutional powers and responsibilities to discharge... The Congress party believes in a harmonious relationship between these institutions and it is convinced that it is only through such constructive functional relationship can the foundations of our Republic be strengthened. The party shall always work towards this end. ...The AICC calls upon all Congress men and women to work hard for the all-round development of the weaker section of society, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, Backward Communities, farmers specially small and marginal farmers, etc. The Congress party is committed to ensure their rightful share and full involvement in the development of this country...

(Source: The Hindu, 7 April, 1998)

(Continued from Page 203)

issues are not central to politics today... Mobilisation is largely, though not wholly, in terms of cultural symbols and group identities. What is positive is the increasing assertion of hitherto marginal social groups including the Dalits and in southern Bihar, of the tribals. But affirmative action can only become the first step for social justice in a wider sense if it embraces an economic agenda and goes beyond the struggle to control the body politic. The struggle for supremacy is yet to reach a decisive stage....

Rajni Kothari on Metamorphosis and Survival of Congress

Congress is still a major political player with a wide organisational base. It is likely to benefit the most from fragmentation of democratic politics. ...As we approach the 1998 elections, we seem to be facing (a) backlash against the upsurge of the grassroots phenomenon. A process from which the Congress can only benefit.

This reversal is associated with three distinct trends. No single 'major' party is able to hold power on its own and is being forced to seek allies from diverse sources - by splitting parties, buying individuals and simple horsetrading. Second, there is a growing divergence between the wielders of power at the party-level and their social base. Third, the continuing tussle between parties and party-led coalitions on the issues of secularism and representation of the poor and the minorities.

Every major party is now going to experience splits ... on the one hand and search for new alignments on the other, neither of these producing stability, and instead, more likely, greater instability.

The BJP's claim of providing greater stability and better government on the basis of expanding its ranks is only likely to produce a politics of still greater fragmentation and growing division within its own ranks...

... Playing down its traditional communal stand ... really means the adoption of the Kalyan Singh model by no less a leader than Atal Behari Vajpayee at the national level. Which makes the BJP the biggest culprit in bringing down the democratic culture...

The weak point ... is that it relies almost entirely on buying up small and insignificant parties and almost wholly marginalised individuals...

... Likely to benefit the most from this fragmentation of democratic politics, contrary to current speculations, is the Congress... It has taken some major steps towards consolidating its own forte in two major respects: First, it is finally taking steps to woo back into its corpus the poor and underprivileged sections, as well as the minorities, whom it had alienated... And second, it has finally and clearly reasserted its ideological affinity with secularism.

...The alliance between the Rashtraya Janata Dal and the Congress, together with major constituents of the United Front, provides a way of stopping the BJP from its thoroughly amoral attempt to grab power somehow...

There is a third dimension. The Congress leadership is taking a hard stand vis-a-vis 'rebels'... at the same time calling it quits with Sonia Gandhi. All this - if followed through - is likely to bring the Congress back to its earlier course of being a left of Centre party, which is once again willing to widen its social base and join forces with the politics of the grassroots.

The fact that most of the supporters of the BJP and those willing to jump on its bandwagon ... are essentially upper caste Hindutva types should give the Congress its long-lost mandate...

(Source: The Times of India, 28 December, 1998)

Congress(I): Final Set of Questions to Vajpayee

"In its statement before the Tribunal constituted under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, in the case relating to the ban on the RSS, the general secretary of the RSS stated in 1993 that the term Hindu as a cultural concept will include and did always include all including Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Muslims, Christians and Parsis. This statement of RSS can be called deceptive, misguiding and sheer jugglery. The statement is nothing but an untruth and totally dishonest in every sense", Prof. Vikram Singh (editor of Hindu Asmita, Indore, and an RSS activist for 57 years). Do you agree?

"The Sangh leadership is guided by BJP leadership which in turn is guided by a desire to achieve political supremacy at any cost, and this desire of political power at any cost has brought down the BJP leadership to the lowly depths of electoral arithmetic", Shri Jitendra D. Desai of Surat, Gujarat, an RSS activist since 1980. Do you agree?

"The BJP which has its roots in the Jan Sangh is also deviating. it has, of late, become more vote-conscious. Power seems to be the aim, the ultimate goal; means and principles can be ignored... Since the BJP has also deviated and diluted its stand, people have begun to equate it with other political parties and not as essentially a party with a difference." Shri G.C. Chaudhary, district President, VHP, Madhubani, Bihar - 1989 to 1992. Do you agree? "The whole situation (in the Sangh Parivar) has a macabre resemblance to the situation in the Geogre Orwell's Animal Farm. A deep reading of this classic shows close parallels with the Sangh Parivar. The Sangh should see to it that the BJP changes its flag from saffron-green to saffron. Till this is done, all other pleas, assurances, acts and actions of the Parivar must be regarded as so many squealing of the Squealer (the smooth talking Gobbles of Animal Farm)." Shri Srikant G. Talageri - pro-Hindutva author of "Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian nationalism." Do you agree?

"We Hindus find it deeply distressing that quite a few RSS leaders of national stature have been propagating among the Hindu public certain propositions to propitiate the Muslims". Mrs. Leela Tampi, Secretary, Hindu Matru Samiti, Kerala. Do you agree.

(Source: The Hindu, 6 February, 1998)

C.P. Bhambhri on Congress: Party Without Ideology

... The Congress has obtained only 25.6 per cent of votes polled for the Lok Sabha elections of 1998. This trend of declining people's electoral support to the Congress began in 1989 and it seems to have become irreversible because many social constituencies have new aspirations and other party organisations.

Second, the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities had always looked towards the Congress for the fulfillment of their political aspirations. Not only have the poor and socially vulnerable strata of society shifted away from the Congress, the party has failed to evolve any new social agenda to meet the rising aspirational levels of the deprived and depressed segments who are now trying to find answers for their problems from parties like the BSP or Samajwadi Party or RJD

Third, the BJP could never compete with the Congress for the votes of the scheduled castes and tribes and Muslims, but in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, even the BJP has received sizable percentage of votes from these sections.

Fourth, the Congress was an important political link between north and south and eastern and western India. Since 'regions' of India are an important historical reality, the Congress provided an umbrella under which the regions comfortably co-existed and practised the politics of accommodation... Of late, the Congress has been made to vacate political spaces in some important regions of the country and in a few other regions, its percentage is very thin and its spread is quite limited...

... On the other side, the Congress has a solid political support of one-fourth of the large population of voters who participated in the Lok Sabha elections. Not only this. If Congress leadership and party organisation are determined and united as has been shown in Maharashtra, the party can successfully mobilise its supporters. The success story of the Congress in Maharashtra has a great moral for the party...

The Congress like Hinduism has become a way of life for India for the masses who do not accept the extremist Hindutva and sectarian casteist politics. While its relevance as a reliable 'centrist' force is acceptable to a large section of Indian society, its present ideological bankruptcy puts off voters who want positive social programmatic politics...

... During the Gandhi-Nehu phase of leadership fundamental social goals for the building of a New India occupied centrestage. Not only this. The Congress could not have won the elections without offering an acceptable social agenda before the voters and Indira Gandhi had learnt her party's history quite well by raising the issue of Garibi Hatao... Mrs. Gandhi succeeded in her struggle for power by projecting an ideological force of the Congress faction under her leadership.

All successors to Nehru-Indira Gandhi have shown total bankruptcy in leading the party on the basis of a social agenda... The Congress has failed to identify itself with the new aspirations of the emerging and assertive groups. The Congress cut a sorry figure before V.P. Singh on the Mandal issue in 1990...

The party leadership fell flat before the rising tide of the forces of Hindutva because Rajiv Gandhi, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Sitaram Kesri and Sonia Gandhi and other leaders did not mobilise the masses in defence of their own philosophy of secularism. The Congress tried to beat the forces of Hindutva by accepting a mild form of Hindutva and in the process the ideology of secularism was abandoned in favour of petty political tactics to deal with aggressive political Hinduism. Further, Congress has been shy of publicly defending its new economic policy.

The Congress of the 1990s has witnessed a total abandonment of programmatic politics for social reconstruction and the Congress leadership during the 1990s has been occupied in 'palace conspiracies' and individual advancement...'Renewal' of a crisis-ridden party is always dependent on its ideological revision and reformulation... In an awakened democratic society like India of 1998, the political conspirators of the Congress will be responsible for its liquidation...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, March 31, 1998)

R. Prasad
On the Left and the Hindutva

... In the current conjuncture of Indian politics, the agenda of freedom of expression is inextricably implicated in the agenda of fight against communalism...

... The left Literary magazine editorial ... is a clear demonstration of the success of the Hindutva assault on the consciousness of weak-kneed leftists. The editorial makes two interrelated points. One, "by creating the bogey of communalism, Sahmat is joining hands with people of all shades and hues". And two, to argue that those who are opposing vandalism against Hussain are "giving the game away to the BJP". ...

... How does an ideology acquire hegemonic status? It does so by setting the terms of discourse and above all by penetrating the consciousness of its opponents... It seems to have imbibed the elements of the Hindutva ideology, wittingly or wittingly, such is the dominance of these ideas... When people under the sway of Hindutva ideology become your conscience keepers, you are not too far from joining them. **(Source: The Pioneer)**

M.D. Nalapat on Congress Prspects

... Just as close followers "pressurised" Jawaharlal Nehru to induct Indira ... into the AICC Presidentship, Indira Gandhi was similarly encouraged to bring first Sanjay and then Rajiv into the effective second position in Congress politics. Sonia Gandhi, in fact, has taken much longer than other Nehrus to withstand the entreaties from loyalists of the family.

It was only after seven-and-a-half years of requests to take over the party that she agreed. The next step, in the words of a loyalist, is to get Madam to shift from 10 Janpath to 7 Race Course Road". Only with a Nehru in the Prime Minister's House will India make progress, the Nehru acolytes believe.

Sonia Gandhi has correctly identified the bulk of her "loyalists" as being among the obstacles to such a progression. In 1969, Indira Gandhi was fortunate in that almost the whole of the top level of the Congress party stood with the "Syndicate" against her. On relatively young or obscure office-bearers remained loyal. Thus, between 1969 and the elections in 1971, she was able to field a fresh set of faces and capture the public imagination.

Today, Sonia Gandhi has halted the one process that could have helped her a wholesale shift of top-level Congress leaders to the BJP. This would have saddled the saffron fold with an unattractive mass of office-seekers, and given her the freedom to experiment with new faces.

Rather than reshuffling the pack, a new one is needed. However, whether Sonia Gandhi will go ahead and do this is open to doubt. Certainly Rajiv Gandhi backtracked in weeks from his 1985 Mumbai declamation against power-mongers. Secondly, even assuming that the new President will change the composition of her party's frontline, that by itself will not be a sufficient condition to first halt and then reverse its decline in public support. Policies are as critical as personnel in deciding such an outcome. ...

The vague nostrums and filmi declarations of the new AICC President will do little to remove her handicaps: the perception that as an individual of privilege, she is far removed from the people.

Two, that as a person whose perceived social interaction is mostly with foreign diplomats and relatives, Sonia Gandhi is distanced from the nationalist strand that is driving Indian politics...

Mikhail Gorbachev was popular everywhere but in Russia. Narasimha Rao was appreciated abroad and reviled at home. The reason was that they could not coat their policies in acceptable flavours. Sonia Gandhi's reliance on the same team that helped Narasimha Rao to his rejection by the Indian voters bodes ill for the hopes of Sonia followers... **(Source: The Times of India)**

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS

FROM

KALEEM KAWAJA

THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN MUSLIMS OF AMERICA

THE ORGANIZATION FOR UNIVERSAL COMMUNAL HARMONY

WASHINGTON DC USA

Amulya Ganguli on National Agenda - A Stepping Stone to Hindu Rashtra

... The absence of any reference to Ayodhya, Article 370, etc has demonstrated that there is a national consensus against such policies and that the BJP represents nothing more than an illiberal minority by upholding such views. After all, it cannot now claim that it is the Muslim-appeasing, vote bank-chasing "pseudo-secularists" who are opposing Article 370 and all that. it is the BJP's own partners, courted with great ardour by the party before the elections, who have ensured the exclusion of these controversial items. Their stand in effect means that the entire political spectrum - from the Congress, the Left Front, the United Front and its allies to the BJP's 20-odd partners - is against these socially divisive measures.

So the national agenda has turned out to be really a secular agenda, markedly different from the BJP's own "Hindu agenda" as outlined in the party's manifesto. So far as the latter is concerned, the BJP has no one else for company than the RSS and other Sangh Parivar outfits. Perhaps even its xenophobic soul mate, the Shiv Sena, is not with it, considering that Mr. Bal Thackeray has favoured the building of a national monument rather that a Ram temple at Ayodhya. What this curious development, where the pet projects of the largest party in an alliance is rejected by its partners, underlines is the predicament faced by a party of the political periphery on being suddenly pitch-forked to the centre-stage of a country's political life by a quirk of circumstance. It also means that the secular formations were right all along in opposing these parochial items so close to the BJP's and the Sangh parivar's heart since these militated against India's multicultural polity and threatened the country with civil strife.

The BJP's silence on these controversial points does not mean, of course, that it has abandoned them. All that it has done is to beat a tactical retreat, hoping that this ploy will lull its friends and foes into complacence, enabling the party to continue its pretence of being a "normal" political entity and thereby spread its influence till it feels that there is no need to wear the mask any more. This tactics is not something that it has only recently evolved, but is part of a strategy the party has pursued for a fairly long period.

Under this overall plans, the BJP has now embarked on the second stage of its political journey. The first was when it was a part of the anti-Congress alliances which lasted from the time of the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal ministries in the mid-sixties to 1990 when the BJP brought down the V.P. Singh government by withdrawing its outside support. All through this period, it never gave an inkling to its the then allies of its real agenda. Instead, it used the company of the other secular parties to increase its percentage of votes ... to 11.5 in 1989. It was only in 1990 that the BJP broke free from its alliances and set out on its own, leading straight to the Babri Masjid demolition and countrywide riots, giving it the "untouchable" status. Initially, the party was not too worried about the stigma because it felt that its now revealed agenda would propel it from strength to strength, especially since its voting percentage had gone up to 20.9 in 1991.

However, the stagnation of its voting percentage at this figure between 1991 and 1996 and the loss of several States in 1993 made the BJP realise that it could advance no further on its own and, therefore, needed a new set of allies... In its search for new friends, the BJP was helped to a considerable extent by the follies of its opponents...

As before when it was a part of the non-Congress groups, the BJP is all sweet reasonableness at present when it deals with its new friends... What the BJP evidently hopes is that, in course of time, they ... will fall by the wayside while the BJP will be ready to come into its own.

The difference between the BJP's pre-1990 manoeuvres with allies and its present ploys, however, is that the mask is now off. It feel down, perhaps accidentally, on December 6, 1992... Since no further dissimulation is possible, the BJP has evidently decided to follow a two-track policy. In its manifesto, it has made no secret of what it stands for. But, so far as the common agenda with its allies is concerned, it has shelved all the controversial points, something it had promised to do in 1996 also in order to save its 13-day ministry.

The problem with such an approach is that the BJP can now no longer ignore the fact there are no takers for its basic line. Until now, its claim was that it represented the Hindu ethos which constituted the very basis of the Bharatiya or Indian identity. The Ayodhya temple was projected as a symbol of that identity and, as its manifesto said, "Shri Ram lies at the core of Indian consciousness". The proposed "magnificent" temple at Ayodhya was to be an assertion of that consciousness and of Bharatiya and Hindu - the two being the same - pride.

But, clearly, none of the BJP's allies who are virtually all Hindus ... shares this... Instead, they apparently endorse the "pseudo-secular" view that the concept of "one people, one nation, one culture" is essentially fascistic and, therefore, ruinous for a multicultural polity. Given this reluctance within the BJP's own camp to accept the party's majoritarian thesis, the saffron lobby will not only have to tread carefully at present but may also find it somewhat difficult to propagate its so-called cultural nationalism thesis with as much vigour as before. How can the hype on Hindutva be sustained when not even Ayodhya, let alone Kashi and

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Kuldip Nayar on BJP's Strategic Game for Power

... (A) combination of 14 parties, not the BJP is ruling the country. What has won is the concept of pluralism because the BJP itself has diluted its parochial stand to come to power. It has changed its thesis of Hindutva to make the appeal broad-based. And it has dropped the three contentious issues...

The President's address - a government's policy statement - says that secularism is integral to India's traditions. All doubts over the government's future policy should end unless there is more than what meets the eye... Even in numbers, the BJP has not won. It is 178 out of 539. And that too because of seat adjustments with the Lok Shakti in Karnataka, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, the Akali Dal in Punjab and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal. The BJP's near-majority in the Lok Sabha is due to 89 MPs, who constitute its ally... How can a government, which can be defeated by the switch-over of half a dozen members, be viable or have its writ of authority running?

Therefore, it is not correct to say that the BJP has come to power. At lest, it can be said that the party is leading a shaky coalition. Even for reaching this position, (BJP) has had to make several compromises. The BJP leaders have themselves said that they have revised their agenda to agree upon a national one. In his reply to the confidence vote debate, Prime Minister A.B.Vajpayee gave an undertaking that he would abide by the National Agenda, nothing else... Hindutva ... does not figure in the programme... The BJP was realistic enough. No ally would have been ready to join its combination if it had persisted with Hindutva. In the same way, had the BJP insisted on having its agenda of "one people, one culture", the party would have been in the wilderness once again... The BJP has bowed to win.

However, if the BJP was willing to go so far, it could have shared power earlier. At one time, the party was extremely finicky about the allies. Party president L.K. Advani reportedly said that the BJP would go it alone. From the 1996 election, he changed the tune. He realised that in a country where regional parties were gaining in strength, the prospects of a single party getting a majority in Parliament were dim. This time, the party entered into pre-poll alliances and reaped the fruit. It is not that the BJP was untouchable, an argument which the party advanced repeatedly. It was the other way round. The party kept distance from others. In the 1998 election, the BJP spanned it and hence came to lead the coalition.

This should, however, make the BJP realise how deep is the country's ethos. No fundamentalist stand can prevail here. With 82% Hindu, the country has turned its back on Hindutva. It has withstood the pressure from fanatics and fundamentalists, whose fervour has always subsided eventually, because tolerance is firmly implanted in the mind of Indians... India is among the few states which have no official religion, no pope, no church and no book other than the Constitution. And as the Ganges has taken into her lap a multitude of different streams, whether stormy, placid or dirty, so has India assimilated the strange and the strong from several climes. Both the river and the country have remained undefiled, pure.

Nonetheless, it has to be admitted that the influence of the BJP as such has been growing over the years. All states, except Kerala, have returned it to the Lok Sabha... This should make secular forces think. Be it the Rath Yatra or the pernicious propaganda on the construction of a Ram temple, the fact remains that the party has made inroads even in the countryside. Many Hindus have come under its spell. The Hindu intelligentsia has been contaminated and taken in by the argument that the governments in Delhi have appeased the Muslims. Their argument is thin, unsupported by any evidence, in fact, it is just an anti-Muslim bias. To counter such an atmosphere, secular political parties will have to go to the grassroots... Understandably, Muslims are worried because they see in Advani a hardliner. Also, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharati, entrusted with education and culture, have aroused fears that the history may be rewritten...

The redeeming feature of the otherwise unedifying scenario is that Vajpayee looks like breaking from the past (and) trying to bottle up the forces of reaction and bias which the BJP had unleashed to build electoral support... **(Source: The Radiance Viewsweekly, April 12-18,1998)**

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Mathura, is on the "national agenda"?

It is too early to say that impact the moderating influence of its allies will have on the BJP. Arguably, a party which can merrily abandon one set of principles relating to the observance of a moral code in public life to gain power, as UP has shown, can throw overboard the other principles as well. After all, if the communists can become virtual social democrats, the BJP can become another Congress. The only difference is that the last few years have seen a strengthening of the position of hard-liners in the BJP and the Sangh Parivar, and even the formation of a new outfit, the Bajrang Dal....

Even if it is now clear that their world-view, which the BJP has now temporarily put aside, belongs to the periphery of Indian social and political life and not the mainstream, the militant groups are unlikely to accept their relegation to the background meekly. The BJP will ... expect them to have patience so that it can consolidate its position at the Centre and then implement the "Hindu" agenda. But it will not be an easy line to sell... The Sangh parivar's vaunted discipline will be sorely tested...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 30 March, 1998)

C.P. Bhambhri on BJP's Real 'Hidden Agenda'

... (In the) debate on the "real" or "hidden" agenda of the Vajpayee Government, it is alleged that though "Sarva pantha sarvadara", that is, the Indian tradition of equal respect for all faiths, finds a mention in the National Agenda of the alliance, in reality this is the real Hindutva agenda of the BJP masquerading as promotion of "genuine secularism". The crux of the issue is that the Vajpayee Government as an alliance ... has two faces. The present reality of governance of India under the BJP dispensation can be further demystified by recognising that all its regional partners like BJD or Trinamul Congress or Lok Shakti, etc., are confined to specific regions. Moreover, they are out of the present state governments in their respective states. The BJP occupies a large space in the governance of the country because Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and UP are managed by the BJP and along with Shiv Sena, Akalis and HVP, the party participants in the governance of Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana.

The real agenda ... is quite clear to the Sangh Parivar, which, along with the BJP, has a full-fledged agenda for pursuing the politics of Hindutva. The cat was out of the bag when ... national dailies on April 8, 1998, carried the new programme of the RSS, the Bajrang Dal and the VHP. A few special features of the programme announced by the Sangh Parivar deserve to be mentioned in order to understand its real meanings and implications for the future of Indian society, polity and culture. Another mobilisation for Hindutva may not be undertaken on the Ram Janambhoomi issue but similar kind of Hindutva forces are bound to be unleashed for the "liberation of Government-controlled temples in non-BJP ruled states"...

A pure Hindu agenda with political militancy around sacred temples in three religiously sensitive states may lead to a Hindu-Muslim Christian divide but that will only help to strengthen the base of the Sangh Parivar.

This is because temple issues can play upon irrational Hindu emotions. The politics of emotions is the hallmark of the Sangh Parivar. Its programme announced on April 8, 1998, is a comprehensive programme of the mobilisation of Hindus by setting Bajrang Dal units in all 750 districts and 7531 blocks in the country. These units of the Bajrang Dal bal upasana kendras (centres to pay obeisance to strength) are where Hindu youth is trained in "judo, karate and other martial arts" to give a fitting reply to the Pakistan Inter-Service Intelligence Agents, Christians and carriers of cultural invasion... National Agenda for Governance mentions the need for harnessing youth power by establishing National Reconstruction Corps... This programme for the youth as envisaged in the National Agenda and as concretised by the Hindu Parivar deserves an analysis to properly appreciate its real implications.

The BJP is the only cadre-based party in the real sense of the term. While the Communist parties and the Congress have their front organisations, these parties have their own clear identity. Such is not the case with the BJP, which is only a political arm of the RSS meant to implement its programme. Thus, the Hindu youth of India has always been the target of the Hindu parivar...

... The VHP was established in the 1970s to launch anti-Christian missionary campaigns in the North-East. The new programme is an aggressive continuation of the Sangh Parivar's confrontationist attitude towards Christian missionaries. The BJP umbrella is now available to the Sangh Parivar to launch movements in the North-East ... a sensitive and troubled region.

A particular kind of Hindu ethos is being promoted by the BJP Government where temples, rituals, priests, tilak on the forehead of ministers and MPs are on public display. The PM inaugurated Lord Krishna Temple with fanfare in Delhi, the Education Minister enters office with tilak on his forehead, and Shankaracharyas and sants are new role models for Indians... Professor Morris-Jones in his perceptive book on Indian politics in the 1960s had talked of modern and saintly "idioms of politics of India". But his identification of the saintly idiom was with Gandhi or Vinobha Bhave. Leaders who distance themselves from the politics of power are respected in India and they act as "moral conscience keepers of the Indian politics". JP's movement in the 1970s proved Morris Jones' analysis of the "idioms of Indian politics" right.

India has turned full circle and the Hindu saints in politics in the 1980s and 1990s are legitimising a politics of militant Hindutva directed against every minority community in the country... Sant sammelans are being used today for targeting Muslims by raising the issue of "liberation of temples" from "Government control" or for using violence to halt the so-called invasion of foreign culture, Muslim, Christian or a vaguely defined Western.

The National Agenda and the Sangh Parivar's elaboration of that Agenda on April 8 herald a new era in Indian politics where official interpreters of Hinduism or Indian history will be fighting unlicensed street battles and a sympathetic Government will not intervene, as it happened in Gujarat when the Christian missionaries were under siege by VHP and Bajrang Dal activists. The central issue is that regional partners of the BJP Government do not have any national concerns. Only the BJP has a national agenda and its real agenda is the promotion of Hindutva through the Sangh Parivar. It does not have any hidden agenda of its own. This is the crux of the matter.

(Source: The Pioneer)

Eminent Journalist Dilip Padgaonkar On the Birth-pangs of a New Polity

Now that the BJP has survived a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha by the skin of its teeth, it is beginning to appear in a gentler, more benign light in the eyes of many who have all along criticised and feared it...

But to conclude that the party's image problems are behind it would be premature. The problems are deep-rooted and no amount of packaging can wish them away. For instance, there is as yet no hard evidence to suggest that the sangh parivar is able, let alone willing, to speak in one voice on such basic issues as cultural nationalism, the legitimate rights of minorities and economic reform. Tactical prudence, more than a strategic re-think, appears to be guiding its conduct at present. Indeed, some of its more articulate advocates are already bemoaning its drift away from its ideological moorings. It would be fatal, they argue in substance, if the BJP were to be metamorphosed into a variant of the Congress.

In the weeks and months ahead, we are certain to witness an intensification of this ding-dong battle between the pragmatists and the purists. Its outcome is far from clear. The reason is simply this: the battle is not so much an internecine affair of the sangh parivar but a far more subtle and protracted struggle being waged within Indian society as a whole as it seeks to come to terms with a swiftly changing world.

Significant in this regard is Joseph Campbell's recently published Indian Journal. Campbell, who died in 1987, widely acknowledged as one of the most outstanding authorities on comparative mythology...

His diary of the journey, which lasted for six months, narrates in grim detail his disillusionment with a country he had to passionately admired. Its squalor and misery appalled him as did its bureaucratic inefficiency, sloth and corruption. What irked him even more was the virulent anti-Americanism of its elites (they seemed not to be concerned about the brutality of life under communism) and their smug and arrogant claim to be spiritually superior to the decadent and materialist West.

But the source of Campbell's greatest misery was the assorted holy men and women who mixed spirituality and politics, resorted to nationalistic and religious chauvinism, recked of life-denying bhakti sentimentalism (instead of stressing the life-affirming jnana-marg or the gnosis, intellectual path) and showed a callous disregard for whatever is truly uplifting and transcendental in Indian culture: its music and sculpture, its classical literatures, its philosophical speculations and so forth.

... Despite this disillusionment, Campbell was enthralled by ... aspects of his Indian experience. The Indian he came to cherish was one who was free of caste prejudice and religious bigotry, who pursued his spiritual calling without a to-do, who was engaged in the modernisation of India even while remaining deeply attached to its cultural roots.

In short, an Indian who did not wear his secular or religious badge on his sleeve but assumed his Indianness without being either apologetic or aggressive about it. Campbell found such Indians in all spheres of activity... They rejected both patriotically oriented religiosity and religious flavoured patriotism and focussed instead on the individual who, without every losing sight of the transcendental, nurtured his skills and talents in spirit of enquiry. It is this framework which beckons both the secularist and the sangh parivar.

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

Neerja Chowdhury on Vajpayee's Travails

... The message of the Jaswant episode is that the country's chief executive could not appoint a minister in his Cabinet on whom he had set his heart...

Vajpayee's temperament being what it is, he is not able to assert more. He may also not want to rock the boat at this stage. His exit - if he decides to throw in the towel - would jeopardise the alliance. His capitulation raises other questions. His inability to stand up on seemingly small issues raises doubts about his capacity to be firm on vital matters... The 3% increase in the BJP's vote share this time is essentially due to the Vajpayee factor, a euphemism for moderation, liberalism and change. That is the reason for the party's gain in the South.

There is a growing perception that the RSS is interfering in appointments. This can break the fragile relationship of the BJP with its allies. And today the BJP ... had to tone down its programme. Every partner has made it clear that it is with the BJP because the party has accepted 'their' agenda. They have not accepted 'its' agenda.The allies are not only bargaining for their share in power... They have also set the ideological agenda for the government. They are supporting the BJP because it has given them assurances on secularism and promised not to raise the Babari Masjid issue or the Uniform Civil Code or Article 370 and these parties make no secret of this fact. Not one of the 100 MPs belonging to the allies has come out in defence of the RSS or its programme. ...

It is not inconceivable that when any of the regional parties decided to severe its ties with the BJP, they will make the RSS an issue...

(Source: The Indian Express, 7 April, 1998)

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everywhere for all times. My articles do not instigate the Muslim Indians; they serve to assure him that the national order offers a remedy for their grievances; that they shall be heard and not condemned without hearing. Why doesn't Mr. Singh deals with my arguments instead of casting aspersions?

Swapan Dasgupta
On BJP: Party Without a Difference

... (In the past) Vajpayee and Advani successfully drove home the message that (the BJP) was a "party with a difference". That is why when Advani spoke of pseudo-secularism and the double standards of Nehruvian consensus, he found a receptive audience. Those who voted for the BJP in droves in 1989, 1991 and 1996 did not do so because they wanted a Hindu theocratic state. Apart from other concerns, they were motivated by a desire to usher in a wholesome alternative to the Congress... To middle India - the social backbone of the BJP - politics without ethics is meaningless.

Of course, the BJP has paid a heavy price for being excessively goody-goody. The sight of BJP leaders trying desperately to secure additional support for Vajpayee to remain prime minister in May 1996 was, to say the least, funny. They were completely clueless in a game involving bluff, deceit and undercover arrangements.

... In its desperation to prove that it does not lack a killer instinct, the BJP has clearly decided to give up all scruples and join the rest of the political class with gusto... Why, many of the party's supporters asked belligerently, should we always be at the receiving end of unprincipled deals? Since politics is ultimately about winning power and retaining it, that seems a fair question. However, there is a larger question involved. To what extent must the BJP abandon its "party with a difference" tag?.. Is fielding notorious criminals in the Legislative Council polls in Uttar Pradesh and inducting bigamists an appropriate way of doing it? In 1991, the BJP stole the moral thunder by recruiting scores of distinguished notables. This year, with the party nearer to power than it ever was, the quality of newcomers is distinctly unappetising.

... Even as Vajpayee and Advani win new allies, they must reassure the BJP's core constituency in middle India that there is a lakshman rekha that will not be crossed...

(Source: The India Today, 29 December, 1997)

Neena Vyas
On Formation of BJP-led Government

The formation of the BJP Government could have been dismissed as yet another example of the theatre of the absurd that politicians regularly enact, if the issues involved had not been far too serious.

The making of the new Government's Finance Minister was the subject of Act I, which unfolded over a few hours on the night of March 18-19. It raised several important issues relating to the violation of the confidentiality of the process of Cabinet-making and the "extra-constitutional" pressure being brought upon an elected Prime Minister by an organisation such as the RSS, totally outside the pale of political democratic processes. ...

In this entire drama surrounding the making of the Finance Minister, what stood completely exposed was the fact that the Prime Minister was not entirely his own man and certainly not in command of the situation. He had to contend with his allies - that was natural as those parties were also to be part of the government he would be heading. Then, he had to consult his own party president, L.K. Advani, which was natural and as should be. But, then, he also had to take into the account the "wishes" of the RSS bosses, which he could ignore only at his own peril. And that was exactly what had happened...

What has also been exposed as hollow during the course of the ministry-making exercise is the BJP claim that it is a disciplined party compared to others. Perhaps, the tussle for ministerial positions was greater in the BJP itself then among its alliance partners - and the tremors created by it may become visible in the form of cracks in the days to come as the party gears up to keep its government going. Its first "task" will be survival, the rest can wait.

(Source: The Hindu, 22 March, 1998)

The Unsaid Agenda
Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 13.4.1998

The national agenda for governance ... is more remarkable for what it does not say than for what it does. For the nation as a whole this is welcome because the BJP minus the programmes for building a temple at Ayodhya, the abolition of Article 370 and the imposition of a uniform civil code cannot be accused of running a government on the basis of Hindutva. The omissions are not sins. The commissions ... are also sinless. How far they are practicable and implementable is a matter for speculation... The agenda's "first commitment" to the nation is to give "a stable, honest, transparent and efficient government". Of these four adjectives, one seems impossible (stability); one (honesty) is inexpedient and the third (efficiency) is dubious leaving transparency as the only achievable one, that too because of modern technology. The claim that a nation of nearly 100 crore people cannot be governed by the arithmetical division of majority and minority is unexceptionable... The promise of governance by consensus can become a benchmark for the future. Perhaps, it is ... an unavoidable condition of existence ... that the Vajpayee Government should involve "the opposition parties and all sections of society in dialogue" find solutions to major issues.

The agenda speaks of the appointment of a commission to review the Constitution of India and make suitable recommendations. The delicious vagueness of this can mean either not doing anything to the Constitution or just starting a national debate to assess the experience of the past 50 years to decide whether the system needs change... All in all, the national agenda is broadly acceptable... But then, the bone of contention is not the substance of governance but who governs. That fact is contentious enough.

The Phenomenon of Small Parties
Editorial, The Hindustan Times, April 1, 1998

Two complementary features of the present Lok Sabha deserve attention. One is the large number of small parties - the number having increased from 29 to 41 - and the other is their tendency to coalesce into a front... These outfits convey the clear signs of fragmentation of the political arena on narrow considerations. But ... what is immediately obvious is the trend towards cohabiting with a large party - either the Congress or the BJP - or to form an alliance of their own... Another recent phenomenon is the effort towards forming a separate group the moment differences arise within a front. For instance, when the TDP found it difficult to go along with the UF... Several other smaller parties have considered collaborating with each other for the sole purpose of embarrassing the saffron lobby. These ... include the Samajwadi Party, the RJD, the SJP and the RJP ... are all offshoots of a major party...

... They all probably feel a little lost (like the Tamil Maanila Congress)... Most of these are also one-person outfits. If the SP, RJD, SJP and RJP amount to nothing without Mulayam Singh Yadav, Laloo Yadav, Chandra Shekhar and Shankarsinh Vaghela, parties like Biju Janata Dal, Lokshakti and Trinamul Congress are solely dependent for their identity on Patnaik, Hegde and Mamata Banerjee... The fact that they all seem to pin their hopes on one individual carries the seeds of whimsicality and consequent instability. This is true of even a fairly large party like the AIADMK... Even a major party enjoying their support will never feel quite at ease. The reason why they have flourished is, of course, the decline of national parties. Unless the latter show signs of revival, the small parties will continue to play a role .. much larger than what their sizes warrant.

Sikander Vajpayee
Editorial, The Times of India, 30 March, 1998

The victory may have come largely courtesy a last-minute switch of allegiance by the TDP, but it is a victory nevertheless - jo jeeta wohi sikander... In the event, the new dispensation has much to thank Chandrababu Naidu for... The BJP can now legitimately claim to have knocked down the ideological mental block that had kept it on the fringes of power. For Naidu this is equally a turning point in a career speckled with milestones... For better or for worse, he has to stay with his new friends...

Throughout the confidence motion, the BJP's opponents threw dark hints about a hidden (RSS-linked) agenda, which the Prime Minister was at pains to refute.

However, the only surefire way to dispel fears on this count is through action which demonstrably shows the BJP leadership to be independent of mind - held to ransom neither by the RSS nor by one or the other of its allies...

Mani Shankar Aiyar
On Vajpayee - Jayalalitha Relationship

... "Cooperative federalism" ... was at all times a dangerous doctrine, for it looked on India not as a nation but as a commonwealth of states. The sum total of each state's interests was held to represent the national interest. Jayalalitha has shown us all that the Centre exists to conciliate rival state demands, not pander to them.

... Jayalalitha will still compel Prime Minister Vajpayee to answer the question: Is this one nation or a congeries of states? Is Tamil Nadu home to Tamilians - or to Indians who are Tamilians? The same applies to every other state of the Union. Which and what of your narrow state interests do you have to sacrifice for the privilege and advantage of belonging to that larger entity called India?

It is ironic that the BJP is being obliged to wrestle with this conundrum. Because hitherto it was on the "Hindi, Hindu, Hinduism" axis that the Sangh Parivar had evolved its vision of India. For it, in its ideological origins, there was no place for compromises with the infinite diversity of this country. The very word "composite" was, and remains, anathema to it. The quest for power is, however, a relentless taskmaster and the BJP is discovering that it is only by being less itself and more like everyone else that the mandate to rule can come within its grasp.

... Just as the BJP, on growing from a club of early morning PT fanatics into a parliamentary party, lost its famed discipline and found itself untrained to deal with dissent, so also - as it sheds its Aryavarta perspective - it may find itself unable to cope with Bharat, Bharatiyata and all which that entails.

... If Vajpayee fails to acknowledge that Jayalalitha is the state, she is going to make him eat cake. Rao survived because he was not dependent on her. Vajpayee is pathetically so.

... And she will not forgive him if he does not give her the answer she seeks. And terrible will be her vengeance...

(Source: The India Today, March 30, 1998)

Mukund Padmanabhan
On AIADMK and the BJP-led Government

... The threat from the AIADMK-BJP stand-off may have receded, but the problem has not vanished. While the BJP is unlikely to take her for granted any longer, much may depend on how far Mr. Vajpayee is willing to go in accommodating Ms. Jayalalitha's agenda for Tamil Nadu. The numbers in the Lok Sabha provide a strategic advantage the AIADMK and its allies and it will surprise nobody if Ms. Jayalalitha decides to cash in on this once again.

(Source: The Hindu, 22 March, 1998)

BJP: National Executive's Political Resolution

... For the first time, a truly non-Congress national alternative to the party that has ruled India for 45 years of its last 50 years, has emerged. The BJP has added to its parliamentary strength and popular vote share. It has expanded social and geographical base...

The UF's electoral plank of anti-BJPism has collapsed. The barricades that the UF erected to isolate us have come crashing down in this election. We have defeated the "stop BJP" campaign of the pseudo-secularists.

The BJP today has more friends and political allies than any other party, indicating our ever-increasing acceptability as also support for our vision of a resurgent India free from bhay (insecurity), bhookh (hunger) and bhrashtachar (corruption)...

The BJP-led Government has adopted a National Agenda for Governance that seeks to close the gap between people's aspirations and Government's performance. The Agenda ... also emphasises on the need for cooperation and consensus on all major national issues. The National Executive hails the new Government's commitment to securing broad national consensus on all contentious issues...

BJP and Bhrashtachar

In its 1996 and 1998 election manifestos, the BJP vowed to eliminate "bhaya", "bhukh" and "bhrashtachar" (fear, hunger and corruption). Within four weeks of releasing its latest document of commitments, the party seems to have given a complete go-by to the anti-corruption plank by joining forces with a scam-tainted Sukh Ram and his Himachal Vikas Party.

The BJP, which had accused the former Communication Minister of entering into "dubious" deals and "controversial" telecom contracts and disrupted Parliament for 13 days did not hesitate to strike its own deal with him when the elections delivered a hung Assembly in Himachal.

The package reportedly worked out between the two includes the HVP's backing for a BJP-led Government, both at the Centre and in the State and Mr. Sukh Ram's withdrawal from the Mandi Parliamentary poll in favour of the BJP candidate. It also includes his rehabilitation as a Cabinet Minister in the State, and a Rajya Sabha nomination for his son, Anil Sharma, who in 1996 had as unceremonious an exit from government as his father had when the CBI raids unearthed an astounding treasure-trove from their residence.

That the party's political and morality graph may have slipped from "Ram to Sukh Ram" as the Congress has put it - does not seem to trouble the party at all...

Because of its decision to tie-up with Ms. J. Jayalalitha and her AIADMK, notwithstanding charges of corruption pending against her, it was considered only a matter of time before the BJP rushed to shake hands with leaders it condemned as corrupt...

The two parties fought each other in almost every Assembly segment. But when the elections threw up a House where the HVP and the lone Independent could tilt the balance, the BJP decided to shut its eyes...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 26 March, 1998)

Shiv Sena: Bal Thackeray's Views

... The Congress is not a problem to us but one thing is certain though: the Muslims, through Mulayam Singh Yadav and his Samajwadi Party - despite his having done little for them - voted for the Congress, although they had been helped so much by my government.

We did things for them. We gave them a completion certificate for the Haj House; we allowed them to hold their Ijtema; we gave them special concessions on the Floor Space Index (FSI) for mosques. They were happy. Very happy. The Imams - not the Jama Masjid one - also came here (his residence, Matoshree) to tell us that they were so filled up with emotion. I thought then that a big chunk of the Muslim vote would come to us. But it didn't.

... You are not supposed to do Hindutva propaganda. The Election Commission moves around with video cameras. Do you mean to say that I am a fool when every one of us, including all my Shiv Sainiks, are toiling so hard, just to be disqualified? But (otherwise) where is the question of going soft (on Hindutva)?

I have never appeased the Muslims. Never... There were 2.5 crore Muslims in India during Partition. Now they are more than 15 crore - a population larger than that of Pakistan. So what are you going to do with them? Not all Muslims are traitors. So is it not better to have an understanding and develop brotherly relations with them? I want Muslims to accept India as their motherland, too. I will not accept those who have their body in Hindustan and hearts in Pakistan. That kind must quit the country.

So far as the Babari Masjid site goes, it was the duty of the Narasimha Rao government to solve the crisis. Now it is six years since the demolition and if you are unable to build either a temple or a mosque, then why not build a monument to Mangal Pandey, the boy who fired the first shot for azadi, to mark the golden jubilee of India's Independence? That should be acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims.

... If Advani can build the temple, let him try. I will support it, of course. (My) idea (for a national monument) does not mean we cannot claim our rights in our own motherland...

(Source: The Indian Express, 22 March, 1998)

Insaf Morcha: Covnener Shahabuddin On Pro-BJP Stand of National Conference

28 March, 1998

The separation of the TDP, the National Conference and the Assom Gana Parishad from the United Front is a matter of concern to the secular forces in the country. because on separation they have, in fact, walked into the BJP's parlour. The quid pro quo may not be in the public domain for some time, but in the present stage of our national politics, it would not be unfair to conclude that the leaders of these Parties have been actuated not by national interests but by personal considerations. For example, it has been well known that Dr Farooq Abdullah, the President of the J&K Conference, would like his son, a first-timer to be a member of the Council of Ministers just as three other sons of three other State Chief Ministers have become. If three 'sons' are rising, why not the fourth?

But, this is for the Prime Minister Vajpayee to ponder over. What is important is that in rationalising their decision, the Chief Ministers of J&K and AP have taken shelter behind their concept of serving the interests of their respective States. The Constitution lays down the functions, duties and responsibilities of the Union and the States. It is envisaged that the Union may be governed by a Party or Alliance different from the one in a given State. The relationship between the Centre and the States is not personal but a constitutional relationships. Whatever be the political complexion of the two, they must be guided at all times by the Constitution. If under the existing rules a State merits a certain quantum of Central allocation, no Union Government can deny it to that State. Similarly, no Union Government cannot intervene within the Constitutional jurisdiction of the State as defined by the List II, of the Constitution. This extra-Constitutional argument, therefore, is a very dangerous argument and hits at the very root of Indian federalism.

It is possible that the State Governments are apprehensive of many a skeleton tumbling out of their cup-boards because the protective hand of the United Front has been withdrawn and they are taking pre-emptory action in order that the skeletons remain where they are. In this they might succeed because BJP is prepard to pay any price to stay in power.

As far as J&K is concerned, the stance of Dr Farooq Abdullah is a matter of national concern because his Government is bound to lose credibility in the eyes of the Kashmiri people for his 180 degree shift from the demand for complete autonomy and return to 1950, to collaboration with those who are totally opposed to the very concept of special status for the State. Disenchantment is bound to reignite the smouldering ashes of insurgency.

In any case, why should the two Chief Ministers who were regarded as the pillars of secular order provide a fig leaf to cover the communal character of a party which has not abandoned its philosophy of Hindu nationalism.

BJP Government's Onerous Responsibility

Editorial, The Janata, 15 March, 1998

... The BJP had learnt the lesson in May, 1996, when all others had joined to oust it from power. It went out of its way to seek and forge alliances. All its purism was a thing of the past, and it was willing to accept anyone who cared to join hands with it. The corruption-charged Jayalalitha was invited. Gopalaswamy who was considered close to the LTTE, too, was wooed; even that arch renegade, Subramaniam Swamy became a dear comrade-in-arms. One might call it promiscuity. The BJP went even further. It bade a go bye to its moral standards and accepted the likes of Hari Shankar Tewari as ministers and gave tickets for the Lok Sabha to Sanjay Singh and D.P. Yadav. The power bug had bitten it so hard that it started to vacillate on matters of policy, too. Having admitted such undesirable elements into its ranks, and having joined hands with all and sundry, the party is now going to reap the harvest. Its pragmatism and sense of real politic should ensure that it would not pursue a precipitous course. The bargaining has already started... But, a Council of Ministers which has eminent politicians like Ramakrishna Hegde, George Fernandes, Nitish Kumar and Surjit Singh Barnala, apart from some talented leaders of the BJP, should be able to steer the Government to a moderate and liberal course. Those who think hat the BJP would want to pursue its hate agenda because of the pressure of the hard-liners and for future electoral gains may also be right. But, then, the balance in the Lok Sabha will be so precarious that unless the BJP leadership is planning to hold an early general election and achieve a majority of seats on its own, it would not adopt that course.

Dissolution of the Lok Sabha in this fashion might not be acceptable to the parties aligned to it, for obvious reasons. Therefore, possibly, the BJP would settle to rule by consensus for as long as possible... The common people would be really interested to see that there is no price rise, social tensions are not aggravated and policies of poverty alleviation are pursued. With a vigilant opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Government will ever be on its toes. The BJP's major worry could be the intransigence of some of its own obdurate elements as also the demands of the allies. Hopefully, these factors will be easily negotiated. But, one cannot be too sure. In that sense, the challenge for Atal Behari Vajpayee will be quite a tough one.

While the BJP, with a will to power, was assiduously seeking allies, the Congress(I), decided otherwise...

... But, the change in the party's thinking in respect of Tamilnadu, South Bihar, UP and Madhya Pradesh occurred after Sonia Gandhi jumped in the campaign and began to draw large crowds... The party definitely lost what it could have gained... The difference could be more than fifty seats for the Congress(I) and its possible allies...

For the United Front, the election results were disastrous... Today JD is in a shambles after having given three Prime Ministers to the country. Hopefully, its leaders will make an agonising appraisal of its decline, steep as it is.

A Plea for a Third Force

Editorial, The Janata, April 5, 1998

... The BJP as also the Congress(I) would definitely work for a polarisation in which the United Front or any third force finds no place at all. The secular space is sought to be monopolised by the latter ... and the anti-Congress(I) space by the former... If the Front has to survive, then not only has it to shed its pro-Congress(I) stance, but also to consolidate and broaden itself as a distinct political entity...

A broadening of the UF by the inclusion of the RJD, the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) of Chandra Shekhar, Haryana Lok Dal (Rashtriya), which was but a part of the SJP, the BSP and the Republican Party of India (RPI) can help it to emerge as a strong force. At the same time, efforts should continue to be made to persuade and pressurise the J&K National Conference and the AGP. A flexible approach towards some elements in the BJP-led coalition like the Lok Shakti, the BJD and the Samata Party might not be ruled out, looking at the fragility of that coalition...

This Third Force is to be strengthened ... against the dynastic ambitions of the Congress(I) and the hidden agenda of the Sangh Parivar... The Government has to be pushed into acutalising its promises made in the National Agenda, announced by the ruling coalition, particularly in respect of those programmes which it has borrowed from the UF's Common Minimum Programme... The broadened UF must fight hard to ensure that the secular democratic fabric of the polity is not allowed to be tinkered with.

... Instead of prioritising the ouster of the BJP in alliance with the Congress(I), or that of the latter in collusion with the BJP, a policy of equidistance has to be pursued, with ... the aspirations of the common people.

Devesh Kumar on Janata Dal in Bihar

... The results of the Lok Sabha elections in Bihar (has) conclusively proved that Laloo Prasad Yadav was the sole occupant of the non-BJP-Samata Party space in the State leaving the Janata Dal struggling for survival - and the security deposit. ...

Having touched its nadir in terms of electoral fortune ... in a State where battle lines are clearly drawn between pro and anti-Laloo forces, reviving the party ... is bound be an arduous task. Sooner or later, state leaders of the JD will have to swallow their pride to join hands with Laloo if they want to face the challenge thrown by the BJP-Samata alliance...

(Source: The Indian Express, 23 March, 1998)

A Secular Alternative for Muslims

In a recent article "Do Muslims need a separate political party?" in *The Nation and the World* Mr. Saiyid Hamid, the eminent educationist and administrator, has argued against the establishment by the Muslims of an `exclusive religion based political party' on the ground that the Muslim party `will give a fillip to majority extremism and fanaticism', because it will be seen as a `move towards separatism' and because of this such a step will also `increase the distance between Muslims and other Indians'. I fully endorse his views and I am convinced that there is no scope for another pre-partition Muslim League in secular India.

Mr. Hamid has put forward the alternative strategy that the Muslims should strengthen the political parties which believe in justice and humanity and endeavour to transcend narrow, religious and linguistic prejudices. Unfortunately, there are no such parties on the Indian political scene today. All parties have well defined social constituencies and to that extent although they espouse the cause of secularism, social justice and welfare of all, they in fact promote or endeavour to promote the narrow interests of their specific social constituency, defined in terms of religion and caste and how warfare they finally lose out to the anti-secular forces.

To say the least, the Muslim intelligentsia and the Muslim masses are both dissatisfied with the secular parties and impatient with their internecine. Mr. Hamid has also suggested a third alternative that the Muslim community should prepare a Common Minimum Programme on issues of concern to Muslims, which should be binding on all Muslims MPs. This raises the questions as to who will frame the CMP and how the Muslim MPs, elected on Party tickets and subject to Party whips, can be bound by such a CMP. How can they take a stand different from the programmes and policies laid down in the Party documents including the Manifestos? So long as the Muslim MPs depend on the goodwill of their Party bosses and so long as they care for advancing their political career they are not capable of taking an independent political line on matters of concern to the community, without a green signal from their party bosses, even if their stand falls within the Constitution and the party ideology. Therefore, this alternative also may not work.

Mr. Hamid has observed that the Muslim Indians and their leaders do not generally deliberate over the problems in a cool and objective manner, decide the course of action by application of reason but on the basis of emotions and at times act aggressively rather than persuasively, as a weaker participant particularly a minority should. I agree with him.

Mr. Hamid has argued that unless we remove these basic flaws in the collective character and remove the deficiencies in education and development and unless there is inter-sect and inter-class unity among the Muslims. The Muslims cannot be effective in national politics. And I agree with him but I feel that time and tide wait for no one and the political panorama is changing so fast that we cannot set about correcting our basic flaws, making up deficiencies and mastering a new style of politics and remove all misunderstanding about ourselves, as a pre-condition for our entry into the political arena

Before I proceed, I must also put on record that the political environment is clouded by wide-spread and persistent misunderstanding about Islam, Muslims and Muslim Indians in the Hindu Indian mind, which is continuously and deliberately nurtured by the Sangh Parivar but which forms the intellectual background, even of the Hindu intelligentsia, irrespective of party affiliation. This obviously limits the acceptability and intolerance towards the Muslim Indians by their compatriots and to that extent cramps the style and extent of the Muslims in role in national politics. But participation they must and effectively, if they wish to survive.

Mr. Hamid has sagaciously argued that Muslim Indians must learn to work together with the Hindu Indians for the moral betterment of **all** Indians, in consonance with their Islamic faith and value system. This implies that Islamically Muslim Indians have a duty to participate in the affairs of the nation with political will and with readiness to make any sacrifices to achieve the objective of Equality, Justice and Dignity - defined in national and universal terms.

There is a case for a Muslim-based secular party also, if every social group with all its flaws and deficiencies is operating in the political arena through a political party; so can Muslims. This would mean Muslim Indians establishing not a Muslims party but a Muslim-based party with a national and not a communal programme, a party with secular and not theocratic ideology, a party whose field of concern and action shall embrace all the deprived groups, nay, all the people, a party which will endeavour to ensure a fair and equitable share of national resources, goods and services as well as just division of the allocations and fruits of development to all social groups in the country, a party which will not demand special rights for any social group and will oppose dominance of the policy, society and economy by any one either, a party which will be as much against Muslimvad as it is against Brahminvad or Yadavavad or Shudravad and a party which will try to solve the problems faced by the Muslim Indians not in exclusivist terms but in terms of a common solution for all Indians who face the same situation.

For example, it will seek to deal with anti-Muslim

violence in terms of common measures to be undertaken by the State to prevent and curb and punish all manifestations of inter-group violence. It will seek to protect the rights of Urdu-speaking people in common terms applicable to all national languages wherever they form a minority group. It shall seek educational and cultural autonomy not only for Muslim Indians but for all religious, linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups, with equal access to the national educational system for all. It will seek the expenditure of development outlays at the grass-root level in a manner so as to benefit all identifiable and conscious social groups at the operational level equally and equitably. It will seek freedom of religion from State intervention except at the request and with the consent of the religious group. It shall strive to maintain the identity of every social group in the country whatever its basis - religion, language or race. Such a party will be truly national and secular. Its doors will be open to all without any distinction and therefore it shall be essentially democratic, development oriented, committed to federalisation, decentralisation and social justice.

But the Muslim Indians will have to provide its backbone, without its being an exclusive Islam based political party, if such a party is to help pull them and other marginalised out of the political and economic quagmire they are in today.

The Insaf Party which I had founded in 1988-89 was a short-lived experiment. The experiment failed because the level of political consciousness in the Muslim masses was not high enough to play 'camouflage' politics. Muslim masses respond generally to Muslim dictum, style and manner in politics. However, ten years have elapsed since then and the real nature of all political parties is visible even to the blind. The Muslims have begin to see how from time to time they have been exploited as vehicles for the promotion of interests of specified social groups, without may equitable quid pro quo.

The Muslims are today looking for a political alternative: There are only two: either to form a non-political forum at the national level which should be a representative body, command the confidence and trust of the community and be in a position to negotiate with political parties which seek Muslim support without itself participating in elections; or it should be a political party with the characteristics, I have mentioned above.

Indeed, several political parties representing various deprived social groups are also looking for Muslim support but they do not know whom to approach, who can speak on behalf of Muslims and deliver the goods. No individual can but the community organized in the above manner and speaking either through a non-political forum or a political party can. This can lead to the evolution of a social coalition, a winning combination, in the fragmented state of national politics today.

- Syed Shahabuddin

Gandhiji's Advice to Muslim Minority
24 December 1947

... In Karachi on 15 December, 1947 the Council of the All India Muslim League passed a resolution bifurcating the organisation into two. One part was to be the Muslim League of Pakistan, and the second All India Muslim League... Thus, this question is to be answered: of what character were the forthcoming Conference of Muslims in Lucknow organised by Maulana Azad, and a later one to be held in Madras by the "Muslim League"? In this context, Gandhiji felt that after the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim League could not continue to exist in India as a political organisation. However, he had every regard and concern for the Muslims as a minority people.

He, therefore, assured them, "A minority, however, small should have no reason to feel afraid for its honour and for the things it holds dear. If man could know his Maker, and realise that he himself is a reflection of that Maker, no power on earth can take away his self-respect.... (In) Transvaal, a dear English friend told me. "I always like to be with a minority, for a minority generally does not commit mistakes, and even if it does commit them they can be rectified. But a majority gets drunk with power, and it is difficult to reform it. If the Muslims of India see the virtues of being a minority, they can show the beauties of Islam in their own way. They must remember that the best days of Islam were the days of the Prophet Mohammed's minority in Mecca". (He) advised the nationalist Muslims of India to join the Congress. This advice of his was widely welcomed...

After prayers, Gandhiji told his audience, "I receive Sikh visitors and read the newspapers. They say that I am an enemy of the Sikhs. A tree is known by its fruit. For man is not God: man can know a thing only by its results. The fruit of Independence has been that today Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand, and Muslims on the other, have become enemies. I had been deluded that our freedom struggle was truly non-violent. God had rendered me blind, and I was misled. Because the lame, the crippled, and the cowardly cannot be non-violent. I do not literally mean the lame and the crippled, for God helps them, and they are always non-violent. Even a child can stand before the whole world on the strength of non-violence...

Patrtick French
On Gandhi and Hindu-Muslim Unity

(Despite) all his talks of everybody loving each other and communal harmony, Gandhi failed to bring the Muslims into the Congress. You may have individual figures like Dr. Ansari and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, but they were token figures. There was never any mass Muslims joining the Congress. I think there was a genuine failure to make the Muslims welcome to the Congress. To me it was a gigantic failure.

Hasan Mansur
On Political Tasks of Muslim Community

The latest General Elections have serious lessons to teach the minorities, Muslims in particular... To underestimate RSS strength could be sheer adventurism if not suicidal. The ... truth is, no fanatical outfit as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has carried on such sustained and committed work at the grassroots for more than seventy years and this is a record beside which Fascism of Europe pales into insignificance. Its well-orchestrated propaganda of blatant lies out-Goebbelsing Goebbels, disinformation, distortion of history and blind hatred towards Muslims is astounding if not frightening.

The inroads Hindutva had made into all spheres of the Indian polity is too well-known to be retailed here. The abysmal failure of the political parties labelled secular to promote democratic ethos in the country has rendered the legislatures ineffectual... The forces of law and order have been largely communalized as witnessed in events in Kashmir, the North-East, massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and Punjab and of Muslims in Bombay, Surat and elsewhere; they have become suspect in the eyes of the Dalits, tribal, other minorities and the poor in general. The judiciary has often failed to rise to its constitutional obligation, the latest instance where the Supreme Court rendered justice to Kalyan Singh in thirty hours whereas it is yet to pronounce judgement over the dismissal of Mulayam Singh though he sought justice thirty months ago. The myth that the armed forces are above board has been rudely shattered with scores of their topnotch officers joining the BJP, after retirement, J.G. Nadkarni, former chief of the Indian Navy in a revealing article in The Indian Express dated 11.3.1998, entitled, "The saffron undervest" writes, "... under their immaculate uniforms, a large number of our senior services men wear a saffron vest" and goes on to point out, "To every serviceman, Pakistan has been, is and will be our principal adversary.

It is natural for him to bear an antipathy to every Pakistani and by extension to every member of the minority community in India. Despite the fact, that not a single case of sabotage or disloyalty occurred during the three wars, every member of the community will always be a suspect." All citizens of India seriously concerned with the future of democracy here must heed the writing on the wall and take immediate measures to forestal likely disasters.

... Muslims are slowly bearing the game by voting for parties or individuals who are the least ill-disposed towards the community. Since this game of numbers is a gamble, it might end up giving a majority to the saffron outfit which would enable the latter to carry out the agenda set for it by the Sangh Parivar...

To trust that these electoral games alone will keep the communal monster at bay is deceptive. The real task lies at the grassroots. The three thousand year old oppression of the Dalits, the plight of the displaced tribal, and the exploitation and atrocities the poor in general are subjected to, must be inscribed on the agenda of the Muslims. They must be in the vanguard of the movements fighting against criminalisation, corruption and communalism. They must throw in their lot with others demanding facilities for education, employment and health, agitate against price rise, raise their voice against globalisation and uphold the rights of women and children. The saffron tide must be stemmed by forging ties with all those forces who are victims of a state which has ceased to govern and has never been accountable to its citizens. The fascism of Hindutva must be challenged through the movements of the common people fighting for social justice and it is the people and their indivisible unity that could thwart the conspiracy of the Sangh Parivar. The battle for democracy must be fought decisively and won and the saffron threat must be laid to rest and never be let to rise again.

(Source: The Islamic Voice, April, 1998)

Shahabuddin's Letter to A.B. Vajpayee, 17 January, 1998

I am shocked by the views on Islam and Indian Muslims attributed to you on the BJP Website on the Internet on 14.1.98 as reported in the Hindustan Times today.

Permit me to say that you appear to have a very shallow knowledge of Islam and the Holy Quran. You have hurt the feelings not only of Muslim Indians but of the Muslims all over the world through your sweeping and illiterate generalisations. Your views border on the blasphemous and are unworthy of a person of your stature.

As for your open threat to kill the Muslim Indians, if they do not change themselves to meet your specifications, we reject this threat with the contempt it deserves. We believe that our religious identity is protected by the Constitution and we cannot and will not permit it to be compromised at any cost.

Neither do we need any certificate of patriotism from the Sangh Parivar or from its so- called 'liberal' mask. We love our mother land and we wish it to flourish through unity and harmony as the common homeland of all its religions, cultures and languages.

Lok Sabha Election 1998
Muslim Candidates in II Position

S.No.	Name	Constituency	Party	Lost to
Andhra Pradesh:				
1.	K. Ahmad	Bagh Konda	INC	TDP
Bihar:				
2.	Matiur Rahman	Bettiah	RJD	BJP
3.	*A.H. Qureshi	Kishanganj	SP	RJD
4.	Abid Husain	Kodarma	RJD	BJP
Gujarat:				
5.	Iqbal Bhai	Bhrauch	INC	BJP
Haryana:				
6.	Khurshid Ahmad	Faridabad	INC	BJP
Karnataka:				
7.	Q. Islam	Gulbarga	JD	(LS) BJP
8.	I.G. Samadi	S. Dharwar	INC	BJP
Kerala:				
9.	M.M. Hasan	Chirayinkil	INC	CPM
Lakshadweep:				
10.	*K.K. Md. Koya	Lakshadweep	JD	INC
Madhya Pradesh:				
11.	Arif Beg	Bhopal	INC	BJP
Maharashtra:				
12.	A.R. Antulay	Colaba	INC	PWP
13.	S. Lokhandwala	Bombay SC	SP	SS (BJP)
Orissa:				
14.	S.M. Ahmad	Cuttack	INC	BJD
Rajasthan:				
15.	G.M. Said Khan	Jaipur	INC	BJP
Tamilnadu:				
16.	T.A. Md. Saqui	Vellore	INC	BJP
J&K:				
17.	*M.M. Dar	Anantnag	JD	NC
18.	*Agha S. Mehdi	Srinagar	INC	NC
Uttar Pradesh:				
19.	Ale Hasan Ansari	Amroha	BSP	BJP
20.	*Noor Bano	Rampur	INC	BJP
21.	Islam Sabir	Bareilly	SP	BJP
22.	Anis Khan	Piliphit	BSP	Ind. (BJP)
23.	Muzaffar Ali	Lucknow	SP	BJP
24.	Daud Ahmad	Shahabad	BSP	BJP
25.	K. Yusuf Malik	Domariaganj	BSP	BJP
26.	M. Husain	Kairana	SP	BJP
27.	Mukhtar Anis	Sitapur	SP	BJP
West Bengal:				
28.	*A.H.K. Chowdhury	Jangipur	INC	CPI(M)
29.	*A.H. Khan	Murshidabad	INC	CPI(M)

*** 7 Lost to Muslim candidates.**

Party-wise Break-up

Nominating Party	Candi-dates	Winning Party	Candi-dates
Congress	10	JP & Ailies	18 (including 1 Muslim)
SP	4		
BSP	4	TDP	1
RJD	2	CPM	1
JD	1	PWP	1
DMK	1	BJD	1
Total	**22**	**Total**	**22**

Shahabuddin's Letter to The Nation and the World, 12 January, 1998

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

While agreeing with you that blind support to anyone party throughout the country should be ruled out, I feel that for the same reason, support to anyone party even within the same State, particularly large States, should be ruled out.So finally, the secular voters have to decide at the Constituency level, if more than one candidates are fielded by secular parties/formation, to vote for the strongest among them, irrespective of religion, caste or party label, who can defeat the candidate fielded by the BJP or its allies.This would indeed be in the best interest of both the country and the community.

If there is a one-to-one fight between the BJP and any secular party/front in any Constituency, the secular voter faces no problem.

What needs to be emphasized is that every vote matters and, therefore, the secular voter must cast his vote.

United and Massive voting for one secular candidate in every Constituency can alone stop the Hindutva Rath from reaching Delhi.

New Muslim Faces

Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, 38, BJP -
"The BJP is not at all against any community".
Rampur, Uttar Pradesh
Electorate: 13.1 lakh
Main rival: Noor Bano (Congress)

He is one of the BJP's most potent weapons, a Muslim MP draped in saffron... He performed kar seva at Ayodhya... Twice he lost assembly elections...No longer is the BJP guilty of lacking Muslim representation.

Akbar Ahmed, 45, BSP -
"I have wrested this seat in spite of strong-arm tactics".
Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh
Electorate: 12.08 lakh
Margin of victory: 15,368
Main rival: Ramakant Yadav (Samajwadi Party)

A loud-mouth landlord and former Sanjay Gandhi acolyte ruled the roost during the Emergency. Now heaps abuse on every politician. He says, "My ambition is to serve the people"... Can this high-profile feudal lord sit quietly at the feet of Mayawati?

(Source: The India Today)

On human rights, I make no concessions to anybody. Be it the BJP or the CPM. I cannot be silenced just because I am part of a coalition that governs India. I will speak out my mind, whatever the consequences may be.

- George Fernandes, Minister of Defence, India

Gandhiji on Rights of Muslim Indians
Prayer Meeting, 12 September, 1947

I would ... request you not to regard the Muslims as your enemies. Just because the country has been divided into India and Pakistan, it does not befit us to slaughter the Muslims who have stayed behind. The Government of Pakistan has forgotten its duty to minorities. I want to tell my people that they should not become so barbaric. If the Hindus and the Sikhs here say that they will take revenge on the local Muslims because the Hindus and the Sikhs in Pakistan are in danger, because their homes have been destroyed there, and they have fled, it will be sheer barbarism. If any Hindu or Sikhs from the Punjab comes and tell me that his anguish is greater than mine because he has lost his brother or daughter or father, I would say that his brother is my brother, that his mother is my mother, and that I have the same anguish in my heart as he has. I am also a human being. But when I feel enraged I swallow my anger. That gives me great strength. What revenge can I take with that strength? How should I take my revenge so that they feel repentant for their crimes and admit them? Only by returning good for evil. Let us know our own dharma. In the light of our dharma, I tell you that our greatest duty is to see that the Hindus do not retaliate in frenzy, nor the Sikhs indulge in acts of madness. Till the Muslims are able to return to the places from which they have fled, we cannot have peace of mind. I appeal also to the Muslims of India that they should, with an open heart, declare that they belong to India and that they are loyal to India. If the minds and hearts of all of us are thus purified, we can live in amity."

Thousands of Muslims surrounded Gandhiji when, accompanied by Dewan Chamanlal and Dr. Dinshaw Mehta, he visited the Purana Qilla camp. Not all of the refugees who came up to the Mahatma were reverential. Wrath and vitriolic rage were rained upon him by many who blamed him squarely for not preventing atrocities being perpetrated against their kith and kin professing Islam... Speaking in his gentle, soft manner, he said he could well understand the anger that they (the hapless victims) felt. He would only assure his accusers, and others too, that his only aim was to bring them comfort. Gandhiji vowed "I shall either put matters right here or I shall die in the process. In his prayer meeting speech later, he said, "Let the Hindus and the Sikhs invite every Muslim driven out to return to his home. This alone is right."

(Source: The Hindu, 13 September, 1997)

V.N. Datta on Jinnah's Role

Jinnah did not matter much in the twenties and early thirties of the century and he had no political base. He couldn't get on with any one either in the Congress or the Muslim League. He knew little of provincial politics and his main interest lay in Central politics. He was at best a 'consultative politician' anxious to offer ready-made formulas on constitutional questions. A man of few words, proud and formal, he could seldom inspire confidence. The Muslim League was then a moribund organisation....

Sardar Patel's
Justification for Partiton

... After the 'direct-action-day', called by the Muslim League government under the Prime Ministership of Suhrawardi, in Bengal, in August, 1946, which led to the slaughter of Hindus, Sardar Patel concluded that there was undeclared civil war in this country by the Muslims on the rest. He knew that the non-Muslims were unprepared for violence and civil war and that as long as Gandhiji was alive, there could be no armed defence by the non-Muslims against the Muslims. He was sure that if the non-Muslims organised and started resisting the Muslim violence, they would prevail but that it might take 20 to 25 years. In the meanwhile, great harm would be done to the country. He therefore preferred the lesser evil, namely, the partition of India. He called K.M. Munshi and said, "Hello Akhandawadi! I have decided to agree to the partition of India". K.M. Munshi was shocked and asked how partition would be the solution. Sardar Patel explained his reasoning and thoughts and then added, **"Munshiji, after partition we will have the machinery of the government of India at our command, i.e. the military and the police. At least we can use them to withstand the onslaught of Muslims in Pakistan** and within India and protect the life and honour of non-Muslims in what remains as India.

(Source: Editorial, The Prajna, January-March, 1998)

Gandhiji on Pakistan's 'Service' to
Muslims in India, 20 October, 1947

Shaheed Suhrawardy was trying to restore normal relations between India and Pakistan, but was finding it a very difficult task... Gandhiji earnestly believed that in Suhrawardy he had one ace he could depend on to win some advantages in the ticklish game of Indo-Pakistan reconciliation. To Shaheed he said, "I am at a loss to understand what Pakistan really wants to do - whether to have the Hindus to stay there, or to have them leave. Remember, to the minorities this is a life and death question. Fine phrases or impressive declarations on paper will not do. **If you can get the authorities in Pakistan to implement their declarations in action, then you will have rendered the greatest service to Indian Muslims...**

(Source: The Hindu)

... After the Pakistan resolution was passed in March 1940 at Lahore the rift between the Congress and the Muslim League widened. Jinnah was determined to fight for an independent sovereign state while the Congress insisted on setting up a Constituent Assembly to frame a Constitution based on adult franchise. The Cripps proposals (1942) failed to reconcile the contending parties. The 'Individual satyagraha' (1940-41) and 'Quit India' (1942) left the field open for Jinnah to emerge as the most influential Muslim leader. By 1945 the British took him as the sole spokesman of the Muslims in India. The Pakistan issue had caught the imagination of the Muslims and the British realised that it could no longer be ignored.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 10 August, 1997)

Gandhiji on Accession of Junagadh and J&K to India

Prayer Meeting, Delhi, 11 November, 1947

I had not expected that the struggle which was being carried out on behalf of the people of Junagadh would have such a happy ending. I had also expressed my fear that if the request of the officials of Junagadh for India's assistance did not have the sanction of Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah (the Governor-General of Pakistan), it would not be proper to feel right about the matter now. Hence you will be amazed and distressed to know that the officials of Pakistan have now protested against the Provisional Government of the State assuming power on behalf of the people. The officials have demanded "withdrawal of Indian troops from the State's territory, relinquishment of the administration to the rightful Government, and stoppage of violence and invasion of the State by people from the Indian Union." They also state that neither the Nawab nor the Dewan of Junagadh has any legal authority to negotiate any permanent or provisional settlement with the Indian Union. According to Pakistan, the action of the Government of India is "a clear violation of Pakistan territory, and a breach of international law."

"Looking at the reports that have appeared, I find that there is neither a breach of international law in the matter, nor any operation by the Government of India to establish control over the State of Junagadh. As far as I can see, there is nothing illegal in the campaign (for accession to India) carried on by the Provisional Government on behalf of the people of Junagadh. The Government of the Union of India sent military help for the safety of the whole of Kathiawad at the request of the rulers of that territory. Hence, I find nothing illegal in this whole action. As against this, whatever the Dewan of Junagadh did by publicly changing his mind, was illegal. I look at the whole situation like this: **the Nawab of Junagadh had no right at all to accede to Pakistan without the consent of his people, of which I am told that 85 per cent are Hindus.**

The Sacred Hill of Girnar and all the temples on it are part of Junagadh. Hindus have spent a lot of money on those temples, and thousands of people go to Girnar on pilgrimage from all parts of India. In free India, the whole of the country belongs to all the people. Not even the smallest part of it can belong to the Princes as their private property. They can retain their claim to be Rulers only by becoming trustees of the people, and that is why they would be required to give evidence of popular support for every action of theirs. The Princes have not yet realised that they are the trustees and representatives of the people. And it is also true that, with the exception of the alert subjects of some States, the people of all the princely States have not yet realised that they are the true rulers of themselves. But that does not diminish the principle of what I have laid down.

Only the people of any particular State have the legal right to accede to one of the Unions, India or Pakistan. **If any Ruler joins either of the Unions in his personal capacity, that Dominion cannot stand before the world to justify his action.** From this point of view, I think that the Nawab's accession has been baseless from the very beginning till it is proved that the people of the State had not given their consent to his decision. The dispute as to which Union Junagadh would finally accede to can be resolved only by taking public opinion, that is by referendum. This task should be properly carried out without violence, or even the show of violence. One cannot think that the matter should be decided by the sword.

Whatever I have said about Junagadh applies equally to Kashmir and to Hyderabad. As far as I know, the point has been clarified in the case of Kashmir. If it had been only the Maharaja who had wanted to accede to the Indian Union, I could never support such an act. **The Government of India agreed to the accession for the time being, because both the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah, who is the representative of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, wanted it.** Sheikh Abdullah came forward to make the demand representing not only the Muslims but the entire masses of Kashmir.

Government Statement On Militant Activities in J&K

Total number of persons killed in

Year	J&K	No. of militants arrested and detained
1993	2567	4780
1994	2867	4244
1995	2768	43288

(Source: LSUQ No. 2728 dated 10 December, 1996 by P.R. Dasmunsi)

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settlement.

... Initial noises made both by Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif have subsided, although both had promised to go an extra mile. In the background of Agni and Ghauri and the option to make the bomb, the extra mile needs to be covered sooner than later.

My impression, during a recent visit to Pakistan, is that the Nawaz Sharif government will feel satisfied if only a separate group is constituted to resume talks on Kashmir. He has no time-frame in mind... It will amount to stalling the process if no separate group is constituted on Kashmir, although it may look like placating Pakistan...

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

Kuldip Nayar on Combating the Politics of Hatred and Breaking Deadlock over Kashmir

Pakistan's assertion that Kashmir is the 'core issue' is as much a cliche as India's statement that it is ready for 'a serious dialogue' with Islamabad. In fact, it is worth assessing whether Kashmir is a symptom or a disease. The two would have found some other reason to stay distant because they have not yet overcome the religious differences, which led to the partition of the subcontinent in the first instance. The hiatus may widen with the BJP-led coalition in New Delhi... The rulers or political parties have been at pains to run down secularism in India (and) insisting on describing it as a Hindu country, whatever its credentials or claims...

... How do the two countries, if arrayed as Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India, find a solution to the problem of Jammu and Kashmir, which demands a secular approach, transcending religion? There have been serious suggestions from Pakistan to divide the State on the basis of Hindu and Muslim, the formula used at the time of partition... Such proposals have never taken into consideration the harm this will do the Indian polity as well as the Muslim population in the country. Now ... the result can be still more disastrous...

If at all there is any serious effort towards a settlement, it has to move away from the scenario of religion, the Hindu and the Muslim syndrome. It has done great harm to the subcontinent. But the tragedy is that while Pakistan has remained stuck in parochial thinking, India has somewhat lost the lustre of secularism. The BJP has been able to arouse fears among many Hindus that they are facing the danger of losing their identity. It is no use going into the morality of means and methods. The fact is that the party has won one-third of the Lok Sabha's 540 seats on its own symbol... I shudder to imagine the two religiously fundamentalist countries growling at each other, with the instruments of destruction at their command.

Since there is no contact between India and Pakistan except at the level of officialdom, the two countries have developed a culture of suspicion and one-upmanship... For years, both have not allowed even an exchange of newspapers, books or, for that matter, any information, not to take of normal traffic or trade. The two countries have lived from 50 years behind the high walls of hatred. It is no wonder that the post-partition generation on both sides is a strange combination of ignorance, hatred and chauvinism.

In fact, they have tied themselves in so many knots that they cannot loosen them easily. National mindset makes any departure from their earlier stand more and more difficult than before. This is not the question of a particular government or a prime minister. This relates to the entire crop of politicians, bureaucrats, mediamen and others. Over the years, they have come to adopt an attitude, more or less a second habit, which underlines distance and differences, not conciliation or cooperation. Still, everything is attributed to Kashmir, at least in Pakistan. This is not true because the cleavage over Kashmir has been there since August 1947, when the two countries became independent. But relations between them have never touched such a low that they have now. True, there was no harmony but there was no hostility either. Now even the word Pakistan in India or India in Pakistan generally arouses emotions which are far from normal. There is a fiendish satisfaction over the failings and calamities of the other. Still there are no two people in the world who are so alike and so linked. The dispute over Kashmir comes in handy to cover-up their antagonism. Fires raging in the name of religion are still burning fiercely.

For Pakistan, India is a Hindu country which has not yet reconciled to the Muslim-majority areas constituting an independent Islamic country of their own... For New Delhi, Pakistan is a rough Muslim state, which has not relaxed its efforts to destablise India. Whether through the ISI or the assistance of other Muslim countries. Islamabad is trying to divide India into many countries so that its enormous size does not work to the disadvantage of Pakistan. Religion, as the Pakistani ideologues must have realised, does not provide ethos to a country. The breakaway of Bangladesh and domestic unrest like the one prevailing in Karachi are a lesson. By playing the Muslim card, Pakistan has strengthened communal forces in India. Were it to plug the same line, it might support the BJP's thesis for the restoration of Hindu pride and glory in politics. This would only support Hindu fundamentalism.

Pakistan might have the satisfaction that it had ... proved that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations. But how does it help in spanning the distance between the two? For religious fanatics, there are no shades; there is only black and white. They cannot even brook the approach of tolerance, of feeling that perhaps others might also have come share of the truth. But there is no go from such an approach to have " a meaningful dialogue", the phrase used by Pakistan. If Islamabad sees the point, it may break the deadlock. That means that the ground has to be prepared from where the nettle of communalism must be uprooted. Kashmir is important not because it is a Muslim-majority area but because it has the key to normalisation between the two countries. That kind of attitude will mean that all outstanding problems are the core issues. That Kashmir should be discussed goes without saying. In fact, New Delhi is committed to doing so under the Simla agreement for finding a final

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Shahabuddin's Letter to Prime Minister, 3 April, 1998

According to Shri Yubaraj Ghimire's report in the Indian Express, New Delhi, 31 March, 1998, the VHP has proposed that the Babari Masjid site, on which a make-shift temple now standing (and the disputed land around it) be 'restored' to the Ram Janambhoomi Trust for the construction of the proposed Ram Janambhoomi Mandir.

You may kindly recall that the disputed land, including the Babari Masjid site was acquired by the Union Government in June, 1993. The Supreme Court has ordered a freeze on the dispersal of the acquired land till the Special Bench of the Allahabad High Court decides the title suit pending before it. The hearings are going on.

I do not see how the State Government enters the picture. How can a State Government or for that matter the Union Government defy the Supreme Court's order or nullify it by an Ordinance?

Such reports create apprehension even in the mind of those persons who are sympathetic to the BJP because they tend to confirm the existence of the hidden agenda.

I request that the VHP and the Chief Minister of UP should be advised that such a move would go against the National Agenda and the politics of consensus that you wish to follow.

I also request you that the Union should render all possible assistance to the Special Bench to expedite the hearing of the title suit.

Supreme Court on Contempt Case

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

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

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

(Source: AIR 1997 Supreme Court 3451)

Stone Pillars for 'Ram Mandir'

Despite many legal and political obstacles in the way of re-construction of Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya, three workshops in Ayodhya and Rajasthan are regularly preparing material which will be used in the re-construction. According to an activist of the Shri Ram-Janmabhoomi Trust, material for 32 ft height of the temple (total height 132 ft) is almost ready...

The stone work, as per the proposed model of the temple was started in 1991 at the Nyas Karyashala in the Ramghat area of Ayodhya...

... The joint secretary of VHP, Shri Champat Rai, said that ... if the stone are ready we can start the re-construction work beginning from the sanctum sanctorum as soon as circumstances favour us. He pointed out that about 2.5 lakh sq. ft. of stone ... are to be used... Sculpturing of stones for the floor and the stairs is almost complete and the work on 49 whole and 24 part pillars out of a total of 144 whole and 68 part pillars, is on... **Right now only stones for the sanctum sanctorum are being cut.**

(Source: The Organiser, April 5, 1998)

Farhat Ehsas, Editor, Qaumi Awaz On Babari Masjid Problem

"Whether the ritualistic wailings and mournful demonstrations on every anniversary of the demolition is the only way to reconstruct the broken thing and whether the cultural and spiritual perception of the Muslims cannot think of any other solution to the problem?" ...

"The Muslim leaders and all other political parties whipped up so much hatred against P.V. Narasimha Rao by damning him as the first culprit responsible for the demolition... Consequently, the Congress was driven out of political power. However, its place was taken by a loose combination of those parties who had cleverly exploited the situation to reach the corridors of power... Powerful debates ... held in Parliament on the issue of communalism versus secularism ... continues in the minds of the well-wishers of the country. In fact, the questions raised therein are still a cause of a new worry. For while the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party (of Mulayam Singh) are clearly propped on the twin issue of "Mandal and Mosque", the Mosque is of more vital importance for them than even Mandal. For, without the `Mosque', `Mandal' could not have helped them much. While the Muslims were demanding of the Congress to rebuild the mosque at the old place, these parties came forward to assure them that `you will get the mosque, if you put us in power'. This is what the Muslims understood by their campaign. And this is the false promise which is the basis of their power".

"But now when the leaders of these two parties are in power, they are trying to put off the Muslims. Instead of fulfilling the promise they are trying to lure them by raising diversionary issues like reservations for Muslims. However, one thing that they do not confess in public but know inwardly is that they dare not rebuild the broken prayer-house. They dare not admit that this is beyond their power because it is the question of defying the collective will of the majority, and this is the domain in which their writ does not run. For, even their captive vote-bank, that is those sections of people who are mesmerised by the Mandal mirage, will not allow the reconstruction of the mosque. As at is, it is one thing to capture power by exploiting the emotional mosque issue and quite another to solve the problem".

(Source: The Organiser, 22 December, 1996)

On Religion,Culture, Personal Law, Freedom
Shahabuddin's Letter to
The Communalism Combat, 27 March, 1998

With reference to Swami Agnivesh's rejoinder "Theology and Freedom" in the issue of February, 1998.

Freedom and Religion: Freedom does not only mean debate; it also implies abstention from debate - silence. Why should Swamiji force everyone into a debate? I do not see any purpose to be served by high-brow debate in an organised framework on religion. Let the orthodox believe and practise and preach what they do, so long as they do not take away any one's right of 'interpretation' by force. In any case the world is too vast to be influenced by the proposed debate.

Let those who are blessed with mystical insight explore and experience the Truth. But this is not given to every common man and woman.

Swamiji has obviously a very distorted view of Islam. No where does Quran ask the believers "to kill all unbelievers". Neither has any Sufi put aside his faith in the Quran as the Word of God or in Allah and in the Holy Prophet.

Personal Law of Non-Muslims in Islamic World: The Islamic world has always permitted non-Muslim minorities to have their own personal laws. The Egyptian Copts, the Iraqi Assyrian Christians, the Algerian Christian Berbers have their own personal laws, recognised by the State. This flows from the concept of freedom of religion as the personal laws have religious origin and sanction. To a Muslim Indian, thus, the emphasis on uniformity is incomprehensible. In any case this emphasis is only a post-Partition phenomenon.

But Swamiji has put his belief very succinctly that he is against any personal law based on religion. It will take more than Swamiji to convince the religious people of the world that birth, marriage and death are absolutely secular phenomenon and have nothing to do with one's religious belief.

Even assuming that Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan etc. are not as free as Swamiji would like them to be, is it logical on that basis to limit the freedom of the Muslim Indians in India?

Swamiji swears by freedom but he denies the people of the N.E. the freedom to embrace Christianity, even if propagated by missionaries of foreign extraction. Is India outside the global village the world has been reduced to?

Survival of Cultures: Swamiji asks whether any pagan culture survived the Muslim and Christian lands. Did Buddhism survive in India? Did Stone Age culture survive anywhere? In any case culture is a flowing river with roots in geography, nourished by the flow of history, technology and religion and the tributary streams and rivulets. All cultures are ever changing. Does Swamji see merit in being static?

Perhaps Swamiji in contemplating a new DIN-e-ELAHI, so that he may run "his own enterprise and making a lucrative means of livelihood"!

Khushwant Singh
On Muslim Divorcees Act, 1986

...Much of communal violence is the outcome of politicians plotting to gain votes by playing one community against the other. Inevitably there was resurgence of religious intolerance. **A perfectly valid judgement of the Supreme Court granting maintenance to Shah Bano was cast aside by an Act of Parliament to appease Muslim bigots.**..

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 25 January, 1997)

Shahabuddin's Letter to Khushwant Singh,
10 February, 1997

I have noted your citation en passant, of the Muslim women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 as an example of appeasement of Muslim bigotry and of the Supreme Court Judgement it nullified as "perfectly valid". You would be surprised to know that the Act has turned out to be a boon to Muslim divorcees who are being granted under the Act by several High Courts, lump sum provisions in addition to their legal dues under the Shariat. You may describe it as one-time alimony. This is incomparably better then the dispensation under Section 125 of the Cr. P.C. which provides for the payment of a maintenance of a maximum of Rs. 500, irrespective of the economic status of the former husband.

The judgement was criticised by the Muslim community not so much because it had granted a few rupees as continuing maintenance to an old widow but because it had cost aspersions on Islam, undertake an independent interpolation of the Holy Quran and urged the immediate introduction of the uniform civil code.

Shahabuddin on Right to Azan
Letter to The Pioneer, 23 August, 1997

Apropos Shri B.B. Singh's letter "Leading the Community Astray", I would like to place on record that the article on Azan was written only after 8 leading Imams of Calcutta were hauled up for violation of Court's orders (the cases are still pending) and for "rowdyism" and after the eminent lawyer and former Chief Minister S.S. Ray filed a writ petition challenging the constitutionality of the order of the High Court.

The ban on use of PA System for Azan is not a trivial matter. It widens the psychological gulf between the State and the Muslim Indians were none should exist. It generates suspicions about the impartiality of the administration and the tolerance of the Hindu Indians and fears about interference in religion. All this puts a question mark on the character of the secular state and a brake on its evolution. Because the PA System in Masjids has been misused somewhere, sometime is no justification for a ban

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Calcutta High Court
On Use of Public Streets

South Calcutta Hawkers Association, Appellant v. Government of West Bengal and others, Respondents.

B.P. BANERJEE AND VIDYA NAND, JJ.

... Constitution of India, Article 14 & 19 (1)(g) - Street-hawkers - Hawkers squatting on foot path and making constructions - No action taken by authorities for years - That does not create any right in favour of the hawkers and/or squatters to construct the stalls and structures on the footpath and continue their business form there.

... Public street - Nobody can put up stalls and structures on road or pavement - Removal of such structures - At least 24 hours notice should be given to stall holders - Authorities should not discriminate between hawkers of one areas and other... State to decide articles that could be sold on pavements - State and Municipal authorities can deny benefit or right to hawkers selling costly luxury goods on pavement - Use to which it can be put.

The public has a right to pass along the highway for the purpose of legitimate travel. This certainly does not mean that travellers have to be in perpetual motion when he is in public street. It may be essential for him to stop sometime for various reasons... What is required of him is that they should not create any unreasonable obstruction which may cause inconvenience to other persons having similar right to pass. He should not make excessive use of rights to the prejudice of others. Liberty of an individual comes to end when the liberty of another commences.

... Right to do business while going from place to place - Recognised since long - Right however is subject to proper regulation in the interest of general convenience of the public including health and security consideration... Right to trade on street pavements - Cannot be denied on ground that streets are for passing and repassing only - Proper regulation is necessary. **(Source: AIR 1997 Calcutta 234)**

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And this in the face of feverish build up of latest weaponry by hostile neighbours Pakistan and China...

Inherent perennial vital energy of the nation once again sprouting forth... There are massive movements for general Dharmic and social awareness being carried on by various organisations and eminent men...

In fact, these two apparently conflicting pictures represent ... a single unfolding momentous event, the birth pangs and the eventual birth of a strong, effulgent, Hindu Entity shedding off the debris of the past and ushering in an era of purity, plenty, self-reliance and self-respect...

(Source: The Varsha Pratipada Special, 29 March, 1998)

A.P. High Court
On Freedom of Speech in Prison

M. Hasan and another, Petitioners v. Government of Andhra Pradesh and others, Respondents.

N.Y. HANAUMANTHAPPA AND AVINASH SOMAKANT BHATE, JJ.

Constitution of India, Article 19(1)(a) - Freedom of speech - Petitioner, journalist and videographer seeking interview with condemned prisoners - Refusal by jail authorities - Amounts to deprivation of citizens fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.

Every citizen has a right to propagate his ideas and views on many aspects through available media without any fear or favour as long as they stand the test of reasonable restrictions. The reasons given by the jail authorities to turn down the request of the petitioners journalist and videographer for interviewing the prisoners sentenced to death are

(1) if permission is granted it results in campaigning by large number of public for reducing the sentence of the condemned prisoners;

(2) Such exhibition or videograph may result in lowering the position of the Courts;

(3) The prisoners earlier had not expressed their desire to be interviewed. On the other hand, their consent was obtained subsequently;

(4) Reporting in the press or videographing the views or feelings of the condemned prisoners cannot be allowed for the reasons of safety and security. The said reasons given by the jail authorities to refuse permission to interview the prisoners do not answer the restrictions declared under Article 19(2) of the Commission of India... A film, movie, television or videograph are the modes of communicating the views and ideas as such refusal to interview the willing condemned prisoners is quite illegal and unconstitutional... (For) exercise of fundamental rights ... position of a condemned prisoner is on par with a free citizen of the country. He has a right to give his ideas and he is entitled to be interviewed or to be televised...

(Source: AIR 1998 Andhra Pradesh 35)

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legal and ethical traditions insisted that rights without duties can never be secured and that duty well-done fortifies a right more than a mere demand for that right. Indeed rights and duties are only the two sides of the same coin. We have struggled for many decades to make human, civil and political rights work; we have striven for many decades to promote and reinforce social, economic and cultural rights. Let us open a new chapter of duties as an essential concomitant of rights. ....

Zafar Jung on Agenda of Muslim Uplift

Muslims constitute the single largest religious minority group in India. Their level of living (is) much lower in comparison of other communities. A majority of Muslims obtain their livelihood through petty business, small-scale enterprise and low-paid jobs. Most of them are concentrated in the peripheral and decaying areas of urban economic life.

In rural areas ... most of the Muslims are landless or poor peasants and in urban areas (they) live in the most deplorable conditions. The percentage of Muslims living below the poverty line is higher than the national average.

Studies:

Data compiled by the National Sample Survey Organisation in 1987-88, the first official attempt to study the socio-economic aspects of various religious groups, revealed that the incidence of urban poverty is higher among Muslims, compared to Hindus, by more than 17 per cent. The number of Muslims living below the poverty level was more than 35 million out of a total Muslim population of 76 million.

Some NGOs have conducted studies to measure the extent of Muslim backwardness. A recent study by Professor Ausaf Ahmad of Third World Academy, New Delhi, finds that Muslims received a mere five, or 1.25 per cent, of the total of 405 industrial licenses approved in 1989. In 1990, this proportion rose a little when six licenses were granted to Muslims out of the total of 386. Of all telephone connections, 94.6 per cent belong to Sikhs and Hindus, 2.06 per cent to Christians and only 1.52 per cent to Muslims. The Muslims have a mere 4.05 per cent of the petrol dealership of Indian Oil Corporation, 2.3 per cent of its gas dealership and 6.2 per cent of kerosene dealership.

Another study by Mr. S. Navalakha of the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi, reveals that Hindus, constituting 82.2 per cent of the total population, form 85.3 per cent of the elite; the Christians, comprising 2.6 per cent of the population, are 3.5 per cent; while Jains, constituting 0.5 per cent of the population, are 2.8 per cent. It is only in the case Muslims that the trend is reversed. The Muslims, who are 11.2 per cent of the population, constitute only 4.5 per cent of the elite.

Public Employment:

Muslim employment in government services has drastically gone down since independence. In 1981 there were 3,883 officers in the IAS cadre all over the country, out of whom only 116, or three per cent, were Muslims. Similarly, in the Indian Police Service, Muslims constitute 2.85 per cent, in the income tax department 3 per cent, in the railways 2.65 per cent, in banks 2.18 per cent, in central government offices 4.41 per cent and in state government offices, 6.01 per cent. There is a conspicuous absence or very low representation for Muslims at the high executive level and in top management cadres. In no state of India, except Jammu and Kashmir, is the proportion of Muslim officers more than five to six percent; and in most states it ranges between one and three percent. (Hardly any) Muslim is on the boards of directors of the 16 commercial banks. Out of the total 467 members in the boards of directors of 20 nationalized banks, only four are Muslims.

At the class III and IV levels also, Muslim representation is poor. In the clerical cadre their representation ranges from a low two per cent in the banks to eight per cent in private enterprise. In the class IV category it ranges from two per cent in the banks to 7.9 per cent in private enterprise.

In the case of small-scale enterprises it has been estimated that only 14,000 or 2.3 per cent, of the total 600,000 industrial units, belong to Muslims. Even among these only 2,000 qualify for the official definition of small scale industry.

Legislature:

Muslim representation in Parliament and the state assemblies is also going down constantly. There were 46 Muslims in the Lok Sabha in 1982, but this was down to 25 in the 1996 elections. The number of states without any Muslim representation has risen to 14.

The state of economic degradation in which Muslims are living in India is a matter of deep concern. The government cannot absolve itself of the blame. Most Muslims believe that their backwardness is essentially due to discrimination in the public as well as in the private sector. In a multi-religious society, where employment opportunities are scarce, there must exist effective deterrents to prevent such discrimination and prejudice.

... There is need for a combined and sustained effort (for uplift) both by the community and the government. Greater attention must be paid towards education... This alone can solve the problem to a great extent.

(Courtesy: The AIM Journal, Washington D.C., November, 1996)

Neem- Banyan 'Marriage'

In a unique ceremony dating back to the Vedic times, a young neem tree has been given away in marriage to a banyan tree at the Thrikkalathur Sree Ramaswamy Temple near Muvattupuzha, about 30 km from here. The banyan tree was planted in front of the temple on April 30,1990 to replace another one, said to have been 1200 years old, which got uprooted on June 27, 1989.

-UNI , 31 January, 1998

RSS: G.S. H.V. Seshadri's Report at ABPS, Bangalore, 20-22 March, 1998

Sangh Shiksha Varga - 1997: The numbers for the Sangh Shiksha Varga for the previous year were 9,240 for I year, 3,044 for II year and 1,068 for the III year...

Increase in Shakhas and Supportive Centres: ... Most of the provinces present an overall increase in Shakhas...

Besides the regular Shakhas, Saptahik Milans and Sangh Mandalis, efforts to reach new places in the rural and vanvasi areas through the Jagarana Patrikas, brought out in all major languages, are also picking up...

New Thrusts in Sena Activities: Service activities too have made steady progress... A team of experts have come up with "Seva Disha". Its Second Edition has come up with more authentic data, categorising of service activities organisation-wise, type-wise, province-wise... One vital consideration ... has been .., social transformation ... conducive to our total integrated concept of resurgent, reorganised Hindu National Life...

The 'Swarna Jayanthi Sangh Sangam' organised at Ludhiana on the 17th of November last was historic in more sense than one...

... All time high turnout of nearly 20,600 uniformed Swayamsevaks drawn from about 970 places - a good number of Keshadharis among them..

The presence of Sardar P.S. Badal, the Chief Minister of Punjab and his outspoken speech... Unveiling of a portrait of Guru Nanak Dev at the Guru Nanak Stadium by Sardar Gurucharan Singh Tohra, President of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee... The massive get together of 1.25 lakhs of Swayamsevaks and well wishers at the Nehru Stadium in Delhi on 2nd October 1997, overflowed into the surrounding roads and was the biggest ever in Delhi so far...

The Sangh Shiksha Varga during July and August 1997 at Bangalore ... was attended by 63 trainees from 7 countries (including) South Africa and Guyana... During the same period, Rashtra Sevika Samiti also had organised a training camp for 42 Sevikas from 7 countries.

Sri D. Thengadi ... addressed the 'The Other Economic Summit' Conference parallel to the one of G-5 countries ... attended by over 1,000 economists, sociologists and social workers from several countries (and met) with the Presidents and Prime Ministers of Trinidad and Guyana...

Sardar Chiranjiv Singh toured UK and some countries of Europe, USA and Canada helped in establishing the branches of Rashtriya Sikh Sangat and bringing the Keshadhari bandhus nearer to the Sangh.

(There was) an impressive camp of Sangh Swayamsevaks in Kenya and four similar camps in Malaysia... Sangh and allied organisations launched one of the biggest national-awakening campaigns through the Bharat-Mata Poojan programme...

Visit of Nepal King and Queen: ... King of Nepal and the Queen (visited) Haridwar on 20th October, 1997 ... to inaugurate 3-day Virat Hindu Sangam jointly organised by kanchi Kamakoti Peetham and Vishwa Hindu Maha Sangh of Bharat... Nepal Naresh (was described) as "the emperor of the devout Hindus the world over" by Ashok Singhal...

Tamil Nadu: ... The Hindu Unity Yatra initiated by the Sangh was led by respected sadhus ... and joined by several Hindus ... organisations...

Bihar: ... The Sangh and other allied organisations have initiated a unique programme termed Gram Gaurav in Bihar villages. Mainly it revolves round evoking righteous pride in the achievements by the residents of that village.

Mizoram's Hindu Minority: Mizoram ... has ... shown what a terrible fate awaits its Hindu minority population if they refuse to get converted to Christianity. The Hindus belonging to Reang janajatis... During 1997, 23 temples of Reangs were destroyed. But when they still resisted conversion, a couple of Mizo terrorist organisations abetted by Christian missionaries and in league with the State Armed Constabulary let loose a terrible spree of looting, burning, killing and raping and drove nearly 31,000 of them out of the State...

VKA ... went to their aid immediately... The least that the Central Government has to do immediately is to form an Autonomous District Council for the Reangs...

Coimbatore Blasts: Even as Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu was reeling under the riots and the toll of 17... The series of dastardly bomb attacks there ... have taken a heavy toll of over 60... L.K. Advani, the BJP president ... was the prime target...

... Subversive forces, pampered all along by the DMK Government have been emboldened to act with impunity... The DMK will, I hope, take stern measure to liquidate such forces.

Kashmir: The massacre of 23 Hindus in Kashmir Valley by the insurgents has once again exposed the hollowness of the J&K Government's propaganda that the atmosphere there has become normal enough for the uprooted Hindu families to return.

There has been a general climate of lawlessness all over the country... Internal saboteurs aided by hostile agencies like ISI indulged in a series of bomb blasts right in national capital, Mumbai, Calcutta and in trains and elsewhere in Tamil Nadu...

In respect of our overall territorial security too, ... cut down in allotment ... for defense (in) adequate ... army officers cadre and slow-down of new recruitment of the general category - all these are public knowledge...

(Continued on Page 226)

RSS Seeking Actual, Not Remote, Control

Editorial, The People's Democracy, April 5, 1998

... Within hours of winning the vote of confidence, the BJP leaders, both in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha, assumed a strident position of not only defending their links with the fascistic and communal RSS, but going to the extent of asserting that they belong to the RSS and are committed to its ideological project. The prime minister ... stated that the RSS is a "good organisation"... The home minister ... sought to deny that the RSS will be the real power behind this government and operate it through a remote control. In doing so, he has actually exposed before the country and the people...

The home minister gave a weak explanation to deny the RSS role as a remote control by pointing out that Nehru and Patel used to consult Mahatma Gandhi and that Morarji Desai used to consult Jaiprakash Narain, but neither can be accused of being a remote control. It needs to be underlined that Nehru and Patel were heading a Congress government and Gandhi was the undisputed leader of the Congress. Their consultations, therefore, were of the nature of the nature of representatives in the government consulting the party leaders. Likewise, Jaiprakash was the inspiration and practically the creator of the Janata Party... Morarji Desai's government was a Janata Party government. The consultations between them, therefore, were of a similar nature.

By Advani's very own logic ... the leaders of the present government are members of the RSS and, therefore, they consult the RSS chief... In other words, both the prime minister and the home minister have confirmed that it is the RSS which is holding state power. Hence, there is no need for the RSS to function as a remote control; it is in actual control...

The dangers of such a reality to the secular democratic foundations of a modern Indian republic have been confirmed by none other than their leader in the Rajya Sabha (also a member of the RSS of long standing). While the home minister in the Lok Sabha said he was not 'apologetic' for placing issues like Uniform Civil Code, abolition of Article 370, and construction of a temple at Ayodhya in the BJP Manifesto. S.S. Bhandari in the Rajya Sabha went a step ahead to firmly state that these continue to be important issues for the BJP... He stated that the BJP, as a political party, will vigorously campaign for them... Such a campaign backed by state power will have grave and dangerous consequences in today's circumstances.

... The RSS is settling down to its business of seeking to establish its ideological project of a 'Hindu Rashtra'. This represents a grave assault on the secular democratic foundations of India ... This is a challenge that will have to be faced and defeated.

RSS Chief Rajendra Singh On RSS-BJP Relations

... "We will not hold the government on a leash, nor turn the heat on it. There is nothing common between the BJP and us, we only share an ideology. The only thing we would expect is that the government will not hinder our activities like Indira Gandhi or the Communist government in Kerala did."

There would be no change in the RSS stand on contentious issues like Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi but ... Muslims ... have nothing to fear, but they should not give the impression that they have aligned with the invaders.

... "We would like to see a strong and prosperous country with the stress on our culture, language, self-respect, self-sufficiency and self-pride"...

... "Unless the BJP came to power, there was no way it could solve certain problems. They have a right to make compromises because they did not get the right number. I think, the BJP's good governance will soon make the others fall in line".

... "My own view-point has not changed... It is not the question of building certain temples, but that of national prestige. The invaders who came from abroad to rule us are gone. These monuments that you see are a slur on our independence. Only when the mosques there are removed Hindus will gain self-respect. How this should be done - through negotiation, legislation or education - that has to be decided"

(Interview withGautham Machaiah in The Times of India, 28 March, 1998)

On BJP's Alliances: The BJP might have alliances but each party has a different manifesto and they are fighting on their own agenda. It's only a question of seat adjustments to make sure that their votes don't get divided and the third party doesn't win. And the BJP has not done anything which we don't approve of.

On Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura: Being a political party, the BJP thinks and talks about the immediate issues. They need not think about the questions of the future. At present we cannot do anything about Ram temple because the land surrounding it has been taken over by the Govt.

On BJP's Policies: Kalyan Singh induct people with criminal links in his Cabinet ... to show that the BJP was not an untouchable. To show that you can't make a fool of us every time and topple our governments. For abnormal times we have to adopt abnormal policies.

On Godse: Godse was motivated by (the philosophy of) akhand Bharat. *Uske mantavya achhe thhe par usne achhe uddeshya ke liye galat method istemal kiya* (His intention was good but he used the wrong methods)... He was shocked to see crores of people migrate (from Pakistan) and wanted to kill all the leaders.

(Source: The Outlook, 19 January, 1998)

Yubaraj Ghimire on RSS Strategy and the BJP

... Like the BJP, there are nearly a hundred other organisations affiliated to and guided by the Sangh, but with functional autonomy to chart out their own programmes, set their goals and targets and decide the way to achieve them within the 'larger Hindutva framework'.

joining hands with forces once opposed to the BJP, or individuals tainted with corruption and criminal charges, therefore, remains purely a concern for the BJP. The party wields that much autonomy and knows that the Sangh will not come in the way. For the Sangh, this is only an apaad dharma that the BJP has been following.

Through its various other activities, the RSS will now concentrate on its expansion, and will certainly benefit from having its own governments - though with the vices and vulnerability of a coalition.

RSS chief Rajendra Singh's message to the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidh Sabha (ABPS), the Sangh's plenary which concluded on March 22 in Bangalore, was: "Sangh volunteers are expected to exploit such a pro-Hindutva atmosphere towards a durable and permanent growth, specially in areas where they have failed so far".

Yet the Sangh expects to continue with its undiluted world view with Hindutva as its central theme. Its goals are much beyond a BJP government, or a coalition led by it... A government for the RSS is just a means. That is why the RSS is unlikely to make any compromise on its agenda ... could be criticism for the government... After all, Sangh's prominent ideologue and joint general secretary K.S. Sudershan did not desist from publicly criticising BJP's soft-pedalling the Hindutva issue on the eve of elections.

Even as the BJP shows sign of transformation into a mass base party, Sangh volunteers still form the BJP's cadre across the country. Also, about 134 full-time pracharaks of the Sangh are loaned to occupy key policy and strategy making bodies of the party. Besides, more than 75 per cent of the party's national executive members have RSS background.

The Sangh takes the mandate of '98 as the rejection of the propaganda that 'pro-Hindutva forces' are anti-secular... That the analysis does match almost word by word with that of BJP president and Home Minister L.K. Advani - himself a former pracharak - is not a mere coincidence. Advani had expressed similar sentiments and views while proposing Vajpayee as leader of the BJP and allies in Parliament...

The Sangh's annual report submitted to the Plenary makes a special mention of Advani is someone to have undertaken a 'veritable national tapasya'. ... A tribute to Advani, a key figure in the Cabinet can only be a testament of hope and faith in the government as well its limitations. That is why it readily approved omission of issues such as scrapping Article 370 from the Constitution, ban on cow slaughter and the Ayodhya temple. Yet, the Sangh succeeded in imposing its views on secularism on over a dozen BJP allies. Reiterating that "we are committed to establishing a civilised, humane and just civil order, that which does not discriminate on grounds of caste, religion, class, colour, race or sex, we will truly and genuinely uphold and practice the concept of secularism consistent with the Indian tradition of 'equal respect for all faiths' and on the basis of equality of all", the Sangh has positioned itself against the forces it calls 'pseudo-secularists'...

Also with the new government, the Sangh's missionary activities especially in the field of education, will get official recognition and cooperation. There could be special measures in certain pockets of some north-eastern States like carving out special autonomous district councils to protect 'minority Hindus'. Also the Sangh's grievance for several years that Indian missions abroad 'do not cooperate with their representatives abroad' may get redressed...

There are still areas which can brew trouble between the coalition government and the Sangh... But for the Sangh - with many ups and downs in its 73-year existence that saw it being banned thrice - the rapid growth in terms of sakhas is a bigger achievement. The report suggests that there are about 130,000 regular activities that include 42,000 daily sakhas in addition to weekly gatherings all over the country. They are the real carriers of the Sangh's message. And the BJP-led government will have a three-way responsibility: delivery, managing the contradiction among allies and acting as the Sangh's political machinery to translate its world view...

(Source: The Indian Express, 27 March, 1998)

Sangh Structure

The RSS is the umbrella organisation of all its affiliate bodies. Its executive is headed by general secretary of the Sangh and has three joint general secretaries and about a dozen senior pracharaks who are in charge of various organisations and activities.

The joint general secretaries, K.S. Sudershan, Madan Das and Suresh Rao Ketkar - the last two in their fifties - coordinate with various Sangh parivar organisations on a more regular basis...

Sudershan, a Kannadiga ... holds an M.Tech degree in engineering and has emerged as the formidable ideologue of the Sangh. he is in charge of the central and northern states. Madan Das ... is a qualified Chartered Accountant. He is in charge of the north-east and eastern states. Suresh Rao Ketkar who holds a masters degree in science is in charge of the southern and western states...

(Source: The Indian Express, 27 March, 1998)

Bhaskar Roy
On the March of the Saffron Brigade

... K.H. Hedgewar founded the (RSS) on the Vijaya Dashami day at Nagpur in 1925... The RSS saw parliamentary democracy as a corrupting influence. For Golwalkar the state as an instrument for social transformation was severely inadequate. Soon after the first ban on the RSS was lifted in 1949, a debate started in the organisation on the desirability of participating in the first general election.

"We will be as corrupt as the Congressmen if we become part of the system," Golwalkar, the RSS chief at that time, said addressing a meeting of the Swayamsevaks in Uttar Pradesh.

However, one section in the sangh argued that they needed a voice inside Parliament so that their viewpoints could be defended against attacks by others. That is how the Bharatiya Jan Sangh was created and it contested the elections in 1952.

It is interesting that the RSS did not back the Hindu Mahasabha, an existing political entity, and instead decided to set up its own political wing. Apart from Golwalkar's differences with the political line of V.D. Savarkar, implicit in the creation of the Jan Sangh was an admission that while coming to electoral politics a secular facade was needed. ...

The party which was born with an enormous amount of self-doubt and cynicism about its role in the system, has travelled a long way and replaced the Congress as the mainstream of Indian politics. From 3 in 1952, the party emerged as the single largest party in 1996 with a tally of 161 seats...

... For the BJP the turning point, it now appears, was 1986-87. Soon after the historic low of 2 Lok Sabha seats in 1984, the BJP began to look for a distinctive plank, an issue that would help it carve out some space it could call its own.

The unlocking of the Babri Masjid provided the BJP with such an issue. The Congress had still clung on to the issues of development and stability, V.P. Singh hit the road riding the anti-corruption bandwagon. The BJP's championing of the temple cause helped it create a new constituency, spread its support base. It was reflected in the 1989 election results, from two the party fortunes soared to 86 seats and 11.5 per cent votes.

Even when the Hindutva rage was on, V.P. Singh brought a new element into Indian politics by announcing his decision to implement the Mandal Commission report. Unfazed by the move, the BJP, long perceived as the political platform of the upper castes, did not hesitate to embrace Mandal and overnight promoted a large number of Backward Caste functionaries in the party to prominent positions.

The same party in 1996 played down its temple appeal and tried to occupy the space being vacated by the Congress. It projected itself as a responsible, mainstream party ready to grapple with the national issues. And in 1998 it gave a call for stability and efficiency - issues so close to the Congress heart for such a long-time. The party ... today in charge of the ... South Block.

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

RSS: The De-facto Goverment!

... Senior BJP leaders draw their power not from the other elected bodies of the party but directly from the RSS. And if they fall out of RSS favour, they are dropped, taken out and discarded, like the fly in the milk.

Senior RSS leaders have often made it clear that the "long-term" goals of the RSS include the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra or a state with Hindutva at the core of its ideology.

The "core" Hindutva issues have often been articulated by the BJP - a Ram temple at Ayodhya, scraping of Article 370 of the Constitution which confers special privileges on Jammu and Kashmir, a common civil code, pushing back all "infiltrators" from Bangladesh (all Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh fit into the RSS description of "infiltrators", whereas the Hindu immigrants are called "refugees").

The present coalition is only a stepping stone to the goal of putting the BJP in power with a majority of its own so that it can then go ahead and complete the task the RSS has set for it. Until then, the BJP will be forced to put Hindutva on the back burner. ...

The RSS bosses have made it equally clear that the party will not hesitate to help other parties if, by doing so, it can meet its target faster...

... To this day, the RSS and its other wings such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad have the "liberation" of the Kashi and Mathura temples also on their agenda.

The land on which the Gyan Vapi mosque in Kashi and the Idgah at Mathura stand must be "handed back to the Hindus". As for Ayodhya, it has already been demonstrated what the "liberation" meant, demolition of the Babari Masjid.

The BJP has been carefully avoiding any criticism of the RSS or the VHP on Kashi and Mathura. The standard response to the RSS/VHP agenda is that these are "cultural organisations" and they have the right to say and do what they believe in...

(Source: The Hindu, 29 March, 1998)

Shashi Tharoor on Hinduism and Hindutva

... Dharma, an ancient concept ... is both an untranslatable Sanskrit term... No one-word translation ('faith', 'religion' and 'law') can convey the full range of meaning implicit in the term. "English has no equivalent for dharma", writes P. Lal in the glossary to his "transcreation" of the Mahabharata, in which he defines dharma as "code of good conduct, pattern of noble living, religious rules and observance". ...

Dharma ... attract the opprobrium of the Hindutva brigade, I believe, it is the key to bridging the present gap between the religious and the secular. T.N. Madan, the social scientist, has argued: "It is the marginalistion of faith, which is what secularism is, that permits the perversion of religion. There are no fundamentalists or revivalists in traditional society". The implication is that secularism has deprived Indians of their moral underpinnings - the meaning that faith gives to life and religious extremism has risen as an almost inevitable antithesis to the secular project. The only way out is for Hindus to return to dharma - to the tolerant, holistic, just, pluralist Hinduism articulated so effectively by Swami Vivekananda.

Hinduism, after all, has not traditionally accepted the notion of a separation between dharma and moksha (salvation) on the one hand and artha (wealth) and kama (pleasure) on the other. In other words, the Hindu's secular pursuit of material happiness is not meant to be divorced from the ethical and religious tenets of his faith. So, the distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' is an artificial one. There is no such compartmentalisation in Hinduism. Secularism avowed by successive Indian governments, as R.S. Misra of Benaras Hindu University has argued, is based on dharma-nirpekshata ("keeping apart from dharma"), whereas an authentically Indian ethic would ensure secular objectives be infused with dharma.

I find this view persuasive but incomplete. Yes, dharma is essential in the pursuit of material well-being, public order and good governance, but this should not mean turning public policy over to sants and sadhus, nor excluding any section of Indian society from its rightful place in the Indian sun. If we can bring dharma into our national life, it must be to uphold, rather than at the expense of, Indianness.

... To live in dharma is to live in harmony with one's purpose on earth. This emerges from Hindu tradition. It is not necessarily practised in a traditional way. ...

No more certitudes. Accept doubt and diversity. Let each man live by his own code of conduct, so long as he has one. Derive your standards from the world around you and not from a heritage whose relevance must be constantly tested. Reject equally the sterility of ideologies and the passionate prescriptions of those who think of themselves an infallible. Uphold decency, worship humanity, affirm the basic values of our people - those which do not change - and leave the rest alone. Admit that there is more than one Truth, more than one Right, and more than one dharma...

Hinduism has always acknowledged the existence of opposites (and reconciled them): pain and pleasure, success and failure, creation and destruction, life and death are all manifestations of the duality inherent in human existence. These pairings are not contradictory, but complementary; they are aspects of the same overarching reality. So also with the secular and the sacred: a Hindu's life must involve both. to acknowledge this would both absorb and deflect the Hindu resurgence.

I, too, am proud of my Hinduism; I do not want to cede its verities to fanatics. To discriminate against another, to attack another, to kill another, to destroy another's place of worship, on the basis of his faith is not part of Hindu dharma...

(Source: The Indian Express, 22 March, 1998)

Bajrang Dal: Vinay Katiyar's Views

... Our government is here at last. Par yeh sarkar adhura hai. We will have to complete the unfinished work.Sahejta, saralta ke sath, tanav rahit, karna hai. In the past, Muslim leaders were always ready for a dialogue with us, but Congressmen and the Janata Dal people stood in the way. But today, the people have finished them off. These are positive signals. ... The temple has to be built. Work is already on. It will take at least two years to get the building blocks of the temple ready...

The Ayodhya who created trouble have gone and now we can solve the issue through dialogue. The BJP has always been in favour of a dialogue and it will ensure that it takes palce. Religious leaders of both communities will come to an understanding. And when they do, Ali and Bajrang Bali ka milan hoga. Muslim leaders there (Ayodhya) have never opposed the temple at all. When Kalyan Singh became chief minister for the first time, they had gone along with me to ask for the mandir. Since Atal Behari Vajpayee became PM, the mandir has been a major topic of discussion... Vajpayee's coming to power will make the temple possible. ...

The puja is already on - all that is needed is a permanent structure. The government has no part to play in this - all it has to do is not interfere. The rest will be settled through dialogue.

... Things can even be settled out of court... The BJP has not removed the Ramjanambhoomi issue from its agenda. It has been put on hold for the moment. In any case this is not entirely a BJP government, it is a coalition. And in such a situation you have to include only those issues on which there is consensus.

... Vajpayee has just been sworn in. After this he will go to all the parties and suggest that this issue be resolved. Atalji will try to sort out this issue through dialogue with all parties...

(Source: The Times of India, 22 March, 1998)

Coimbatore Riots: PUCL Report (Summary)

A traffic constable, Shri Selvaraj was killed by three Muslim young men. The killing was condemned by Muslim leaders. The constable had become an innocent victim of religious fanaticism that is being whipped up by the Sangh Parivar and the frenzied reaction by a few Muslim organisations. Palpable anti-Muslim mindset of a section of the police force is quite evident. To claim that the events that followed were solely due to the death of the constable is false. Factors such as presence of several communalised police officers, insensitive exploitation by Hindu fundamentalist forces, trade rivalries, funding by some North Indian businessmen contributed to cold-blooded and inhuman massacres of innocent Muslims and pre-meditated destruction of the economic self-reliance and enterprises of the Muslims. The events expose the nexus between some of the local police and the Hindu fundamentalist force. That the Sangh Parivar cadres/ sympathisers are fast becoming lumpenised and barbaric is clearly evident from the ghastly events that took place in the hospital grounds and premises. Two Durgahs which are visited more by Hindus than Muslims were mindlessly attached by lumpenised Hindu fundamentalist forces. The torching to death of innocent Muslims who brought critically injured Muslims to the hospital, ways adopted to identify and then stab/batter/torch them to death, chanting 'Jai Kali' and 'Om Kali' shows the savagery, to say the least. The manner in which the police indulged in senseless killings would shame even hardened criminals. They reached the peak of arbitrarily shooting down people for the only reason that they belonged to a particular community. A new method of using the Dalits as perpetrators of loot, carnage and attack on the Muslims has been adopted by the police and the Sangh Parivar. This is an insidious attempt not only to use Dalits as a shield or as soldiers in their "holy war and purge" against Muslims but also to dub the Dalits as criminals when the need arises. If left unchecked, this can lead to the brutalisation of the psyche of the Dalits and criminalisation of one section of the society.

(Source: PUCL Bulletin, April, 1998)

Lessons from Coimbatore Editorial, The India Today

... There are two real lessons to be learnt from the Coimbatore blasts. First, that state government cannot afford to view intelligence alerts so casually... Second, the Coimbatore experience is a warning to all political parties to not play footsie with religious extremists. There may be short-term gains from being soft on those with a divisive agenda but this strategy inevitably rebounds, with catastrophic consequences. The DMK has experienced it with the Tamil Tigers, the Congress with ... Bhindranwale and the BJP with the VHP. It is a shame that no lessons have been learnt.

Ashok Das On A.P. Police and Muslims

Notwithstanding strictures by National Human Rights Commission and Andhra Pradesh High Court regarding the extra judicial methods adopted by policemen in the State in the name of maintaining law and order, police excesses continue in periodic regularity in the State.

... Three incidents of police brutalities, including one in the State capital, have sent shockwaves in the State and served to further alienate police from the masses.

Two women were raped, while another was molested during the week by the protectors of the law. The most bizarre, however, was the burning of a hotel worker by three police constables for no apparent reason int he city on Friday. The incident would have otherwise remained unknown but for the chance survival of the victim. Though the three constables thought him to be dead and ordered an autorickshaw driver to take him to a hospital confident with the knowledge that he would be pronounced dead by doctors on arrival, because of sheer luck he survived for a whole day to tell the shocking story...

All the victims happen to be Muslims and this has created an impression among the minorities that they are being made targets in the wake of new political equation involving TDP and the BJP in the State. The TDP leaders have been at pains to deny the insinuations, nonetheless the fear refuses to subside.

The week began with the harrowing tale of Mumtaz, a housewife in her early 30s. Mumtaz used to seel arrack in her native Kadiri town in Anantapur district to augment family income. From her statement it seems the policemen, on deputation to excise department, had an eye on her daughter-in-law. They had threatened her with serious consequences for selling arrack, which is banned in Andhra Pradesh and hinted that the matter could be settled amicably if she could sent her daughter-in-law to the station.

On the evening of April 4, she was picked up by three constables, named Srinivasulu, Rafique and Rajgopal, on the pretext of questioning. She was kept at the excise station for 48 hours and allegedly gangraped by the three constables and that too in the present of the station-in-charge, Mr. Ramachandra Reddy. Dilshad, female relative of hers was allegedly molested.

A traumatised Mumtaz was not cowed down by the threat of the constables for the court of the additional judicial first class magistrate in the town and narrated her story. Admitting the case, the magistrate referred her ... for medical examination.

... The Government has subsequently placed under suspension the three constables, two of whom were later arrested, while one was absconding.

The timely steps taken by district administration has prevented the incident building into a communal flare-up...

T.V. Rajeswar on Muslim Militancy in India

Plea to BJP-led Govt. to Raid Muslim Concentration Areas to Recover Arms, Bombs etc.

The serial bombing ... in Coimbatore ... convincingly demonstrated that militant Islamic fundamentalism has taken root in Tamil Nadu... The men behind it have assiduously built up an extensive network... All this would not have been possible without external assistance in the shape of money, material and guidance.

... On the question of Hindu-Muslim unity or maintaining communal peace, the DMK and the AIADMK have no differences. However, while the ... Jayalalitha was perceived to be patronising the backward class of Thevars, it was also considered to be well disposed towards the RSS and its front organisations like the Hindu Munnani... DMK government ... in 1996 gave a subtle twist (to) in its attitude towards Muslims as they were extended a favoured treatment. Karunanidhi grant of bail in January, 1997 for the sixteen Al-Umma militants who were arrested in the RSS building blast case...

There were strong signals from November, 1997 onwards on the growing Muslim militancy in Tamil Nadu... The Intelligence Bureau and the Home Ministry had repeated sent warnings and alerts to the DGP, Tamil Nadu and the state government but the response was lukewarm. There was a communication on December 21, 1997, another on January 2, 1998 and yet another on January 19, 1998 and all these communications contained warnings about the activities of Al-Umma and their planning for explosions...

The ... recoveries ... all over Tamil Nadu by the police since February 14, are like the proverbial locking of the door after the horse had bolted. Extensive publicity is being give to recoveries and arrests to show that Tamil Nadu police is rounding up all the Islamic militant elements. Politicians in power ... fail to read strong signals which call for immediate attention, when their party's narrow interests are involved...

Following the demolition of Babari Masjid in December, 1992, the ISI had extended their operations in a systematic manner throughout the country and the process continues. The serial bomb blasts on March 12, 1993 in Mumbai were carried out in a demonstrative manner to show what Islamic militants were capable of. In the following weeks recruits were taken from Trivandrum, Hyderabad, Patna, Aligarh, Lucknow, etc. and most of them were taken to Pakistan through Bangladesh... The bomb making and locating agents throughout the country seem to have continued unabated...

... Islamic militants are active (in) almost the entire country. J&K and the north-east have their own serious problems and the ISI role there is very pronounced... What lesson does India learn from all this evidence? The obvious one is that Islamic militancy has spread throughout the country and arms and explosives are secreted in several cities and areas. If surprise raids are carried out in some of the communally- sensitive areas, even if they have remained peaceful for quite some time, there is a strong possibility of firearms and bombs being recovered. With the BJP government settling down at the Centre, the Islamic militants are likely to become more restive and aggressive. No time should be lost in strengthening the intelligence and law and order organisations and intensifying vigilance at all levels.

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

Tamilnadu:

Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam Report

... Tamil Nadu has traditionally been a haven of peace. It was Hindu Munnani (Hindu Front) a frontal organisation of Sangh Parivar which launched a violent tirade against Islam and Muslims.

Dalits in Tamil Nadu have been embracing Islam in large numbers ever since the advent of Islam in South India. However, the Meenakshipuram conversions in the early '80s provoked the Sangh Parivar... The conversion of Dalits to Islam is not the fault of Muslims. Yet encouraged by Chief Minister MGR, Sangh Parivar like RSS, VHP, Hindu Munnani etc., made their appearance in Tamil Nadu.

Hindu Munnani headed by one Ramagopalan a full time Swamsevak spitted venom against Islam and Muslims, the Holy Prophet and his Household ... in general .. in the most derogatory terms. Even Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Rithambara's blasphemous speeches would pale into insignificance when compared to the volatile speeches of the Hindu Munnani leaders. These speeches were delivered in the public throughout the state and the State administration took no cognizance of these outrageous activities.

Along with these blasphemous speeches, the Sangh Parivar outfits also whipped up anti-Muslim and anti-Christian passions. The Ganesh immersion ceremony which was small affair in Tamil Nadu till the mid '80s was made into a mass festival and exploited for anti-Muslim riots. Many peaceful towns in Tamil Nadu became sensitive areas after Ganesh processions.

Sangh Parivar outfits also killed nearly 42 innocent Muslims during the last 10 years.

... In order to conceal its misdeeds the Sangh Parivar outfits have raised the bogey of ISI activities in Tamil Nadu ... to malign the Muslim community...

Supreme Court's Guidelines on Arrest, Detention and Custodial Death

Extracts from Judgement of Kuldip Singh and A.S. Anand, JJ

D.K. Basu, Petitioner v. State of W. Bengal, Respondent v. Ashok K. Johri, Respondent v. State of U.P., Respondent

KULDIP SINGH AND DR. A.S. ANAND, JJ.

Constitution of India, Articles 21, 22(1) - Custodial deaths - Any form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment - Fall within inhibition of Article 21, whether it occurs during investigation, interrogation or otherwise - Supreme Court issued the requirement to be followed in all cases of arrest or detention till legal provisions are made in that behalf as preventive measures.

Custodial death is perhaps one of the worst crimes in a civilised society governed by the Rules of Law. The rights inherent in Articles 21 and 22 (1) of the Constitution require to be jealously and scrupulously protected. Court cannot wish away the problem. Any form of torture or cruel; inhuman or degrading treatment would fall within the inhibition of Article 21 of the Constitution, whether it occurs during investigation, interrogation or otherwise. If the functionaries of the Government become law breakers, it is bound to breed contempt for law and would encourage lawlessness and every man would have the tendency to become law unto himself thereby leading to anarchanism. No civilised nation can permit that to happen. Does a citizen shed off his fundamental right to life, the moment a policeman arrests him? Can the right to life of a citizen be put in abeyance on his arrest? These questions touch the spinal cord of human rights jurisprudence. The answer, indeed, has to be an emphatic 'No'. The precious right guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India cannot be denied to convicts, undertrials, detenus and other prisoners in custody, except according to the procedure established by law by placing such reasonable restrictions as are permitted by law.

Therefore the Supreme Court issued the following requirement to be followed in all cases of arrest or detention till legal provisions are made in that behalf as preventive measures:

(1) The police personnel carrying out the arrest and handling the interrogation of the arrestee should bear accurate, visible and clear identification and name tags with their designations. The particulars of all such police personnel who handle interrogation of the arrestee must be recorded in a register.

(2) That the police officer carrying out the arrest of the arrestee shall prepare a memo of arrest at the time of arrest and such memo shall be attested by at least one witness. Who may be either a member of the family of the arrestee or a respectable person of the locality from where the arrest is made. It shall also be counter signed by the arrestee and shall contain the time and date of arrest.

(3) A person who has been arrested or detained and is being held in custody in a police station or interrogation centre or other lock-up, shall be entitled to have one friend or relative or other person known to him or having interest in his welfare being informed, as soon as practicable, that he has been arrested and is being detained at the particular place, unless the attesting witness of the memo of arrest is himself such a friend or a relative of the arrestee.

(4) The time, place of arrest and venue of custody of an arrestee must be notified by the police where the next friend or relative of the arrestee lives outside the district or town through the Legal Aid Organisation in the District and the police station of the area concerned telegraphically within a period of 8 to 12 hours after the arrest.

(5) The person arrested must be made aware of this right to have someone informed of his arrest or detention as soon as he is put under arrest or is detained.

(6) An entry must be made in the diary at the place of detention regarding the arrest of the person which shall also disclose the name of the next friend of the person who has been informed of the arrest and the names and particulars of the police officials in whose custody the arrestee is.

(7) The arrestee should, where he so requests, be also examined at the time of his arrest and major and minor injuries, if any present on his/her body, must be recorded at that time. The "Inspection Memo" must be signed both by the arrestee and the police officer effecting the arrest and its copy provided to the arrestee.

(8) The arrestee should be subjected to medical examination by a trained doctor every 48 hours during his detention in custody by a doctor on the panel of approved doctors appointed by Director, Health Services of the concerned State or Union Territory, Director, Health Services should prepare such a panel for all Tehsils and Districts as well.

(9) Copies of all the documents including the memo of arrest, referred to above, should be sent to the illaqa Magistrate for his record.

(10) The arrestee may be permitted to meet his lawyer during interrogation, though not throughout the interrogation.

(11) A police central room should be provided at all Districts and State headquarters, where information regarding the arrest and the place of custody of the arrestee shall be communicated by the officer causing the arrest, within 12 hours of effecting the arrest and at the police central room it should be displayed on a

conspicuous notice board.

Failure to comply with the said requirements shall apart from rendering the concerned official liable for departmental action, also render him liable to be punished for contempt of Court and the proceedings for contempt of Court may be instituted in any High Court of the country, having territorial jurisdiction over the matter.

The requirements, flow from Articles 21 and 22 (1) of the Constitution and need to be strictly followed...

These requirements are in addition to the constitutional and statutory safeguards and do not detract from various other directions given by the Courts from time to time in connection with the safeguarding of the rights and dignity of the arrestee.

The said requirements shall be forwarded to the DG of Police and the Home Secretary of every State/UT and it shall be their obligation to circulate the same to every police station under their charge and get the same notified at every police station at a conspicuous place. ...

It is now a well accepted proposition in most of the jurisdiction, that monetary or pecuniary compensation is an appropriate and indeed an effective and sometimes perhaps the only suitable remedy for redressal of the established infringement of the fundamental right to life of a citizen by the public servants and the State is vicariously liable for their acts. The claim of the citizen is based on the principle of strict liability to which the defence of sovereign immunity is not available and the citizen must receive the amount of compensation from the State, which shall have the right to be indemnified by the wrong doer. In the assessment of compensation, the emphasis has to be on the compensatory and not on punitive element. The objective is to apply balm to the wounds and not to punish the transgressor or the offender, as awarding appropriate punishment for the offence (irrespective of compensation) must be left to the Criminal Courts in which the offender is prosecuted, which the State, in law, is duty bound to do. The award of compensation in the public law jurisdiction is also without prejudice to any other action like civil suit for damages which is lawfully available to the victim or the heirs of the deceased victim with respect to the same matter for the tortuous act committed by the functionaries of the State. The quantum of compensation will, of course, depend upon the peculiar facts of each case and no strait jacket formula can be evolved in that behalf. The relief to address the wrong for the established invasion of the fundamental rights of the citizen, under the public law jurisdiction is, thus, in addition to the traditional remedies and not in derogation of them. The amount of compensation as awarded by the Court and paid by the State to redress the wrong done, may in a given case, be adjusted against any amount which may be awarded to the claimant by way of damages in a civil suit.

(Source: AIR 1997 Supreme Court 610)

Supreme Court on Mens Rea in TADA

Kalpnath Rai, Appellants v. State (through CBI), Respondent

M.K. MUKHERJEE AND K.T. THOMAS, JJ.

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (28 of 1987), Section 3(4) - Offence regarding harbouring terrorist - Word "harbours" used in Act - Must be understood in its ordinary meaning as for penal provisions - Mens rea is essential ingredient for offence under Section 3 (4).

The word "harbours" used in TADA must be understood in its ordinary meaning as for penal provisions. It is reasonable to attribute a mental element (such as knowledge that the harboured person was involved in a terrorist act) as indispensable to make it a penal act. That apart, there is nothing in the Act, either expressly or even by implication, to indicate that mens rea has been excluded from the offence under Sec 3(4) of TADA. If Sec 3(4) is understood as imposing harsh punishment on a person who gives shelter to a terrorist without knowing that he was a terrorist such an understanding would lead to calamitous consequences. Many an innocent person, habituated to offer hospitality to friends and relatives or disposed to zeal of charity, giving accommodation and shelter to others without knowing that their guests were involved in terrorist acts, would then be exposed to incarnation for a long period. Therefore the mens rea is an essential ingredient for the offence envisaged in Sec 3(4) of TADA. **(Source: AIR 1998 Supreme Court 201)**

Supreme Court on Custodial Disappearance

Smt. P.N. Thokehom and another, Appellants v. General Officer Commanding and others, Respondents.

J.A. VERMA, C.J. AND S.P. BHARUCHA, J.

Constitution of India, Article 21 - Disappearance of persons after being carried away by army personnel - Compensation - Complaint as to three persons being taken away by army personnel and not releasing two of them - District Judge called upon to investigate and report, confirming alleged position - Held, each of the persons involved, should be compensated in the sum of Rs.1,25,000/-. **(Source: AIR 1997 Supreme Court 3534)**

Government Statement On Criminal Case against PAC Personnel

Q: Whether the Government of UP have filed a criminal case against the PAC personnel indicated in CID for massacre of Hashimpura youth in 1987.

Q: Whether the CID had indicated some other personnel who are not being prosecuted. If so, their names and rank and reason for their being let off?

Reply: **Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.**

(Source: LSUQ No.3608 dated 18.3.1997 by Mukhtar Anis)

Karnataka High Court On State-aided Private College

T.T. Chakravarthy Yuvarajand others, Appellants v. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Medical College, Respondent

R.P. SETHI, C.J. AND S. RAJENDRA BABU, J.

Constitution of India, Articles 12, 226 - 'Instrumentality or agency of State' - Determination of question as to whether private body is instrumentality or agency of State - Tests for - College run by private trust - Functions carried on by college viz., imparting education which would otherwise be function of Stte - Principal of college exercising powers of disciplinary authority - Held, writ would lie against such private body.

... Where the power to enforce discipline is available under Section 62 of the Karnataka State Universities Act, 1976 to the college run by private turst ... it must be held a writ would lie against such an act even in respect of a private body. **(Source: AIR 1997 Karnataka 261)**

West Bengal: Non Formal Education for Muslim Women

... Recognising the latent potential of the adolescent Muslim girl in a marginalised society where 60 per cent of populace is semi-literate and lives below the poverty line, **Sir Syed Group of Schools,** an NGO, brought the schools to their homes and have succeeded in mobilising the little women to effect social reform and community awareness.

The objective was to bring the schools home to willing students unable to attend formal schools due to socio-economic pressures and impart non-formal basic education to girls between the age of 13 and 19 years.

"The need for focussing on adolescent girls was felt as there were no special Government programmes for them", says Mr. Anwar Premi, honorary general secretary, SSGS, claiming that their project is unique among the minority community in the country.,

Those with basic primary education or no eduction and school dropouts are all eligible, to join the courses in Urdu and English, that are being conducted for the last five years.... The SSGS has so far imparted non-formal education to nearly 1000 adolescent girls through its home schools. It runs 15 such schools with one teacher in each and a total of 150 students. In addition, it conducts a two-year condensed formal course for those wishing to appear for the State Secondary (Madhyamik) Examinations as private candidates, after completion of their three-year course in home schools. At present it has 25 candidates in its condensed course...

The SSGS also runs a drug de-addiction centre in the area with the neo-literate girls playing an important role...

The home school has not only equipped the girls with basic education and community awareness, for many it has provided a new direction in life. ...

The teachers, who get Rs.150 per month, are motivated and trained to establish friendship with the girls. They prepare a monthly appraisal report of each girl. The three-year course run by the home schools is based on the non-formal training chalked out by the State Social Welfare Department. But these schools are yet to be recognised by the Government.

The syllabus in the home schools have three components - basic education, personal and reproductive health and community awareness. The syllabus varies for those who have received education upto the primary level and for those in the above primary level. The condensed course is aimed at dropouts from formal schools whose schooling has been terminated due to various factors.

With a view to making adolescent girls and women over 20 years self-sufficient, the SSGS has also launched a "Jeevika Project" imparting them training in stitching soft toys and embroidery. At present 12 girls are engaged in the project. SSGS also runs a craft centre offering income generation packages to women like paper packet making, juice making, doormat stitching, textile printing, block printing and sewing....

The SSGS, registered in 1985, receives a grant of Rs. 8 to 10 lakhs for its de-addiction Centre, "Duva". The State Social Welfare Advisory Board gives it an annual grant ranging between Rs.5000 and Rs.10,000. But funds constraint poses a major problem for the SSGS...

Gandhiji On the Tibbia College, Delhi

... Both Hindu and Muslim students joined it for studying Ayurveda. Later, courses in Unani, Allopathy and Homeopathy were also added.Hakim Ajmal Khan was the founder of the Tibbia College. He was a popular leader of Delhi. Today Hindus have made themselves enemies of Muslims. It was not so when we thought of starting this College where everyone, irrespective of communal considerations, could study medicine. All people contributed freely. Among the donors were Hindu Rajas and Muslim Nawabs. The late Dr. Ansari worked hard to make the scheme a success. The College was under the management of a Trust which had on its board Hindus and Muslims. Today some Hindu friends came and asked me what would happen to Tibbia College now. They said that it is difficult to continue it under the present circumstances. Funds have ceased to come. It would be a matter of great grief and shame if such an institution has to close down. I am trying my best to avoid this calamity. The College is situated in Karol Bagh.But Muslim boys fear to go anywhere near it... It seems that we are doing our best to ruin ourselves. For, when we try to ruin others, we certainly ruin ourselves. This is the rule of life".

*Haryana CM Bansi Lal demands scrapping population quota and recruitment to defence forces only on merit. *Prime Minister assures continuance of reservation for SC/ST beyond 2000.

Historic Monuments: *Delhi High Court stays construction in and around Zafar Mahal in Mehrauli **(20 Mar)**. *Maharashtra detains 200 Shiv Sainiks trying to storm disputed mosque and mazaar in Kalyan **(9 Apr)**.

Commemoration: *Commemorative stamp issued to mark death Centenary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan **(27 Apr)**. *Urdu Academy Delhi organises a two-day Seminar on Maulana Abul Kalam Azad **(28-29 Mar)**. *National Amir Khusro Society organises Khusro Memorial Lecture by Usbek Orientalist.

Obituary: *Noted Urdu writer and journalist Qayyum Khiz, 75, passes away in Patna **(12 Mar)**. Poet and dramatist Agha Jani Kashmiri, 89, passes away in Toronto **(27 Mar)**. *Eminent poet and critic Ata Kakvi passes way in Patna **(18 Mar)**. *Shah Aun Ahmed Qadri, 79, Sajjada Nashin, Khanqah, Majidia, Phulwari Sharif, passes away in Patna.

Muslim Organisations: *The Institute of Objective Studies, Delhi's two-day Seminar on Muslims in India after Independence inaugurated by ex-Chief Justice A.M. Ahamadi, releases a number of publications on the occasion **(24-25 Mar)**.

Urdu: Seminar in Hyderabad demands academic commencement of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad National Urdu University from July 1998. *All India Urdu Education Committee organises Seminar in Hyderabad. *Central and Delhi Governments proscribe book 'Sarkari Qatl-e-Aam' by Sikh leader Brar about 1984 Anti-Sikh riots.

Other Minorities: *World Sikh Council proposes People's Commission to look into violation of human rights in Punjab during past 15 years **(8 Apr)**.

Indo-Pakistan Relations: *Pakistan Foreign Minister G. Ayyub sees India in grip of communal forces **(16 Mar)**. *Prime Ministers Vajpayee and Sharif exchange cordial messages reiterating commitment to improve ties **(20 Mar)**.

*Pakistan President Tarar accuses India of avoiding meaningful dialogue **(25 Mar)**. PM Nawaz Sharif blames India for current deadlock **(5 Apr)**. *Pakistan test fires 1500 Km Ghauri missile **(6 Apr)**.

Muslim World: *UK bans entry of 'Islamic militants' **(31 Mar)**. *Israel restricts free access to Jerusalem by Christians and Muslims **(30 Mar)**.

*UN-OIC make fresh joint bid to revive peace talks on Afghanistan **(21 Mar)**. *OIC appeals to all Member States to break diplomatic relations with Israel. *Large scale sectarian violence in Pakistan town leads to curfew and army intervention **(22 Mar)**. Negotiations between PML and MQM in Pakistan show signs of strain **(9 Apr)**. *Al-Azhar Sheikh calls upon Muslims in France to respect French laws.

Ramesh K. Singh

On Murder and Cannibalism to Please Devi

... In Garkhara, a village about 30 km from Varanasi, a family had beheaded senior most member of their house - Ramchandra Chauhan - as an offering to the Devi (Goddess)... Family members ate the flesh. And they did all this simply to please their deity on the occasion of Chaitra Navratra... There are two versions on the gruesome act. A few villagers said it was done on the advice of an ojha, while others said that Meena, the wife of deceased's eldest son Ram Sevak, had got instructions from Devi to offer a human being.

First the family members decided to offer three-year-old Laxmi, daughter of Ram Sevak... However, some villagers said ... Meena ... ordered her husband to cut her tongue and present it as offering. When Ram Sevak cut her tongue, Meena said Devi was not happy yet and wanted a human sacrifice. The ... Ram Sevak beheaded his father with Gharasi (a sharp-edged weapon)...

... The police (have) arrested all the three sons of the deceased - Ram Sevak, Shiv Badan and Bashisth, wife Kevala Devi and daughter-in-law Meena...

(Source: The Pioneer, 5 April, 1998)

Tantrik Killing

A tantrik ... killed the four-year-old child of a distant relative in the name of God... a week ago in Awsadhi Sarai, Ward No. 11, Hodal sub-division. The tantrik's wife is also reported involved in the conspiracy. ...

The boy was ... fed, (given) a bath (and) made to sit before 'Devi' for sacrifice. Amidst mantras and ritual dancing, the child was strangulated by the tantrik. As the boy lay gasping on the floor, the tantrik and his wife moved around him reciting mantras...

... The boy's body was thrown (out)... According to tantrik confession, on the day following ... he went off to a religious place...

Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, the Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, during his 3 day thanks-giving visit to his Constituency, not only had a Darshan of Bhagwan Shiva in the Shiv Mandir in village Rathaunda, Tehsil Milk, Rampur but also performed 'Jal Abhishek' according to Hindu tradition. Mantriji did not enter any mosque or Mazar during the visit.

(Source: The Qaumi Awaz, 7 April, 1998)

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