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Beyond the Elections in Kashmir

In the Assembly Elections in Kashmir, the National Conference, under the leadership of Farooq Abdullah won a landslide victory. Farooq Abdullah has been sworn in as the Chief Minister of the State and commands 2/3 majority in the Assembly without taking into account the strength of his electoral allies - the BSP, the Congress(T) and the CPI(M).

National Parties participating on their own, the Congress(I), the BJP and the JD have been marginalised.

In his election campaign Farooq Abdullah, with exemplary courage, upheld the accession of the State to the Union of India as final and indissoluble and denounced the options of accession to Pakistan and independence, dangled before the people by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference which appeared to be the invisible adversary, though not participating in the election. Farooq Abdullah promised restoration of full autonomy for the State, within the framework of the Constitution of India and hinted that through negotiations with the Centre, the form and context of autonomy shall be fixed at a point lying somewhere between the Delhi Agreement of 1953 and the Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord of 1975. He also promised to give the people of the State, an honest government and a functional administration and through them all-round economic development, revival of tourism and above all, peace and normalcy to the strife-torn state. He promised a review of all cases of detention and the release of those retained merely on suspicion of association with militancy and ex-gratia payment for loss of life and property and the creation of conditions for the return of the Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley, in dignity and without fear.

There is nothing in Farooq Abdullah's programme and priorities to which any sensible person could take objection but the question remains: whether and how far he will be able to deliver and how soon, before euphoria begins to ebb and hopes begin to vanish and disillusionment begins to set in.

This question is valid because the election have been conducted in J&K under the shadow of the gun: raging militancy kept under control by an overwhelming pressure of the security forces. Because their legitimacy, despite the unexpectedly high turn-out and low invalidity rate is questioned. Because, above all, the election has not addressed the political question behind the insurgency which has been raging in the State for 7 years and which acquired, at times, both the dimensions of a proxy war by Pakistan and of a war by India against its own people.

The political question remains unresolved.

The people have voted. They might have voted out of fear under coercion but they voted for the party which they knew, which has served as the traditional vehicle for Kashmiri Nationalism, for the expression of their "national" aspirations, for well-orchestrated `defiance' of central authority, as and when the political situation so demanded. They rejected Farooq Abdullah when he identified himself with the national party ruling in Delhi and they have embraced Farooq Abdullah, not only because they had no choice and one's own devil is better than the other owing allegiance to distant and untrustworthy masters but because Farooq Abdullah promised to realise "autonomy, short of independence", as promised by Congress(I) and "maximum "autonomy" as offered by the United Front, even though he failed to obtain a categorical assurance either from the Congress(I) or the UF on the restoration of the Delhi Agreement, or a formal Resolution of the Parliament or even a formal statement by the Central Government on the floor of the Parliament. This was denied to Farooq Abdullah, and what is more important to the Kashmiri people, on the specious plea that without elections, the Central Government could not recognise any party or formation as the legitimate representative of the people. This apparent commitment to democracy was nothing more than a device. The Union Government wanted to play the cards, keeping them close to the chest, and to keep all options open. In order to set the stage for the election, the Central Government could have offered a political package based on autonomy and special status for the State - the active principles behind Article 370 and the Delhi Agreement, defined howsoever vaguely, the form and quantum of autonomy, thus offering a meaningful challenge both to Pro-Pakistan and pro-Independence forces in the Valley and giving something concrete to Farooq Abdullah on which to rally the Kashmiris. Farooq Abdullah was forced to eat the humble piece and face his people empty-handed and charge his political tactics, with courage and determination, from boycott of the Lok Sabha election, to participation in the Assembly election.

Farooq Abdullah's rhetoric tinged with theatrics, during the elections and as the Chief Minister, may sound sweet music to the Central Government and to the people in the rest of the country, but how long shall the conductor, with all the will in the world, perform, without the immediate audience getting restive and impatient with every passing day, an audience which is not free of paid as well as committed hecklers and cat-callers?

Time is running out in Kashmir - faster than the Central Government and the national parties realise. It is time to make a grand move, time for a magnificent gesture, time for a determined bid, in order to win over the people of the Valley, disillusioned, as they are, with Pakistan, sick, as they are, with the destruction of life and

environment fatigued, as they are, caught in the cross-fire between the militants and the security forces.

The Hurriyat's call for boycott of election was defied, it could not have been otherwise but they have not vanished into thin air nor are they totally out of tune with the innermost aspirations of the Kashmiri people - a longing for 'Azadi', which should not be equated as love for Pakistan.

The Hurriyat has been caught in its own web; it does not know whether it stands for independence or for accession to Pakistan or for the first as a tactical step to the second. But it is the Kashmiri people who have to be convinced of the perils of independence and of accession to Pakistan and made to feel like master in their own house, under a regime of real autonomy which combines the joy of self-government with the advantage of intimate association with a big country, big not only in size, population and resources and as a market, but in its commitment to plurality, secularism and multi-culturalism.

The time is auspicious for a new beginning. A national consensus has emerged in India - which only Hindu Nationalism, as espoused by the BJP and the Shiv Sena does not share - that Kashmir deserves a special status and the fullest possible measure of autonomy.

And Hinduvadi forces can be ignored because they lack vision and imagination and because they are swimming against the course of history and the worldwide currents of ethnic resurgence and decentralisation of power and because they have always and invariably placed territory above the people and demanded a "free hand to the Army" to bash them up or throw them out, because they lack compassion and understanding and because they treat Muslim Kashmiris as if they were all enemies or a booty of war.

Only after the wounds have been healed, only when the hearts and minds of the Kashmiris have been won, they can turn to Pakistan, for a serious and since dialogue to find a final settlement of the dispute.

Farooq Abdullah and the United Front should first set about their task of finding a meeting ground between Indian sovereignty and Kashmir autonomy. This is their historic responsibility. The sooner, the better.

Before Farooq Abdullah retires again, disillusioned and disgusted...

Before another winter of discontent sets on....

Before the Paradise Regained is lost for ever....

New Delhi,
1 November, 1996

(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)

Not by Keeping BJP Out but by Establishing Revolutionary Democracy

Editorial in the Voice of the People Awakening, June 1996

The most significant development since the BJP formed the Central Government and then lost it, is the polarisation of the political class into two camps - a pro-Hindutva camp and an anti-Hindutva camp. During the past seven years, political struggle was essentially a three-cornered fight with the so-called third force claiming to fight both the BJP and the Congress party. Overnight, the logic of a hung Parliament, coupled with the overriding aim of pulling the BJP away from power, has propelled the Congress and the Third Force into each other's arms.

The three-cornered dog fight in the political class helped the BJP to become the largest parliamentary party within a span of eight years by fully exploiting the split in the so-called secular vote. The present opportunistic ganging up of the Third Force and the Congress party will relentlessly push up the vote share of the Hindutvawadi camp as they are now privileged to be the sole opposition. As the BJP ideologues have succinctly put it, "For four decades, the country has had a united ruling party with a divided opposition. Today we have a divided ruling combination with a united opposition".

... The Hindutvawadi camp grabbed the opportunity of forming a minority government for two primary reasons. The first, in order to announce to the electorate that it has one foot within the Red Fort. The second, to expose to the full view of the people, the opportunistic ganging up of the Third Force with its enemy of yesterday - the Congress party. It succeeded on both counts. For the first time, the BJP government gave the people the privilege of witnessing live on television the "dignity" and the "sacredness" of that hallowed institution of parliamentary democracy, the Lok Sabha. The result was a mass revulsion for this institution, as well as for those who had united only on the negative programme of pulling down the BJP government. This negative programme supposedly "to save parliamentary democracy" was nothing but a nail in the coffin of this democracy! This negative programme supposedly "to defend secularism" actually discredited secularism as it was fought with the help of the "secular" Congress whose hands are still sticky with the blood of the Sikhs killed in the anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984!

The most ironic aspect of the Lok Sabha debate on the vote of confidence was the manner in which the anti-Hindutvawadi camp castigated the Vajpayee government for giving up all contentious issues like the building of the Ram temple, the scrapping of Section 370 and the promulgation of a uniform civil code. It was as if the "secularists" were more affected than the Hindutvawadis by this compromise of the Hindutva programme. It was as if their secularism could be defined and sustained only if Hindutva was alive and vibrant. On the other hand, by dropping these contentious issues, the Vajpayee government successfully signalled to the bourgeoisie, how responsible it can become while in power. The BJP is no more a pariah for even sections of the liberals!

This neurotic and unprincipled anti-BJPism which we witnessed in Parliament can only help in the long-term consolidation of the BJP. The driving force behind this neurotic anti-BJPism has been the ... Left leaderships. They have carefully cobbled together the United Front and yet refuse to lead the flock. Right now, some of them do not know whether to sit in the treasury benches with the ruling coalition or to sit in the opposition. If they sit with the ruling coalition they will have to bear the consequences of all the government's actions. If they sit in the opposition, they will alienate their allies whom they were instrumental in uniting. Yesterday, they took to task the Vajpayee government for compromising on its Hindutva programme, and yet today, they are joint architects with Chidambaram in drafting the Common Minimum Programme which goes even beyond Narasimha Rao's New Economic Policy!

The Source of the Neurosis

... This neurotic anti-BJPism ... has its source in their driving obsession to defend and to protect the existing system of parliamentary democracy... We thus are confronted with a historical irony. On the one hand, protection of bourgeois democracy is not a priority for the big bourgeois parties, while on the other hand, it has become a fixation for the Parliamentary Left.

The Parliamentary Left has correctly grasped that the biggest threat to Parliamentary democracy comes from the Hindutvawadis. The Sangh Parivar's cultural nationalism and economic nationalism, its fascist mass mobilisation methods against minorities, Dalits and liberal and secular Hindus, its propagation of a Hindu Rashtra, etc. is preparation for not only gaining electoral power, but for changing the very nature of state power - from bourgeois democracy to fascism. However, the Parliamentary Left is only deceiving its cadres if it believes that the growth of the rightists can be halted by defending parliamentary democracy. Just the opposite....

... The militant Right stands for change, while the conservative Left defends the status quo. It is because the masses feel the need for change that they are attracted to the Hindutvawadis (as) the Parliamentary Left has no agenda for change, leave alone revolution...

... The only way to expose and oppose the rightists who stand for change, is not to protect parliamentary democracy, but to put forward a programme for revolutionary democracy. This is possible only if the class nature of the existing institutions of power, including parliament, is exposed to the masses. This is possible only if we spell out an alternative vision of democracy where the masses, organised from below upwards, control on a daily basis state officials and

elected representatives; where the workers and the peasants, and not the exploiters, will be the centre of national reconstruction and development...

The Parliamentary Left leaderships neither have the programme nor are interested in formulating a programme based on revolutionary democracy. If they were committed to such a democracy, they would begin by exposing the rot that has spread to every parliamentary institution. They would expose the wheeling dealing that goes on in the hundreds of parliamentary committees...

Of course they cannot do such a thing. If they acted so "irresponsibly" ... what would happen to the United Front Government? Would this not lead to the fall of the government? Would this not help the BJP to come to power? And would this not be a national tragedy? This, in essence, is the convoluted logic of the conservative Left. A Left that wants to conserve the political system, conserve the existing government, conserve the existing class rule! Frankly, this is a greater national tragedy than the BJP coming to power!

But the Parliamentary Left is living in a fool's paradise if they believe their conservatism can stop the BJP. Conservatives have a morbid fear of going to the masses... The Hindutvawadis ... are the only political force ready to go to the masses. They are the only political force that can indulge in the rhetoric of calling for another election soon.... What a cruel twist of history! The fascists go to the masses and involve them in a political debate. The Parliamentary Left leaders on the other hand, scurry to cobble together the Hegdes with the Deve Gowdas... From consistently tailing the national bourgeoisie, our Parliamentary Left leadership have now graduated to leading the regional bourgeoisie! ...

... The UF ... government daily survives under the shadow of the Congress party. It survives under the shadow of this party's history of corruption and crimes against the people.

Many fear that the Congress party will withdraw support and bring down the UF government. They forget that the Congress could break up the earlier coalition governments only with the help of forces within ... Charan Singh (and) Chandra Shekhar... An alliance of regional forces at the centre is inherently unstable. In a period of liberalisation and globalisation, the former contradiction between an authoritarian Centre and the states is giving way to intense competition between the states themselves. The centre plays a crucial role in setting the terms and conditions of this competition and playing referee. If states are fighting the Centre, it is primarily to get something for themselves ... by denying it to other states. The regional forces cannot compete with each other at the state level and also together referee the competition from the centre for long. ... There is no guarantee whatsoever that these parties, whose main rivals in their states is the Congress party, will not gravitate towards the BJP, if and when the UF cracks up.

It was to precisely pre-empt such a possibility that the Parliamentary Left leaderships played a leading role in forming this coalition of the regional parties. And they will have to continue to keep this coalition together even as its leaders discredit it and its government's policies fuel inflation and unemployment. But how long can they play this charade?

V.R. Krishna Iyer
On BJP and Communalism

... The plea ... is that the BJP should be defeated at the hustings as it is a great danger if it comes to power; and so all secular parties should stand together to achieve this objective... An appeal to the electorate to defeat the BJP in the UP polls is the thrust.... In all likelihood, I must have signed the letter without reading all the details on the assumption that I was signing a statement demanding secular politics in India...

I do not belong to any party and do not wish to publish campaign letters for or against any parties, alliances, adjustments, fronts and like operations. I am skeptical of many other parties and their policies and programmes. I do hold firmly that secularism is implicit in humanism which is my creed and that on principle, not merely as a strategy, India must be secular. I further subscribe to the view... that Hindutva, as commonly understood in political parlance, was Hindu communalism and should be given up, that Bharatiyata expressed our finer nationalism and should be adopted instead.

The BJP, as I understand its functionalism, has many elements, some communalist in the extreme sense and others with moderate versions. Moreover - this too is important - some other parties wearing secular apparel also have communal politics, covert and overt, hard-core casteist bases and crypto-communal operational strategies. The Congress(I) among others, has long ago lost its secular identity. In my view, therefore, secular politics is a battle against the communal component entrenched in many parties in different degrees and designs, using caste and religion and blended brews as appeals to votes positively and negatively. The BJP has no monopoly of communal magnetology and some Fronts are communal-friendly or caste-allergic. I cannot confine my secularism to opposing the BJP, since communal consanguinity is present in varying shades in other parties of plural labels even while choosing candidates, although they make secular noises...

... While I see highly objectionable communal factors in the BJP and elsewhere, there are certain matters like swadeshi, self-reliance and anti-US hegemony which are welcome aspects of BJP politics, if what it says is what it really means.

Secondly, the intricacies of UP politics and the communal percentage in each party contesting elections, are beyond my ken. I do not wish to be dragged into that political jungle through statements or otherwise...

(Source: The Times of India, 18 September, 1996)

Rajmohan Gandhi on the Dying Congress

... In the statement announcing his resignation from the Congress chair, Mr. Rao said: "During the period I was in positions of power, including that of Prime Minister, I have not done anything violative of law nor have I done anything which might bring discredit to my party or my Government".

Alleged violations of law by Mr. Rao are now the business of courts and investigative agencies, but I am interested in his view that he had done nothing to hurt the credit of the Congress or of the Government over which he presided. Whose reputation was enhanced, the Congress's, the Government's or his own, when one after another Mr. Rao's ministerial colleagues were exposed in scandals and had to quite office in disgrace?

If Prime Ministerial responsibility has any meaning, then the Prime Minister is surely accountable for the misdemeanours of colleagues chosen and supervised by him. This accountability need not call for a Prime Minister's resignation whenever a Minister is guilty of misconduct... For a succession of Ministerial misdemeanours, the Prime Minister, who was also the Congress president, has to take the blame.

If Congress corruption was effectively communicated, so was the party's failure to speak up and stand up for what it believed in. Alternatively appeasing Muslim and Hindu communalism, and forward and backward casteism, the Congress betrayed its soul.

... The fear of losing a vote bank proved stronger than any fear of crucifying its convictions.

"Settle through negotiations or we will have the dispute settled through the courts." Instead of taking such a line towards the Ayodhya disputants, the Congress leadership resorted to double-speak and alternate appeasement. Thereby it brought about its own decline and a rise in communal feeling.

It was better to lose an election and retain self-respect than to betray decades of history. That Indians are one - as all humanity is - was the idea that the Congress had fought for since its birth in 1885. The Congress fight did not prevent Partition but it powerfully contributed to integrating India emotionally.

By yielding to the fear and lure of communal - and caste - winds, the Congress has undermined the unity of a nation it had once helped build, without reaping any political gains. Fear and greed proved bad guides.

Cash for power and power for cash became the Congress fever. Under its grip Congress leaders lost contact with the ordinary citizen's life and chores...

An excess of comfort and unpunished rule-bending produced a sense of a divine right to rule, and a refusal to introspect or to hear criticism. Finally, prolonged profligacy seems to have consumed almost all the fruits of the tapasya of forefathers.

But the Congress will not easily die. The tapasya of the founders and forefathers as formidable, and over the decades the Congress penetrated every corner of India. Even today between a fourth and a third of the Indian people seem willing to vote for the Congress.

But death is not impossible, and the decline is pronounced. Only in two ways can the decline be arrested. If a senior Congress leader finds the courage to be really honest about his transgressions and to face the consequences, he would become the first mason of a new Congress structure. Even power and position might seek him out after a while. Provided his repentance is genuine, he would be more attractive than the numerous leaders protesting their innocence.

The other way would be for any unblemished Congresspersons to wage a resolute fight against corruption and for a uniting national agenda - not a fight for their own positions.

Since there are not many signs of movement along either route, the Congress' decline seems likely to continue.

(Source: The Hindu, 14 October,1996)

M.D. Nalapat
On the Future of the Congress

In giving credit for Narasimha Rao's resignation to the court cases against him, political analysts have ignored another factor: the erosion of authority of the AICC president within his own party. In the past few days, Rao has had to jettison the Punjab Pradesh Congress president - a loyalist of his - to appease his dissidents within the Congress Working Committee. He has had to watch mutely while Mamta Banerjee, Priyaranjan Das Munshi and Subrata Mukherjee set up a parallel PCC. Two days ago, an entire state government slipped out of Congress control, when Gegong Apang walked out of the party in protest against the appointment of a PCC chief.

It appears that the Congress party is hurtling towards extinction. Bits and pieces are breaking away, sometimes to other parties (the Ajit Singh case), sometimes as separate groups (Arunachal). The writ of the AICC now stops at the gates of ... the party headquarters. The party has ceased to exist as a coherent entity. It has become an ever-dividing mass of small fiefdoms, in which its members fight each other rather than other political formations. Within a year, given the present rot, the party

(Contd. on page 488)

Narasimha Rao's Interview with Kuldip Nayar

... The weakening of the Congress had led to the mushrooming of political parties. These were of various colours. But he was not so much worried about them as about the Bharatiya Janata Party, "a non-secular party in a secular country with a secular Constitution"...

"The BJP wants to polarise India, 85% of the people on the one side and 15% on the other... This polarisation is going to be disastrous for the country. If you take Ram as your weapon, I cannot fight Ram although I can fight you. I refuse to believe that Ram belongs to you. You are trying to monopolise Ram." "I can not understand why an appeal in the name of religion was allowed when it went against the grain of the Constitution. It was an unequal fight. Non-secular matters should not be brought into the democratic process of secular India. Elections in a secular democracy should allow only secular issues, no other issues, particularly no non-secular issues."

"Much is being said about Hindutva, Hinduism, Indianness etc. The Supreme Court also has given a kind of pronouncement. It appears that according to many BJP friends, Hinduism is equal to Indianness. Then, is the Indian Evidence Act equal to the Hindu Evidence Act?"

The worst period in the country ... was the 13-day rule of the BJP. Even before getting a vote of confidence, they went about doing things which even a legitimate government would hesitate to do. Their Law Minister wanted to start all types of inquiries and made no secret of his intentions against whom he was moving.

"My information is that the party has taken copies of various files and documents before it left office," Narasimha Rao alleged. He did not elaborate. But it seemed that he had some solid proof. ... Where did things go wrong? He paused for a while and said: "The demolition of the Babari Masjid". I tried for a consensus for two to three years. The parting of ways came on 6 December, 1992. That day the consensus was broken"....

"I am not to blame. If one of the parties go with a non-secular, religious programme saying that they are going to build this or that, the results cannot but be disastrous. There are communities which may be having a lot of difficulties, constraints and conflicts in the religious affairs but election is not the way out for resolving them".

(Source: The Mainstream, 7 September, 1996)

Mani Shankar Aiyar On Secularism

It is something of a mystery that secularism held unchallenged primacy when the majority community was most threatened and is under most challenge when the majority community is most secure. Secularism as a canon of statecraft was fashioned in the white heat of Partition - and all the terrible consequences of Partition for the co-religionists in West and East Pakistan of the majority community of India.

Indeed, the proximate cause of the foundation of the Jan Sangh by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee in 1951 was the maltreatment of the Hindu minority in East Pakistan even four years after Partition was a settled fact. Yet, what almost all Indians wanted was that India should rise above such inhumanity. Instead of avenging itself on the Indian minority, the nation as a whole moved to protect them. The party of vengeance, the Jan Sangh, got but two seats in the Lok Sabha in the elections of 1952. Today, in their reincarnation as the BJP, they are the biggest single party in the House.

Why has this happened? In sociological terms, I suggest the reason is that 50 years after freedom, the parameters of the argument have shifted from issues of citizenship, identity and security to the question of a common charter of human rights for all Indians. Contradictions have emerged between the "liberal" position and the "secular" position. These contradictions cannot be brushed aside or left to simmer. Reconciling the two is feasible - but has not really been attempted. The result is that the communal forces have succeeded in camouflaging their essential communalism in the garb of human rights activism.

They have masked their original questions about the citizenship, identity and security of the minorities into questions of human rights. While secularists must continue unmasking the communalists and struggling for the preservation of the half-century old consensus on citizenship, identity and security, this must be accompanied by an earnest endeavour to reconcile identity, culture and freedom of worship with imperatives that are commonly accepted as uninfringible human rights. it is not a new definition of secularism that is called for, but a new agenda for secular activism.

(Source: The Sunday, 18-24 August, 1996)

Lakshmi Kantamma on Narasimha Rao

Narasimha Rao is a completely dependent man. He is like a creeper. He cannot stand on his own nor can he take his own decisions. I do not know what all could have influenced him when he was the P.M. but it is obviously his family had tremendous influence over him...

Narasimha Rao is a genius among intellectuals. But his intelligence is perverted, and perverted intelligence is the most dangerous. He did not learn the fact that intelligence is a two-edged weapon and that it an cut him too...

He is also the most ungrateful person and he has no political morals. He has no sense of gratitude. He has been ungrateful to all those who helped him. I am still trying to understand him. He has no sense of shame.... Narasimha Rao is like a cat who shuts her eyes and drinks milk, thinking nobody is watching.

He is clinging to his position and chair because he suffers from an inferiority complex, he is fearful and insecure, lacks courage and inner strength. He is completely corrupt...

JD: Views of V.P. Singh

... I do feel a sense of satisfaction and achievement when after such a vehement opposition by a section of society, today every party has endorsed Mandal.

I also feel vindicated by the fact that the highest forum of the country, the Supreme Court, also upheld it and certainly, the judges were not looking for any political gain... It was natural for the upper classes to protest, because the Mandal Commission affected the very power structure of the socio-political order, and then the conditioning of the mind over thousands of years cannot be done away in a day. ...

(In 1989) the main desire of the people was to dislodge the Congress which had become a symbol of corruption, which had distorted the symbol of democracy. It was an atmosphere like 1977 when Mr. Jai Prakash Narayan led the opposition... The basic point was that Jai Prakash also took support from every quarter including the BJP. So I drew lessons from history, that was the way to dislodge the Congress. I also had the comfort that when the BJP walked out of the Janata Party, its membership in Parliament fell to two! So I thought that if it becomes aggressive communal, we can part ways and it will meet the same fate in future. Anyway, now I have learnt better...

If we look to India's record its system has shown a lot of resilience and strength. Indian democracy has withstood wars, change of government, assassinations of its prime ministers, the oil shock, natural calamities of floods and droughts. So there is a basic strength in its economic and political system as it has withstood all the possible laboratory tests that can be made on a nation's democracy. Certainly, India will make it.

... Consider the decisions of the Supreme Court on communalism as well as social justice... The Supreme Court has clearly come out against communalism, but has fully endorsed the Mandal Commission. Would you consider the Supreme Court to be casteist? ... They were upper caste judges in it, and they delivered the judgement when I was not in power but when Narasimha Rao was in power...

Consider how it is in the US, which is an open democracy, they have affirmative action for the Blacks. About the past, there have always been things done not the right way from our assessment today. But does it mean that we again rehearse all the conflicts that have occurred in the centuries past. Is there not enough blood on the pages of history that we have to spill more? ...

... I am not pessimistic about India's future, while there are many things to be angry about, but it is ... anger .. that is the hope also, because it provides the steam for change. So I would visualise India having its place of respect in the comity of nations, and that can come only by making India strong in various fields of economy, of diplomacy ad defence. Within the country, fraternal India which is not ridden by emotional divides, is my dream.

... Thee is a time-window for the solution of the Kashmir issue. My assessment during my visit to Srinagar that the people there are totally fed up with violence. Two, while many of them are still alienated from India they are totally disillusioned with Pakistan on the ground that Pakistan will only use them as pawns. They have also realised that the Indian state is too powerful to be dislodged. Therefore, an honourable solution, within the parameters of the dignity of the Kashmir people and the sovereignty of India can be arrived at....

(Source: The ?????????, 13 September, 1996)

(Contd. from page 486)

is likely to dissolve into a hail of splinters.

As Indira Gandhi demonstrated in 1977-78 and L.K. Advani is doing so today, a politician under indictment from the courts can hold on to office, provided the rank and file - or the public - back him. It is only when a politician's credibility with his constituents has collapsed does an adverse court verdict destroy his ability to function, as it has done in the case of Rao. ...

While Rao has become the symbol of the disease that is killing the 111-year-old party, he was only the latest of three leaders who presided over its fall. The process of replacing grassroots leaders with sycophants began with Indira Gandhi after the 1973 Congress Working Committee elections when Vayalar Ravi and Chandra Shekhar got elected despite her disapproval. Thereafter, internal democracy was stifled. It made a brief reappearance under Narasimha Rao in 1991, but was put on hold by him a year later, when arch-rivals Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh got elected to the CWC.

Since the 1970s, the AICC president has in effect preserved the privileges of a small clique of unelected officials that constitute the party secretariat. These were chosen on grounds of personal loyalty, and each attempted to use the office to build up a political empire... Only sycophants of the AICC leadership were allowed to hold positions, irrespective of their lack of integrity or popularity.

Rao had an opportunity to change that. He declined. Instead, he continued not just the style but even the personnel of the earlier regime. Not surprisingly, the base of the party continued to shrink... The United Front ... can hope to pick up mot of the pieces once the Congress collapses.

(Source: The Times of India, 23 September, 1996)

Muslim Appeasement - Deve Gowda Style

The Indian Observer, New Delhi 15 August, 1996

Muslims numbering over 120 millions form second largest community of India, so are not exactly a minority. But it is also true that because of historical reasons; because of the hold that fanatic Mullahs and selfish communal leaders have got on them; because they can be easily incited in the name of religion, because a big majority of them is illiterate, they have been rendered backward in almost every field, especially economic, social and educational spheres. Therefore, they need special attention. First of all they need to be liberated from the clutches of Mullahs and ... other vested interests who want to keep them perpetually in a backward state... That is why Muslims by and large have not joined the national mainstream...

True, a small number of educated and affluent Muslims have got big positions in the government, also are serving as ministers, legislators and M.Ps. Few enterprising among them have launched small and medium scale industries and businesses though, there is not a single big Muslim industrialist...

Different secular parties are only interested in monopolising Muslim vote bank, as to win power. For the purpose, instead of trying to solve the basic and real problems of the Muslims poverty, backwardness, illiteracy, unemployment and social injustice ... the vote seekers resort to the tactics of appeasing the exploiter class among the Muslims like Mullahs, feudal elements, businessmen and communal Muslims leaders...

... Mullahs and communal leaders discourage the Muslims especially women from getting educated and trained. They want them to remain poor and backward. In the circumstances, how will Muslims progress?...

For better part of the 49 years of freedom, Muslims mainly voted for Congress. But then they became alienated from the party when others like JD, SP, BSP etc. began to compete in wooing Muslim vote bank via ... Mullahs, Imams and communal leaders. The Muslims turned against Congress essentially not because of Babari demolition, which was used as a pretext to sway them in the name of religion, but because 45 years Congress rule failed to solve the basic problems of the Muslim masses.

Now Congress Raj has ended at Centre too... Today U.F. of 13 parties is ruling the country albeit with Congress support from outside. There were expectations that in view of the pronouncements of the leaders of UF Parties, the regime will adopt a more practical, result-oriented and positive approach to solve the problems of minorities including the Muslims. But Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and of course leaders like Mulayam Singh Yadav, R.V. Paswan and Laloo Prasad Yadav, have caused big disappointment by their approach and policies. We can understand the two Yadavs who have developed their own vested interests in appeasing Mullahs and communal Muslims, but we had great hopes in Deve Gowda, who as P.M. could hold the others in check. But it is now obvious that Deve Gowda is outdoing even Rao in appeasing only the vested interests of Muslim community while ignoring the masses. He is more interested in wooing the likes of Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi who is defying courts and indulging in blatant encroachments, than hapless poor Muslim masses.

With an eye on Muslim vote bank Deve Gowda is going all out to appease the exploiter class of Muslim. Everyday he is meeting 'Muslim' delegations representing these vested interests and not masses. During 50 days of his Prime Ministership he has met about 50 Muslim delegations. There can be no objection in wooing all the communities to his party. But Muslims are not the only minority in India. As Prime Minister he should take care of all the communities...

Even Muslim elites are under-represented in Deve Gowda government while other minority communities and women have hardly any representation. And the UF Government has yet to come out with a comprehensive programme for educational and social uplift of minorities and backward classes. Reservation can not solve any of these basic problems, it will only shut the mouth of aspiring leaders belonging to vested interests. If Deve Gowda can come out with economic package for J&K, with dominant Muslim population, a measure which even BJP has welcomed, why not such a packages for all minority and backward communities that helps to eradicate poverty and illiteracy...

PM Deve Gowda's Statement on Meeting With Bal Thackeray, 28 August, 1996

No political significance should be attached to my meeting with Mr. Bal Thackeray during my recent visit to Mumbai.

No political question was discussed at the meeting which took place at Mr. Amitabh Bachchan's house where I had gone to enquire about the health of his father, Mr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan.

Mr. Bal Thackeray and I believe in different ideologies.

My commitment to the ideals of democracy and secularism is abiding. Nobody can make me depart from the principles I believe in.

At the meeting I offered condolences to Mr. Thackeray on the death of his wife and son. I also enquired about the health of Mr. Thackeray, who had undergone a heart surgery recently. These are normal courtesies. There is no need for my critics to have any misapprehension about my meeting with Mr. Bal Thackeray. This should set the controversy at rest.

Rakesh Sinha on Rise and Fall of Laloo Prasad

... Something strange happened in Bihar between the spring of 1995 and the spring of 1996. An insurrection went unnoticed. ... A new combine, the BJP-Samata, emerged in the State with 24 MPs. Laloo Prasad's dream of ruling from Delhi turned into a nightmare as he surveyed the ruins. In south Bihar, the NF-LF was decimated with the BJP winning 12 of the 14 seats. This was the same region which had elected nine MPs from the NF-LF-Jharkhand Mukti Morcha panel in the 1991 elections. ...

The Kurmis and Koeris, disenchanted with Laloo Prasad for not sharing the Mandal cake with them and for concentrating power in the hands of the Yadavs, threw their entire weight behind the Samata. With the Congress already reduced to an "also fought" party in the State, the upper castes waited for an alliance which could take on Laloo Prasad.

Once the Samata and BJP announced that they would put up a common platform, the anti-Laloo votes rallied behind the new alliance. ... the emergence of the CPI(ML) in Bhojpur and Siwan also contributed to his misery. The CPI(ML) has a strong Dalit base in an area where many landlords are Yadavs. Some of these landlords have been engineering regular attacks on the Dalits. This upset Laloo's calculations. ...

Laloo Prasad also alienated his ally, the CPI, after he went around boasting that it was he who was instrumental in getting the Madhubani Lok Sabha ticket for Chaturanan Mishra (now a Union Minister). Sitting MP Bhogendra Jha had been denied the ticket and many in Patna believed it was because he was critical of Laloo Prasad.

So peeved was the CPI that the State council, which met after the reverses in the Lok Sabha polls, blamed the Janata Dal for the emergence of the Samata-BJP as the challenger. "This alliance is a creation of the Janata Dal's own misdeeds ... concedes a State CPI leader.

Dissidence within the State Janata Dal has been brewing... Laloo Prasad will also have to deal with the clamour for Jharkhand now that the United Front has conceded the demand for a separate State of Uttarakhand.

Perhaps the most damning observation on the Laloo Prasad Government came from the Patna High Court earlier this month when Justice R.M. Prasad noted that the constitutional machinery had broken down in the State and there was need for immediate remedial measures... Justice Prasad indicted the Bihar Government for failing to comply with repeated directions of the court to conduct elections to the local bodies, be it the panchayat system or the urban bodies.

The judge rejected as untenable and misleading the pleas forwarded by the Bihar Government, pointing out that the State Government had not framed rules for the conduct of elections to these local bodies even ... years after the 74th Constitutional Amendment. ...

The judgement has thrown into a tizzy his supporters in the party and officials in the State administration. It is the latest shock to the Government which has already been taken to task by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). In its report for 1994-95, the CAG held the Bihar Government responsible for its failure to prevent excess withdrawal from the treasury by officials of the Animal Husbandry department. The next few months will provide a testing time for Laloo Prasad....

(Source: The Indian Express, 24 August, 1996)

Laloo in a Spot?

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 27 Aug., 96

The socio-economic and political scenario in Bihar has been dismal for long; it now borders on the despairing. The State has become notorious for caste violence, social anarchy and economic backwardness. The past few months have marked a new low in governance and probity in public life as well. For months now scams have never quite left the newspaper headlines - fodder scam, pesticide scam, uniform scam, bitumen scam, etc. The series of scams is estimated to have drained the State exchequer of Rs. 1,500 crore. The Laloo Prasad Yadav Government has received a rebuke from the High Court, the CAG and Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta for its failure on various fronts... The Laloo Prasad Government too turned a blind eye to the organised loot of public funds. Such fraudulent practices could not have gone on for so long without the knowledge and connivance of the Government... Today there is no sign of foreign investors coming to Bihar.

... The biggest blow to Mr. Yadav's self-serving electoral image of electoral invincibility was dealt by the spectacular performance of the BJP-Samata combine in the last Parliamentary elections. Mr. Yadav who was hoping to become the king instead ended up playing the kingmaker... Gowda's announcement on Uttarakhand has put Mr. Yadav in an unenviable position. Railway Minister ... is further trying to cut into Mr. Yadav's support base. Today even lightweight party leaders have begun sniping at Mr. Yadav. One Janata Dal MP recently dubbed him "a comedian, a rustic". It is premature to say that it is all over for Mr. Yadav, but his persona certainly has lost much of its sheen.

Mandal will die its natural death. And the politicians who try to keep it alive, only unnaturally, will fall by the wayside sooner than later. ...

(Source: The Sunday)

Dipankar Gupta on Roots of Crisis within the BJP

Recent dissensions within the ranks of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have certainly undermined its claim of being a disciplined and united organisation... The Vaghela affair ... calls for a closer analysis of the principles on which religio-nationalist organisations are formed.

Some religio-nationalist organisations like the Shiv Sena openly proclaim their anti-democratic preferences... This is one of the many factors of discord between the Shiv Sena and the BJP, though on the face of it the two appear very compatible...

In religio-nationalist bodies there is little room for a reconsideration of alternatives. The slightest dithering on this score can bring about an organisational collapse. These parties must necessarily be clear, unambiguous, and unflinching about their political aspirations. For instance, the primary aim of the BJP and Shiv Sena is to teach the Muslims a lesson and assert Hindu pride nation-wide. It is their uncompromising assertion of ultimate values that makes these organisations more like social movements than political parties. Hence even when they are in power, they must initiate movement-like elements into their political programme...

As long as movement - like elements dominate such parties, procedures fora democratic reconciliation of differences will hardly receive any consideration. This explains why religio-nationalist organisations are generally authoritarian in character....

The BJP is however caught in a dilemma. While it does not openly flout inner party democratic norms the way the Shiv Sena does, it cannot allow its movement-like features to diminish either. This would be organisational suicide. In fact the BJP was practically wiped out in the 1984 elections because it campaigned on a democratic and secular manifesto. Other parties like the Congress have less difficulty in switching goals. From import substitution they can become advocates of ...economic globalisation and yet gain in strength as the Rajiv Gandhi period demonstrates. As parties like the Congress are not driven by commitment to ultimate values they are organisationally better equipped to respond to internal pressures and redefine their objectives.

But the BJP ... gives primacy to ultimate values and goals. This is the reason it finds it difficult to control power tussles as democratic procedures have little credibility within the organisation... Political rivalries .... can only be resolved by an authoritarianism is not founded on naked power - as with the Shiv Sena. It is far more subtle in character. It is a cultural authoritarianism based on status. It demands acquiescence to a certain kind of lifestyle...

In the past it was much easier for the BJP to exercise their subtle silken, or velvet-gloved, authoritarianism for the party was still quite small. it was limited to urban and literate Hindus. This brought about a rather homogeneous cultural base that allowed an authoritarianism of life-styles and etiquette to monitor the party's functioning. But this restricted support structure also made the BJP electorally insignificant. In order to meet the imperatives of electoral politics, the BJP worked hard to enlarge its mass base by reaching out to the rural population and to the so called backward castes.

Factions in BJP

Now that the BJP is consciously trying to go beyond its earlier Brahmin-Bania confines it is forced to project the interests of other ranks and strata within the Hindu community. This has led to tensions within the organisation...

Though the late RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras,, and others like him, may have strenuously argued against casteism, both the RSS and the BJP were, till very recently, upper caste and urban in their membership. In that sense they never really had to face the alternative lifestyles, ethics and ambitions of non-urban backward castes within their respective organisations. it was only when Kurmi BJP leaders like Vinay Katiyar emerged in Uttar Pradesh, or leaders of backward castes like Vaghela began to nurse ambitions of their own in Gujarat, that the varieties of political styles, and their accompanying mass bases, within the so-called Hindutva fold, became apparent.

It is not as if these other non-urban classes and backward caste BJP activists are less zealous about Hindutva. There are after all Hindus and Hindus: the Jats do not get along with the Gujjars, the Gujjars are contemptuous of the Kurmis, the peasant castes together distrust the village Banias, and the list goes on. Such cleavages in routine existence can be expressed through a religious idiom, but religion here is used and understood differently by different sections of the community.

Such an admission will not do at all for religio-nationalist parties. This explains why the BJP strives so hard to present an unified pan-Hindu view of its ultimate goal and necessarily depends on urban elites to articulate its ideologies and programmes. It is the urban literati that are most pretentious about being universally representative... They believe that they alone can give an all-India perspective and rise above caste and regional differences. It is they who dictate the terms on which the authoritarianism of lifestyle and etiquette is founded. ...

A religio-nationalist party therefore has only two options. Either it remains openly dictatorial and ridicules democratic forms like the Shiv Sena and other fascist organisations do world wide. Or it stays as a small and cohesive status conscious political group, as the RSS and the Jana Sangh used to be. Since the BJP wants to be neither, it faces a systemic crisis. The Vaghela affair is just the beginning.

(Source: The Times of India, 6 September, 1996)

Ajoy Bose on BJP's Limited and Sectarian Base

The abject failure of the BJP to reach ... a majority in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls has not merely deprived it of regaining power in the country's largest State. It has also dealt a stunning psychological blow to the party's long term plans of becoming the national alternative to the Congress.

For the BJP, the UP polls provided a golden opportunity to demonstrate its superiority in the face of a badly divided Opposition. Indeed, the electoral contest in the State suited the party perfectly since there was virtually a vertical split in the anti-BJP vote. ...

BJP leaders had (in 1993) explained the party's poor showing in terms of the opposition unity index. In fact, they had waxed eloquent on how the unholy nexus between the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj as well as the collapse of the Congress vote bank had cumulatively turned a BJP victory into a defeat. ...

It is also astounding that the BJP was unable to derive any electoral advantage out of the present controversies raging around its political rivals in UP...

... There could have been no better political scenario for the BJP to have put its best foot forward in UP. Yet, neither the division in the anti-BJP vote, nor the poor public image of its opponents appears to have helped the party move even an inch closer to capturing power in Lucknow.

... This baffling failure of the BJP ... may turn its disappointing performance... into a cause of great disquiet within the party... (and) a fresh bout of uncertainty not only about its prospects in the State but at the national level as well.

... The setback in UP has come shortly in the wake of the party's down fall in Gujarat. Having blown a two thirds majority in Gujarat and frittered away the chance of an easy win in UP in quick succession, the confidence of BJP leaders must have plunged to a new low.

For the BJP, more than any other party, such a confidence crisis is particularly damaging. Adept at self-publicity and media manipulation, BJP propagandists have always managed to project a larger than life image of the party. But, aggressive public relations is a double edged weapon and when the chips are down the BJP usually falls twice as hard compared to its political rivals.

Yet, it would do not harm to the BJP leadership to indulge in less propaganda and more self-introspection...

... Regardless of the party leadership's claims, the meteoric rise of the BJP in the past decade has not followed a systematic evolutionary path but been characterised by the most convoluted and lopsided growth. This ... has left it vulnerable to the constantly fracturing political mosaic in the country today.

Unfortunately, neither of the two frontline leaders of the BJP have been able to consolidate the huge gains made by the party out of the debris of the collapsing Congress edifice into a permanent support base.... Advani has been hamstrung by the Hawala case vacillating between moods of extreme depression and those of sheer bravado.

... Vajpayee, on the other hand, appears to be content in being regarded as the tallest politician in the country but displaying neither the aptitude or inclination to turn the BJP around. Despite his sterling oratory within Parliament and at election meetings, Vajpayee has given no fresh direction to his party. The second rank ... leadership in the BJP ... conspicuous by its absence...

In Uttar Pradesh itself, the emergence of a backward caste leaders like Kalyan Singh had some years ago provided a cutting edge to an upper caste dominated party like the BJP. But Singh in recent years have palpably failed to craft an effective caste alliance...

It is therefore not surprising that despite a fertile political soil to grow taller, the BJP has been unable to exhibit either the imagination or the audacity to do so. Instead of widening its support base ... party leadership has clung to its already committed urban middle class support neglecting grassroots activism and mass action.

With the fading of the Hindutva movement and the lack of an alternative platform, the BJP had sought to win the Uttar Pradesh polls through sheer mathematical jugglery... It is a broader poll chemistry that paves the way for clear victory.

In the process, the BJP has only exposed its limited and sectarian base ... clearly inadequate to take the party past the winning post. Having stumbled so badly in its stronghold, the BJP at the moment does not seem at the moment to have what it takes to conquer the far more difficult terrain across the country.

(Source: The Pioneer, 11 October, 1996)

M.J. Akbar
On the Secular Hindu

It needs to be pointed out that India remains a secular state not because one-fifths of its population is Muslim, Sikh or Christian, and therefore, obviously has a vested interest in secular constitution, but because nine out of ten Hindus do not believe in violence against the minorities. If all the Hindus had been zealots, no law and order machinery in the world could have prevented the massacre of Muslims who are scattered in villages and towns all across the country.

(Source: The Organiser, 29 September, 1996)

UP Assembly Elections, 1996

UP: Muslim Representation in Assembly Elections, 1996

Party	Total				Muslims		
	Candidates	MLA's	Second Position	%age	Candidates	MLA's	%age
BJP	414	174	158	42.0	3	NIL	NIL
SP	284	110	96	38.7	43	20	46.5
BSP	298	67	93	22.5	53	12	22.6
Congress	126	33	42	26.2	10	3	30.0
UF	158	24	25	15.2	13	2	15.4
Others & Indep.	1022	16	10	1.6	NA	1	--
Total	**2302**	**424**	**424**	**18.4**	**122**	**38**	**31.1**

Total No. of Seats	:	425
Muslim Population	:	16%
Due Representation	:	68
Actual No. of MLA's	:	38
Level of Representation	:	56%

UP: Partywise Vote Percentage, 1996

BJP-Samata	32.7
SP-UF	29.4
BSP-Congress	27.8
Others	10.1
Total	100.0

UP: Vote - Religious Break-up

(Figures in %)

Religion	BJP	BSP	SP
Hindu	97	87	53
Muslim	3	13	47

(Source: The Week, 6 October, 1996)

UP: Assembly Election Results, 1996

Party	Seats	Party	Seats
BJP	174	SP	110
BSP	67	Congress	33
BKKP	8	JD	7
CPI-M	4	Congress(T)	4
Samata	2	CPI	1
Independent & Others	14	Total	424

UP: Pre-election Opinion Poll, 1996

Caste	BJP	BSP	Cong(I)	S.P. & Allies	Cong(T)	Others	Un-certain
Brahmins	80%	--	12%	--	4%	4%	--
Rajputs	79%	--	4%	5%	7%	5%	--
Yadavs	7%	4%	9%	75%	--	5%	--
Jats	30%	--	9%	28%	--	7%	26%
Kurmis	37%	27%	8%	26%	--	2%	--
Lower OBCs	43%	19%	9%	25%	--	4%	--
Muslims	--	5%	8%	77%	--	10%	--
Dalits	11%	65%	9%	10%	--	5%	--

(Source: The India Today, 31 August, 1996)

UP Election 1996: Muslim MLAs

S.No.	Name	Constituency
Samajwadi Party:		
1.	Ameer Alam	Thana Bhawan
2.	Abdul Kalam	Mahdawal
3.	Taufeeq Ahmad	Domaria Ganj
4.	Ateeq Ahmad	Allahabad West
5.	Afzal Ansari	Jaunpur City
6.	Babu Khan	Shahabad
7.	Refaqat Hussain	Hasanpur
8.	Iqbal Mahmood	Sambhal
9.	Saulat Ali	Moradabad (Rural)
10.	Abul Kalam	Varanasi (North)
11.	Alam Badi Azmi	Nizamabad
12.	Haji Mushtaq Ahmad	Arya Nagar
13.	Abeedur Rahman	Atraula
14.	Dr. Viqar Ahmed	Bahraich
15.	Sarvar Ali	Ram Nagar (Barabanki)
16.	Shabbir Ahmed	Charda (Bahraich)
17.	Waseem Ahmed	Gopal Pur
18.	Jamaluddin Siddiqui	Kamal Ganj
19.	Abdul Rasheed Khan	Chanda
20.	Dr. Muslim	Tilwai
Bahujan Samaj Party:		
21.	Qazi Moinuddin	Laksar
22.	Anees Ahmed	Bail Pur
23.	Abdul Mannan	Sandila
24.	Akbar Husain	Kundarki
25.	Qasim Husain	Jehanabad
26.	Rizwan Zaheer	Tulsi Pur
27.	Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari	Mau
28.	Ghazanfar Ali	Bijnore
29.	Karim Hasan	Jehanabad
30.	Farid Mahfooz Kidwai	Masooli
31.	Bunyad Husain Ansari	Laharpur
32.	Murad Lari	Saleempur
Congress:		
33.	Afroz Ali Khan	Rampur City
34.	Kazim Ali Khan	Milak Bilaspur
35.	Dr. Ammar Rizvi	Mahmoodabad
Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party:		
36.	Kokab Hameed	Baghpat
37.	Parvez Haleem	Kithaur
Independent:		
38.	Mohd. Muqeem	Etawa

Smita Gupta On Muslim Voting in UP

... As far as the Muslims are concerned, **they will continue to vote for the strongest non-BJP candidate, with the advantage remaining with the UF:** for one, the Congress has not been forgiven for not protecting the Babari Masjid; secondly, the Imam of Jama Masjid's fatwa in favour of the BSP has not pleased the community - as recent letters in the Urdu press testify.

(Source: The Times of India, 21 September, 1996)

Performance in UP Elections

BSP

... 13% of newly-elected BSP MLAs came from upper castes, while 30% belong to other backward castes... Notwithstanding its image of belonging to Scheduled Castes, the BSP fielded 57 upper caste candidates this time of whom nine won. Most of the seats are in the Poorvanchal region.

17% of the BSP MLAs are Muslims this time. The BSP fielded 54 Muslim candidates of whom 12 won. BSP's Muslim candidates captured Bijnor, Kundarki, Bilaspur, Lahapur, Sandila, Masoli, Bhinga, Tulsipur, Salempur, Mau and Jahanabad Assembly seats.

The BSP had fielded a highest of 102 candidates from the other backward classes, 26 whom won. The BSP has only 20 Scheduled Caste MLAs in the new Assembly. The party had fielded 86 candidates.

BJP

... The BJP which won the highest number of the reserved constituencies. Once considered as the party of the upper caste, it had given the maximum number of tickets to OBC candidates this time. ...

Under the process of social engineering launched in 1993 by BJP's second generation leader Govindacharya in order to reverse party's image as a party of upper castes, the party this time fielded more OBC candidates.

The number of BJP's upper caste legislators fell by 12 seats. In the last elections, 97 upper caste candidates had won. This time only 85 upper caste contestants were successful. Among the OBC candidates was fielded this time, 51 won, 11 more than that of the previous elections in 1993.

... 55% of the BJP MLAs in 1993 belonged to the upper castes. This time, a little over 40% of the BJP MLAs are from upper castes... Very few of BJP's winning candidates from (western UP) belonged to the Jat community... The BJP's fortunes tumbled in western UP because of Mr. Ajit Singh's joining hands with the United Front... The BJP had given ticket to 27 women candidates of whom, only seven managed to win. Of them, four to OBC and only two were from the Dalit community.

SP

The strategy of the Samajwadi Party to expand its support base among the upper castes has worked well in this election. The party has eaten into a sizeable chunk of the upper caste votes of the BJP. Of the 110 seats won by the SP, it has wrested 39 from the BJP. The SP has gained a total of 72 new seats.

The SP had fielded about 30 Rajputs, out of which 11 have won. Eight of these seats were wrested from the BJP, though the SP had also to lose ten of these 30 seats.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 15 October, 1996)

Vijay Sharma on Shiv Sena in UP Elections

The Shiv Sena, which is a decisive factor in Maharashtra politics, has yet to create any base in UP despite a full-fledged party organisation.

It is evident by the fact that 50 of its 51 candidates, who were in the fray in the recently-concluded UP Assembly elections, forfeited their deposits while only one contestant - the state Shiv Sena president Pawan Pandey - got 43,000 votes to win third place in Akbarpur Assembly Constituency of Ambedkar Nagar. ...The Sena attributed the poor performance to a weak organisation and the false promise of the BJP leaders, who after making a commitment, refused to spare 25 of the 425 assembly seats for the party... State general secretary, Nripendr Pandey ... disclosed that in at least 30 constituencies the Shiv Sena candidates got more votes than the margin with which the BJP candidates lost mainly due to division of pro-Hindu vote bank...

(Source: The Pioneer, 14 October, 1996)

BJP's Reverses in UP

... UP was Hindu heartland, UP was Hindi heartland and UP was also the shortest route to Delhi. This explains why the party upped the ante to a do-or-die pitch before the polls. Had UP fallen into the BJP kitty, it would have immediately invested the party with the moral authority to demand that the Deve Gowda government march out of office...

In the event, the verdict has seriously hurt the BJP. Not only has it squandered away the rapid gains it had made since breaking up the alliance between the SP and the BSP, it has suffered reverses across the state, including in its strongholds of eastern and central UP. The only region where the party has posted impressive victories is Uttarakhand - obviously the voter here was reacting to the Tiwari Congress's alliance with Mulayam Singh Yadav, a symbol of tyranny in this area.

But winning Uttarakhand while being pushed back everywhere else may add to the BJP's troubles. For that will reinforce the growing impression that the party is essentially upper caste, creating further disaffection in its OBC ranks and frustrating the party's attempts to broaden its appeal. Indeed, the identity crisis that is currently wracking the BJP seems set to worsen in the days to come. The BJP needed a morale boosting victory in UP... to put down inner-party dissidence in Gujarat and contain the ambitions of Bal Thackeray in Maharashtra. A positive message from UP would have forced fence-sitters in Gujarat to do a rethink. The hung verdict, on the other hand, may hasten their migration to Shankersinh Waghela's party, especially if he looks like forming a government there. Thackeray, who has been locked in a running feud with the BJP ... can also be expected to throw more temper tantrums.

... The party's once reliable fallback, Ayodhya, has run its course and seems unlikely to lend itself to revival. Even if that were possible, the BJP has to keep in mind the impact of returning to this volatile issue on its probable future partners. The regional parties for one would be chary of any step the BJP takes towards Ayodhya - a factor which will reinforce its isolationist status and foreclose its options in Delhi....

(Source: The Times of India, 13 October, 1996)

M.A. Hafiz

On BJP Strategy in UP Elections

The fractured electoral verdict in Uttar Pradesh has come as a serious blow to the BJP strategy aimed at capturing power in the State to destabilise the United Front government at the Centre. ...

"Unless there is a BJP Government at the Centre, the Ram temple at Ayodhya cannot come into being", said Kalyan Singh...

However, the BJP suffered electoral reverses... in Faizabad-Ambedkarnagar, except for the lone Ayodhya seat... Of the nine seats, the BJP could win just two including Ayodhya.

... In Gonda and Bahraich, the two districts across the Saryu river ... of the eight seats in Bahraich, it ... won only two and of the 11 seats in Gonda just five... In 1993, the BJP had won seven of the 11 seats in Gonda. Therefore, Ayodhya failed to prove a springboard...

The Hindutva party suffered reverses again in Eastern UP where the United Front and the Cong-BSP candidates offered serious resistance to the BJP. In Sidharthanagar, Deoria, Basti, Padrauna and Azamgarh, the BJP was halted in its tracks by the UF and the Cong-BSP combine.

However, in Uttarakhand comprising of over 90 per cent Brahmin and Rajput voters... the BJP flag flutters in 18 Assembly segments...

The BJP suffered in Western UP due to the last minute entry of BKKU into the electoral fray.

The BJP lost nearly two per cent of its popular votes as compared to the recent Lok Sabha polls when the party had secured 33.43 per cent votes. The party leadership expected to get 38 per cent votes...

The voters also punished some ... defectors to the BJP, who had joined the saffron brigade after the collapse of the SP-BSP Government....

Among the United Front constituents, the SP improved its electoral tally by one seat as compared to 1993 ... while the Janata Dal, which had bagged 27 seats in 1993, was left with just seven...

Veteran leader and president of Congress-T suffered the worst innings of his political career when his outfit failed to win any seat in Uttarakhand while its electoral tally is a dismal four...

The Congress certainly emerged in a better shape after forging an electoral alliance with the BSP. It won 33 seats and most of its stalwarts romped home ... due to the 24 per cent Dalit votes...

The BSP did not emerge as a gainer, as it had won 69 seats in 1993 ... in alliance with the SP.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 12 October, 1996)

Arati R. Jerath

On BJPs Appeal in UP Election

The BJP's poor showing in UP is being attributed in party circles to three main factors - the overt Mandalisation of the party, the lack of an emotive issue to subsume the casteist nature of these elections and the poor selection of candidates.

Although the party was on a favourable wicket ... given the three-way split in votes, it clearly failed to capitalise on its advantages and enthuse its supporters. This is underlined by the fact that the BJP's vote share is likely to go down a point or two since the 1993 Assembly polls.

Last night, BJP leaders attempted to explain away their failure to win on a low turnout of voters. The figures that came in this morning, however, shot this argument to pieces as they proved that the turnout this time is the highest since 1977. It was even higher than in 1993 when the party won 177 seats - 54.6 per cent as against 53.6 per cent in 1993.

Obviously, while its opponents managed to get voters out in their support, the BJP was unable to mobilise additional votes for itself.

... Some ... insiders are already pointing accusing fingers at former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh for his aggressive pro-backward caste stand which is thought to have dampened cadre enthusiasm and prevented the upper caste consolidation for the BJP, expected in the wake of the Congress-BSP alliance. At the same time, it did not yield the desired increase in OBC support. ...

Party circles feel that the blatant pandering to the backward castes may have lost them 30 to 40 crucial seats which has made all the difference between sitting in the Opposition and forming the government in Lucknow.

... While both Mulayam Singh and Mayawati can openly appeal for votes on a caste basis, the BJP cannot. It was thus bad politics to try and fight the SP and BSP with its own weapons.

What the BJP should have done was to have identified a single emotive issue which would have put its campaign on a different plane altogether as in 1991 when the Ram mandir plank overshadowed the Mandal completely.

The campaign itself is also coming in for severe criticism... There were logistical and administrative failures galore. The planning and execution of the entire campaign this time was left to the State unit at its insistence, resulting in poor coordination between the State and the Central units...

Clearly, the BJP has only itself to blame for its poor performance in UP...

The official reaction was thus muted. "We are satisfied that we have maintained our primacy but we are disappointed that we have not secured a majority", spokesman said. ...

(Source: The ???????????, 11 October, 1996)

P.K. Roy

I - On Muslim Apathy in UP Elections, 1996

Notwithstanding assiduous wooing by parties across the political spectrum in UP, the Muslim community has responded with studied indifference as discerned in the two phases of polling held on September 30 and October 3. The first two phases covered as many as 296 constituencies, including most of the 136 seats, where Muslim vote plays a decisive role. The Muslim apathy in the ongoing elections, discerned also in the Lok Sabha poll, may upset political calculations. ...

The ... trend was seen in ... Muslim-dominated constituencies of the State. They came out to vote, but on a lesser scale and for only SP candidates. In constituencies where non-SP United Front parties were in the fray, the response was mulch less, according to reports reaching from districts.

Incidentally, in view of the low turnout in the Lok Sabha poll in May last, the All-India Milli Council had issued an appeal to the community to come out and vote in large numbers. The religious leaders had also made the same appeal. But, the average Muslim voter remained unmoved, unconcerned. The possibility that such a stance might benefit the BJP, did not bestir them as in 1993. A 'who-cares' attitude is discernible.

Political observers attribute this to the demolition of the Babari Masjid having lost much of its thrust as an emotive issue. The issue had driven the community to punish the BJP at the hustings. The coming together of the SP and BSP had raised their confidence that the BJP which had won the 1991 poll could be defeated. Their parting of ways has caused dismay and consequent apathy. Many feel that the BJP cannot be stopped from coming to power, as the Lok Sabha poll outcome has demonstrated. The Muslim religious leaders working at cross-purposes issuing fatwas for one or the other line-ups added to the confusion. Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav has lost much of his charisma.

The question being asked is what benefit the community would get by supporting him in real terms. Besides BSP leaders and Shahi Imam Bukhari, Maulana Taufiq Raza Khan Barelvi has accused him of using the Ayodhya issue to bring about a confrontation between the two principal communities. His justifying the Bal Thackeray-Deve Gowda meeting added to the confusion. Nevertheless, Mr. Mulayam Singh remains the first choice of the community.

Many Muslim voters (said) that their community like others was more concerned about economic issues, unemployment, drinking water problem, power crisis, sanitation and corruption than emotive issues. There is growing cynicism over the role of politicians of the day, irrespective of their party label. Law and order is another aspect and many Muslims are willing to buy Ms. Mayawati's charge that goondaism and the Mafia gained ascendancy under Mr. Mulayam's rule...

(Source: The Hindu, 5 October, 1996)

Amit Sharma

On Muslim Apathy

... For the one group that has remained conspicuous by its virtual non-presence in the polling booths this time is Muslims - the SP's and the BSP's favourite vote-bank. This was especially true in areas like Kanpur, Moradabad, Agra, Rampur and Bareilly where the community, by virtue of its strength, has traditionally called the shots. Ironically, the parties may have no one else to blame but themselves. First, the SP and the BSP - who had been allies the last time - parted ways, giving, as Muslims saw it, the BJP a chance to come back to power.

Second, despite reports that Muslims had been hardly taken in by the move, both the SP and the BSP made it a point to have their claims backed by the "right" leaders. If the BSP snatched the support of the Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid - Abdullah Bukhari - right from under Mulayam Singh Yadav's nose, the SP had its own Imams backing it. ...

Mulayam and Kanshi Ram ... seem to have learnt no lessons from the recent Lok Sabha polls. Even then, the community's disenchantment had been obvious as a majority stayed away from the polling booths. Another noticeable trend is that this time, Muslims seem to have rejected candidates belonging to other communities in general, except for a few cases where some non-Muslims fielded by the SP got their support. ...

Mohammed Suleiman of the Indian National League believes there is a reason for the turnaround. "Muslims are now wise enough to smell a rat in the designs of political parties, which use them as a mere vote-bank", he says. "By casting our votes in favour of Muslim candidates, even if they are Independents, we have at least shown loyalty to the community. ...

(Source: The Indian Express, 6 October, 1996)

II - On Reasons for BJP's Fall

Losing in as many as 92 of the 177 seats won by it in 1993, in the face of a combined challenge of the SP-BSP, mainly contributed to the failure of the saffron party to secure an absolute majority... An over-confident State unit in the face of the gains in the May last Lok Sabha poll, when the BJP bagged as many as 52 of the 85 seats and a lead in as many as 236 segments, frittered away the apparent edge through arbitrary decisions in ticket distribution... and apathy to the committed vote-bank, besides very short ... poll campaign ... and shortage of funds.

Uttar Pradesh is the main prop of the BJP scheme of things... A feeling developed that old-timers and the committed vote-bank were being taken for a ride, and they reacted by not actively participating in the campaign.

The BJP while cultivating the OBC and dalits, in the name of social engineering ... had taken the upper caste support for granted and inducted new faces of dubious

(Contd. on page 507)

Surendra Mohan on Farooq Abdullah Now on Good Wicket

Dr. Farooq Abdullah's grand return has come about in circumstances similar to those in 1983. The National Conference (NC) led by him had contested the Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections held in that year without an alliance with the Congress, which was in New Delhi. The Janata Dal was contesting against it.

... No hostility exists between the NC and the United Front as had existed between the former and the Congress(I) in 1983. Therefore, while in 1983-84 Dr. Abdullah was an enthusiastic participant in the conclaves of the non-Congress (I) chief ministers and opposition leaders and even hosted one of them in Srinagar, now it has been decided that the NC would join the UF...

It is significant that the coming together of the NC and the UF did not take place before the assembly elections.... But if that had happened, the NC would have appealed to the people of the state as surrogates of the rulers in New Delhi. However, a long history of unfair elections and dismissals of chief ministers had made New Delhi quite unpopular; and close link with it could have reduced Dr. Abdullah's stature. The UF too would have been accused of trying to put its own favourite candidate as chief minister... Now that the NC has won on its own strength, its credentials to represent the state and its people have acquired authenticity...

Dr. Abdullah has given an assurance that autonomy for each of the three regions of the state shall be realised within a year. He has also stressed the continuing role of the security forces. It remains to be seen, however, as to what are his proposals for the realisation of autonomy for the state as a whole within the Indian Union. Earlier, he had asked for a pre-1953 status for the state. The agreements signed between Sheikh Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952, and between the former and Indira Gandhi in 1975 had affirmed that, in respect of a number of subjects, laws passed by Parliament would be applicable in the state only after the Assembly has ratified them. In the 1975 agreement, it was said that the state assembly could review the laws passed by Parliament after 1953 in respect of their applicability to the state.

However, during 1975-1984 and 1987-1989, when the NC was in power in the state, the state assembly did not undertake any such exercise. Now it may wish to do so; for, Parliament has enacted several laws during the past 14 years which are draconian. But, extension of jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General could be retained. Dr. Abdullah (has spoken of) a formula appropriate for 1996...

The UF Government's commitment to federalism should facilitate the rebuilding of confidence between the state and the Centre. The key to further strengthening of the peace process is good governance which promotes people's welfare. Employment generation has to be the top priority, considering that recruitment to government services has remained frozen for years, developmental activities have come to a stand still and tourism has sharply declined.

Pakistan's Moves

Moreover, ... the success that the Pakistan-supported Taliban has secured in Afghanistan ... could ... embolden it to pursue infiltration in J&K with greater vigour. In this context, Dr. Abdullah's emphasis on the continuing role of the armed forces is quite apt. He has committed himself to discussions with groups like the All Party Hurriyat Conference. But, India should also persist in proposing dialogue with Pakistan on ... Jammu & Kashmir.

(Source: The Times of India, 9 October, 1996)

JD: Views of V.P. Singh

It is not Farooq who's on test, it is all of us... One has to seek Farooq's participation (shirkat), in the governance of India, alongwith our shirkat in the governance of Kashmir... Farooq (should) build a bridge between India and Pakistan.

(Source: The Pioneer, 14 October, 1996)

A.R. Wig
On Election in J&K

... A close scrutiny of the results of (the elections held) in the wake of threats by militants and boycott call by the Hurriyat ... revealed a four per cent increase in the voters turn-out and a decline of 1.85 per cent in the invalid votes over the May Parliamentary elections. The electorate too had shown 6.50 per cent increase over the Parliamentary elections. ... **(Source: The Hindustan Times, 9 October, 1996)**

Final Results

National Conference	57
Bharatiya Janata Party	8
Congress (I)	7
Janata Dal	5
*Bahujan Samaj Party	4
* CPI(M)	1
* Congress (T)	1
Panthers	1
** Independent	2

*Allies of NC ** Joined NC

Nikhil Chakravartty on J&K Elections

The verdict of the just-concluded elections to the J&K Assembly has a definite mandate - a mandate which spills beyond the estimates and calculations of the votes collected by different parties. The verdict has proclaimed that once again the voter has asserted himself and the long night of militancy and counter-militancy need not be regarded as the only destiny for the hapless people of (the State). For long, the media and the public could not be sure if any election could take at all in the violent turmoil... Many genuinely felt that the elections might lead to a disaster as the climate for civil functioning seemed to be missing ... last year...

The situation has changed since then, and one could perceive through several signs that the people ... had grown tired of tension and violence... the changed mood ensured to a large measure the possibility of the elections... Few can deny that, by and large, normal elections took place now and those elected can claim to command the confidence of the electorate.

There are certain significant pointers emerging from the poll results. No party, not a single party, which could be associated as having something to do with the Centre, could make any mark at all. The Congress has turned out to be the biggest casualty. The Janata Dal's performance has been miserable. The BJP ... could come nowhere near the expected target of emerging as the party with an emphatic majority in Jammu.

In fact, the National Conference has surprisingly made a significant headway in Jammu apart from making a clean sweep in the Valley... (This) has been due to the fact that the electorate, by and large, regarded the Conference as the only party that would fight for the cause of the people in the State. In other words, this has been a vote which demands the Centre to spell out what it has in mind when it offers to grant more autonomy to Kashmir.... For more than a year before the general election, the question of the quantum and nature of the autonomy has throughout been uppermost in the mind of the electorate particularly in the crucial Kashmir Valley. The Government tried in the past to ward off the demand for autonomy by saying that it could not possibly respond unless and until it knew whom to negotiate with...

Now that argument no longer holds good... There is, therefore, no alibi now for the Centre to withhold or delay the promised autonomy.

The former Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, had assured Parliament that he was prepared to consider any proposal for autonomy "short of independence"... In the last resort, its plea was that the subject of autonomy, its design and structure would be discussed and decided upon when an elected government took over the reins of administration in the State.

That moment is here and now, and there is no time to dodge the question. In a sense, the UF Government is better placed to take up the question of autonomy than the previous Congress Government since it is committed to conceding more autonomy to the States as a general principle. Obviously, the question of Kashmir has to be taken up from a broader viewpoint for historical reasons. This is a question on which all constituents of the UF, together with the Congress, can come to an early decision. The spadework might start without delay if the Government does not want to blight the expectations ... raised in the State... The NC with Dr. Farooq Abdullah at the head has always stood for more autonomy and therefore there would be no delay in starting the talks. And when the principle of autonomy is placed on the table, it would only be proper that the new Government in Kashmir extends the same principle of regional autonomy to the clearly-demarcated regions of Jammu and Ladakh. There are a number of issues of immediate concern... For 7 years, Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Valley, has seen an extraordinary concentration of armed forces unprecedented in the annals of India. ...

The modality for such relaxation of armed concentration has to be worked out without delay between Dr. Abdullah and his Government, on the one side, and the Centre with its various agencies. There has to be , in the eyes of the public in Kashmir, the visibility of the newly-elected Government being the master in its own house. There could be no quibbling on this question... In the eyes of the public the responsibility for administration, as also the authority of power, has to be in the hands of the elected State Government. There could possibly by no two opinions on this question. It would be a bizarre spectacle of diarchy if the elected Chief Minister has to share power with the Governor. Such an absurd situation will invite more trouble and the gains of an elected government would be lost.

... Reconstruction and rehabilitation would demand gigantic efforts on State's part as also generous assistance and support from the Centre. ...

At the political level, Dr. Abdullah has an urgent task ... to win back the minds and hearts of the people. As the first step towards that mission of reconciliation, it is now incumbent on him to establish rapport through dialogue with many of those who while asking for independence, did not actively get involved with the aggressive sections of the militants. Such dialogue will go a long way in healing the wounds... Militancy, in the ultimate analysis, is quelled not by bayonets alone but by the healing touch of goodwill and understanding.

... The flowering of Kashmiriyat can be our invincible response to the ... fanaticism of the Taliban playing havoc across the high Himalayas.

(Source: The Hindu, 5 October, 1996)

B.G. Verghese on Autonomy for J&K and Indo-Pakistan Confederation

... The current polls mark a political thaw that could herald spring in J&K...There will be many to counsel caution against acting "hastily" and conceding "too much" with the fading presence of the gun. On the contrary, this is the time for innovative statesmanship, magnanimity, compassion and understanding. With the ballot prevailing over the bullet, it would be tragic to forfeit the battle for hearts and minds which was lost somewhere along the line in the Fifties and then again, after the 1975-77 reprieve, with the massive alienation of a whole new generation by crude manipulation and crass political mismanagement between 1984 and 1987. Pakistan was helpless until then. The Indian State gifted it the opening which it has fully exploited. ...

The successful conclusion of the polls, with all their limitations, will further set back militancy. It would, however, be naive to imagine that insurgency has ended. It is certainly in decline but could revive if the promise of a new beginning is belied. The tide has turned as a result of disenchantment with militancy and the militants, mindless bloodshed, the destruction of Kashmiriyat, the brutal ingress of Afghan and other non-Kashmiri mercenaries, growing disillusionment with Pakistan, the disruption of normal life, sheer fatigue and the yearning for tranquillity. Autonomy - azadi within India - seems for most a realisable, meaningful and acceptable alternative to the mirage of a "plebiscite" or independence. The lack of autonomy in "Azad Kashmir" and the colonial servitude suffered by the Northern Areas since 1949 are a poor advertisement for secession to Pakistan. ...

Consideration should be given to declaring an amnesty for all those not charged with heinous offences, tracing of missing persons, lowering the security profile to the extent possible without prejudice to public safety....

No time should be lost whether in Srinagar or Delhi in getting down to the business of translating "maximum autonomy" into a review of Centre-State relations and nailing down the subjects which might be repatriated to the State. The mechanism suggested by the previous Government, that is of starting with the 1975 Agreement, or any other could be put in motion. This would need to be preceded by internal discussions with the State as between all the relevant actors, which should not exclude the Hurriyat and other elements which may not have participated in the polls, and at an inter-regional level...

... There must follow a settlement across the LOC with the other half of a divided State. Pakistan too has a locus standi, howsoever disputed. The offer of a dialogue with Islamabad on all subjects, including J&K, without preconditions must be reiterated. But Pakistan mus also know that it cannot have dialogue and wage a proxy war at the same time. A soft border with simplified protocols for movement, commerce and cultural exchange among two autonomous halves of all of J&K on either side of the LOC, without derogation from the twin de facto sovereignties that exist, has been mooted and is beginning to find resonance on both sides. With demilitarisation of the State within the framework of a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation, such a regime could in time be overseen by an overarching J&K authority straddling both entities... In some form of innovative "co-confederation" in J&K without prejudice to sovereignty. This could evolve.

... No better denouement than the unfolding of such a package as India and Pakistan prepare to celebrate 50 years of independence. In the result, J&K could be the balm that binds and heals the still bleeding wounds of Partition. **(Source: The Indian Express, 26 September, 1996)**

Arun Joshi

On the Long Road before Farooq Abdullah

The road to become the "Wazir-e-Azam" or the Prime Minister for Farooq Abdullah is tough and difficult. But more serious and difficult for him is to bring back peace to the Kashmir Valley, where nearly 20,000 people have been killed in the past seven years and many more maimed.

His emotional speech... (had) little effect outside the swearing-in-ceremony hall. There was a shutdown in Srinagar. All Parties Hurriyat Conference's call for general strike was responded to by the people in spite of the fact that most of the APHC leaders are still behind the bars. The impact of the general strike and the widespread fear that still prevails demonstrated that the secessionist feelings were not completely dead.

... The new Chief Minister ... constituted his Ministry in a manner which left many hearts dejected and many areas and classes unrepresented. Even the loyalty to the party remained unrewarded. ... There is no leader within the party who can split the organisation...The opposition is split. Congress has only 7 members, BJP 8, and all others are his allies... But ... many within the party are not reconciled to work as simple MLAs... The tasks are tough and daunting... The biggest task is to restore normalcy and peace in the Valley... How is he planning to do it? This is just one question. There are other questions as to how is he planning to give confidence to the people, that he is going to deliver. There is a problem of giving jobs to the unemployed youth... There are surrendered militants waiting to be rehabilitated... Migrants are looking for an honourable return to their homes in the Valley. Nursing their wounds, the victims of militancy too are hoping for their rehabilitation... Kashmiris have no patience. Pakistan and secessionists are waiting for him to delay or falter and if he does, there is nothing in between that can prevent the recurrence of disaster in Kashmir once again....

(Source: The Times of India, 14 October, 1996)

Kuldip Nayar on Kashmir Problem

... There is wide criticism that the voting has not been independent. To some extent, this is true. Srinagar was pretty bad and Doda was only slightly better. But overall the polling was fair.

With fear stalking the State because of the militant's last-ditch effort, the average of 45% of polling is quite high. The Hurriyat's claim that people would not "cooperate" was exposed because militants had to use force to keep voters indoor. New Delhi arrested the top Hurriyat leaders unnecessarily. It was a ham-handed action. Those who voted were determined to do so because they were sick of militancy and wanted the old days of tourism and peace to return. In any case, the militancy is not even a fraction of what it was three years ago. The Hurriyat could have assured "fair" polling by agreeing to the supervision of elections by Indians of its choice. It rejected the offer and wanted elections under the aegis of the UN...

... The Hurriyat should respect the result of elections. New Delhi is obliged to talk to the elected members on autonomy. The Government would, however, be acting churlishly if it were to keep out the Hurriyat from the talks... Various elements, even those who kept themselves out of the elections, should be invited to the talks. And once there is even a modicum of common ground, Pakistan and its part of Kashmir should be associated to settle the problem once and for all.

Should Kashmir on the Indian side decide to go back to the pre-1953 position, there should be no problem... No constitutional amendment at New Delhi is necessary to return to the 1953 position.

A legislation requiring a simple majority can be passed by Parliament to withdraw all the laws extended to the State of J&K since 1952. Once India's sovereignty over the State is accepted, the BJP may not object to the retention of Article 370 that gives the State a special status. When such a status will end is dependent not on the rest of India but on those living in the State because they opted to join the Union, not the other way round.

The Hurriyat leaders are at the crossroads. They can continue to stay in the wilderness but in due course they will get isolated like the Akalis in Punjab...

New Delhi's immediate problem is what to do with the surrendered militants who number around 5,000. They have had the blessings of the Government because they were creating division in the ranks of militants. Essentially, they are a force of looters and killers. They operated without any control. Farooq Abdullah condemned their role during the elections... There should be a provision to absorb these militants into the security forces posted elsewhere in the country.

... There is said to be a reaction of satisfaction in America, Britain and elsewhere in the West. Now it is for New Delhi to act quickly to facilitate the return of autonomy that the State enjoyed under its first prime minister (now chief minister) Sheikh Abdullah in 1952. India has probably got another chance. If it messes it up, it would lose a good opportunity. ... 31 years ago, in August 1965 ... the people in Kashmir ... were with us. This time they were not. So much so that they wanted an independent State of their own. Why they became so alienated is the question to which we have to seek an answer before attempting any solution.

(Source: The Indian Express, 14 October, 1996)

Neerja Chowdhury on the Bridge in Kashmir

But for the absence of the BJP, the swearing-in of the Farooq Abdullah ministry would have been a national event. Dr. Farooq Abdullah had personally invited Atal Behari Vajpayee soon after the results were out. He was among the first Farooq called on when he (came to) the Capital... to seek the support of national leaders of all parties in the uphill task that lies ahead of him. ...

... The BJP's plans underwent a change at the last moment. Vajpayee left for Lucknow... The government formation in Srinagar has taken place amongst many 'firsts'. Through has impassioned takeover speech today, which was telecast live, Farooq acted as the bridge between as estranged Kashmir and the rest of the country.

This is the first time that national leaders of all major parties (except the BJP which brought the National Conference (NC) at the hustings attended the 'party' in Srinagar.

This also included the Congress, with which Farooq broke off last year and which lost important leaders like Mian Bashir to the NC.

Irony too was in full play, Kesri was not even aware that Farooq had hijacked Moulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, who won on the Congress ticket, into his ministry.

Political reasons apart, which took these leaders to Srinagar today, the players were only too aware this time that playing the game was more important than who won.

... The NC will be participating in the coalition government at the Centre, and this has already been announced by Farooq.

It could facilitate the emotional integration of the State with the rest of the country (depending on how Farooq handles the situation) and also ensure that the funds flow in from the Centre which he will surely need if he has to rehabilitate the ravaged State.

Never has the voter turnout been as large as it was in the elections belying all projections - and this too is a first.

Nor has the NC done well in the past in all the three regions of the State, the Valley, Jammu and Ladakh, as it did this time.

More than the slogan of autonomy, which Farooq played down (for he did not harp on the return to the '1952 position' during the campaign), it was the issue of internal autonomy for the three regions of the State - and the desire for peace and normalcy - which seemed to have won him support.

This is also the first time that the bitter feud between the families of Sheikh Abdullah and the former Maharaja Hari Singh ... was brought to an end - and this is expected to make an impact on the Hindus and the Kashmiri pandits in the State. The son of Karan Singh, Ajat Shatroo Singh, who had recently joined the NC, was today inducted as a Cabinet minister...

The large number of people present at the She-e-Kashmir International Conference complex, where the ceremony was held, is symbolic of the qualitative change which has taken place in the State.

What had seemed unthinkable even six months go has come to pass.

(Source: The Indian express, 10 October, 1996)

Rita Manchanda on a Hollow Victory for Indian Democrecy

That the Indian state can hold elections in J&K, was demonstrated in the ... elections. A massive coercive presence of security forces ensured a massive turnout of voters. Beyond that, what do the ... assembly elections signify? Newspaper reports on the first phase of polls are exulting over "J&K voters say `yes' to democracy" or, "Kashmiris turn to the ballot for peace". ...

The same refrain was echoed during the Lok Sabha polls. Then too the media gloated over "Polls prove Pak lost proxy war" and celebrated the people's eagerness to participate in the democratic process. The same newspapers which had reported that villagers and security men were matched in strength in the long queues of voters, exulted over the turnout as a "Decisive rebuff to terrorists", a vote for democracy.

Tossed aside as "propaganda" were the media's own eyewitness accounts of the security forces and armed "surrendered" militants descending on villages, calling out people to vote and checking on the proof - the indelible mark on the finger.

In May, the vote for democracy was 40 per cent or so, the J&K administration claimed. This time round ... voter turnout was more than 50 per cent. But the issue of "zabardasti" and "marzi" this time has become almost irrelevant. For the logic of a proxy war under the prevailing circumstances flattens before it the democratic objection to voters coerced by guns to vote.

Within that logic, a legitimate democratic activity like the door-to-door campaigning by political leaders like Yasin Malik and Shabbir Shah against elections, is clamped down upon by the security forces. The Hurriyat leaders are arrested, beaten up and hospitalised. Their monitoring cells are broken up. The people turning out to vote - coerced or otherwise - is hailed as a rejection of militancy and, more important, of the political question which the Hurriyat leaders pose. Hurriyat is an uneasy coalition, often working at cross purposes. But they are the political voice of the last seven years of militant struggle. They are out of the electoral reckoning, evidently irrelevant to the revival of the democratic process.

Back in the political arena are the discredited political parties which through rigged elections have been coming to power in J&K only to barter away the state's autonomy. Their new allies are to be the political parties of the surrendered militants. The National Conference is busy cataloguing "booth capturing" by these armed renegades. But the Union Home Secretary, Padmanabiah, has made it clear that these surrendered militants will continue to bear arms. Their "friendly" role in decimating pro-Pakistan militants is not to be impeded.

That civil liberties activists and journalists engaged in legitimate democratic activity are becoming the bloody targets of these unaccountable renegades is apparently of little concern. Far from an elected government negotiating a withdrawal of the massive security presence which has turned J&K into a garrison state, the Governor General K.V. Krishna Rao has warned that an elected government should not indulge in "populist refrains and condemn the army and paramilitary forces". It would affect the tempo of the anti-insurgency drive, the General argues.

So what kind of democracy have the tired Kashmiri people opted for? After seven bloody years of militancy, after suffering the systematic subversion of fundamental rights typical of an "occupied" state, where every Kashmiri is the "enemy" and the ubiquitous security forces the law, have the Kashmiri people turned their back on the political question which made them take to the gun - **Kashmir's political identity** The question is important for the assembly elections have nothing to do with that basic political question.

The revival of the democratic process has not been preceded by any kind of a dialogue with the political elements active during the seven years of militancy. Instead, the people are being asked to vote for parties which at best may deliver development but have no relevance when it comes to the basic political question of the struggle for the political identity of Kashmir. It was not for a better economic package that the Kashmir people took up the gun but to get a political solution to a political dispute.

The political issue of autonomy is to be taken up by the newly elected government... But are the people to believe that the same political party which bartered away autonomy before will today defend it? Or, that the majoritarian Indian state will loosen its hold?

... The contrast between empty polling booths in the Jamaat-e-Islami strongholds of Sopore and Baramulla and the crowded rush to vote in other polling centres, is an ominous portent of a people being forced to choose, of a people getting divided, of the ... flare up of a civil war.

Ultimately, it will depend on what the elected government can deliver. How much real power it will eventually be able to wrest from the entrenched security forces is the critical question.

For the Kashmiri people, the face of "the rest of India" has come to be the security forces. Today, it is an Election Commission prepared to turn a blind eye to subversion of democratic process in the name of special circumstances.

(Source: The Communalism Combat, October, 1996)

Tavleen Singh
On Kashmir Problem

Will the assembly elections in Kashmir bring peace? Finally, a solution? No. They cannot for the simple reason that they are irrelevant to the real problem which ... is that everyone continues to lie through their teeth about nearly everything to do with Kashmir. The militants lie when they tell us that Kashmiris have always wanted azadi and that the violence that began in 1989 was only the culmination of a long freedom movement... This is rubbish... Right up to 1988 the Valley was the favourite summer destination of Indian holiday-makers (and) also where Bombay's filmwallahs went to shoot song sequences in the meadows and the snows...

... The Indian Government lies when it tries to convince us, and the world, that the real problem in Kashmir is a Pakistan sponsored terrorist movement. Privately, even the most hawkish of our bureaucrats and politicians ... admit ... that the violence was the result of our own stupid, short-sighted policies. Our Government also lies shamelessly about human rights violations by pretending that the only innocents that have died are those that were caught in 'crossfire'. If this were so, they need to explain why the average Kashmiri is so bitterly anti-India even if he has no ... love for Pakistan.

We come then to the Pakistan Government which lies constantly about the arms and trained terrorists that it exports across the line of control pretending that this is only 'moral' support. It also lies when it tells its people that the 'unfinished business of Partition' will only be finished when Kashmir is absorbed into Pakistan... It also lies, every day ... as does our own Government, about virtually every event that takes place in the Valley.

There are, sadly, other liars in this game of lies. Journalists, on both sides of the border, lie about what is going on and do so because they consider it in their 'national interest'. So, the Pakistani press hesitates to investigate the terrorism that their Government sponsors and the Indian press hesitates to investigate blatant violations of human rights.. The result is that in Pakistan most ordinary people believe that Kashmir will one day be handed to them on a platter and in India the average Indian believes that Kashmiris are basically a bad lot who spend their time killing our patriotic soldiers and policemen. (He) considers them ungrateful to boot... Sheikh Abdullah put a stop to subsidised rice when he became Chief Minister and ... most of the aid ... poured into the Valley since 1989 has gone towards the deployment of our troops and para-military.

Lying is clearly ... infectious ... because ... even Western observers in Delhi and Islamabad appear to become afflicted by it after they have spent a few months in either capital.... Western journalists ... often report stories entirely on the basis of what they have been told by Kashmiri militants...

One day when the lying stops there will be a lasting solution in Kashmir. Then, the Indian Government will have to admit ... serious mistakes ... the toppling of Farooq Abdullah's Government and Rajiv Gandhi's mistake alliance with the National Conference, followed by the sham elections of 1987, which were the direct cause of our current Kashmir problem... In Islamabad, when the lying stops, they will have to admit that is not quite so easy to break India once more. And that to try to do it yet again in the name of Islam will have consequences for Pakistan that will be as serious as for India. Both Delhi and Islamabad will also need to admit that we can no longer afford the Kashmir problem... If we do not start instilling a few home truths into the Kashmir debate we can forget about catching up with the rest of Asia, leave alone the world. Already, we are shamefully far behind and Kashmir is one of the main reasons why.

(Source: The Indian Express, 15 September, 1996)

Janak Singh
On Lesson for Farooq Abdullah

... The people's disenchantment with Pakistani propaganda promising liberation of the Valley and the general disgust with militancy which had paralysed normal life were important factors in determining the outcome of the poll.

The people have, by and large, come to realise that all those promising azadi could not succeed. They have proved pragmatic in reposing their faith in a party ... which had come to be regarded as anathema when militancy was at its peak in the Valley... However, it cannot be assumed that the verdict is an outright rejection of Pakistan or indicative of a newfound love for India... The electoral outcome merely reflects the feelings of a befuddled people, looking for a way out of a tunnel. Whether it would lead to normalcy in the Valley depends on Farooq Abdullah. ...

The ISI-funded and armed militants are not the only threat to peace in Kashmir. The All Party Hurriyat Conference, which made a vain bid to dissuade people from participating in the poll, could still create much mischief. They have the young Omar Farooq, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir, as also hard-boiled politicians like Abdul Ghani Lone, on their side. The successful outcome of the elections can only harden the resolve of these trouble-makers. Kashmir has never been free from anti-Indian sentiment... It would be better to appreciate certain peculiarities about Kashmir. One such is that Kashmiri sub-nationalism is a very strong factor in the ethos of the people...

(Over 11 years) misgovernance became synonymous with the Abdullah clan. ...(Farooq Abdullah should learn) lessons from the past... (and) avoid all that made the Sheikh family unpopular in the first place...

(Source: The Times of India, 11 October, 1996)

A.N. Dar on A New Life in J&K

... We have not yet estimated how the currents and cross currents of thinking crossing the minds of the people who have gone through the ordeal in the last seven years will be stilled or directed along new channels. Not only the new rulers of Kashmir but those who govern the rest of the country should know of it so that their actions go along the right lines. This depends upon the calm, satisfactory rehabilitation of not only the physical but also the psychic condition of the people.

First the Valley. There is still a large number of people who are not reconciled to association with India...

They fall into two categories. One of them is the hard-core Pakistani adherents. They would all like to create trouble. Their hopes will be pinned on the mistakes the State Government makes. Their way will be Islamic fundamentalism. Their point of activity will be the mosque. Their example will be the Taliban. The Indian and Kashmir Governments should know of their ways. The trouble from them is not over.

The other faction is formed of those who were somehow drawn into the former's fold. They can as well come out of it and be part of the mainstream. They should not be doubted. They can be an asset in bringing new life into Kashmir. They lost some fine leaders like the Mirwaiz of Kashmir and the Mirwaiz of South Kashmir. If they see the writing on the wall, people like Shabir Shah and Yasin Malik can still be part of this section. Sure, they cannot be a part of the administration but that would not make them enemies of the State. They can provide the right correctives to those in power. They can help hold Kashmir democratically together.

These are the political folds. There are also others. There is a vast majority who just want to live a life of daily work and honesty in what was once but still can be a Happy Valley. They should be given justice and order... They should get good roads, schools, hospitals, ... electricity, tourists and export of handicrafts... This work is a challenge for the administration. The good of Kashmir lies in doing this at breakneck speed ... with a kind of honesty that Kashmir has not often enjoyed. It is not going to be easy... Both Muslims and Pandits who stayed on ... despite odds and those ... with courage in their hearts and having braved much distress outside return there (are) the hope of the return of peace in Kashmir... (They) will welcome their old neighbours back to their hearths. The people of the rest of India also played a part. (No) Kashmiri salesman ... was hampered even as gory accounts came out of Kashmir... When they would go back to Kashmir with their earnings they would tell their people that India was truly a secular country. Everyone deserves a thank. ... The people of Jammu would need a greater say in the administration. Ladakh ... will also need greater autonomy.

All three must know that some kind of a Taliban, composed and inspired and funded by Pakistan, will be waiting for a moment of weakness. The danger will not go for a long time...

When peace fully returns Kashmir must start work on a monument to those known and unknown who fell to the bullet, (those) were brutally done away with and (those who) did their duty like true soldiers and (those) whom militancy drew out and (who) died in inhospitable situations... This monument should commemorate them all...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 11 October, 1996)

Anand K. Sahay on Tasks in J&K

... The people in the Muslim-majority State ... (have) revealed their preference for what Pakistan might call "Hindu" India... "Hindu" India, with all its shortcomings, is actually still a functioning democracy in which there is better chance of the rights of citizens to be safeguarded than in a military-guided plutocracy operated in the name of a faith... But Indian rulers must recognise it was a near thing... The Centre must now engage in serious and meaningful dialogue with the elected dispensation in Srinagar. ...

... The people of J&K, the Valley ... included, are not prepared to countenance an option other than the one that exists and has done so for nearly half a century, transient lures of azaadi or merger with Pakistan notwithstanding, viz. that they still prefer to be in and with India no matter what may have happened in the last 10 years or so.

...Farooq Abdullah ... appreciates this reality. It is now the turn of the Centre to carry out its part of the deal imposed by history and ... play true and fair withthe Kashmiri people, and ... show it has a large heart... With the Taliban today sitting pretty on the periphery of Central Asia, ambition can only be leaping in the bosom of the powers rearing to fasion a new world order. And given Islamabad's track record, it will be no surprise if it signed up in aid of the great powers game... These nuances of elections in Kashmir show that, whatever the propaganda, the ordinary folk in the Valley never did go over to the ... ideological wares peddled by the ISI and its local subservients. And, although with some hesitation, it can now be believed that the phase of "insurgency" - implying a noticeable measure of popular support - is over. Thus, any residuary violence now can only be ascried to naked, anti-democratic ... terrorism.

But the new Government in Srinagar must drive home its political advantage with speed. It must make sure there are representatives of Kashmiri political forces besides those of National Conference on the committee to negotiate with the Centre the quantum of autonomy and related issues... Further, Farooq Abdullah must attend to some people-level difficulties on an urgent basis, before winter sets in deep so that ... the ordinary folk are delivered some fruits of democratic existence.

(Source: The Pioneer, 8 October, 1996)

Pushp Saraf
On NC's Historic Opportunity

... It is true that the NC chief has been pleading for greater autonomy for the State. But the margin and sweep of his victory must convince him that the vote for his party is not a vote so much for his demand for greater autonomy but in the hope that he will find a way out of the present mess.

... The Buddhist-dominated Leh district and the Hindu-dominated areas of Jammu region ... would have never placed trust in him if the elections had been contested solely on the issue of greater autonomy or the return to the pre-1953 dispensation.

This factor makes Farooq's task more delicate but should also give him the required courage to take the bull by the horns. A major challenge would be corruption in public life which had even before terrorism erupted in 1990, alienated the Valley's urban educated youth who first identified with the anti-establishment Sheikh Abdullah and then with the militants against the Sheikh's self-appointed heir, Farooq...

The thrust during his poll speeches, has been on providing a responsive administration. That will equip him with an effective tool to fulfill other promises which include: the release of militants in jails for minor offences after they and their parents give a written undertaking of good behaviour, industrial growth including power generation in private sector, rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits and promotion of regional harmony.

The National Conference ... on the political plane has admitted top leaders like Mian Bashir and Abdul Aziz Zargar from the Congress and Abdul Qayoom from the Janata Dal into his party. All three of them are moderates and should help Abdullah balance the influence of the hawks in his party.

At a different level, he has welcomed with open arms the entry into the organisation of a former Chief Secretary, Sheikh Ghulam Rasool, a bureaucrat with a formidable reputation and reach to all sections of society. ... The concern over the role the local bureaucracy may play - particularly at the lower level - is justified because it is the symbol of the government's authority. But in the Valley, it has invariably collapsed under the threat of militants ... However ... the local police has been slowing recovering its confidence. It is heartening to note that Farooq has publicly stated that steps will be taken to further upgrade the local police "to make it one of the best in the country'.

Adequate security paraphernalia, spearheaded by the local police, will be reassuring for private investors to resume their activity in the State. ...

Building a high development profile will help Farooq to tackle his political opponent like the Hurriyat Conference effectively...

... The majority of the constituents of the Hurriyat Conference will like Kashmir's Sufi tradition retained. Dotted with Sufi shrines, the Valley has so far resisted all onslaughts of Islamic fundamentalism.

Sooner or later, the Talibans across the border will target the Valley. They will meet their waterloo if the National Conference and the sympathetic sections of the Hurriyat ... rise above petty politics....

... History repeats itself for wise men to learn lessons from their first bitter experience. Farooq has got a historic opportunity now to live down the charge of having allowed militancy to gain ground during his previous tenure as the Chief Minister...

(Source: The Pioneer)

Arun Joshi
On Farooq Abdullah's Last Opportunity

... Stung by remarks describing him as "undependable", Farooq Abdullah had lashed out at the Press during electioneering, but he has yet to prove that he has the capacity and will to deal with highly challenging tasks ahead.

Aware that people expect a lot from him, he has listed assignments which he wants to undertake immediately...

Farooq Abdullah is conscious of all this. But will he be able to deliver? ...

While Farooq Abdullah has promised that he has learnt many lessons from his past, his critics do not agree with him. Within the party too there is a feeling among senior leaders that he is being carried away by the euphoria of massive mandate. He has to start addressing basic issues without wasting any time...

This time, party leaders say, is the "last opportunity for him to deliver". There will be no other opportunity as they feel that "Kashmiris who were seeking azadi or accession with Pakistan have settled for an acceptable promise of restoration of greater autonomy to the State by the National Conference, ... if Farooq Abdullah fails ... the secessionis voices would gain credibility...

However, amidst this not so optimistic scenario, there are hopes too. Dr. Abdullah is cautious in making observations... For Hurriyat leaders, mot of whom in jails, he pauses and promises that their cases would be reviewed. Nor he makes wild promises of doing things overnight....

... Critics and ... commoners while hoping that Dr. Abdullah improves do not hesitate in voicing fears that if he falters, not only he and his government but the entire State is doomed. The doomsayers, however, want the Centre to back him fully in the fight against militancy, poverty and backwardness...

(Source: The ?????????, 8 October, 1996)

Mani Shankar Aiyar s Open Letter to Farooq Abdullah

... When the general election was called in mid-October 1989... whatever the pressures building up internally and externally, the J&K Government, in tandem with the Government of India, was firmly on top of the situation... The political situation in Kashmir received but a passing mention even in the National Front's election manifesto.... Delhi's priority changed, with the change of government; from helping you shore up the State against militancy to making the undermining of your government the priority. ...

The ... NF ... was blinded by their fury at what they believed was your betrayal of them. They had been delighted when you had steered your National Conference (NC) towards a united Opposition front against the Congress in 1983. When the Cong. at the Centre ousted you in 1984, it was a kind of rite of passage which they believed confirmed you as one of them. When, therefore, you opted in 1986 to rejoin hands with the Cong., you became the Mir Jaffer of their mythology. The myth was built around the elections of 1987. No election in India is perfect, and in J&K perhaps less so. The fact, however, is that the number of disputed seats in the 1987 elections would have made little difference to the outcome... The NC-Cong. majority would have remained even if by-elections had reversed the results in everyone of the disputed constituencies.

... Governor Jagmohan carried this logic to its insane conclusion: disinherit you, discredit the NC, dismiss the State Assembly - and all would be well. He did just that - and into the political vacuum so created moved in the forces of terrorism, armed, financed and backed from without; and to combat the terrorism, the mailed fist of the Union. It has taken all of seven years to bring the people of J&K back into the picture by restoring politics to the State. You have found yourself reconfirmed as the representative voice of the State. As a Congressman, I naturally feel disappointed that you seem to have no more need of us. But as an Indian, I am delighted that the people of your State have unambiguously confirmed a secular nationalist as their choice. It is only secular nationalism that can freeze the turbulence unleashed by the Jagmohan mindset.

Congratulations, therefore, on the priority you have accorded to the return to their homes, in safety, security and honour, of the Kashmiri Pandits. It needs to be stressed over and over again that of the thousands and thousands of non-combatants killed in J&K these last seven years, less than a hundred were Hindus before the exodus of March-May 1990. ... The fact is that some 99% of the civilian victims of Kashmir terrorism have been the co-religionists of the terrorists. Whatever you can do to rehabilitate the Kashmiri Pandit who wish to return to his home in the Valley will be the crowning confirmation of your secular nationalism, the bonding adhesive of our nationhood.

(Source: The Indian Express, 9 October, 1996)

Historians Statement on Babari Masjid 'Relics', 17 September, 1996

A recent reported decision of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court throwing open the site and alleged remains or artifacts attributed to excavations conducted at the site of the Babari Masjid or Ayodhya in 1992 upon and after its destruction has raised great concern once again about the way archaeological evidence is being sought to be produced for proving a special case.

The destruction of the Babari Masjid on 6 December 1992 was a flagrant violation of law; the unauthorised "excavation" thereafter was an offence committed against the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Act; and there is no explanation of the presence and activity by unauthorized persons on the site after 6 December 1992 when the site was occupied by security forces. There are, therefore, grounds for the gravest suspicion about the genuineness of the artifacts being shown or the images, etc. having been found at the site in situ.

We, therefore, demand that the Government of India should make it clear why the Archaeological Survey of India has not taken action against the unauthorised "excavation" at the Babari Masjid site and surrounding area both before and after 6 December 1992 in Ayodhya. We feel that the Archaeological Survey should immediately take possession of the alleged artifacts, inscriptions and sculptured pieces and permit their inspection by bona fide scholars, so that the whole matter of their provenance may be thoroughly probed and clarified.

1. Prof. Suraj Bhan, Kurukshetra University
2. Prof. R.S. Sharma, Patna
3. Dr. Sita Ram Roy, For. Director of Archaeology, Bihar, Patna.
4. R.C. Singh, For. Director of Archaeology, UP, Lucknow.
5. Prof. D. Mandal, Allahabad University
6. Prof. M. Athar Ali, AMU.
7. Prof. Irfan Habib, AMU
8. Prof. K.M. Shrimali, Delhi University
9. Prof. D.N. Jha, Delhi University
10. Prof. Iqtidar Alam Khan, AMU
11. Prof. P. Bhatia, Delhi University
12. Prof. K.N. Panikkar, JNU
13. Prof. K.K.N. Kurup, University of Calicut
14. Prof. V. Rama Krishna, University of Hyderabad.
15. Prof. Anirudha Ray, University of Calcutta.
16. Prof. Suranjan Das, Calcutta University
17. Prof. T.K. V. Subramanian, Delhi University.

Sushil Srivastava on the Babari Masjid

(Concluding Chapter (Extracts) from the Disputed Mosque, A Historical Inquiry, Vistaar, New Delhi, 1991

... The conflict that arose in 1949 between the Hindus and Muslims over the possession of the mosque was shifted to the judicial arena for arbitration and the political, social and religious tensions that arose in Ayodhya and Faizabad were contained for a long time. But the declaration by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of its intention to liberate the birthplace of Shri Rama in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Shri Krishna in Mathura, and the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi, again brought the question of the Babari Masjid and Ramjanambhoomi to the forefront of national issues. The VHP took the offensive, when several Hindus took an oath to fight for the liberation of the Ramjanambhoomi. In 1987, the Parishad announced that it would take over all the mosques that had been raised on the site of destroyed Hindu temples.

The VHP wants to undo the realities of history. It apparently seeks to efface from memory that period of history which, according to them, saw the oppression and humiliation of the Hindus.

The declarations of the Parishad and their logic naturally created an atmosphere of fear among Indian Muslims. They drew the conclusion that the occupation of the mosques in Ayodhya, Mathura and Benares would lead to the take-over of other mosques and would logically culminate in the occupation of their homes. In these circumstances, a very large section of Indian Muslims began questioning their decision to choose secular India rather than Islamic Pakistan. They were convinced that a 'Hindu nation' would have no place for non-Hindu people. R.E. Frykenberg believes that the idea of a Hindu nation is as old as the British empire...

The policy of the government in the early part of the nineteenth century was to consciously encourage the integration and mobilisation of 'Hindu' institutions - that is, all religious institutions which were not openly Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Sikh - into a common identification as belonging to a single religion. This process of basing identity in religion merged with the new force of nationalism which demanded for its growth a democratic environment within the British empire. Democratic institutions based upon the principle of the 'majority' naturally led to a coalescence of the idea of Hindu nationalism with Indian nationalism. A sense of fear naturally gripped the other religious groups, which were in the minority. This fear had at times found an outlet in activities that were termed, by the majority as 'anti-national'. Animosity between the majority and the minority religious communities grew in this atmosphere. Today, it has become focused on the Babari Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi issue.

The growing popularity of Shri Rama coincided with the growth in the activities of the Ramanandi sects. Abul Fazal, the chronicler of the Mughal emperor Akbar, accepted that Ayodhya was also known as the Ramjanambhoomi or the place of birth of Rama. However, till the seventeenth century, all activities and places associated with Shri Rama were limited to the banks of the river in Ayodhya. William Finch tells us about the bathing ghats but does not talk about temples situated in the city. He also relates some local myths - that Vishnu took human form in Ayodhya, about the ruins of the fort of Rama and the Swargaddwar. The last two places described by Finch were situated on the banks of the river. This naturally raises the issue of whether there were no places associated with Rama inside the city of Ayodhya known till the seventeenth century.

During the eighteenth century a struggle continued between the 'Shaiva' Sanyasis and Vaishnava Bairagis over the possession of religious places in Ayodhya. Shaivas were dominant in Ayodhya and elsewhere. Although, Hans Bakker claims that there was a continuity in the traditions of Rama bhakti and Ayodhya, he does not deny the conflict between the Shaivas and Vaishnavas. The 'Sanyasis' were a militant group and the Bairagis could only take over by waging a bloody war. There is evidence that Raja Naval Rai, a Rama bhakta, encouraged the building of several Rama temples in Ayodhya. The Bairagis received encouragement and political backing to win away the places of worship from the Sanyasis. It was during his time that building activity in Ayodhya was encouraged and therefore Cunningham could say that most of the temples in Ayodhya appeared only as old as the period of Aurangzeb.

However, the local myth-makers, faced by the problem of finding a historical personality and attributing to him the construction of the famous Ramajanambhoomi temple, said that a king called Bikramjeet had constructed it. Montgomery Martin was also told in 1838, about the famous temple and he concluded that the Bikramjeet of the local myths was actually Vikramaditya the ruler of Ujjain. However, he did not believe that Vikramaditya of Ujjain discovered the birthplace of Rama and re-established the other religious places associated with Rama. According to the myths in circulation the religious places discovered and established by Vikramaditya numbered 360. Martin doubted the existence of these temples and also the story that the Mughal emperors had destroyed Hindu temples...

Montgomery Martin is the first historian who relates

the local myths of Ayodhya. It was he who raised the matter of the blackstone pillars in the mosque:

> "That they have been taken from a Hindu building is evident from the traces of images being observable on some of their bases; although the images have been cut off to satisfy the conscience of the bigot. It is possible that these pillars belonged to a temple built by Vikrama, but I think the existence of such a temple doubtful; and if it did exist, it is probable that the pillars were taken from the ruins."

Martin expressed his doubts about the theory that the Muslim rulers dispossessed people from land and destroyed non-Islamic buildings. He, in fact, believed that the Muslim rulers preserved the social and cultural fabric of the land. ...

Despite the attempt of Montgomery Martin to examine the question in a rational manner, other British historians continued the process of providing a historical basis to the local myths. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Erskine provided credence to the story that Vikramaditya had gone to Ayodhya... The writings of Leyden and Erskine convinced the British officials posted in Avadh about the truth of the local myths. Carnegy, Benet and Nevill all came to believe that Babur had come to Ayodhya and destroyed the Ramjanambhoomi temple. They also regarded as historical the story that Vikramaditya constructed 360 places of worship in Ayodhya. Along with the officials, archaeologists and some scholars also came to regard the myths as historical truths.

It is certain that **the myth that Babur destroyed the Ramjanambhoomi temple and constructed a mosque instead came into circulation in the nineteenth century.** We do not have any historical evidence to show that the myth existed before this. This is not surprising, taking into consideration the political and religious environment in Ayodhya. In the eighteenth century, the Ramanandi sect had gradually established itself. it started acquiring land in the city. Soon after, the sect clashed with the Sanyasis for the possession of religious places. In the nineteenth century the domination of the Vaishnava Bairagis was so complete that when Martin visited the city in 1838, he called Ayodhya the Hindu city and Faizabad the Muslim area. After the Bairagis had taken all the important places, particularly those of the Muslims. It was during this time that claims over the Babari Masjid might also have been raised.

... Not surprisingly, the mosque is at the highest and most central spot in the city. There are non-Islamic elements in the material used for its construction. These, however, cannot be said to be exclusively Hindu. The material could have been a part of either a Hindu, Jaina or Buddhist structure.

Claims and counter-claims were made by the two communities for a long time before they finally led to bloody conflict, between 1853 and 1855. The British sought to resolve the situation by physically demarcating the rights of the two religious communities in the area. The Hindus were to worship at the raised platform outside the eastern entrance of the mosque and the Muslims were to enter the mosque from the north gate. But the tension between the two communities was not resolved and, in fact, continued to grow till, finally, Hindu groups have declared their intention to demolish the mosque and construct a glorious temple to commemorate the birthplace of Rama.

The state seems to have played a significant role in supporting the cause of the Hindus. The British Government openly encouraged the Bairagis. They were allowed occupation over nazul land and were encouraged in their building activity. Although in 1885 the Bairagis were not allowed to physically occupy the land in front of demarcation of the religious places in Ayodhya...

In 1949, the state once again came to the support of the Hindu cause. Following the conflict that arose around the Babari Masjid, the District Magistrate asked the Imam to leave the premises, while he allowed entry to a maharaj (cook), and two purohits (priests). In 1986, the doors of the mosque were unlocked and the Hindus were allowed to establish a Rama temple in the central sanctum. However, the Imam was not allowed to hold prayers in the mosque. In 1989, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad laid the foundation-stone of the Rama temple in front of the Babari Masjid. The question, is, may they do so? All land in Ayodhya is nazul land and without the permission of the State Government, no land can be utilised for any purpose by any party. It is necessary for the Government to put a complete end to any building activity in Ayodhya. To preserve history, the building of the mosque should be handed over to the Government of Uttar Pradesh, for maintenance as a historical monument.

(Contd. from page 496)

allegiance. And in the name of winnability it tried many controversial faces, from other parties, some joining it a few days before filing nomination... Allegations of favour as a quid pro quo, or caste consideration are being openly flung, against influential State leaders and powerful regional organising secretaries, as never before...

The party should have derived much mileage in 1996 ... in vertical split in non-BJP votes and indifference among a confused Muslim electorates... The BJP's projections of securing lead in eastern UP did not fructify and so also in central region. The Tikait-Ajit factor did not damage it much... Only the Uttarakhand gave the party more than ... expected. But that is because, the SP and BSP are no force in the upper caste-dominated region and the Bundelkhand in the south, where the BSP had made its first presence. But, the two with 40 seats cannot compensate for losses in main regions.

(Source: The Hindu, 12 October, 1996)

All India Milli Council: Memorandum to Prime Minister, 1 June, 1996

TADA

...All cases under TADA be either withdrawn or due legislative process be adopted to achieve that end.

Communal and Ethnic Rights

... A cash compensation equal to that given in case of the death of a passenger in an air crash is suggested and to the injured commensurate with the nature and extent of the injury sustained.

Further, in matter of relief and rehabilitation and other matters connected therewith the course adopted for the victims of the 1984 Delhi riots be treated as a model and same be applied in all cases of communal and ethnic riots... An Anti-riot force be raised to be manned by personnel with special training and secular mental make-up...

Minorities Commission

... It is suggested that ... all the bottlenecks and handicaps be removed so as to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the Minorities Commission.

It is further suggested that the United Front Government use its good offices to persuade the State Government of Maharashtra to revive the State's Minorities Commission which it has scrapped.

Minorities Finance Corporation

... Rs. five thousand crores ... be made available to the Minorities Finance and Development Corporation at an early date... It is further suggested that ... all loans by ... Corporation will be advanced on zero rate of interest...

Minority Educational Institutions

... It is suggested that a guideline be forwarded to all state governments... Some state governments make the according of recognition dependent on the waiver of right to claim grant-in-aid ... the well-established principle of 'aid follows recognition' should be adhered to.

Fifteen-Point Programme

The Fifteen-Point Programme ... be suitably modified and updated and its effective implementation be ensured.

Education and Economy

Reservation should be provided to Muslims in professional and technical courses in government-run educational institutions. Some relaxation in qualifying standards be granted to Muslim students in above.

Educational institutions on the pattern of ITIs be started in predominantly Muslim localities.

... The share of Muslims employment in government and semi-government establishments, government undertakings, statutory corporations is negligible. Measures be devised to rectify the situation. A fair quota for Muslims belonging to backward classes, identified in the Mandal Commission Report be fixed. ...

The existing list of backward Muslim groups be updated... Separate reservation be provided for those economically backward among Muslims. ...

Uniform Civil Code

... Either Article 44 of the Constitution be deleted altogether or, in the alternative, a proviso be added to the said Article that all those communities who express their wish for it shall stand exempted from the ambit of Article 44.

Urdu

Recommendations made in the Gujral Committee Report on Urdu language be implemented.

All India Milli Council: Annual Conference, 31 August - 1 September, 1996 (Resolutions)

On Wakfs

... The General Body of the All India Milli Council ... calls upon the Central Government to issue an ordinance with retrospective effect providing for the extension of the life of the ... Wakf Boards, formed under the repealed Act, and validating all acts done by these Boards till such time as fresh Boards are constituted under the new Wakfs Act.

Urges the Central Government to start the process of constituting the Wakf Boards under the new Act without further loss of time. ...

Urges the Central Government to immediately set up a committee to review the Wakf Act and incorporate such amendments as necessary in consultation with the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

Calls upon all State Governments to allocate a sum of Rupees One Hundred crores each, at the minimum, as a permanent corpus with the purpose of advancing interest-free loans... for the development of Wakf properties...

The General Body notes with regret that in spite of the fact that ... the CID identified the police officials - officers as well as constables - who were found directly involved in the wanton and cold-blooded murder of Muslims in Hashimpura and Maliana (Meerut - UP) and recommended their prosecution... The criminals in uniform are being shielded which in other words amounts to condoning state - terrorism.

... 27 PAC men and 39 police and District officials have been held responsible... The General Body demands that appropriate action should forthwith be taken against all persons ... identified in the report....

... The Milli Council opposes the demand for repeal of Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983...

The Milli Council, while reiterating its commitment to have an electoral roll free from foreigner's names, demands that while revising electoral rolls in future all documentary and other evidences admissible under the Indian Evidence Act be accepted and the names of all Indian Citizen be included in the voters' list without any bias and bungling.

The Milli Council urges upon the Government to provide adequate compensation to the victims of the Bodo extremists and rehabilitate the refugees in any secure place...

Minister of Welfare's Statement in Parliament

On Misuse or Illegal Sale of Wakf Properties, 9 September, 1996

... The Parliament has enacted the Wakf Act, 1995 for better administration of Wakfs to curb such illegal activities. The Wakf Act, 1995 empowers the State Governments under Section 13 of the Act to set up Wakf Boards to ensure proper maintenance of Wakfs under their control and administration of Wakf income for the purposes for which such Wakfs were created/intended. The role of the Central Government is confined under Section 96 of the Act to regulating the secular activities of the Wakfs.

The purpose of bringing new Wakf Law is to provide for better administration of Wakfs and to plug loopholes in the earlier Wakf Laws to ensure that Wakf properties are not alienated by way of sale or transfer. The new law contains the following specific provisions:-

i) Ban on alienation of Wakf properties under Section 51 of the Act by virtue of which a gift, sale or exchange or mortgage of an immovable Wakf property is void, if it is made without prior sanction of the Wakf Board. If any property is gifted, sold or exchanged in violation of the provision, the Board can request the District Collector to recover the property and deliver it to the Board.

ii) The Chief Executive Officer of the Board has for the first time been given powers under Section 54 of the Act to remove encroachments from Wakf properties and get this order enforced with the help of concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrate.

iii) Under Section 40 of the Act, the Board has been given the powers to collect information about the property which the Board considers to be Wakf and declare it as such after proper enquiry.

iv) Under Section 61 of the Act, penalties of fine and imprisonment upto 6 months have been prescribed for erring Mutawallis; Section 64 empowers the Board to remove Mutawallis for their acts of omission and commission.

However, the above provisions would be effective after the State Governments constitute the Wakf Boards under provisions of the Wakf Act, 1995. Central Government has been pursuading State Governments to implement the provisions of the Act by constituting Wakf Boards and Wakf Tribunals. Reports received indicate that State Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Meghalaya have already constituted the Wakf Boards while Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are taking action to implement the provisions of the Act. Other State Governments including that of W.Bengal are in the process of implementing the provisions of the Act.

As for the cases of illegal sale and transfer of Wakf properties a few cases in Assam, two cases in Delhi, 71 cases in Maharashtra, 43 cases in Orissa and one case in Kerala have been reported. Complaints have also been received about some instances of illegal sale and transfer of Wakf properties in West Bengal by erstwhile West Bengal Wakf Board. The Government of West Bengal have confirmed having received similar complaints and have instituted a departmental enquiry to look into it. A copy of the abovesaid enquiry report has not yet been furnished to the Central Government.

The concerned State Governments have taken appropriate measures for recovery of alienated Wakf properties. In Delhi, two complaints of illegal sale of Wakf properties are being enquired into by the administration. In Maharashtra, departmental action has been taken against 10 Mutawallis. In Kerala, prosecution has been started against the Mutawalli concerned; and in Orissa, out of 43 such cases Civil suits have been decided in 29 cases and 14 cases are still pending in Courts. Besides, there have been some cases of sale of Wakf properties by the Rehabilitation Department in Punjab and Haryana, which have been taken up by the Punjab Wakf Board with respective State Governments.

It would, therefore, be appreciated that the Central Government has been requesting the State Governments to take effective steps to ensure that provisions of the new Wakf Act are implemented. Once the State Governments constitute the Wakf Boards and establish Wakf Tribunals, cases of irregularities in sale/gift/mortgage of Wakf properties would receive urgent attention and it would be possible to take corrective action under the relevant provisions of the Act.

(Contd. from page 521)

by the Personal Law - and how many Sikhs actually wear a sword?

And yet the debate must go on freely for things to get better. The Hindus must be free to talk of the need to have a purely Hindu house of God undisturbed by a house of the Muslim God at Ayodhya (A "purely" Hindu temple would never keep out a Mosque or a Gurdwara or a Church, if the Hindus know their religion ever a bit). The Muslims must be actually encouraged to carry on with the Personal Law... If the debate wee to come to an acrimonious halt, this could spell disaster for our national heritage. After all, what is cultural nationalism if not a respect for all cultures enriching this country and what is secular liberalism if not a willingness to hark the sensitivities of all religions that adorn this land? We need ... to change our approach to the debate in order to make it worthwhile.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 17 July, 1996)

Lahore Declaration on Family Laws and Rights of Women

The Declaration was adopted by the Workshop on Family Laws and Human Rights of Women, organised by the AGHS Legal Aid Cell, Lahore.

Preamble

Recalling that the constitutions of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan guarantee all citizens equality before the law. Noting that such equality is denied to women and children in the sphere of family laws and which is of crucial significance to them and realising that family laws of religious minorities have remained even more stagnant and often bear the risk of being influenced by the norms of the religious majority, the participants of the two-day Workshop on Family Laws and Human Rights of Women in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan call upon concerned persons, social action groups, political parties, legislators the government of these countries to campaign for and initiate reforms in family laws in order to make them just and guarantee equal rights to all women and children.

The minimum requirements for such standards are:

Marriage, Separation and Divorce

* Both women and men shall be entitled to a free choice in marriage.
* Women and men shall have equal rights in all matters relating to marriage, divorce, guardianship, maintenance and custody of children.
* Marriages and divorces shall be properly registered and easy access to records be provided.
* Child marriage shall be abolished. The minimum age of marriage for both women and men shall be eighteen years.
* All polygamous marriages be banned and made punishable. Such marriages shall be null and void and the injured party be adequately compensated.
* Provisions pertaining to restitution of conjugal rights shall be deleted.
* A civil law shall be enacted to provide for inter-faith marriages and their registration.
* Women and men shall have equal right under citizenship laws and domicile regulations.
* Spouses shall be entitled to judicial separation by mutual consent and by contest.
* Distribution of moveable and immovable assets and income upon divorce or dissolution of marriage shall be based on principles of justice and equity.
* Matrimonial courts shall be established to deal exclusively with all disputes under family laws (including inheritance and return of personal belongings to the spouses). These courts shall have jurisdiction in respect of family mattes of all religious communities. Court fees should be minimal.
* The matrimonial courts shall have adequate representation of judges from religious minorities and women.
* Execution of decrees passed by the matrimonial courts shall be made more effective and efficient.
* Laws shall be enacted to allow for transfer of cases from one jurisdiction to another in family matters.
* Women and men shall have statutory right of free access to information about their rights through all avenues, including legal aid, the media and through curriculum in formal and informal educational centres.

Guardianship, Custody, Adoption and Other Rights of the Child

* All children born in wedlock or out of it shall enjoy equal status and equal rights.
* The law must recognise both parents as the natural guardians of the child.
* In case of separation amongst spouses custody of minors should be awarded upon sole consideration of the welfare of the minor.
* In passing orders relating to custody, the court shall also pass appropriate orders for the minor's maintenance and management of his/her property.
* Every adult person shall have the right to adopt children.
* All questions of custody and maintenance of the property and adoption of the minor shall be decided by the Matrimonial Courts.
* All matters of adoption shall be dealt by Matrimonial Courts.
* Children must never be described as 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' by the law.
* Denial of parentage, if found to be untrue, should be made punishable.

Economic Rights of Women Within Marriage

* The economic rights of women on marriage, during the subsistence of marriage and on dissolution of marriage shall be protected by law.
* All endowments pledged to a woman at the time of her marriage, whether by parents, parents-in-law or her husband, and gifts given to her shall be her absolute and separate property.
* Adequate maintenance, including interim maintenance, shall be provided to the dependent spouse during the subsistence of the marriage.
* During the subsistence of the marriage the wife's access to matrimonial assets must be guaranteed including her right to reside in the matrimonial home.
* Laws against domestic violence shall empower the courts to grant injunction restraining a violent spouse

(Contd. on next page)

Geetanjali Gangoli and Gopika Solanki on Woman in World Religions

All religions have historically evolved within social frameworks controlled by men; they have, accordingly, tended to propagate patriarchal ideologies based on the principle that man is fundamental, woman merely instrumental. While acknowledging that religion has been among the most effective and seductive tools used to oppress women in various cultures at various times, some contemporary feminist scholars have argued that texts and principles of religion ought, nevertheless, to be reinterpreted from a women-centred perspective.

Their thesis is that, although religions reflect the dominance of the patriarchy, the situation does admit of space for women to intervene. Religion also plays a very important role in the lives of women: indeed, they are the "carriers" of rites and traditions. Besides, a second look at faith - through a secular and humanistic prism - can help in the battle against communalism...

Riffat Hassan, a scholar of Pakistani origin who now lives in the US, has contributed significantly to a feminist interpretation of the Koran. Though her critique centres on Islam, it is equally relevant to other religious systems. Hassan suggests that egalitarianism, humanism and social justice are at the heart of all religions. It has been the misrepresentation, mostly deliberate, by male scholars and theologians that has led to the degeneration of religions into a series of oppressive and punitive practices, especially where women are concerned.

Hassan uses three tools of analysis in approaching the Koran: the politics of language, philosophical consistency and ethical principles. She proposes that language is central in identifying the vested interests of the patriarchy. She adduces the common practice of collating Allah with miyan (literally husband) in speech, which equates husbands in general with God. This, Hassan emphasises, is impermissible and blasphemous in Islam. Besides, the Koran has a logical consistency - that of equality - which is discernible when it is studied in its entirety and not in fragments. Finally, she points out that the central ethical principle of the Koran is justice, as Allah is just. Any interpretation of the text which perpetuates injustice violates the intentions of God.

... Religions like Hinduism (with their multiplicity of traditions) ... do not operate from a single textual tradition, many conflicting interpretations can and do arise. What, then, is the basis for prioritising one interpretation over the others...

... In the Brahmanical tradition - the epics reflect and legitimise an anti-women, anti-lower caste bias... A selective reading of the past (and the present) can push one into adopting a blinkered view which mythicises the past while sweeping aside certain negative aspects of it.

The importance of such efforts as a strategy to work in a; pluralistic society like India is obvious... But such a strategy cannot work in isolation: it must be combined with other strategies like legal reform, the creation of alternate social spaces, the raising of consciousness and the establishment of a programme for economic independence. This will enable women to become, through action and reflection, to become subjects rather than objects of their destiny. **(Source: The Times of India, 21 September, 1996)**

from entering the matrimonial home.

* In case of dissolution of a marriage the courts shall decide all related matters - e.g. divorce/dissolution, maintenance/alimony or dower/financial settlement and provision of shelter simultaneously except disputes relating to custody of minors. In doing so, separate procedures be laid down in order to provide for expeditious disposal of suits.
* Assets, movable or immovable, accumulated during the subsistence of the marriage shall be distributed equally on the termination of the marriage.
* Inheritance laws shall be changed to ensure that the share of the male and female heirs of same class of kinship shall be equal. Upon the death of the husband, the widow and her children shall inherit in equal proportion half of the immovable and moveable assets accumulated by the couple during the subsistence of the marriage. The widow shall remain the sole owner of the balance half of such assets till her death.
* Children should also inherit the share of property of their pre-deceased parents at the death of the grandparents.
* Spouses should also inherit from the share of their pre-deceased spouse on the death of a parent-in-law.

(Source: The Seminar, June, 1996)

Supreme Court on Dowry Prohibition

G. Gopal Reddy, Appellant v. State of A.P., Respondent.

DR. A.S. ANAND AND M.K. MUKHERJEE, JJ.

Dowry (Prohibition) Act (28 of 1961), Section 2 - 'Dowry' - Act prohibits not only actual receiving of dowry but also very demand for dowry made even before marriage.

The Act is a piece of social legislation which aims to check the growing menace of the social evil of dowry and it makes punishable not only the actual receiving of dowry but also the very demand of dowry made before or at the time or after the marriage where such demand is referable to the consideration of marriage. ... **(Source: AIR 1996 SC2184)**

Patna High Court on Gift in Muslim Law

Bibi Riajan Khatoon and others, Appellants v. Sadrul Alam and others, Respondents.

B.L. YADAV, J.

Muslim Law - Gift - Essentials.

Under the Mohammedan Law for validity of the deed of gift four elements are necessary; (1) declaration of gift by the donor (2) relinquishment by donor of ownership and dominion (3) acceptance of the gift by donee, and (4) delivery of possession of the property by donor. The relinquishment of control and ownership by the donor is necessary to complete the gift. **(Source: AIR 1996 Patna 156)**

Antara Dev Sen's Report in the Indian Express

On Roots of Violence in AMU Compus

It looks like a students' movement. But if you probe deeper, the present crisis at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) reveals a grotesque nexus between university members, criminals and politicians. The main issue is not students' rights or even communalism but hard cash. And political power.

AMU is being slowly throttled by an enormous network of corruption where crores are at stake. So vice-chancellor Mehmoodur Rehman, a heavy-headed IAS officer who doesn't believe in either delegation or discussion, came down strongly on the various rackets in his inimitable style of functioning...

As the money dried up, the ring-leaders of the rackets seemed desperate to get rid of the man choking the pipes of corruption. And apparently, when some residential students fell sick after eating at the mess, they saw their chance... One student was shot dead and another gravely wounded in what seems to be a police shoot out.

... The police know what's going on, they have not acted. Nor are they denying the firing, though many students and teachers believe that the bullets... were not fired by the police.

Their hesitation might be due to the enormous political patronage that the ruffians linked to AMU have. Some of the known roughnecks are said to be close to a former Minister of State for External Affairs, while other claim links with a former Railways Minister. Even Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Yadav seems to be a godfather of sorts.

Thanks to the political protection, a number of rackets have blossomed in AMU. These involve land-grabbing, students' admissions, staff appointments and defalcation of funds. Teachers insist that all this had been brought to the notice of the previous VC, Prof. M.N. Faruqui, but he had failed to stem the rot. When Rehman took over as VC last year, he started his own cleanup operation.

The sprawling campus of AMU is just a part of the enormous property that the university possesses. Estimated to be worth Rs. 150 crore, it has been constantly under threat from illegal property dealers and other encroachers. Earlier this year, the VC suspended three professors related to a property scam.

Admissions was also a major money-spinner for certain 'students' and teachers of the university. Lists were doctored and the substantial discretionary quota of the VC was used to hustle in underqualified students. For a price, of course.

The going rate for a ticket to AMU's medical college was Rs.3-5 lakh. Engineering went slightly cheaper at Rs.1-3 lakh. Still cheaper was the MBA course, a flat rate of Rs. 1 lakh. And for just Rs. 50,000 you could walk in the back-door of the computer courses.

For the Plus Two course the rates were slashed to Rs. 25,000. And those willing to settle for graduate courses in Arts, Science and Commerce could get in simply by pledging their loyalty. No cash down, just the assurance of mob strength and unconditional support.

Getting into the teaching faculty was almost as easy. Greased palms, political backing and fake papers ensured tenure. People who would seem eminently unqualified as teachers are established faculty members now.

For instance, Mohd. Hafiz Ilyas, who was rusticated from AMU in the early '80 and had unsuccessfully challenged the rustication in the High Court and then in the Supreme Court... figures in connection with several police cases involving crime and violence on the campus. Now he is a lecturer in Psychology in AMU. On the campus, he is known as Salman Khursheed's man.

The current agitation against the VC seems to be triggered by a number of factors. First, the admissions were closed on September 30, the day before the shooting. Second, the VC had scrapped the admission interview in most of the departments, banking solely on written tests and marksheets. And he strictly monitored the VC's quota.

Third, he started a 'dining hall' system recently, by which all students needed to pay for and eat in their hostels and not, as was the custom, in the nearby dhabas. A lot of these eateries, which had become the meeting place of criminals and students, lost business and were up in arms against the VC. Fourth, he took the land-grabbing threat seriously and suspended three teachers.

Finally, he set up an enquiry committee headed by a High Court judge to look into AMU's affairs over the last five years. Interestingly, the committee began work about two weeks ago. Among the scams it is probing is the case of missing Rs.12 lakh that disappeared from the Controller's office in 1990.

Thus, it is not surprising that many people want the VC out. Some teachers and a section of students believe the current agitation to be a set-up job...

The VC himself has been behaving very strangely. Since the night of the firing, he has gone into hiding... The only gesture he has made to reach out to the students has been a note from underground, beginning: "My heart bleeds..."

... A campus as volatile as AMU needs more than that.

The Pioneer's Report on Role of Land Mafia

Land Mafia, in connivance with some teachers and rusticated students, seemed to have instigated violence in the Aligarh Muslim University which resulted in police firing on October 1, leaving one student dead...

The VC had ... taken action against this lobby, and four teachers had been suspended in April last for their involvement in land grab... These teachers were chargesheeted only four days before the present round of violence took place....

Tension started brewing in AMU right after the present Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Mehmudur Rahman, joined the university in May (1995).

Mr. Rahman undertook operation to clean the University of anti-social elements.

After joining, the first thing Mr. Rahman did was to make it compulsory for every student, living in the University hostels, to join the mess. Mr. Rahman also passed strict instructions that every student should clear his dues. ...

To check the unfair activities of unscrupulous students, Mr. Rahman dissolved the Student's Union....

In a move to cleanse the varsity, the VC had appointed his own men at various posts. A section of the teachers was very annoyed with this...

Even the food poisoning case, that took place in Sir Syed Hall, seemed to be a handiwork of anti-social elements. The first batch of students that ate the same meal did not face any problem while the second batch had to be hospitalised due to food poisoning...

However, the different account of the students on the reason to demonstrate at the VC's residence, that resulted in the police firing, raises doubt whether the agitation was spontaneous or organised. While a group of students feel that food poisoning provoked them to organise a demonstration at the VC's residence, another group is of the view that it was the attempt by Punjab Police jawans to enter Habib Hall.

There are other incidents that indicate that an attempt was being made to disrupt normalcy at the campus.

For instance, on September 30 when students marched towards the VC's residence in protest against food poisoning, a group of students broke open the doors of Pro-VC's office and admission records wee looted and destroyed. Incidentally September 30 was the last day of submitting admission forms and ... the VC had refused (to extend it).

Meanwhile, Mr. Rahman said ... that he had to close the university sine die to enable law-enforcing agencies to segregate anti-social elements from the students....

(Source: The Pioneer, 6 October, 1996)

1996: Lok Sabha Voter Turnout

		National Average	57%	Above + Below -
1.		Very Poor	+2.9	
2.	{	Men	+2.4	
	{	Women	-2.2	
3.	{	Rural	+1.1	
	{	Urban	-3.0	
4.		Graduates	-4.5	
5.	{	Dalit	+1.9	
	{	Muslim	-0.8	
	{	Upper Caste	-1.6	

(Source: India Today, 31 August, 1996)

Bombay High Court On Revision of Electoral Roll

Shri Savio O. Fernandes and another, Petitioners v. State Election Commissioner and others, Respondents.

K.G. SHAH & T.K. CHANDRASHEKHARA DAS, JJ

Representation of the People Act (43 of 1950), Section 20 - Revision of electoral roll - Procedure - Public intimation or public notice is sufficient to anybody who wanted his name to be included in electoral roll.

The argument of the learned counsel for the petitioners in Writ Petition No. 44 of 1996 that before omitting the names of the petitioners from the electoral roll, they should have been given a personal notice under Section 22 of the 1950 Act, does not appeal to us. When the intensive revision of the electoral roll was carried out, the public intimation or a public notice was sufficient to anybody who wanted his name to be included in the electoral roll and he should have inspected the draft roll when it was ready and published and should have made an effort to get his name included in the final electoral roll if his name appeared in the earlier electoral roll prepared in the year 1993 but, this time was omitted.

(Source: AIR 1996 Bombay 343)

Bombay High Court On Pre-Election Corrupt Practice

Vejhurani Thakurdas Jhamandas, Petitioner v. Sabir Shaikh, Respondent.

A.P. SHAH, J.

Representation of the People Act (43 of 1951), Sections 33, 123 - Corrupt practice - Candidate posing himself as Shiv Bhakta and covering himself with dhoti of orange colour - Held allegation relating to period anterior to commencement of candidature cannot be relied upon and even otherwise wearing clothe of a particular colour could not amount to corrupt practice.

Corrupt practice - Respondent a Muslim posed himself as Devotee of Lord Shiva and secured sympathy votes - Allegation to this effect not supported by material facts - Allegation cannot be sustained.

(Source: AIR 1996 Bombay 356)

Kewal Verma
On the Demise of the Mandal Phenomenon
A Review of Srinivas, M.N.: Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar

... In the early 1990s, Mandal, all of a sudden, became fashionable... But what is surprising is that Mandal should have gone out of fashion so soon...

Why has Mandal gone out of fashion? ...

The fundamental social divide in Hindu society is on the line of untouchability. Under the four varna system untouchables i.e. scheduled castes are outside the caste system. The backward castes are covered under the broad category of shudras.

Only the untouchability divide has been proving to be too stubborn to go. As far as shudras are concerned, even the traditional Hinduism provides space for upward mobility. Even in the pre-British period, there was a movement of Sanskritisation among sections of shudras to trace their ancestry to the Brahmins and the Thakurs. At the time of census, there was campaign among backward castes to register their belonging to upper castes. Then with urbanisation and industrialisation, the process of Sanskritisation began to change over to bourgeoisification of backward castes. This gave little move to push social mobility.

The abolition of the zamindari system turned many backward castes into dominant castes virtually overnight. The Green Revolution reinforced social mobility. The social mobility brings about increasing differentiation among the backwards, each struggling to move upward than the others.

The Supreme Court judgement on the Mandal Commission accelerated the process of differentiation. The Supreme Court ordered the government to review the situation periodically to identify "creamy layer" among the backward castes and deny them the benefits of reservation.

The ground reality and the Supreme Court judgement have begun to reflect politics. The solidarity of backward castes was shattered in the recent parliamentary elections. Both in UP and Bihar, sections of backward castes joined hands with the upper caste to defeat Mandalites.

The Mandalites received further shock when the backward castes - scheduled castes alliance constructed by Mulayam Singh broke down.

It is not accidental that Jayalalitha, who got the reservation increased to 69 per cent, and the Congress in Karnataka, which promised to increase the reservation to 80 per cent, lost. On the contrary, the BJP, which didn't make any firm promise on reservation emerged the single largest party.

The earlier public sector-led growth, in fact, hindered the weakening of the caste system. In the public sector, caste-oriented nepotism and favouritism thrived. But the shift from the public sector to the private sector, higher industrial growth and fast urbanisation would sound the death knell to casteism... The market would ignore caste prejudices easily. Perhaps, it may not ignore communal prejudices.

The caste system draws its sustenance from birth and occupations. Urbanisation will weaken the link between caste and occupation. And Mandal will die its natural death. And the politicians who try to keep it alive, only unnaturally, will fall by the wayside sooner than later. ...

(Source: The Sunday)

Delhi High Court
On Reservation in Higher Education

Dr. Chanemouga Soundaram C. and others, Petitioners v. All India Institute of Medical Sciences and others, Respondents

M. JAGANNADHA RAO, C.J. AND DALVEER BHANDARI, J.

Constitution of India, Article 226 - All India Institute of Medical Sciences Act (25 of 1956), Section 14 - Education - Admission to P.G. Courses in All India Institute of Medical Sciences - There can be no reservation of seats on University based preference, catering to regional needs.

The All India character of AIIMS as per the Act, together with the fact that in MBBS, the 40-45 students who join AIIMS after a common examination, are themselves drawn from all over India, shows that the 33% reservation for AIIMS students at Post Graduate level cannot be justified on a regional requirement basis. Nor is it a case of Post Gradua students from AIIMS being expected to settle down in Delhi. It might be that AIIMS, treated as an institution which confers degrees, could be treated as on par with a University but even so because of the object and purposes for which it is established and particularly that it is to be a high model institution for education, teaching and research for the entire country, there can be no reservation of seats on a University based preference, catering to regional needs.

... Admission to P.G. Medical courses - Principle of institutional continuity - Is no longer acceptable.

... 33% reservation in All India Institute of Medical Sciences towards institutional reservation - Is discriminatory and violative of Article 14 of Constitution - So far as AIIMS is concerned, which is a premier institute, such quota is not permissible and its withdrawal was proper as it has resulted in substantial deterioration of standards in AIIMS.

(Source: AIR 1996 Delhi 291)

Ambedkar
On Reservation for Untouchables

The Untouchables demand that a certain proportion of posts in the public services of the country shall be reserved for them, subject to the rule of minimum qualification. The Hindus object to this demand... The only point of dispute, and it is a very important point, is whether caste and creed should form a consideration which must be taken into account in the recruitment for public services. ...

The Hindus seek to give to their opposition to the demand of the Untouchable an appearance of fairness by relying upon efficiency and competitive examination. Here again the argument is quite beside the point. The question is not whether the competitive system of Examination is or is not the proper method of getting efficient persons in public services. The question is whether the competitive system simply because it is open to all castes and creeds will enable the Untouchables to get a footing in the Public Service. That depends upon the educational system of the State. Is it sufficiently democratic? Are the facilities for education sufficiently widespread and sufficiently used to permit persons from all classes to come forth to compete?

Otherwise, even with the system of open competition large classes are sure to be left out in the cold. This basic condition is conspicuous by its absence in India. Higher education in India is the monopoly of Hindus and particularly of high caste Hindus. By reason of Untouchability the Untouchables are denied the opportunity for Education. By reason of their poverty higher education necessary for higher posts in the public service - and higher posts in the public service are the only things that matter because they have a strategic value - is not within their reach. The State will not take the financial responsibility of giving them higher education - they are demanding it... to ask the Untouchables to rely upon the results of the competitive examination for entry into the public services is to practise a fraud upon them. The position taken by the Untouchables is in no sense unreasonable. They admit the necessity for maintaining efficiency. That is why ... they themselves say that their demand shall be subject to the rule of minimum qualification. In other words what the Untouchables demand is that a minimum qualification should be prescribed for every post in the public service and if two persons apply for such a post and the **Untouchable has the minimum qualification he should be preferred to a Hindu even though the Hindu may have qualification higher than the minimum qualification.** It, of course, does mean that the basis for appointment should be minimum qualification not the highest qualification. This may sound queer to those who do not mind if their test of efficiency gives certain communities a monopoly of public service. But did not Campbell-Bannerman say that self-government was better than good government? What else are the Untouchables demanding? They are prepared to recognize the need of having an efficient Government. That is why they are ready to accept the requirement of minimum qualifications for entry in the public services of the country. What the Untouchables are not prepared to do is to forego self-government for good government. **Good Government based on higher qualification will be a communal government, for the Hindus alone claim qualifications higher than minimum qualifications.** ... What they say is that minimum qualifications are enough for efficient government and since it makes self-government possible, minimum qualification should be the rule for entry in Public Service. It ensures self-government as well as efficient government.

(Source: The Dalit Voice, 16-31 August, 1996)

Supreme Court
On Declaration as SC/ST

Nityanand Sharma and another, Appellants v. State of Bihar and others, Respondents.

K. RAMASWAMY, B.L. HANSARIA AND S.B. MAJMUDAR, JJ.

Constitution of India, Articles 342, 366 (25) Scheduled Tribe - 'Lohars' are other backward class and not Scheduled Tribe - Court cannot give declaration of social status as a Tribe or declare them as Scheduled Tribe in Act.

Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment Act) (1976), Section 4.

Lohars are Other Backward Class. They are not Scheduled Tribes and Court cannot give any declaration that Lohars are equivalent to Loharas or Lohras or that they are entitled to same status. The Court has no power to declare synonyms as equivalent to the Tribes specified i the Order or include in or substitute any caste/tribe etc. It would thus be clear that for the purpose of the Constitution, "Scheduled Tribes" defined under Article 366 (25) as substituted under the Act, and the Second Schedule thereunder are conclusive. Though evidence may be admissible to a limited extent of finding out whether the community which claims the status as Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, was, in fact, included in the concerned Schedule, the Court is devoid of power to include in or exclude from or substitute or declare synonym to be of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe or parts thereof or group of such caste or tribe.

(Source: AIR 1996 Supreme Court 2306)

Asghar Ali Engineer on the Image of the Muslim Indians

Minorities in all countries face problems. There is hardly any country, developed or developing, secular or theocratic, democratic or authoritarian, in which minorities, whether religious, linguistic, racial or cultural, do not face any problem. The degree of problems of course can vary. There may be cases of genocide in some countries, there may be cases of repeated violence in some others and there may be discrimination and unequal treatment. Also, the prejudices are not found merely among the people but also become part of the administration. The police in Europe are as prejudiced against the racial minorities as the police in India are against Muslims or Dalits...

Pakistan was created apparently on the basis of religious solidarity. This solidarity melted like thin ice, no sooner than Pakistan was formed. Ethnic conflicts between Sindhis and Mohajirs, West Pakistanis and (then) East Pakistanis and between Punjabis and non-Punjabis came to the fore. Ultimately, East Pakistan separated to form Bangladesh. There is acute ethnic and religious conflict in Pakistan today. The Mohajirs, who were instrumental in the formation of Pakistan, are being treated as aliens. They are at the receiving end today. Their loyalty to Pakistan is suspect. According to the Pakistan National Human Rights Commission, on an average six Mohajirs were killed every day in Karachi in 1995. The Mohajirs felt persecuted as a religious minority in India before 1947 and hence vigorously supported the Pakistan movement. However, now in Pakistan the Mohajirs though most of them are Sunni Muslims - a majority community in Pakistan - are an Urdu-speaking ethnic minority facing persecution at the hands of Punjabis and Sindhis. ...Minorities (are) judged by certain stereotypes which, at best, are partially true. Thus the African Americans in the U.S. and Muslims in India are believed to be crimeprone. Very few Whites, for example, dare to walk through Harlem in New York...

In India, most of the middle class members of the majority community think that the rate of crime is much higher among the Muslims and that it has something to do with their Muslimness. The Muslims think the Hindus are cowards, cunning and unreliable. ... It is thought that Muslims are much more fanatical and that they never practise family planning.

Such stereotypes about a community, especially about a minority community, are formed during conflict situations. It will be ... difficult to find the prevalence of such stereotypes about Muslims in pre-British India as there was no conflict between Hindus and Muslims on religious or communal lines. This conflict began with the advent of the British and intensified until the unfortunate partition of the country...

It is totally wrong to believe that more Muslims are in crime than Hindus. First we accept a stereotype and than draw sustenance for it from selective reading of the sources... As Muslims are poorer and backward, and have less economic opportunities, it is likely that some of them take to crime. But one will find a much higher proportion of white collar crime among the economically affluent communities! The reason, in fact, is economic, and not religious. One cannot damn the whole community (and no community is really homogeneous) what a few people of that community do. But this is precisely what happens in conflict situations. Even an individual is seen as "representative" of the community.

It has also not been borne out by field studies that Muslims do not practise family planning because of their "Muslimness". Again family planning is basically an economic phenomenon. Well to do and educated Muslims practise family planning like their Hindu counterparts... It is equally wrong to believe that Muslims are more aggressive and fanatical. All riots studies in independent India have shown that more Muslims have been killed and injured.

The demolition of the Babari Masjid was certainly an act of religious fanaticism. But it will be equally wrong to blame Hinduism or all Hindus for what happened. The responsibility lies with certain political parties and groups, not with the entire community. This distinction is very vital to understand the problem. In order to combat ethnic or communal conflict the first and most vital step is to combat these stereotypes. This battle also, like others, begins in the human mind.

(Source: The Hindu, 14 March, 1995)

Sardar Patel's Views on Secession

Interview with the Daily Worker, London Correspondent Palme Dutt, 10 April, 1946

Question: Would you clarify further the position of the Congress in regard to the right to self-determination, including the right of secession, by any territorial unit in India if there is a clearly proved democratic wish?

Answer: The Congress position is that if the League feels that the Muslim community is hampered in its growth in the manner it likes, the Congress is prepared to agree to a redistribution of the Provinces in such a manner as to allow them fullest possible autonomy in areas in which they are predominantly in a majority, subject to their agreeing to a common policy in regard to subjects of common interest as may be agreed. The Congress cannot, under any circumstances, think of partitioning India.

The Congress does not think in terms of forcing any area to remain in the Union against the declared wish of its population (emphasis added).

At the same time, the Congress will not agree in any way to give its voluntary consent to such a separation. It would reserve its own right to continue to persuade, by non-violent means, the people of that area to remain in the Indian Union..." **(Source: The Hindu, 11 April, 1996)**

Press Council of India: Norms of Journalistic Conduct, 1996 (Extracts)

Caste, Religion or Community References: General

In general, the caste identification of a person or a particular class should be avoided, particularly when in the context it conveys a sense of attributes a conduct or practice derogatory to that caste.

Newspapers are advised against the use of word 'Scheduled Caste' or 'harijan' which has been objected to by some persons. An accused or a victim shall not be described by his caste or community when the same does not have anything to do with the offence or the crime and plays no part either in the identification of any accused or proceeding, if there be any.

Newspapers should not publish any fictional literature distorting and portraying the religious characters in an adverse light transgression of the norms of literary taste and offending the religious susceptibilities of large sections of society who hold those characters in high esteem, invested with attributes of the virtuous and lofty.

Commercial exploitation of the name of prophets, seers or deities is repugnant to journalistic ethics and good taste.

Door Darshan's RSS Connections

The RSS infiltration with mass media is not confined to the print media alone. Government owned AIR and DD have also been infiltrated to the extent that the swearing in of Atal Behari Vajpayee was celebrated in the newsroom of DD...

Unfortunately, even after the UF government has taken over at the centre, the infiltration continues... A major political programme has been given to Major Raghuvanshi, whose pro-RSS credentials have never been in doubt... When Babari Masjid was demolished by Hindu fanatics, Raghuvanshi was perhaps the only journalist who did not make any attempt to hide his joy and went on proclaiming that the pride of Hindus had been restored.

But then Raghuvanshi is not the only Sanghi to have benefitted from the new found journalistic objectivity of DD bosses under UF regime... One Ms Ritu Dhavan is likely to bag a prestigious current affairs programme in DD.

Those who are aware of the closeness between Rajat Sharma and Ms. Dhavan would not hesitate even for a second in pinpointing the real man behind the enterprise and Rajat's political mentors are in the Sangh Parivar.

... DD's largesse is likely to come in handy for him to continue to contribute his humble might for the cause of ... Hindu Rashtra. ...

(Source: The New Age Weekly, 1-7 September, 1996)

I - Guidelines for Observance by the Press Council in the Wake of Communal Disturbances, 1969

Recognising that the Press which enjoys the utmost freedom of expression has a great and vital role to play in educating and moulding public opinion on correct lines in regard to the need for friendly and harmonious relations between the various communities and religious groups forming the fabric of Indian political life and in mirroring the conscience of the best minds of the country to achieve national solidarity, the PCI considers that this object would be defeated, communal peace and harmony disturbed and national unity disrupted if the Press does not strictly adhere to proper norms and standards in reporting on or commenting on matters which bear on communal relations. Without attempting to be exhaustive, the Council considers the following as offending against journalistic properties and ethics:

1. Distortion or exaggeration of facts or incidents in relation to communal matters or giving currency to unverified rumours, suspicions or inferences as if they were facts and base their comments on them.

   Employment of intemperate or unrestrained language in the presentation of news or views, even as a piece of literary flourish or for the purpose of rhetoric or emphasis.
3. Encouraging or condoning violence even in the face of provocation as a means of obtaining redress of grievances whether the same be genuine or not.
4. While it is the legitimate function of the Press to draw attention to the genuine and legitimate grievances of any community with a view to having the same redressed by all peaceful, legal and legitimate means, it is improper and a breach of journalistic ethics to invent grievances, or to exaggerate real grievances, as these tend to promote communal ill-feeling and accentuate discord.
5. Scurrilous and untrue attacks on communities, or individuals, particularly when this is accompanied by charges attributing misconduct to them as due to their being members of a particular community or caste.
6. Falsely giving a communal colour to incidents which might occur in which members of different communities happen to be involved.
7. Emphasising matters that are not to produce communal hatred or ill-will, or fostering feelings of distrust between communities.
8. Publishing alarming news which are in substance untrue or make provocative comments on such news or even otherwise calculated to embitter relations between different communities or regional or linguistic groups.
9. Exaggerating actual happenings to achieve sensationalism and publication of news which adversely affect communal harmony with banner headlines or in distinctive types.
10. Making disrespectful, derogatory or insulting remarks on or reference to the different religions or faiths or their founders.

II - Guidelines issued by the Press Council for Observance by the State Governments & the Media in relation to Communal Disturbances, 1990

1. The State Government should take upon themselves the responsibility of keeping a close watch on the communal writings that might spark off tension, destruction and death, and bring them to the notice of the Council.

   The Government may have occasion to take action against erring papers or editors. But it must do so within the bounds of law. If newsmen are arrested, or search and seizure operations become necessary, it would be healthy convention if such developments could be reported to the Press Council within 24 to 48 hours followed by a detailed note within a week.
3. Under no circumstances must the authorities resort to vindictive measures like cut in advertisement, cancellation of accreditation, cut in newsprint quota and other facilities.
4. Provocative and sensational headlines should be avoided by the Press.
5. Headings must reflect and justify the matter printed under them.
6. Figures of casualties given in headlines should preferably be on the lower side in case or doubt about their exactness and where the numbers reported by various sources differ widely.
7. Headings containing allegations made in statements should either identify the person/body making the allegation or, at least, should carry quotation marks.
8. News reports should be devoid of comments and value judgement.
9. Presentation of news should not be motivated or guided by partisan feelings, nor should it appear to be so.
10. Language employed in writing the news should be temperate and such as may foster feelings or amity among communities.
11. Corrections should be promptly published with due prominence and regrets expressed in serious cases.
12. It will help a great deal if in-service training is giving to journalists for inculcation of all these principles.

III - Guidelines issued by the Press Council in the wake of the Ram Janambhoomi-Babari Masjid Dispute, 21-22 January, 1992

Guidelines for guarding against the commission of the following journalistic improprieties and unethicalities:

1. Distortion or exaggeration of facts or incidents in relation to communal matters or giving currency to unverified rumours, suspicions or inferences as if they were facts and base their comments on them.
2. Employment of intemperate or unrestrained language in the ... news or views, even as a piece of literary flourish or for the purpose of rhetoric or emphasis.
3. Encouraging or condoning violence even in the face of provocation as a means of obtaining redress of grievance whether the same be genuine or not.
4. While it is the legitimate function of the Press to draw attention to the genuine and legitimate grievances of any community with a view to having, it is improper and a breach of journalistic ethics to invent grievances, or to exaggerate real grievances, as these tend to promote communal ill-feeling and accentuate discord.
5. Scurrilous and untrue attacks on communities, or individuals, particularly when this is accompanied by charges attributing misconduct to them as due to their being members of a particular community/ caste.
6. Falsely giving a communal colour to incidents which might occur in which members of different communities happen to be involved.
7. Emphasising matters that are apt to produce communal hatred or ill-will, or fostering feelings of distrust between communities.
8. Publishing alarming news which are in substance untrue or make provocative comments on such news or even otherwise calculated to embitter relations between different communities....
9. Exaggerating actual happenings to achieve sensationalism and publication of news which adversely affect communal harmony with banner headlines or in distinctive types.
10. Making disrespectful, derogatory or insulting remarks on or reference to the different religions or faiths or their founders.

UK: Hindu Minority

A national survey by the National Statistics Office has confirmed that when it comes to education of children and home ownership, the Indian community is the best... The study looked at GCSE Examination passes, home ownership and unemployment. Even in unemployment statistics, it was discovered that after the host white community, the Indians had the lowest unemployment. The statistics speak for themselves.

... Almost all of the Indian community is actually Hindu which includes Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. Some sociologists have suggested that it is normal to expect immigrants to perform better because they are more adventurous and hard working... By comparison Indians (Hindus) have done much better than those who have come from Pakistan and Bangladesh (all of whom are Muslims). All three so-called 'Asian' communities originate from same part of the world and experience same prejudices and problems in the host country... The credit ... must go to the Hindu way of life and thinking which is rooted deeply in the Hindu 'Sanskriti' brought to the British Isle by the Hindus...

(Source: The Organiser, 13 October, 1996)

Islam-Hinduism Interaction

... Early Muslim knowledge about the religious belief of India was very small: and no wonder, for Hinduism is utterly different from Islam in most of its ways... Its beliefs were not investigated for Islam before al-Biruni (q.v.) compiled his K. Tarikh al-Hind in Ghazna in the 5th/11th century; this deals, however, mostly with the beliefs of the Brahman community, the highest grade in the Hindu social order... Al-Biruni, though he mentions many popular practices, does not sem to have gone so far as collecting material on "popular" Hinduism, the beliefs of the non-Brahman population.... To the Muslim conquerors all these shades of Hindu belief were anathema; their practitioners were not Ahl al-Kitab, and therefore in theory they could not be beneficiaries of the dhimma (see DHIMMI), and be given the choice of paying the djizya (q.v.); the alternatives were Islam or death. This, however, is not easy for a minority to impose on a majority, and there is early evidence (from the Cac-nama, a Persian work of ca. 613/1216 said to be a translation of an Arabic account of the conquest of Sind) of the Sindhis being allowed the status of dhimmi. There are references to djizya early in the chronicles of the Dihli sultanate, but these may relate to the payment of tribute by Hindu chieftains.

The rulers of India seem to have taken little interest in the belief of their subjects before the reign of Akbar. That ruler introduced many forms drawn from Hindu worship (as from that of the Djayns and Parsis [q.v..] and from Christianity) into his personal devotions, and later into his own syncretistic faith the Din-i-Ilahi... Akbar's religious curiosity was followed by that of his great-grandson, Dara Shukoh (q.v.) in whom it was perhaps more dangerous to Islam in India as he saw the mixing of the two seas... of Muslim and Hindu pantheistic mysticism as a scholastic counter to orthodoxy, and sought in this the common factors of Hinduism and Islam...

Although the apparent rapprochement of Islam to Hinduism in the writings of the Indian sufis suggests that Islam in India may have come under Hindu influence, this does not in fact appear to have been the case; although some trends in Hindu mysticism may have stimulated the sufi mystics. This mysticism was in Sufism long before its arrival in India, and indeed al-Halladi (q.v.) is not far from the thought of the Upanishads. The real union of Islam and Hindu notions comes rather from the Hindu side, in the syncretistic movements of north India in the 9th/15th and 10th/16th centuries: Kabir (q.v.) in spite of his name, is more in the Hindu tradition than the Muslim, and indeed his Islam appears to have been learnt at second-hand; what singles him out from other Hindu preachers is his uncompromising monotheism, expressed pantheistically, rather than the usual mediaeval Hindu monotheistic expression which is a henotheism and susceptible of compromise. The later Islamic influence in some of the syncretistic cults, such as the Pran-nathis, the Kabir-panthis, the Dadu-panthis, and not excluding the Sikhs (q.v.), stems directly through Kabir's monotheism.

Hindu influences on some of the Muslim writers of Hindi (q.v.) are rather literary than religious. When Indian literature began to be studied as an art form in the Mughal courts and under Mughal patronage a whole additional repertory of image and metaphor, already couched in Hindu terms, became available to the Muslim poet; indeed, we know that much of this repertoire was already familiar to the sufi poets of Awadhi (see Malik Muhammad Djayasi). But its acceptance by Muslim poets such as Rahim (see Abd Al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan) certainly does not involve the acceptance of the theology; indeed, it does not seem to involve it on the part of many Hindu writers.

There do, however, seem to have been some Hindu influences on Muslims in social rather than in religious practices. The Hindu conception of caste (djat, djati), a pre-Aryan social division of society which, by being grafted on to the Aryan concept of social order (varna), has acquired Brahmanical sanction and consequent sanctification, has certainly spread to Muslim minority communities in some of the remoter districts of India. Caste is, for example, usually endogamous, and some Muslim communities have adopted similar restrictive endogamic patterns to those of their Hindu neighbours; in some cases even community of worship has ceased to be observed, and commensality has been replaced by mutually restricted eating groups. This is particularly noticeable among recent converts from Hinduism, especially from the lower caste Hindus or from the so-called "untouchables"...

(Extract from Encyclopaedia Brittannica)

Gen. K.M. Cariappa on Muslim Loyalty

The partition of India came as a result of the demands of the top leaders of the Muslim League who wanted Pakistan. In this context, I make a fervent appeal to all my Muslim brothers and sisters in India to please come out in the open and declare, at least to their conscience, a whether their loyalty is to India or Pakistan. If on the other hand, if it is to Pakistan, they must pack up lock, stock and barrel and go to Pakistan at once. If it is to India - and I know there are Muslims who sincerely and truthfully feel so - they must expose disloyal elements in their community with all speed and get them to quit India.

(Source: The Organiser, 29 September, 1996)

The Nightmare of a Hindu Technocrat

Extracts from Letter of T.H. Chowdhury, ex-Dy. D.G., Telecoms and ex CMD, Videsh Sanchar Nigam,

... Given Islam's exclusivity and Muslim inability and unwillingness to live peacefully in any State other than-that ruled by them, it is a good riddance that the Muslim majority Pakistan and Bangladesh were partitioned off from India. The pre-1947 efforts to keep India as one State would have meant a weak and strife-torn country and state like Yugoslavia after end of Communism. The Hindus in different States under the leadership of people like Mulayam Singh, the Dravidian parties in Tamilnadu, the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, the Mizos and Nagas in the East would have emulated the Muslims in weakening the nation and State and the Federal State would have come under the Veto of some or the other, if it tried to intervene with something like the Article 356 of present day India's constitution. So it was good, that the Muslim majority areas seceded and the rest of India was given a chance to become a strong, united nation state.

The misfortune is that do-gooders but poor realists like Gandhiji and Nehru, while agreeing to the partition on the basis of religion, deceived themselves into believing that Muslims remaining in India would give up the religion-based two-nation theory and become secular like other Indians. But Islam does not countenance secularism and so we see that Muslim inhabitants of India are now back to their old separatism but backed by two Islamic states of Pakistan and Bangladesh and abetted by communists, casteists, power-mongers and plain traitors who harbour infiltrators. Had we exchanged the Muslim and Hindu populations in 1947, by now, India would have been a strong, united State like Christian Germany and Muslim Yemen. What has happened is that all the Hindus from Pakistan had been squeezed out and the majority of Hindus from Bangladesh had also been forced out without an equal number of Muslims being sent out from India. It is only a matter of a few years before no Hindu would be left in Bangladesh also. In addition, we have the Muslims also illegally immigrating into India for the benefit of "secular" parties as their bonded (initially) voters. So, India has no longer the option of exchange of populations between itself and the Islamic states carved out of it.

... Pakistan's population is expected to be the second largest in the world after China in another 40 years. Bangladesh may not lag behind. Confederal India would be settled by the overflowing Muslim populations and Hindus would be reduced to an ineffective minority... India would be an Islamic Republic. Hindus would pass under Aurangzebs, Ala-ud-din Khiljis. It would then be Nepal's turn to be inundated by the Muslim hordes. Hindus would be either converted or evicted.... As no country, not America or Canada or Australia can accommodate 800 million Hindu migrants; the certainty therefore would be conversion.

Even without confederation, 20 million Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and West Asia have infiltrated and are safely, securely harboured in the homes of Muslim inhabitants of India. With confederation, they would be here legally and Hindus will be "illegal" residents in an Islamic Republic. The spectre is too ghastly to imagine even. NO! Confederation is calamitous. Islam cannot co-exist with any other religion in peace, in one nation-state. Only a strong, united, nationalistic India, unappeasing but just to every loyal citizen as a human being, alone can safeguard the Hindu people, nation and country. If we have to pay a high price to remain Hindus, to preserve and promote our culture, our heritage, well we should pay. We need no confederation; we need a strong patriotic, confident, virile people and nationalist leaders.

Nirad Chaudhary
On Destruction of Temples by Muslims

... From 1000 A.D. every Hindu temple from Kathiawar to Bihar, from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas has been sacked and ruined. Not a temple was left standing all over northern India. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Jesuit Priest and mathematician, Tippenthaler noticed in the evenings as he travelled from Malwa to the other end, the flickering flames of tiny earthen lamps placed by the villagers at some risk to themselves. Temples escaped destruction only when Muslim power did not gain access to them for reasons such as dense forests. Otherwise it was a continuous spell of vandalism. No nation with any self-respect will forgive this. They took our women. And they imposed the jiziya, the tax... **(Source: The Organiser, 29 September, 1996)**

Sri Aurobindo on Undoing Partition

"India is free, but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom... The whole communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that the Congress and the Nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled, or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled; civil strife may remain always possible, possibly even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go... For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and frustrated. That must not be" - Shri Aurobindo, 15 August, 1947.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 22 September, 1996)

Harcharan Bains

On Unreal Debate between Secularism and Cultural Nationalism

Must we cry wolf everytime someone or the other supercilliously describes India as a Hindu nation?... Is it possible to think of this country as a secular zone inhabited by a Hindu majority? In other words, can we begin to talk about an India that is a secular nation despite being a Hindu country? Or better still, is it possible to think of our country as a secular Hindu nation, much the same way as ... almost all of Europe and the United States could safely be described as secular Christian lands? ...

... I have been somewhat discomfitured by a statement made by the eminently loveable Vajpayee in Bhopal. To me, sadly, the statement represents the very climax of the politics of communal intrigue that some of the big wigs in the BJP deem it a prerequisite for capturing power at the Centre. In a suave idiom typical of him, Mr. Vajpayee spoke of the debate between "pseudo-secularism and cultural nationalism"....

Unfortunately ... Mr. Vajpayee has this disconcerting knack of not letting us feel overly secure and confident of him all the time. Every now and then, he does indulge in the elusive maiden act, slipping through the fingers of faith with slithery extremism. No one seems to have told him that he carries the whole cargo of national optimism in that refreshing smile that melts all communal demarcations.... Vajpayee seems to think that in order to carry his community to the fulfillment of a secular dream, he has first to pander to its present communal obsessions. There is a point in that approach...

... The debate between secularism and cultural nationalism (pseudo and real) takes on a whole new turn, beginning with questions like, "Is the debate really worth it? Are secularism and nationalism really at war with each other and, if they are, is it a holy war or a fratricide? Is there anyway the majority can stop sermonising and the minorities start getting rid of the carefully nurtured persecution complex?

And above all, are Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity larger issues for an Indian than the fact of his being an Indian? None of these religions placed religious bigotry above nationalism, but their professed followers, including those in the BJP, appear to do so today - as before.

More than to anybody else as a class, it should be clear to the Indians that religion needs no defence - except against those who claim to defend it. Religion, as everyone with even a scent of sensitivity would tell you, is self-protective for the reasons that it aspires not for victory but for humility and service in matters temporal and expansion in matters visionary and spiritual. Unfortunately, expansionism these days seems to have lost its spiritual and religious context and has become a mere political and geographical denominator. Attempts to reduce religion from a spiritual to a territorial and numerical phenomenon have been the cause of unspeakable human bloodshed in the past all over the world - and continues to do so even today.

This is at the root of what we are witnessing in India today - as indeed in every other part of the world where grounds exist for turning religion into a political weapon. This is the service that the BJP is rendering Ram...

It is in this context that the debate between pseudo-secularists and cultural nationalists - must be taken to its logical moderation, where the whole exercise can be seen to be what it really is, a ploy used by some of us to befool some others of us, with results that can be catastrophic for the country. It is as relevant to question the secular extremism of one Harkishan Singh Surjeet as it is to battle against the communal animalism sought to be perpetuated by some sections of the BJP, the Akalis and their fellow travellers in other communities. Secular fundamentalism is in no way less pernicious than communal vandalism, as we have already seen in the role of the Left-BJP-Congress secularists in Punjab. As for the communists, they have at times displayed greater bigotry than even the BJP-putting their nationalism below a dogmatic adherence to their religion or "ism"...

All this is not to question the nationalistic bona fides of the communists, the Sangh Parivar, the Akalis or anyone else, including the Congress. This is just to reaffirm the unquestionability of issues like faith and patriotism. We must carry on the debate on personal laws, on the BJP's refusal to heed the highest court of this land on the Ayodhya issue, on the Akali insistence on being a voice of the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular, on the role being played by affluent Muslims, on the Tamil identity, on Kashmir, on Assam, Punjab ... - in fact on everything.

Only, we need to redefine the parameters of debate and emphasise the essential commonness of approach on matters vital (for) our survival as a sane, self-confident nation with no inferiority or insecurity syndrome that holds us back from an open discussion on the above issues. After all, cultural variety, religious heterogeneity and differences of opinion on matters political are a part of our national legacy and an open and no-holds-barred discussion on these must be seen as strengthening that legacy rather than running against it. The Muslims need to be sensitive to the Hindu sensitivities on Ram and everything connected with him just as Advani needs to understand the Muslim sensitivity on the Personal Law. And this is not difficult at all. Most of these issues are made inflammable by the passion arousal factories of our political parties. After all, how many Hindus had actually visited the Ram Janmabhoomi before 1989 or have done so even after that, and how many Muslims actually abide

(Contd. on page 509)

The Jain Community's Memorandum to Prime Minister

On Sunday, 11 August, 1996 a delegation of prominent Jain leaders representing different organisation from all over India met PM Deve Gowda at New Delhi and submitted a Memorandum urging him to declare Jains as a minority community under Clause (C) of Section 2 of the National Minorities Act, 1992. The Prime Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegation and assured that he would look into the matter sympathetically.

The above delegation was led by Mr. Ashok Kumar Jain, Chairman, All India Teerthaksetra Committee and Mr. D. Surendra Kumar, Senior Vice-President, Bharatiya Jain Milan and former Member of Karnataka Minorities Commission along with prominent representatives of Dakshin Bharat Jain Sabha.

Memorandum

... The Jains have not been accorded their legitimate Minority status by the Government of India even though the National Commission for Minorities have made a specific recommendation to that effects. ...

The Jain community has repeatedly represented its case for declaration as a Minority community to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India, and the National Commission for Minorities during the last 15 years. ...The Jain religion is a radically different ancient Sramanic tradition from the Vedic-Brahminic one, and secondly, that it is a distinct minority community by virtue of the demographic fact of being a minority population in every State of India and in the Indian population as a whole. ...

The Jains repudiate the authority of the Vedas... In his Allahabad speech Nehru said on 3rd September 1949: "No doubt India has vast majority of Hindus, but they could not forget the fact that there are also minorities - Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jains...

The acting Chief Justice Kumar Swami Shastri in Getappa vs. Vermma and others (AIR 1972) said: "Were matters res integra, I would be inclined to hold that modern research has shown that the Jains has an origin and history long anterior to the Smritis and Commentaries which are recognised authorities on Hindu law and usage.. The Jain religion refers to a number of previous Tirthankaras and there can be little doubt that Jainism as a distinct religion was flourishing several centuries before Christ.

In fact Jainism rejects the authority of the Vedas which form the bed-rock of Hinduism and denies the efficacy of the various ceremonies which Hindus consider essential. So far as Jain Law is concerned it has its own Law books of which Bhadra Bahu Samhita is an important one. Vardhamana Neeti and Aradhana Neeti by the great Jain teacher Hemchandra deal also with Jain Law".... On 25th January, 1950 ... Jawaharlal Nehru clearly assured (a Jain) delegation that the Jains are not Hindus and on 31.1.1950 his Principal Private Secretary, Shri A.B. Ghai wrote the following letter in reply to the petition:

"Your delegation has drawn attention to Article 25. This Article merely makes a definition this definition by enforcing a specific constitutional arrangement circumscribes that rule. Likewise you will note that this mentions not only Jains but also Buddhists and Sikhs. It is clear that Buddhists are not Hindus and therefore there need be no apprehension that the Jains are designated as Hindus... There is no doubt that the Jains are a different religious community and this accepted position is in no way affected by the Constitution. If that is the Constitutional position, and if the inclusion of the Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs does not affect their independent religious status, and more significantly still, if the Buddhists and Sikhs have been declared as Minorities ... the Jain community fails to understand why they should have been excluded... It is interesting to note that according to the Government of India Resolution No. F.8-9/93-SC/ST dated 28.7.95 of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Deptt. of Education, SC/ST Cell, constituting a National Monitoring Committee for Minorities Education (published in Part I Section I of the Gazette of India) in its Memorandum on Minorities Education Cl. 3.1.3 mentions that "according to 1981 Census the religious minorities constitute about 17.4% of the population of which Muslims are 11.4%, Christians 2.4%, Sikhs 2%, Buddhists 0.7% and the Jains 0.5%...

Thus it is clear that the Human Resources Development Ministry recognises the Jains as a Minority...

(Source: The Clarity, 1 September, 1996)

Christians Vs Hindus in Kerala

For nearly 13 years after they fought over the construction of a church at Nilackel near the famous Ayyappa shrine in Sabarimala, Hindus and Christians in Kerala have maintained peace. Last fortnight that peace was shattered when members of the Ezhava caste clashed with Christians over a planned cemetery at Thirumani Venkita Puram in Kottayam district.

Ezhavas, who comprise 90% of the locals, say the cemetery is a health hazard and resent it being near a temple. Prohibitory orders were issued when Ezhava youths, backed by their powerful organisation, Sanathana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), attacked Christian houses. Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court has stayed the construction of the cemetery.

But with the BJP and RSS taking up the cause of the Ezhavas, and the Syrio-Malabar Church defending the Christians, tension has escalated...

The row began in 1977, when the church was refused clearance for a traditional burial ground. It settled for a crypt in 1992, after having won clearance from the local panchayat upwards, but the protests continued, and the UDF government - headed by K. Karunakaran and later A.K. Antony - sat on it. The licence was finally granted in June , 1996 by the ruling LDF ... only to light the latest communal fire.

(Source: The India Today, 31 August, 1996)

Uday Mahurkar
On A Dargah for the Insane

... At Mira Datar Baba's dargah in Unava, a small, dusty town of 19,000, a two-hour drive north of Ahmedabad on the Mumbai-Delhi highway... it is believed the pir's spirit cures mental illness and drives evil spirits away. ...

It's difficult line to swallow for rationalists who would swear by medicine and psychiatry. But close to half the 2,000-strong crowd that throngs the Unava dargah daily is there at this last-resort faith-healing centre... From not being able to understand modern medicine's interpretation of the mind, let alone being able to afford it - a visit to a psychiatrist, a doctor - or simply becoming weary of looking for a cure. Visitors have to pick their way past deranged men and women shrieking, babbling incoherently, small clusters of blank-eyed people, young and old, in a trance-like state...

... Mir Saiyad Ali was a boy-general in 15th century Gujarat in Sultan Ahmed Shah's army. He died 500 years ago, aged 16, while leading an army division against the Sultan of Malwa during the battle of Mandugarh. Folklore says he had willed that in the event of his death, his body should be put on a camel and buried where the camel finally stopped - at Unava. A mazar was built at the place... Gradually... it came to be associated with spiritual healing for the mentally ill... **(Source: The India Today, 15 July, 1996)**

Vir Sanghvi
On Astrology and Politics

Prime Minister Deve Gowda waited for an astrologically propitious time to be sworn in. He even delayed the shift to Race Course Road till the star-gazers gave him the go-ahead. And the Cabinet expansion awaits the approval of the soothsayers. ...

Politics and astrology go together in India. Indira Gandhi did not get out of bed until she got the permission of assorted astrologers, tantriks and yoga teachers. Morarji Desai refused to be disheartened during his eight years in the wilderness because an astrologer had told him that he would be Prime Minister one day. And Narasimha Rao is said to owe his remarkable ability to survive all crises to the efforts of such men as N.K. Sharma who would... red the stars and conduct havans. Nor are these former Prime Ministers the only ones who count on astrologers. All Indian politicians base the timing of major decisions on astrology, palmistry or some such future-reading craft. ... Essential to being an Indian is a belief that there is something to astrology, palmistry and the like. ... In 1989, because of the ambiguous nature of the results they got away with it. But in 1991 and 1996, when there were genuine surprises the journalists failed to predict, the astrologers also got it wrong.

Why should this be so? The astrologers offer assorted explanations... Frankly, none of this is at all convincing. Either all political astrology is bogus or the current crop of astrologers consist of incompetent star-gazers. ...

(Source: The Sunday, 30 June - 6 July, 1996)

R.K. Misra
On Destruction of M.F. Hussain's Paintings

In a shocking election-eve display of vandalism, activists of the Bajrang Dal sneaked into an art gallery in the precincts of the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology and reduced about 25 to 28 M.F. Husain paintings to cinders in Ahmedabad on (10 October, 1996).

The paintings are valued at Rs.6 crore. The Bajrang Dal was unrepentant, even threatening... Proud of their handiwork, the Bajrang Dal activists stamped the gallery and whatever remained of its belongings with Bajrang Dal's stickers. Before leaving the place, they rent the air with Tarzan - like yells proclaiming their pedigree - Jai Bajrang....It is believed that the destroyed paintings were precious (for their) creator and had never left his home in Mumbai before...

(Source: The Pioneer, 11 October, 1996)

Beef: A Cheap Source of Protein

... A ban on cow slaughter will rob millions of poor people of a cheap source of protein. The cheap source of protein denied to millions of people can be substituted by other sources only at a tremendous cost, which the nation can ill-afford when nearly 50% of the population is under-nourished.... People do not feed cows when they stop yielding milk; they become a burden and are left to fend for themselves. If cow slaughter is banned, such animals will become a public nuisance.

Anti-cow slaughter measures would also interfere with the proprietary rights on the animals. Unless the Government acquires these animals, it would be illegal to impose conditions on their use. If the Government does acquire them, it will be saddled with the logistics of impounding and feeding millions of animals countrywide, which will cost the public exchequer a fortune.

(Source: The Tagore Dassan, Mysore)

Allah 'Miyan'?

(In) Ms. Geetanjali Gangoli and Ms. Gopika Solanki's article, The Scriptures Through Women's Eyes' (Speaking Tree, Times of India, September 21), it was amusing to read ... the comment in connection with the use of the word 'miyan' with Allah ... that the common practice of collating Allah with miyan in speech was tantamount to equating husbands, in general, with God. It was further said that this was impermissible and blasphemous.

I would like to point out that the meaning of the word miyan does not mean 'husband' in any way. Rather it means someone who is to be respected and revered. That is why we use 'bade miyan', 'miyan sahib', 'miyanji', etc. for elderly people. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind.... that the full name of the former premier of Pakistan is Miyan Nawaz Sharif and ... that prefix in the name undoubtedly has nothing to do with the word 'husband'

(Source: The Times of India)

Prospects for Indo-Pak Unity

Editorial, The Spokesman Monthly, August 1996

... The partition of the country in 1947 was wrong and it should not have taken place... The Hindu leaders wanted to preserve the integrity of India without granting any special rights to the minorities. This being against the democratic spirit, the country came to be divided. Now, if we wish to rectify the wrong, we will have to make a start from the point where the first distortion took place. In other words, in keeping with democratic principles:

1. The minorities will have to be given such political rights as enable them not to live in subservience to the majority. What these rights should be, will be decided by the minorities themselves, even though the issue had been frankly discussed before 1947 and the entire written record is available.
2. No decision relating to the minorities shall be taken by the majority; rather their elected representatives shall do so.
3. All promises made to the minorities before 1947 shall be fulfilled.
4. The country shall be given a federal structure in the true sense of the word, and barring three or four departments, all other departments shall be entrusted to the states.

Indo-Pak unity is possible only if the principles mentioned above are accepted in toto, not only in words but in practice also. A beginning can be made ... by giving a truly federal structure to the country. By doing so, all reasons for keeping Pakistan a separate country will evaporate and no individual (in both the countries) will oppose Indo-Pak unity...

Benefits of Indo-Pak Unity

Indo-Pak unity has many advantages. First, India can become a Big Power of the world, while at present the two countries continue to dance to the tunes of other countries in order to defeat and denigrate each other. Secondly, the fear of nuclear war in the region will be eliminated. Both countries probably possess nuclear weapons and nobody knows when they may be used for mutual annihilation. This danger will be warded off as a result of Indo-Pak unity. Thirdly, the Kashmir problem will also be solved. Fourthly, as a consequence of Indo-Pak unity achieved after accepting the principles enunciated above, regional ... separatist tendencies in both the countries will disappear, because the minorities and State governments will have such rights as will render separation from the country unnecessary, while at present, disgruntled and alienated minorities in both the countries are working for separation. Fifthly, many advantages will accrue in economic sphere too, (as) defence expenditure will lessen. **In return, the only thing to be renounced is the thought that India belongs to the Hindus alone and the minorities have to live here at the majority's will.** This feeling, in fact, was responsible for the division of the country and this too is the stumbling block in the way of Indo-Pak unity. Besides, if this feeling continues, even without Indo-Pak unity, India can at any time (face) dangers as ... in Russia, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The Hindu leaders ... should decide whether they want a United India ... or a Hindu India...

(Source: The Spokesman Weekly's Monthly, August, 1996)

Bhutto's Doublespeak On Indo-Pakistan Relation

The Pakistani Government's doublespeak, especially in relation to Kashmir, is showing up increasingly in the public pronouncements of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto... Bhutto's speech at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) was only the most obvious example in recent days, of its divided face on policies, the analysts say. The divisions are symptomatic of a deep conflict within the Pakistani Government (and) increased Western pressure on (her) to moderate the Pakistani stand on Kashmir, they say.

...The most notable conflict in Bhutto's presentation at the IISS was between the written speech .. usually prepared by bureaucrats, and what she said extempore. The written speech was a long and bitter invective against India devoted almost entirely to Kashmir... Bhutto herself spoke of the schism when she deviated from the speech. "While my talk may have painted a grim picture, let me give you the most optimistic picture now", she said in the course of the same talk. ...

Under criticism for her negative projection of relations with India, Bhutto said that despite differences "the two countries have not gone to war since 1971." And though it had been "quite hard to explain to the Kashmiri people and to some of the more conservative elements within Pakistan", her government was separating politics from trade relations with India, she stated. She spoke of an agreement signed between her and then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in December, 1988 in which the two countries agreed not to attack each others' nuclear installations. All was going well, she said, until Rajiv Gandhi was voted out of power and later she "left office". ... The departure from that kind of rhetoric in her extempore remarks was a virtual acknowledgement of Western pressure to deal with India more realistically, an adviser on defence issues at London University said. "Her remarks showed her to be decidedly more reasonable than the hard line of her speech", he said. ....

Bhutto made several statements extempore contradicting her own speech and her own actions... She spoke of India's piling of weapons as aggressive. But she claimed the successful release of weapons from the US as a "strengthening of our defence". ...

(Source: The Pioneer, 5 October, 1996)

Government Statements

On US Attack on Iraq, 3 September, 1996

We are gravely concerned at reports of US cruise missile attacks today on targets near Baghdad, and the adverse effect that this is likely to have on peace and security in the area. We believe that enforcement actions under UN Security Council resolutions can only be undertaken by the Council itself. Details of the US action, and the material damage and loss of lives caused by the bombing are not available. We are concerned at the possible loss of civilian lives and we are monitoring the situation closely.

On US Attack on Iraq, 6 September, 1996

Members have expressed their strong feelings on the US cruise missiles attacks against Iraq on September 3 and 4, 1996. Their sentiments are in large measure shared by Government... We had issued an official statement immediately after we received the initial information regarding the US attacks on September 3, 1996, we had expressed our great concern at these attacks and their adverse effects on peace and security in the area. We also expressed our firm conviction that enforcement action under UN Security Council resolutions can only be undertaken by the Council itself.

... There has been widespread international opposition to the US action, which is not in consonance with accepted norms of conduct in international relations...

Despite this widespread international sentiment... the US again undertook cruise missiles attacks on Iraq on September 4, 1996. We do not know if more attacks are planned. This is highly regrettable. The Government of India is unable to accept that the justification put forward for the bombing, on the grounds of alleged Iraqi contravention of UN Security Council resolutions, or the protection of the interests of the US and its allies in the Gulf, has any basis. We call upon the United States to refrain from any further attacks on Iraq...

We are particularly distressed that the Security Council's relaxation of the embargo on Iraqi oil export to enable it to purchase medicines and food for the Iraqi people has been frozen...

These developments have also had a direct impact on India. The price of oil has gone up. The adverse effect of the atmosphere of uncertainty in countries of the region, where we have important interests, including those flowing from the presence of large number of Indians living and working there, is naturally a worrying factor. There is also the possibility of the events leading to an upsurge of tension in the area.

We are watching the situation closely and are in touch with friendly countries on this matter.

CPI-CPI(M) Statement

On US Attack on Iraq

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India strongly condemn the unprovoked massive US missile attacks against Iraq launched on 3 September, 1996. Using the pretext of Iraq's operations in the northern part of its country, the US has launched a deadly cruise missile attack around the capital Baghdad....

The attack ... is a clear expression of the USA's desire to establish its hegemony over the oil rich Gulf region and reaffirm its desire to impose a new world order according to its own interests. This attack must be seen by the international community as a renewed aggression on the part of US imperialism to impose its hegemony - both military and political.

The progressive and anti-imperialist forces the world over ... will join together in condemning this attack and **asserting the rights of sovereign nations to deal with their internal problems without interference from any outside force.**

The CPI(M) and CPI call upon the United Nations to openly condemns this unprovoked US attack on Iraq and exercise pressure for the immediate cessation of this one-sided aggression.

The CPI(M) and CPI call upon the government of India to outrightly condemn this attack and thereby uphold the long standing tradition of India's commitment to world peace, democracy and non-alignment.

Muslim Population to Reach 2.5 Billion in 2020

India has Third Largest Muslim Population after Indonesia and Pakistan

World Muslim population is expected to reach 2.5 billion by the year 2020... Muslims constitute 23.1 per cent of the world population. One out of five persons is a Muslim. About 70% of Muslims live in Asia, 28% in Africa and the rest in Europe, America and other countries. Half of the Muslim population lives in seven Muslim countries: Indonesia (170m), Pakistan (121m), Bangladesh (102m), Nigeria (68m), Turkey (59m), Iran (57m) and Egypt (52m). There are 106 million in India, 70m in China and 54m in the Central Asian republics. The majority of Muslim population is youth and children. Children below five years represent 43%, which is much higher than 22% in the developed countries.

(Source: Al Azhar University, Cairo, International Centre for Population Studies,
Courtesy: The Radiance, New Delhi)

D. Shridhar on Shia-Sunni Conflict in Pakistan

The eruption of sectarian violence i the Parachinar area of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has brought back the scourge of sectarianism onto Pakistan's political centrestage. Clashes between Shia and Sunni groups have led to more than 200 people losing their lives, forcing the army to be called out. The abject failure of the Benazir Bhutto government ... to detect the brewing sectarian storm saw virtually no attempt to curb the fighting, which is generally believed to be a follow on to sectarian clashes happening elsewhere in the country. After a brief period of lull, ... tensions and violence have gripped the entire country...

Parachinar, which is dominated by a Shia population, has always been a sensitive area that has been prone to sectarian violence primarily as a reaction to this phenomenon occurring elsewhere. In the present case as well, the immediate provocation for the violence was the recurrence of sectarian violence in Karachi on August 14, 1996, when worshippers belonging to one community were allegedly gunned down by supporters of the other. This in turn led to a flare up of sectarian violence in the Jhang-Faisalabad sector, culminating in the assassination of Allama Murid Abbas Yazdani, supreme commander of the Shiite group Sipah-i-Mohammad a few weeks earlier. Since then, several areas in Pakistan, including Parachinar, have remained tense.

The intensity of hate between the two communities in Pakistan has been further compounded by the fact that Parachinar, which borders Afghanistan has been awash with weapons... The second major factor rise in tensions and its eruption into violence has been the mushrooming of religious schools in the area belonging to both communities, which are beyond the purview of law enforcement authorities. These religious madrasas have reportedly stock all kinds of weapons and ammunition...The pre-dominantly Sunni Taliban fighters ... could well enter the sectarian struggle and enlarge the battle lines. The violence also buries the peace accord that the two communities had agreed to in 1995 under the auspices of the Milli Yakjehti Council, a fundamentalist grouping which played peace maker amongst the two communities and which was able to bring peace to large parts of rural Punjab for nearly a year. ...

But the root cause for the persistence of sectarian tensions, lies in the type of politics that was and is being practised in Pakistan, specially during and after the Zia years. In the post-Zia era, these religious parties, which were propped up by the martial law regime found themselves without finances and were forced to underworld linkages to protect their respective turf. This veering towards militancy was exacerbated by the easy availability of weapons. This ... militancy led to formation of separate organisations that undertook militant activities on behalf of their umbrella bodies. The SSP is generally considered the militant outfit of the Anjuman-e-Sipah Sahaba (ASS), a Sunni body that openly calls for the creation of an Islamic system which would ex-communicate the Shia community. The SSP (Force of the Lions of Pakistan) is a militant organisation that represents the puritanical Wahabi sect in Pakistan.

The second factor ... has been the policy of Islamisation. A recent micro-study of the sectarian problem in Punjab showed that much of the mushrooming of deeni madrasas came between 1976 and 1986 and specially during the period of the martial law, when General Zia used the fundamentalist parties to counter traditional political opposition to his seizure of power. The study also showed that between 1947 and 1975, only 868 deeni madrasas had been set up. In 1995, the Federal Interior Ministry found that there were 2,512 functioning deeni madrasas, representing all schools of sectarian thought in Punjab alone, with an estimated student enrollment of 2,18,939.

In the NWFP too, the deeni madrasas have created a major administrative problem, albeit differently. Radicalisation of Pathan youth and the corresponding weakening of the tribal code of honour saw a burst of violence when clerics led the rebellion in Malakand, Swat and Bajaur in August 1994, demanding the imposition of the Shariah in their areas. There were subsequent clashes in Bara on the same issue. This radicalisation amongst the youth has seeped into the sectarian sphere as well... With most deeni madrasas relying on foreign donations, the ability of the state to introduce non-radical instruction in these schools is virtually absent. The revival of the sectarian spiral of violence, almost two months old, shows no sign of remission...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 23 September, 1996)

Ali Sardar Jafri on Urdu and Urdu Script

... Khushwant Singh, during an interview asked me why Urdu should not be written in Devnagri script. Instead of going into a long explanation and argument I narrated an incident to him. Sometime back a friend of mine who happens to be the Governor of a State (I did not mention any name) asked me the same question, and I told him that the Hindiwalas have dropped the Bindi and cannot write GHALIB, GHAZAL and JAFAR. Let them restore the Bindi and start teaching Ghalib and Mir in Hindi schools and I will accept their proposal. While we were talking, a Hindi-speaking Member of Parliament arrived and joined the discussion. He was opposed to the idea of restoring the Bindi and teaching Urdu literature in Hindi schools and colleges.

I have had many experience of this kind. Firaq Gorakhpuri used to say that the Hindi world is afraid of the beauty of Urdu language and its vigour.

It is too late now to go back to Gandhiji's Hindustani in two scripts. No political party will accept it. So far as I am concerned, I accept both Hindi and Urdu as two highly evolved languages from one and the same root. **The question of giving up the Urdu script does not arise, but it would be profitable for the Urdu language and writers to publish their books in two scripts in India.** The process has already started and thousands of Hindi reading people are buying these books. ....

(Letter to S. Shahabuddin, 10 April, 1996)

Chronology of the Month

(16 September - 15 October, 1996)

NATIONAL POLITICS

Congress: *P.V. Narasimha Rao steps down under pressure; Sitaram Kesri appointed provisional President (23 Sept). Kesri launches strategic plan to bring alienated Muslims and SCs back into Congress (29 Sept) inducts Manmohan Singh into Working Committee (6 Oct). Kesri warns UF Government not to take Congress support for granted (1 Oct). Question of withdrawal of support to UF raised in CWC meeting (13 Oct). CWC renews call to old Congressmen to rejoin party. Pressure built up for Congress to join UF Government but Left threatens to opt out.

UP Elections: *UP elections result in hung Assembly with BJP as single largest party with 174 seats, UF including SP with 133 and Congress-BSP with 99 (10 Oct). * Congress pressures for UF support to BSP's Mayawati to form government bu UF rejects plea (15 Oct). State heads towards constitutional crisis. * BJP negotiates with BSP for formation of Government but Kalyan Singh faction not prepared to concede chief ministership to BSP/Mayawati (10 Oct). Opinion also divided on whether BJP should extend support from outside or participate in the government (15 Oct). * UF also rejects BSP's offer and Congress pressure to form coalition government with Mayawati as Chief Minister. Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav adamant on Mayawati as Chief Minister (14 Oct). UF offers coalition with C.M. from Congress.

Secularism: *Left interprets UP result as verdict against BJP. *RSS considers national political scene as bleak with prevailing corruption and instability. VHP ascribes BJP loss to erosion of saffron agenda.

*UF Leader and PM Deve Gowda in intensive election campaign asks people to choose between better life and temple construction (29 Sept). Home Minister Indrajit Gupta apprehends resurgence of communal forces in UF collapses. SBP leader Chandra Shekhar notes BJP's policies creating fear in minorities (30 Sept).

*Several Muslim organisations appeal to Muslims to adopt tactical voting and vote for winning secular candidate irrespective of Party. Milli Council rejects BSP's overtures and supports UF. Abdullah Bukhari's appeal for BSP fails to make impact. *Forum for Democracy and Communal Harmony appeal to UP electorate to vote for secular candidates (28 Sept). *Seminar on Social concerns of Minorities held in Delhi considers politicisation of religion and culture as root causes of communalism (22 Sept).

Corruption: *Former Communication Minister Sukh Ram on return to Delhi taken into custody by CBI for interrogation in telecom Scam (16 Sept). *Trial of former PM Narasimha Rao in St. Kitts Forgery and Lakhubhai Pathak Cases deferred to selection of alternative site on security grounds. *Government's instructions to CBI not to oppose bail petition of Narasimha Rao in Lakhu Bhai Pathak case widely criticised. Plea for statutory status to CBI revived. CBI counsel in Pathak case resigns (2 Oct). BJP demands inclusion of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's name in chargesheet in St. Kitts Case. Former PM Narasimha Rao arrested and immediately released on bail (9 Oct). *Delhi High Court stays trial against BJP President Advani in hawala case. CBI files supplementary chargesheet against BJP leader Yashwant Sinha.

*PM Deve Gowda elected to Rajya Sabha from Karantaka in order to continue as Prime Minister (25 Sept).

Bihar Bye-Election: *JD loses 4 seats, 3 of them, earlier held by Central Ministers, to Samata Party.

Assam Situation: *AASU demands revision of electoral rolls repeal of Tribunals Act and withdrawal of black laws and security forces from Assam. Election Commission announces yet another intensive revision of electoral rolls (4 Oct) with January 1, 1997 as date of reference. Shahabuddin writes to Election Commission to issue appropriate guidelines to minimise hardship and harassment to electors already registered.

States Reorganisation: *Home Minister Indrajit Gupta supports formation of second State Reorganisation Commission. Prime Minister prepare to consider formation of Vidharba if Congress so proposes.

Election Commission: *Election Commission extends deadline for recognised political parties to complete organisational elections by March 1997.

KASHMIR SITUATION

Assembly Election: *The second, third and the fourth phases were peacefully completed (13 Sept). *Hurriyat maintained its boycott and called for general strike which had visible impact in the Valley. Its leaders as well as Shabbir Shah detained for long periods to prevent anti-election campaign. Panther Party alleges electoral manipulation. Hurriyat alleges coercion by security forces. *National Conference wins landslide victory with 57 seats out of 87 with its allies BSP, Congress(T) winning 5 more seats. Congress, BJP and the Janata Dal win 7,7 and 5 seats respectively (1 Oct). *National Conference elects Farooq Abdullah as its leader, who is sworn in as Chief Minister. All national parties except BJP participate in installation ceremony (9 Oct). *Chief Minister terms restoration of peace and return of migrants to Valley as first priority, apart from negotiations with Union on Autonomy and economic reconstruction. *National Conference offers to join United Front and have representation in Central Government.

Reorganisation of State: *Farooq Abdullah appoints Dr. Karan Singh as Head of a Commission to negotiate terms of Autonomy and work out details of federal structure for State with Regional Councils for each autonomous regions.

Human Rights: *State Government announces setting up of Human Rights Commission as well as review of all detention cases (11 Oct).

Hurriyat: * Hurriyat leader Syed Ahmed Shah Geelani escapes bid on life. Hurriyat delegation led by Mir Waiz Umar Farooq visits USA and submits memorandum to the U.N. Participates in Conference of Kashmiri leaders and signs Washington Declaration (10 Oct). JKLF Chief Amanullah Khan criticises Hurriyat for surrendering option of Independence in Declaration (12 Oct) .

Insurgency: *Militant activity shows spurt during and after elections with sporadic attacks on newly elected MLAs as well National Conference workers.

International Developments:

*Pakistan PM Bhutto calls for third party mediation (1 Oct) denounces the election as 'shame' in address to UN General Assembly (4 Oct). Proposes multi-lateral dialogue under US auspices. Pakistan President Leghari rejects 'farcical elections as substitute for plebiscite' (7 Oct). *USA asks Pakistan to stop material support for Kashmiri insurgency, 'rejects' Bhutto's proposal for international conference (5 Oct). Suggests settlement through bilateral terms (10 Oct).

*UK Foreign Secretary offers help in solving Kashmir issue but calls for meaningful dialogue between India and Pakistan. UK sees elections as restoration of political process (10 Oct). OIC calls for self-determination in Kashmir (3 Oct). BJP take exception to 'blatant' interference by OIC (5 Oct). *India rejects Bhutto's proposal for internationalisation (5 Oct). Foreign Minister Gujral reiterates offer for bilateral talks (14 Oct).

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN

Babari Masjid Question: *Eminent historians question on ground of genuineness of order of Special Bench of Allahabad High Court on inspection and exhibition of artifacts claimed to have been found in Babari Masjid debris. Justice K.M. Pande, who as Faizabad District Judge ordered unlocking of Masjid in January 1986 publishes memoirs "Voice of Conscience" which supports Hindutva Case and justifies his own role.

Education: *Stalemate in Jamia Millia Islamia continues. Acting Vice-Chancellor Mushirul Hasan demands full security for entering Campus. A section of teachers and students appeal for restoration of normalcy. University closed following filling of one student on Campus (15 Oct). *Following police firing resulting in death of a student, AMU closed sine die following large scale violence (2 Oct). All India Students Union observes nation-wide protest against police firing in AMU (3 Oct). Muslim University delegation submits memorandum to Home Minister (3 Oct). Students hold demonstration in Delhi with support from JNU students (5 Oct). Home Minister agrees to order inquiry in police firing (5 Oct). University decides to cancel winter holidays. Inquiry set up by Govt. of UP.

*Association of Minorities Educational Institutions, UP, holds annual meeting, demands automatic recognition of minority institutions (22 Sept).

Personal Law: *All India Catholic Union pleads for updating and codification of Christian Personal Law (10 Oct). Supreme Court rejects the authority of Church courts or tribunals to decide matrimonial matters. *Indian Council for Child Welfare Chairman Hamida Habibullah, ex-MP, demands Uniform Adoption Law to stop discrimination among orphans on basis of caste or religion. *Ranchi Bench of Patna High Court awards maintenance of Rs. 50,000 to Muslim divorcee, apart from mehr and maintenance for Iddat under Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 (11 Oct).

Reservation: *All India Christian Peoples Forum rejects proposal for separate quota for Dalit Christians (25 Sept). *Prime Minister reiterates promise of 10% quota for higher castes (23 Sept). *Supreme Court reserves order on writ petitions challenging Kerala Assembly's declaration on non-existence of creamy layer. SGPC President Tohra considers reservation for women in SGPC's an interference in Sikh religion.

Communal Violence: *Madras High Court rules that taking out religious procession not an absolute right and therefore subject to law and order (1 Oct). 9 persons roasted alive and 65 burnt in clashes in village near Bangladesh border in Dinajpur (3 Oct). *Communal violence in Lucknow, situation brought under control (24 Sept); another outbreak also controlled (29 Sept). *Hindu Munnani protests against police order to divert Ganesh immersion procession (20 Sept). * Communal clash in Adilabad, AP, during Ganesh procession, 1 killed 8 injured (24 Sept). *Sri Krishna Commission of Inquiry resumes hearings on Bombay Riots. Shiv Sena MP Sarpotdar justifies retaliatory violence (4 Oct). *Communal violence during Ganesh procession in village Pen in Raigarh Distt. (Maharashtra), 3 killed, curfew imposed. Chief Minister Joshi visits Pen, announces ex-gratia payment of 1 lakh to each bereaved family (5 Oct). *Muslims claim discrimination and injustice. * Communal violence during Ganesh procession in Belgaum, Karnataka.

Hindu Chauvinism: *Shiv Sena holds Maha Aartis in Bombay in defiance of Bombay High Court's order to transfer Kini Case to CBI (20 Sept). *Muslim Painter M.F. Hussain offers public apology for hurting religious sensibilities of Hindus in recent paintings of Hindu goddesses (11 Oct). Case filed against Hussain in Bombay. Bajrang Dal activists destroy collection of Hussain's paintings in Ahmedabad (10 Oct). Noted artists and critic condemn vandalism (12 Oct). Puri Shankaracharya Narayanand criticises Hussain. ABVP burns effigy of Hussain (13 Oct).

*Supreme Court orders prosecution of BJP MP Shatrughan Sinha for defaming Marwari community (24 Sept). Ramakrishna Mission objects to distortion in film on Ramakrishna Paramahans (7 Oct).

Culture: *Annual Phool Walon Ki Sair held in Delhi (27 Sept). *Delhi High Court admits petition for preservation of Ghalib's Haveli as national monument (1 Oct). *Supreme Court orders maintenance of Ghalib's tomb. *Supreme Court appoints Committee to locate Zauq's tomb said to have been buried under a public toilet. *Sound and Light show in Purana Quila, Delhi inaugurated by Vice President (2 Oct).

TADA: *Various organisations demand release of TADA detenues. Shahabuddin requests P.M. to grant general amnesty to TADA detenus except those already under prosecution on serious criminal charges.

Wakfs: *Punjab Imams Organisation opposes trifurcation of Punjab Wakf Board.

Muslim Organisations: *A.I. Milli Council supports SP (UF) in UP Elections. *Imarat-e-Sharia Bihar and Orissa expresses concern on educational and economic backwardness of Muslims (22 Sept). *SIM of India holds Symposium in Bombay to launch Khilafat Campaign (6 Oct).

Urdu: *17th Nizam Urdu Lecture by Persian scholar Prof. Nazeer Ahmed organised by Delhi University.

Human Rights: *Former Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachelliah appointed as Chairman of NHRC vice Justice R. N. Mishra (1 Oct).

Obituary and Commemoration: *Tamil writer and orator Abdullah Adiyar, 60, passes away in Madras (20 Sept). Birth Centenary of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai observed in Delhi, President pays tributes (23 Sept). Governor P.K. Dave offers chadar at the dargah of Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki in Mehrauli.

MUSLIM WORLD

Palestine: *Govt. of India expresses concern over recent violence in West Bank and reversal of peace process (30 Sept).

Bangladesh: *Bangladesh arrests those involved in assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Kurdish Question: *Iran opposes formation of Kurdish State (8 Oct). *Russia rules out independence to Chechenya (8 Oct).

Pakistan: *Reports of continuing Shia-Sunni clashes in Pakistan create mass concern (23 Sept).

Afghanistan: *Public handing of former President Najibullah by Taliban on taking Kabul shocks public opinion (29 Sept). BJP considers developments in Afghanistan as threat to regional peace and security. India deplores Pakistan intervention in Afghanistan and supports independence, national unity, stability, peace and territorial integrity (4 Oct). *Farooq Abdullah does not see Taliban as threat to Kashmir (6 Oct). Gujral reiterates plea for peaceful negotiations (12 Oct). Taliban leader seeks friendly relations with India (13 Oct).