



**SECULARISM
DEMOCRACY
AND
MUSLIM EXPERIENCE
IN INDIA**

UNDERSTANDING
COMMUNALISM AND TERRORISM

Asghar Ali Engineer

Secularism, Democracy and Muslim
Experience in India

Understanding Communalism and Terrorism

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HOPE INDIA

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PREFACE

This is a collection of my essays of Secular Perspective written from time to time in the recent past. Here I have analyzed and commented upon contemporary events and issues, both within India and abroad, pertaining mostly to Islam, Muslims, minorities and secular values. The stand taken here is for humanism and dignity of all human beings, irrespective of one's religion, race, language or culture. Also, some essays are related to Muslim women. They suffer discrimination at the hands of their own people who impose on them restrictions not called for even from Islamic point of view.

India is a highly diverse country. And due to economic migrations, world as a whole is also becoming highly diverse. Diverse India, and diverse world are bound to have problems, specially in respect of minorities. Minorities; be they religious, racial, ethnic or linguistic, suffer from being subjected to stereotyping by the majority. Even where the constitutions guarantee rights and dignity to minorities, they face severe problems in practice. The case is very bad in Asia, particularly in South Asia. These essays analyse the way discrimination takes place and try to make government, administration and the police aware of these discriminations and urgency to fight against these discriminations.

Minorities suffer doubly from majority prejudices as well as from repression against them. Women suffer too. Thus, women's rights are also very important and need to be urgently attended to. Unjust restrictions imposed upon them in the name of Islam are a matter of grave concern.

There is great need for us to understand Islam before imposing such restrictions.

In a collection like this, there is bound to be a degree of repetition. The readers, it is hoped, would take it as an unavoidable problem.

We hope this book, like others in the past, would attract concerned people's attention and help spread proper awareness about minority rights and make our world less irritating and more pleasing.

Asghar Ali Engineer

SECTION-I

UNDERSTAND IN RELIGION & CULTURE

COMPOSITE CULTURE OF INDIA A PERSPECTIVE

India saw wave after wave of outsiders and invaders rather from beginning of history. Only those who are known as *adivasis* or aboriginals and Dravidians are known to be original inhabitants of India. The Dravidian culture may not have had composite character as also the aboriginal one which was essentially a folk culture. The Aryan culture that begins with Aryan invasion is the dawn of composite culture in India. I know a section of scholars, especially those affiliated with Sangh Parivar, maintain that Aryans were original inhabitants and never came from outside. However, most noted historians and scholars do not subscribe to this view and maintain that Aryans came from outside.

I propose in this article to deal with composite culture which came into existence with the invasion of various Muslim dynasties in Sultanate as well as Mughal period. Preceding these Muslim dynasties were many others like Sakias, Huns and Greeks and all of them left their deep imprints on our culture. It is more difficult and challenging to trace their influences now as they constitute remotest past.

However, influences of Turks, Tughlaks, Khaljis, Lodis and especially Moghuls have been very well recorded and continue to be part of our culture. But in our mutual animosities we deliberately ignore these influences or even try

to reduce our culture to a monolithic one or pure one. It is well known that all communal as well as bigoted elements try to project a 'pure' culture. They try to emphasize a pure Hindu or pure Islamic culture. In other words we communalize our culture as we communalize our politics.

When we say pure Hindu or Islamic culture we imply that culture is product of religion and nothing else. This is not true. Religion undoubtedly is an important influence but not the only one. Religion is, among others, one of the factors in giving birth to a culture. Culture, in fact, is product of several factors like customs, traditions, whether, locally available materials, geographical conditions and so on.

A religion may appear within the frame of a pre-existent culture. And then religious teachings may deeply influence that pre-existent culture and re-fashion it in its own way. For example, Islam appeared within the frame of preexisting Arab culture and subsequently re-moulds that culture in its own way. But what we call 'Islamic culture' cannot be thought of without Arab culture of its time.

Similarly what we call 'Hindu' culture or Buddhist culture came into existence within the framework of preexistent Dravidian and Aryan cultures and the Hindu or Buddhist cultures cannot be imagined without their preexistent cultures. Also, when these religions spread to areas other than that of their origin, they imbibed, assimilated and integrated elements of cultures already existing in those areas.

Buddhism spread to various countries like Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, Tibet, Cambodia, Vietnam and Japan and so on. This gave rise to syncretic cultures in Thailand, Sri Lanka, China, Cambodia and Tibet. The Buddhist culture in India cannot be same as say Buddhist culture of Tibet or Buddhist

culture of Japan. All these cultures are radically different though Buddhism is a common factor among them.

Similarly, Islam also spread to many areas far away from Arabia, the land of its origin. It spread from Indonesia in South East Asia to Algeria in North Africa. Though Islam is a common factor and yet indigenous cultures of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Central Asia, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, china, Turkey and Eastern Europe gave rise to numerous cultures different from each other. If religion were the only factor all these cultures would not differ.

In India its existence for almost thousand years gave rise to Indo-Islamic culture which in northern India is also called by various names like *Ganga-Jamni tehzib* (culture of the region between the rivers Ganga and Jamuna or *Mili-juli tehzib* (syncretic culture) or *Sanjhi virasat* (composite heritage). Though these terms mainly refer to north Indian culture. Composite culture is not essential restricted to north India. India is land of many cultures and all regional cultures from north to south and east to western parts of India.

When we refer to culture it includes art and architecture, language, poetry, music, paintings, dances, draperies, food habits, customs, traditions and some religious, especially spiritual practices. After years of composite traditions coming into existence it becomes so assimilated that we consider it part of our original culture. Only scholars know its composite nature.

The discourse about Composite culture is also deeply influenced by political needs. The communal forces, as pointed out before, want to deny existence of syncretism or composite nature of culture and those who promote national integration

and communal harmony try to develop a composite discourse for our culture as it helps bringing communities together.

This composite discourse becomes a great political need in a society like India which is so diverse and in the process of nation building fusion of various communities and harmony among them becomes very necessary. The British rulers were busy dividing us and our liberation from British rule would not have been possible without bringing various communities, especially Hindus and Muslims together. Thus even during our freedom struggle communal forces were emphasizing our separate communal identities.

The theory of Hindu Rashtra and Islamic nation was result of such attempts by communal forces. Ultimately these communal forces on both sides succeeded in dividing our nation despite such composite nature of our cultural and some religious practices. The national discourse, of course, emphasized composite nature of our culture but for various reasons, not to be discussed here, this discourse was drowned in the separatist cacophony and more than half a million human beings lost their lives.

Today in contemporary India communal forces are no less active. These forces still talk of Hindu Rashtra and have coined slogan of 'one nation, one culture and one language. Such an approach denies the rich diversity of India and our composite heritage. Thus it is in the interest of our unity to emphasize and re-emphasize the syncretic nature of our heritage to draw people together.

It is true that this is our political need but one should not emphasize syncretic nature of our heritage such for the sake of political need but also in the interest of our authentic history. History should not be distorted either way – to divide people

as also to unite people. Distortion of history, even for positive purpose, is a dangerous thing. History should be written rising above all religious, political or cultural needs. Those who temper with their past would temper with their future as well.

FUSION OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Islamic ritual practices influenced indigenous Hindu practices and vice versa. Many scholars have pointed out that Satya Narayan Katha which is widely prevalent in northern India today came into existence by imitating Muslim practice of public narration of Prophet's life story especially in Bengal and subsequently it spread to other parts of north India. Common Hindus are hardly aware of origin of practice of Satya Narayan Katha.

Similarly, several Sufi rituals, practices and beliefs, have deep imprint of indigenous practices. The noted German scholar Gruhnalm thinks that the Sufi doctrine of *fana' fi Allah* (annihilation in Allah) is result of Hindu doctrine of *Samadhi* in which a person annihilates himself in Ishwara, the ultimate being. It is also important to note that many great Sufi saints like Baba Farid of Punjab, Sheikh Mohammad of Maharashtra and others wrote in local languages like Punjabi or Marathi. This made them much more acceptable among the local populace.

Baba Farid is highly respected by Sikhs as his Punjabi verses have been included in the *Adi Granth sahib*. The Punjab University has established Baba Farid Chair and lot of work on Sufism is done through this department. Sikh Gurus had great regard for Sufi saints. When the foundation stone for Har Mandir was being laid the Sikh Guru Arjan Dev insisted that Mian Mir, the Sufi saint of Lahore would be the one to lay the

foundation stone. He was requested and he came and laid the foundation stone of Har Mandir.

Sufis showed respect for Hindu religion and indigenous practices. Many rituals during the *urs* (death anniversary) of a Sufi saint have been borrowed by local Hindu customs around a temple. Khwaja Hasan Nizami in his book *Fatimi D'awat-e-Islam* have described in detail some of these rituals. According to him the annual day rituals of Hindu temple were adopted for *urs* rituals like taking out *sandal* paste in procession and chador in a *palkhi* (palanquin) and washing the grave of the Sufi and offering chador is adoption of temple rituals.

Only difference is that idol is replaced by grave. In annual day ritual idol is washed with *sandal* paste and on *urs* Sufi saint's grave is washed with the paste after bringing it in a procession along with a chador. It is interesting to note that in Mahim, Mumbai, the police inspector (generally a Hindu) carries the chador in a *thali* (large dish) on his head and offers on the grave of Sufi saint Makhdum Mahimi.

Again in Mumbai there are Hindu, Muslim and Christian shrines where people of all religions go and take vows and pay their respects. Three shrines like Haji Ali, Siddhi Vinayak temple and Mahim and Mount Mary churches are such shrines. Ajmersharif also attracts, along with other shrines like Nizamuddin Awliya in Delhi and Baba Gesudaraz in Gulbargasharif attract large number of non-Muslims.

Sindh (now in Pakistan) and Kashmir have strong Sufi traditions and in both these regions Hindus have been highly influenced by Sufis. In united Punjab too, apart from Baba Farid, Bullehshah, Makhdumshah Inayat and others were highly respected by non-Muslims as well. Bullehshah was

from Qadiriya school and was also influenced by Shatariyah school and hence one finds elements of rebellion in his poetry.

In Sindh Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was extremely popular among Hindus, apart from Muslims. Shah is a great symbol of Sindhi culture and personality. No student of Sindhi culture and poetry can ever work ignoring Shah Abdul Latif. His poetic work has been collected in *Risalo* and *Risalo* is as popular among Hindu Sindhis as among Muslim Sindhis. In fact all Sindhis irrespective of their religion sing verses from *Risalo*; with great devotion. Shah Abdul Latif is, indeed part of our great composite heritage.

Kashmir is another region where Sufis helped create syncretic culture. No one can think of Kashmir without mentioning Nundrishi (Sufi Nuruddin is popularly known as Nundrishi in Kashmir) and the Shaivite saint Lalded. Though Nuruddin was Muslim and Lalded a Shaivite Hindu both shared very close relationship of mother and son and both are highly respected by all Kashmiris irrespective of religion. Both have left deep imprint on syncretic culture of Kashmir. Both Kashmiri and Sindhi cultures, despite political divisions, remain highly syncretic even after partition.

Amir Khusro, a great poet and very close to Nizamuddin Awliya, the great Sufi saint from Delhi, was himself a Sufi and has made very seminal contribution to composite culture of north India. His father had come to India from Uzbekistan and Khusro was born in India. His father married a local Muslim woman. Thus he was both an Uzbek from his father's side and an Indian from mother's side.

He composed poems in Persian but also poems whose one line was in Persian and one line in local dialect Biraj. He also composed *dohas* in Hindi which were on the lips of

people. He was very proud of being an Indian and wrote an article on India in which he compares India with other countries and proves India's superiority, its flora and fauna and maintains that India is unparalleled in its beauty. Anyone would feel proud of India after reading his essay.

Khusro was not only a great poet but also a musician and invented some musical instruments like sitar which is in fact *sah tar* (three strings) as there are three strings in this instrument. Khusro also invented qawwali a genre of poetry which is sung in accompaniment with harmonium and tabla on Sufi mausoleums. Khusro was very close to Nizamuddin and wrote a dirge on his death in Brij which is highly popular even today.

Urdu language itself is the great symbol of our composite culture. It was borne in bazaar by mixing of different communities like Turks, Hindus, Indian Muslims and others. It was always spoken by people in Bazar and never became court language except towards the end of Moghul period. Urdu is mixture of local Indian dialects like Brijbhasha, Haryanvi, Maithili, Purbi, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit etc.

Towards the end of Moghul period it became language of ruling class and was spoken by people of all communities and it never was language of Muslims alone as it is projected today. Urdu produced great Hindu poets, storywriters and novelists during freedom struggle as well as in earlier period. Among story writers and novelists in Urdu Premchand is the well-known name. He wrote volumes of short stories and acquired legendry fame through his Urdu fiction.

Krishanchand, Rejindra Singh Bedi, Ramlal, Maniktala, Jogendra Paul and several others are well-known fiction writers in Urdu. Similarly Brijnarayan Chakbast, Anandnara-

yan Mule, Firaq Gorakhpuri, Jagannath Azad, Pandit Zutshi Gulzar, Kalidas Gupta Raja, Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, Daya Shankar Naseem, Fikr Tausvi, Belraj Mina and several others are reputed to be good poets. Firaq Gorakhpuri carved out his own niche after Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Thus Urdu was and is most significant symbol of our composite heritage.

Even Muslim poets of Urdu language wrote poems celebrating Hindu holy places and festivals. Ghalib who wrote in nineteenth century wrote a long poem in Persian on Benaras and named it *Kaa'ba-e-Hindustan (chiragh-e-Dair)* in which he showers praises on the Hindu holy place of worship. He says in one of the verses of this *masnavi* (long duet) that even grass of Benaras is like a garden and its dust like the essence of soul (*javohar*). Ghalib says further in this colourful city of temples *bahar* (season of spring) remains permanent and never changes. In all seasons spring, or cold or summer it always remains like paradise.

Thus Ghalib lavishes praise on Benaras, the holy city of Hindus. He had stayed in Benaras for few days while going from Delhi to Calcutta and he fell in love with this holy city. Similarly Nazir Akbarabadi wrote several poems celebrating Hindu festivals. His poems are in simple Hindustani. Many Sufis also wrote popular songs on Holi, the festival of color. A programme based on these songs was presented at Nehru Centre, Mumbai written by Shamim Tariq, an Urdu writer and journalist. It was indeed very impressive programme.

Also Holi, Dasehra and Diwali were officially celebrated in Mughal Darbars with great pomp and pageantry. On the day of Diwali Moghul princesses would go round and distribute saris to poor Hindu women and Red fort was decorated with lamps and it was known as *jashn-e-chiraghan*

(i.e. festival of lamps). Both Nauruz and Diwali were celebrated in grand manner. Nauruz is central Asian festival.

It is also important to note that both the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were translated into Persian and Arabic and were beautifully calligraphed. I have seen one such copy of Ramayana calligraphed in Arabic script and bound with golden margins like the Qur'an in Alwar Museum. It is said there are 60 different Persian and Arabic translations of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jahan who was appointed successor to the throne of India but lost to Aurangzeb in the battle of Samugarh, translated *Upanishad* into Persian and named it *Sirr-e-Akbar* (The Great Mystery). Dara Shikoh had mastered Sanskrit language by spending few years in Benaras with well-known scholars of that language. He was of the opinion that concept of *tawheedi* (oneness of God) was found in *Upanishad* AFTER Qur'an. The handwritten manuscript of *Sirr-e-Akbar* prepared by Darashikoh himself is in the library of Darul Musannifin, Azamgarh and it was shown to me by its Director. Dara Shikoh begins with *Bismilliah al-Rehman al-Rahim* on left side and *Ganesha namaha* on the right with a small figure of Ganesha.

Darashikoh also wrote his *magnum opus* which he named *Majma'-ul-Bahrayn* i.e. Commingling of Two Oceans (i.e. Hinduism and Islam). He compares teachings of two religions and concludes that difference is of language (one is in Sanskrit and other in Arabic), not of content. Hinduism and Islam have remarkable similarities in terms of contents and he discusses all the theological terms of two religions and draws this conclusion. Books like *Majma'-l-Bahrayn* are true representative of our composite culture.

Muslims and Hindus made rich contributions in the field of music, paintings and architecture also. We evolved a composite architecture which can be seen in Hindu temples as well as in structures constructed by Muslim kings, emperors and nawabs. Adilshahi structures are an excellent example of composite architecture in Bijapur which was centre of Adilshahi rule.

Ibrahim Adilshah, popularly known as Jagatguru, was also scholar of Sanskrit language and wrote poetry in Kannada as well as in Persian and Deccani Urdu. Golgumbad, counted among the wonders of the world is mausoleum of Ibrahim Adilshah and his wife and other relatives and its architecture is good example of our composite architecture. One even finds idol of Lord Ganesha in one of the forts built during Adilshahi rule near Kolhapur.

Muslims enriched Indian classical music through their own contribution. Dhrupad and Khayal are their contribution in Indian classical music. Khusro also invented some ragas. There have been several Muslim gharanas (schools) who made rich contribution to Indian classical music. Tansen was one of the greatest musician during medieval times. In our own times Bade Akbar Ali Khan, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Zakir Husain, they are all great musicians in their own right.

On the other hand Shankar Shambhu two brothers were great qawwali singers and sang qawwalis on the day of *urs* at Ajmersharif. Wherever they were they would come to Ajmer on the day of *urs* (death anniversary) to sing qawwali there. They had great faith in Khwaja Moinuddin, the Sufi saint of Ajmer.

Thus we see that India has great and rich tradition of composite culture which our communal politics has

completely ignored today and raising slogans of pure Hindu and Muslim culture widening communal divide between two religious communities. Unfortunately our textbooks also downplay our syncretic culture. It is time we do away with this divide by projecting this rich culture calls it *ganga-jamni tahzib, sanjhi wirasat* or by any other name.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE SOME THOUGHTS

Inter-faith dialogue is becoming commonplace these days and many organizations are organizing it in view of inter-religious tensions in many countries in the world. USA had not known it earlier or very few organizations were involved but post 9/11 Islam came under attack and tensions between Christians and Muslims increased and so many organizations came into being organizing dialogues.

In India too the decade of eighties saw eruption of communal violence and several major riots took place from Moradabad in beginning of eighties to Bhagalpur to Mumbai until beginning of nineties. Thus Indians also realized the importance of inter-faith dialogue and number of them took place. I must say Indians did not have this tradition and it is Christians who took main initiative and invited Muslims and Hindus to talk to each other.

However, most of the dialogues tend to be at a very superficial level. We often refer to what is best in our tradition completely ignoring what is worst in it and causes thereof. Thus all sides praise their own religious tradition and disperse and the problem continues. One wonders then why conflict takes place at all. Thus like other rituals we also perform one more ritual and feel duty has been done.

First of all inter-faith dialogue has to be much deeper encounter between faiths which must bring out not only good and desirable elements but also problem areas and conflict and how to resolve these problem areas. Inter-faith dialogue

should be followed by an attempt to conflict transformation, to make it more useful.

Conflict transformation also needs deeper engagement with the causes of conflict and find ways to resolve it. Inter-faith dialogue per se may be useful but it can become much more so if there is deeper engagement and sincere attempt to understand causes of conflict and resolve it through mutual cooperation.

Inter-religious dialogue needs some strict discipline also. It requires true religious attitude and what is meant by it is accepting truth of all religions. Any sense of superiority about ones own religion, howsoever subtle, defeats very purpose. Sense of superiority has ways to assert itself through our ego, individual as well as collective. One must realize that no religion can ever be based on falsehood though their faith and traditions may differ for number of reasons.

Maulana Azad, a great Muslim theologian and commentator of the Qur'an also realized this and maintained, quoting scriptures of all great religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity that core of religion, what he calls *Deen* is same but what differs is customs, traditions and legal practices what he describes as *Shari'ah*. These differences, he maintains, are not due to different core teachings but due to origin and manifestations of these religions in different cultures. Thus differences in cultures play greater role than different teachings.

We often miss this point and find in these differences causes of conflict. Also, we are so much lost in rituals that we completely miss spirituality of each faith tradition. A great seer like Ramakrishna realized the commonality of spirituality by practicing all three religions i.e. Hinduism, Christianity and Islam and found no significant difference in their spirituality. Both these great religious thinkers understood the problem at

much deeper level and after serious engagement with theologies of these religions.

One should also understand that religion and religious communities are two different entities. Religion remains in theological domain whereas religious communities exist in secular space with secular interests and what conflicts are not religious theologies but secular interests of these communities. Often clash of communal interests are projected as clash of religions or religious theologies.

A good example of this is Huntington's much discussed book *Clash of Civilizations*. In fact there is absolutely no clash between civilizations, it is clash between USA and the Arab nations during the Bush regime which was projected by Huntington as clash of civilizations. In India, it is political interests of a section of Hindus and Muslims or Christians which clash and it is often projected as clash between Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

Also, religion is often misused by vested interests and misuse of religion becomes part of the problem. What is often discussed is politicized religion than religion by itself. There are number of examples of this in history as well as in contemporary world. Crusades are best examples of this. It was no clash between Christianity and Islam but fight for supremacy over Palestine.

Similarly the Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid issue was in no sense a religious issue. It was purely an attempt to politicize a controversy related to a religious place and the right place to resolve this controversy was court of law. The issue was artificially created by the Sangh Parivar in 1948 by installing idols of Ram and Sita with a political project in mind. To fulfill the aim with which these idols were installed inside the mosque at dead of the night, the controversy was raked in late eighties.

As religion is often politicized in contemporary world so it was politicized in history too. And all that became part of religion and now we are unable to separate chafe from grain and what is more unfortunate is that we fight on these issues even in contemporary world. I would like to illustrate with some examples. One such example is the concept of jihad. Some extremist elements among Muslims are grossly misusing it for their own political project.

What is described as jihad by these extremist elements is in no sense a Qur'anic discourse. Jihad meant, as far as the Qur'anic discourse is concerned, nothing more than strenuous efforts to spread good and contain evil. It is in fact intellectual efforts and involves no fight with weapons, though some maintain that it could be the last resort if at all evil takes violent form. The Prophet of Islam himself described *jihad* as speaking truth in the face of a tyrant ruler and get justice to the oppressed.

However, *jihad* came to be grossly misused by many Muslim rulers in history for territorial expansion and every fight with non-Muslim rulers on territorial issues came to be construed as jihad. It is important to note that the Prophet (PBUH) himself was forced to fight some battles but he never described them as 'jihad'. They were described as *ghazwa* which was the prevalent term in pre-Islamic Arabic also for inter-tribal raids and battles. Of course there were no major wars in pre-Islamic Arabia and violence was limited to inter-tribal fights for which the term *ghazwa* was used.

Had *jihad* been a war or battle Prophet (PBUH) would have freely used it as who could then be entitled to use that word *jihad* than the Prophet himself. But yet the rulers who grabbed power after the period of *khilafat* (30 years of rule by the prominent companions of the Prophet) called their mutual fights as *jihad* or any fight with non-Muslim ruler as *jihad*. And its constant misuse throughout history made it part of Islamic discourse.

Thus today those who are non-state actors fighting Muslim rulers and killing Muslims and non-Muslims from civil society describe it as *jihad* and those who have no deeper understanding of religious tradition accept it as *jihad*, many Muslims no exception. It should be abundantly clear to anyone who tries to engage with Islamic history at deeper levels that killing innocent people for political purposes cannot be construed *jihad* in any sense of the word.

Jihad as such implies only efforts, not weapons and even if it does supposedly imply weapons it cannot be permissible to kill innocent members of civil society. Right from 9/11 until today those who style themselves as *jihadis* have killed only innocent people. Be it in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Iraq they are killing only Muslims as there are hardly non-Muslims in these countries.

Jihad was never so grossly corrupted as by Al-Qaida and Taliban in Afghan-Pakistan area. To describe these killers as 'jihadis' is great insult to the term *jihad* and I say there can be no greater insult to this noble concept which implies peaceful intellectual efforts for greater good in our conflict torn world. If *jihad* has to come in its own. However, politicized *jihad* of today has become a curse for the peaceful world.

It is in this sense that a deeper encounter with our own and other's religious traditions is necessary and it is in this sense I maintain that superficial dialogues will not help in which we just mention what is best in our tradition completely ignoring what is worse and how it happen to come about. And such deeper encounter should not be restricted to few dialogue circles only.

More and more people should be involved through mass media. Today media has become a part of problem rather than solution. Media hardly takes interest in inter-faith debate. It spreads prejudices about the other rather than enlightening its readers or viewers. Media has not only been commercialized

but has also been politicized. There is great need to involve media persons in such deeper encounters so that for media persons religion does not become blind spot. Inter-faith dialogue has to embrace whole society.



RELIGION: A SOURCE OF CONFLICT OR RESOURCE FOR PEACE?

It is an age old debate that religion is a source of conflict or resource for peace? Also can religion play any positive role in bringing about 1) stability in South Asia and 2) consolidating friendship between India and Pakistan? To debate these questions about 20 scholars and activists from India and Pakistan met at Dhulikhel, a mountain resort near Kathmandu, Nepal.

The consultation was organized jointly by Irenees of France and Pipal's Tree of Bangalore jointly from 10-13 May 2009. Scholars and activists both from India and Pakistan participated in the consultation. From Pakistan historian and peace activist Prof. Mubarak Ali, noted poet Fahmida Riyaz and Prof. of Pakistan Studies from Karachi University Syed Jafar Ahmad came from Pakistan.

Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, Sanjiv Kulkarni, Prashant of Sri Ravi's organization, Art of Living Foundation, Ms. K. Anuradha of Aman Vedika, Hyderabad and Mazhar Husain of COVA, Hyderabad took part from India. Mr. Henri of Irenees from France and Siddartha of Pipal Tree, Bangalore too play active part in discussions. Prof. Kapil, member Nepal Human Rights Commission, also participated from Nepal.

Siddartha of Pipal Tree, Bangalore Coordinator of the consultation welcomed the participants and also threw light on the purpose of the consultation. He said situation in countries of South Asia especially Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan is quite worrisome and religion appears to be playing major part in these conflicts. We scholars and activists have to

understand, analyse and try to work for peace in this region and hence importance of this consultation.

Mr. Henri of Irenees introduced the mission of the organization saying we are working for peace in several parts of the world including Asia, Africa and Latin America. Stability in South Asia is very important as it is flash point today and so this consultation has its own significance.

Dr. Engineer opened the consultation through his inaugural remarks. He said that role of religion cannot be understood without socio-political context. It would be erroneous to think religion or conflict is innate to religion as many secularists and rationalists tend to do. Conflict and violence comes from external sources i.e. from socio-political situation in the region. Religion is often used as a tool by vested interests.

Pakistan today is in turmoil and Taliban are riding roughshod and we blame it on religion as they talk of Shari'ah law. In fact what Taliban practice in the name of Islamic Shari'ah, is their tribal customs and traditions. It has very little to do with Qur'anic principles and values. Engineer also said that to bring peace to the region one cannot succeed simply by declaring war against Taliban as America wants Pakistan to do and Pakistan is doing under American pressure.

Peace would be a very challenging process in Swat and other regions of Pakistan. Engineer said in the long run peace and stability would be possible by adopting two fold approach to Taliban problem: One, and most important is that Afghan people will never compromise of their sovereignty and freedom. Whole history of region is witness to that. To mess up with their freedom is to invite turmoil in the region and which is what US policies in the region has done.

Secondly, the region has not seen any substantial development and economic prosperity. It is one of the most backward regions of the country. They must be brought in

contact with modernity, modern ideas and development. Development should be, of course, with wisdom and justice. Unless these two factors are born in mind it would be very difficult to control Taliban in the region. No amount of weapons and wars will succeed in eliminating them.

From Pakistan Prof. Mubarak Ali threw detailed light on the kind of history text books which are taught there and hence education has become part of the problem. Hindus and India are portrayed in very poor light and in fact Hindus are blamed for many ills in medieval and modern history of Indian sub-continent. Prof, Mubarak Ali is an eminent historian from Pakistan.

Prof. Mubarak Ali said religion and politics have one common goal: that is to acquire power and use it to fulfill their aims. However, to achieve this object, their methods are different. Religion mobilizes religious sensibilities of they people to capture power while politics uses intrigues, diplomacy, and attempts to win public opinion, if it can be so done, or uses military, if that is not possible.

In fact struggle for power has become seminal be it Pakistan or India or any other country. Even in democracy manipulations of public opinion and conspiracies are not uncommon to usurp power. As long as aim remains power, and it has always been the aim, conflict will continue either using religion or language or ethnicity, as tool. Unless power becomes means to serve people one cannot do away with conflict and violence. But if power remains an end conflict and violence will be the order of the day.

Fahmida Riyaz, said in her paper, Religion is perhaps the earliest human quest about the mystery of existence as well as the striving for order and collective living. It gave people laws to live by and whetted their wonderment and curiosity, leading to deep contemplation of the self and the universe. She also stressed that over thousands of years, religions have come

to be an important part of collective and individual identities. She also dealt with phenomenon of fundamentalism. Bringing out political dimension, she observed that the upper and middle classes adopt saffron on the forehead and regular attendance of mosques when the party in power supports religiosity. They give it up when another party comes to power. Thus religion is seen as mere instrument of power.

Syed Jafat Ahmad traced briefly history of various political developments in Pakistan since its formation. He observed that role of religion in statecraft was recognized in the three constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973, in varying degrees. According to Jaffar Ahmad relevance of religion in Pakistani statecraft remains even today. The Ulama though desire Pakistan to be an Islamic country but absolve themselves of any responsibility for the political mess today by saying they are not directly responsible for introducing Islamic system in Pakistan.

Mr. Prashant of Art of Living Foundation threw light on Sri Ravi Shankar's understanding of religion. According to him religion, if properly understood, can be no obstacle for change. He says even our religious practices evolve with change. He said Ravi Shankar stands for peace and harmony and he has intervened in number of post-conflict situations like in Gujarat and even in Iraq by organizing Art of Living camps. However, a question was raised whether it was enough to teach peace to victims of violence or to teach it to perpetrators of violence.

Mr. Sanjeev Kulkarni from Dharwar, India spoke very critically of Sangh Parivar and its politics of Hindu-Muslim conflict. He felt Sangh Parivar is responsible for changing the image of Ram from a *maryada purush* (a man of ideal human behavior) to a warrior Ram with arrow and bow to promote its own political interests. It came to power by misusing Hindu religion for political purposes. Through Sangh Parivar Hindu

religion became from a higher philosophy of life as in Upanishads to an emotional tool for power.

Mr. Siddarth was of the opinion that there have been counter cultural movements in Hinduism in the past like Chokha Mela, Kabir and Eknath and there is need to revive them. He referred to various Hindu bhakti saints and if we revive their traditions we can do away with the caste system. He said these movements emphasised the openness and inclusive nature of Hindu religion. He said concept of advaita (non-dualism) can promote universalism. Dr. Engineer pointed out to philosophy of wahdat al-wujud (Unity of Being) in sufi tradition which is also quite universal in nature.

Mazhar Husain of COVA maintained that we need to change our whole paradigm of reacting to Sangh Parivar and adopt a pro-active paradigm i.e. from identity to ideological politics. Today contemporary politics in India is conflictual identity politics and ideological politics of yester years like the one practiced by the Congress in early days after independence, has disappeared. Secular and socialist ideology should replace politics of religious and caste identities. That alone can promote peace and stability in the region.

Ms. Anuradha spoke from her experiences as an activist among dalits. She narrated a story of a dalit worker who faced several problems in life after he brought, at the insistence of his wife, a Hindu idol. He had to stop eating beef and he could hardly afford mutton and chicken. He had survived on dry beef through the trying days of famine in his area. Then once the idol came to his house he had to contribute to funds raised for Hindu festivals at the cost of his other necessities. Thus religion became a source of conflict at home rather than a source of peace. She said that these aspects of ritualized religion for the poor also had to be looked at. She also talked about role of women in promoting secularism and said they have formed Women for Secularism for this purpose.

There was much more in the rich discussions which followed after every presentation but for want of space we cannot obviously include that here. Suffice it may to say that it was very useful and insightful consultation on role of religion in South Asia and stability and peace.

HOW SECULAR IS INDIA?

There is always a big gap between theory and practice, theology and history. Indian constitution, no doubt, is one of the best in the world. It is truly secular in spirit so much so it was secular even when word, secular was not added to it until 1975, i.e. during emergency. If it were truly implemented India would be an ideal country to live in especially for minorities, both religious as well as linguistic.

However, as we all know there is big gap between theory and practice, constitution and governance of the country. India was far more peaceful after independence for number of reasons. Firstly, nationalist leaders who had participated in freedom struggle and were instrumental in framing the Constitution were still around and despite various pressures, stuck to ideals and values to a great extent.

Secondly, due to idealism and nearness to spirit of freedom nation as a category and national identity was of great importance and often caste, linguistic and religious divisions mattered less. Thirdly, the process of economic development had just begun and yet people's demand for share in development on caste and communal lines was not very articulate and loud.

Because of all this identity politics was still subdued and Marathi versus non-Marathi, Tamil versus non-Tamil sentiments were not so prominent. Hindu versus Muslims feelings were not so subdued due to memory of partition but due to other factors communal violence was still limited and

had not assumed proportions of ethnic cleansing or genocide like in Gujarat in 2002.

It all began with series of communal riots in sixties assuming great proportions in Ahmedabad in 1969 and Bhivandi in 1970. In Ahmedabad nearly 1000 people were killed in Ahmedabad in 1969 and around 400 people in Bhivandi. But then communal violence remained in check until 1977 when again some major riots took place in several places like Jamshedpur, Aligarh and Varanasi etc.

Again whole of decade of eighties was full of communal violence climaxing in Mumbai riots in 1992-93. The Ramjanam bhoomi movement once again polarized as on the eve of partition. Again there was lull in communal disturbances from 1992-93 to 2002 when Gujarat took place in 2002. Gujarat riots once again made communal situation quite fragile and weakened secular ethos in the country.

Now the identity politics soared quite high and national ethos considerably weakened. Today everyone prioritize once caste, communal and religious identity over national one. National rhetoric, as if, has almost disappeared and even Hindutva forces talk more of Hindu religion than of patriotism or nation. For them too Indian nationalism has been replaced by Hindu nationalism. For Shiv Sena of course Maharashtra was always more important than the Rashtra (nation) and those Hindus too who spoke Hindi the Rashtrabhasha (national language) came under attack. Several Hindus from U.P. and Bihar were mauled by Marathi speaking zealots belonging to Maharashtra Navniram Sena (MNS), a splinter group from Shiv Sena. Now recently Christians who were never targeted before by the Hindutva zealots have also come under attack. Christians, a mere 2.2 percent minority and which has contributed so richly to the country in the field of education and health services are being killed ruthlessly. What is going on in Kandhmal district of Orissa and some adjoining districts, is indeed hair raising.

More than 40 Christians have been killed, a nun massraped, a woman burnt beyond recognition, more than 400 houses burnt and looted and 35 thousand have fled from their villages to relief camps. And what for? A myth has been spread by the powerful machinery of Sangh Parivar that all Christians convert. Remember RSS propaganda "All Muslims are not terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims"?

Orissa is another Gujarat both in brutalities and terrorization of minorities. When Christians and Muslims are being so brutally targeted the RSS Chief Sudarshan says that both Muslims and Christians convert and Muslims want every one to become Muslim and Christians want all to follow Christ and so Hindus must give fitting reply. And our rulers just look on.

When BJP was ruling over the country and whole country was communalized we were feeling suffocated and felt liberated when UPA took over and the BJP led Government defeated at the hustling. We celebrated UPA's victory specially because it was supported by the left which is the only hope for Indian secularism. However, left has withdrawn its support on nuclear issue and once again we are feeling suffocated in the communally surcharged state of affairs in India.

However, what is most worrisome is that it is happening under UPA Government which is supposed to be a secular outfit. Perhaps today there is more suffocation than even under the BJP-led NDA Government. The UPA has forgotten all its promises made to the country and is betraying minorities and jettisoning its secular commitment. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is more occupied with his pet nuclear pact with America than the communal explosion back home.

The communal forces are growing stronger and stronger everyday and the ruling coalition of secular forces is quite indifferent. The Home Ministry is functioning quite in a

lackadaisical manner. It has given complete liberty to these forces and they are riding roughshod over our secular values and constitutional forces. They never got such license to function freely.

The NDA Government liberally recruited RSS inclined candidates in all key positions and they captured important academic positions too. Also, RSS trained teachers and journalists also were recruited on large scale. It is because of this that we find communally minded people in all walks of life. The media also has been communalised as never before.

Today be it communal riots or terrorist attacks most of the newspapers and T.V. channels publish police version unabashedly as if it is ultimate truth. No questions are raised and it appears as if investigative journalism has become story of the past. Media plays most important role in strengthening democratic values and democracy cannot survive without a critical and alert media. But it seems except for few papers and magazines media has been completely communalised.

Even a well-known Daily from south which was known for its strong commitment to secularism appears to have developed, of late, subtle communal slant. It is indeed very critical period for India. India is well known as largest secular democracy in the world. But first Gujarat and now Orissa has dented its secular image thanks to Hindutva forces. Manmohan Singh was faced with the most embarrassing situation abroad and he had to admit that what is happening in Orissa is 'shameful'.

But having described developments in Orissa shameful what has he done to redeem it? He is quite hesitant to ban Bajrang Dal and resisting demand of some of his own Congress party colleagues to ban it saying we are watching and waiting for reports from Chief Minister of Orissa. It is indeed more shameful than communal carnage in Orissa. Any truly secular government would have dismissed Navin

Patnaik Government for its complete inability to control communal violence.

So far I never believed that Indian communalism could take form of fascism as many leftists had been saying all along. Today we see the footprints of fascism in India. The situation is very similar to that of Germany in the thirties. The unemployed hordes of lower middle classes have joined Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad in large numbers and hailing Hindutva leaders. Some of the text books in Rajasthan and Gujarat, both BJP ruled states are praising fascism and Hitler. Also, the Central Government is appeasing these communal forces. It appears though the Government at the Centre is of secular UPA but agenda is of Sangh Parivar. The police appears to be taking orders from Sangh Parivar rather than from ruling Congress or UPA. Riot after riot be it in Orissa or Digras, Pusad or Dhule the police just looks on when mobs loot and burn even during curfew hours.

It is indeed very worrisome situation. The UPA Government is assisting the Sangh Parivar in every way possible. The police is riding absolutely roughshod over minorities and latest example is Batla House 'encounter'. Though the print and electronic media abdicated its responsibility the human rights groups raised questions and pricked holes in the police claim of encounter of 'dreaded terrorists'.

The situation is indeed very grave and unless secular forces unite and play determined role things can get far more worse. And Once things go out of control and the bascist, Communal forces gain command of the situation, it is vary difficult to restore a healthy, Secular and just environment so necessary for progress and prosperity of our people, and for strength of our nation. It is high time. We rise to the occasion and set our house in order and make "if safe and re cure" in every way both from inside as well as outside.

SECTION-II

MUSLIMS: POLITICES & EDUCATION

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INDIAN MUSLIMS : MODERATION AND EXTREMISM

As long as my memory goes I remember Muslims in general and Indian Muslims in particular, have been criticized for being extremists in religious matters and though, the criticism went, there are a few moderate Muslims, they do not take any stand or refuse to stand up and be counted and always, extremists carry the day. This has been an unending criticism of Muslims.

It is not that in the past there were no extremists among Hindus. But they were not so visible and the intellectuals as well as the media thought that they were liberal and that there may be, of course a few exceptions. Also, Hindu liberals, unlike the Muslim ones, were not afraid of taking a stand. These attitudes were, least to say, historical, apolitical and static. Liberalism and extremism are not, and cannot be, eternal categories, as often assumed.

Human attitudes cannot remain permanently frozen in one or the other category. One has to take a dynamic view of the society, as in any society new realities keep emerging. An extremist today could become a liberal tomorrow and a liberal today may turn into an extremist in the coming days. It also depends on political conditions. A politically dominant community is more likely to be liberal than a politically suppressed and marginalized community.

It would be wrong to assume that historically Indian Muslims have been, or at least the dominant trend among them has been, conservatism or extremism. Indians are inheritors of a very rich syncretic culture, which would not

have been possible without liberal trend among Muslims. In fact in any religious community there are multiple trends coexisting in any historical epoch. It depends on our politics as to which trend we choose to highlight.

Sufis have contributed richly to our syncretic culture and to Indian Islam. In fact sufi Islam has been a dominant trend in India, Throughout the medieval ages several regions like Kashmir, Sindh, Kutch, present regions of Karnataka, Punjab and parts of present day U.P. and Rajasthan, were highly influenced by sufi culture which was moderate open and liberal. Even places like Ayodhya and Varanasi had pockets of sufi culture. Dara Shikoh translated Upanishads into Persian sitting in Varanasi.

But communal propaganda deliberately ignored this dominant trend and chose to highlight the role of certain kings like Mahmood Ghazni, Aurangzeb and others so as to derive political advantage. The partition of India, which itself was the project of a section of elite Muslims to retain their political domination, worsened the matter and Muslims, in majority political parlance came to be associated with fanaticism and extremism. And the few liberal Muslims they spotted were also condemned as cowards, unable to take a firm stand.

As stated above extremism is a product not of religion but of political conditions, Hindu extremism emerged as a strong trend since mid-eighties of the last century when, due to the emergence of lower caste Hindus, domination of Brahmanical strata came under severe threat. Today Hindu extremism of RSS, Bajrang Dal, VHP and BJP itself is a well-known phenomenon.

I need not dwell upon the spread of this extremism. Minorities are its target and hundreds of citizens have become the target of its wrath. Narendra Modis, Bal Thackerays, Singhals and Togadias are dominating political discourse among Hindutva leaders. Even hundreds of journalists and

intellectuals show contempt for democratic discussions and basic freedoms. It is not that only minorities suffer from this intolerant attitude. Hindu secular and liberal elements are too their target. Mr. Singhal of the VHP threatened Navin Patnaik when he broke alliance with BJP.

A journalist who claims to be quite fair and objective and keeps on criticizing Muslim fanaticism and often enters into discussion with me wrote to me the other day and mark his words: "who is this rascal Babar to invade India...." This journalist publishes a column regularly in one of the weeklies and keeps attacking Islam. Thus it will be seen that fanaticism or extremism is not a religious but political and social phenomenon and is found in all religious communities of the world; be they Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians or Muslims.

Indian Muslims do have their quota of extremists and fanatics. But today in the given conditions, extremists and fanatics are increasingly being pushed aside, especially in the post-Babri demolition period. A section of Muslim political and religious leadership showed extremist attitude during the Shah Bano and Babri Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi controversy. They adopted a confrontationist political attitude during those days harming the cause of Muslims.

However, demolition of Babri Masjid and the communal carnage of Muslims that followed in Mumbai, Surat and several other cities, marginalized them. They learnt a lesson at a heavy cost and began to adopt moderation in their attitude. The Hindu militancy totally subdued them. Muslim masses began to shun extremist leaders and a section of religious leaders too got the message.

Darul Uloom, Deoband, an important Islamic institution, has always played important role in Indian Islam in late nineteenth century onwards and came out sharply against partition of the country and has adopted even more moderate

position of late. It is reflected in a series of sensible fatwas it has issued recently.

When a controversy arose about cow slaughter, especially on Baqar Eid day when Muslims sacrifice animals, Deoband issued a fatwa that it is not obligatory on Muslims to sacrifice cow and Muslims should avoid sacrificing cow on the day of Baqar Eid. It was a very constructive attitude and with view few exceptions, Muslims generally followed it. Similarly, recently when Mr. Singhal of VHP demanded that Darul Ulum declare India to be Darul Aman, Maulana Mahmood Madani readily declared India Darul Aman silencing Mr. Singhal. It is a different issue that Mr. Singhal may now raise some other demand. Time alone will show as what to the next demand he is going to come up with.

Also, Darul Ulum Deoband has strongly and unequivocally condemned 'jihadism' of Muslim extremists and militants and Maulana Madani has denounced it as *fasad*, not jihad. *Fasad* which is also used in Hindi/Urdu, means corruption, disorder and bloodshed. Thus it was an apt description of 'jihadism' of these politically motivated actors. The Jami'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind held huge rallies against so called jihad and denounced it in no uncertain terms. It was once again a very constructive role played by Jami'at as they had played during partition movement.

These rallies against 'jihadism' have sent a very clear message to Muslim masses in India not to support directly or indirectly such killings by invoking religious doctrine much misunderstood and corrupted in political sphere. These rallies are still continuing, though they are not always covered by the mainstream media.

Recently Darul Uloom has issued yet another fatwa after the general elections were announced which is quite helpful for secular democratic values in India. The fatwa says that Indian Muslims should vote but not on the basis of religion.

The fatwa further says, "The vote should not be kept back. One should vote for the party and the leader that is better and works in favour of Muslims and the country. India is a secular democratic country. Hence it is out of place to look at its politics in Islamic perspective and test the parties and political leaders on Islamic principles", the fatwa says. This is yet again a constructive approach to promote secularism and secular values in the country. Today our voting takes place blatantly on the basis of caste and religion. One hopes Muslims will follow this sensible advice.

It should also not be construed to mean that there are no other trends among Indian Muslims. There are extremists and militants, for sure. However, this moderate trend is emerging as a very important trend and is represented by one of the most prestigious Islamic seminaries in India. It is also to be noted that even this seminary continues to be quite rigid on certain other questions like women's rights etc. But it is a different question.

This fatwa, along with others referred to above, sends an important message to Indian Muslims: it is secular democracy which ensures peace security and progress and that religious extremism and extremist politics based on that is totally destructive of all human values. Let us remember it is secular democracy, which has cemented our unity across religions, languages and cultures. Extremism has always tried to weaken it be it Muslim extremism or Hindu extremism.

Again I would like to emphasize that we should not take a static view of society, as society is ever changing and frozen attitudes on our part will not help us understand the complex and dynamic reality objectively. A social scientist should ever be conscious of these changes taking place around us. That will help break our prejudices and help understand each other better.

MADRASA EDUCATION : MYTH AND REALITY

Madrasas have been at the centre of controversy since 9/11 attack on New York towers. It was thought that attacks were planned by Taliban who were students of madrasas run by Muslims of Wahabi ideology. Though as far as 9/11 attack was concerned, the madrasas in focus were from North West Frontier Province but in India too madrasas came under fire especially from those who were politically motivated and also from a section of media which took a biased view.

Most of the views about madrasas were expressed by those who hardly had any first hand knowledge of madrasa system or what is taught in these madrasas. They just presumed that since these are Islamic institution they must be teaching about jihad and war. Even responsible ministers from NDA Government in those days made such statements. What is needed is well informed and well studied opinion. I am glad that Ms. Saral Jhingran has made such an attempt to do systematic study of madrasas system in historical perspective. The other person who has made such an attempt is Yogi Sikand. These studies are most welcome to fight uninformed prejudices even among scholars. These madrasas were set up to fulfill a religious need rather than promote enmity with any community.

Islam entered into India from earliest time, some maintain even during Prophet's lifetime through Kerala, and a century later through Sindh in North India. Both in South and North India hundreds of people converted to Islam and hence right from earliest time there was need for madrasa institution to teach religion and also to create 'Ulama who in turn could

teach others and also help perform prayers and other religious rites.

Madrasa, an Arabic word, literally means place of *dars* i.e. teaching. In Islamic countries even institutions of higher learning are known as madrasas. In Kolkata there was Madrasa 'Aliyah i.e. higher institution of learning which now West Bengal government has given university status. It is interesting to note that these madrasas were open to students of other communities as well. Raja Rammohan Roy studied in Madrasa Aliyah and was as much scholar of Persian and Arabic as that of Sanskrit and Hindu religion.

In many cases thus madrasas in fact fulfilled both religious and secular needs and thought was necessary for secular as well as religious life. These madrasas can be, in a way, compared with Christian seminaries during medieval ages wherein too what was taught was to fulfill both religious as well as secular needs. These institutions served in those days vital scholarly needs.

The question today is how relevant are these madrasas today? Some would say they are highly relevant and should be abolished and replaced by modern secular educational institutions. Those who subscribe to rational secular point of view would easily subscribe to this position. However, such complex questions cannot be reduced to such simplistic solutions. Things in actual life are far more complex.

A large number of Muslims in India, in fact a vast majority, is of poor and illiterate variety. Most of them are converts from low Hindu caste and still pursue their ancestral vocations. Very few have emerged successfully from their inherited position to take up modern professions. These poor Muslims cannot afford, even if they want, to send their children to institutions of secular education.

Moreover, they have religious needs and madrasas can fulfill not only religious needs but also provide free education

and what is more, are conveniently located. Also, we should not homogenize all madrasas. They need to be divided into different categories i.e. preliminary known as *maktabs* where only preliminary religious teaching is imparted. Then comes middle level madrasas where Arabic language, Qur'an, commentary on Qur'an, hadith etc. are taught.

Then higher madrasas which can be compared with graduate and post-graduate level studies where apart from Arabic literature, Islamic theology, *Kalam*, philosophy and Greek sciences are taught. This syllabus in India is based on what is known as *dars-e-Nizami* devised by Mulla Nizami in eighteenth century is taught. Today there is debate on this issue between orthodox and modernist Muslims whether Dars-e-Nizami should be continued. There is a movement for modernization of madrasas and many madrasas have gone for modernization.

Now coming to Jhingran's study of madrasa, I should say it is quite objective and systematic study of madrasas in India. In the first chapter, 'Society, Religion, Education and Modernity' she defines and discusses categories like society, religion, education and modernity. This discussion imparts clarity to discussion. While defining religion, particularly Islam, she observes in this chapter, "...Religion is a very complex phenomenon, which is impossible to understand in a few pages. In as much as our main interest here is in Islam, we can generally say that it regards itself as; possessing God's final 'revelation', as well as being a comprehensive whole which includes not only Holy Quran but also the sunna as recorded in the Hadiths. As such religious education is more important and detailed for Muslims, especially the orthodox ones."

In the second chapter Ms. Jhingran discusses, right at the outset the possible number of Muslim children going to madrasas. She quotes various sources and various estimates available. She is not satisfied by the estimate given by Sachar

Committee that about 4 per cent Muslim children go to madrasas. She tries to work out her own estimate. She says, "The feed back that I have got from my frequent talks with the madrasa pass outs, now studying in JNU, or those who have roots in villages, puts the number of madrasa going children much higher ...Generally they estimate that at least in villages about 15 to 30 % Muslim children go first to maktab than to madrasas, if only for a few years.

Well, 15 to 30 per cent is a wide variation and to me it appears to be on higher side though at maktab level it may be so but not at higher madrasa level. I do not think so many maktab and madrasas are available to that kind of number. But that is not important. What is important is that madrasa continues to be an important institution for poorer rural and to some extent urban Muslims.

The author also discusses reasons for preference for madrasa education among Muslims. Among reasons she points out are 1) paucity of modern schools in Muslim majority areas; 2) lack of separate girls' schools and even female teachers in common schools; 3) cost of modern education and the poor quality of government schools; 4) poor quality of education in government schools and 5) "genuine grievance of orthodox Muslims is that there is a Hindu bias in school text books." Then she comments, "Though such biases have tendency to creep up even in supposedly objective statements, any such pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim bias is unfortunate and must be avoided with utmost sincerity as it would cause further resistance to modern education among a particular section of Muslims."

This chapter is quite important as Jhingran extensively discusses these reasons for preference among a section of Muslims for madrasa education. This chapter would remove many misunderstandings about madrasa education among non-Muslims.

In third chapter the author discusses historical background of madrasa education. She traces the origin of madrasa right from the time of Prophet of Islam as he established first such 'madrasa' in his mosque where he would teach tenets of Islam and explain the contents of revelation, which he received. The formal establishment of institution of madrasa came into existence much later. At first formal madrasa was established in Nishapur in Khurasan, and second was Nizamia madrasa in Baghdad, both in 11th century. Al-Azhar, now famous Islamic university, came into existence during Fatimid rule in Egypt around that time.

She then discusses establishment of madrasas in India. She traces teaching of rational sciences (*ma'qulat*) during Akbar's period by Fatehullah Shirazi. He introduced, she says, and popularized various rational sciences (*ma'qulat*) which became major part of madrasa curriculum. It must be pointed out that rational sciences included astronomy, geography, physics and philosophy, mostly derived from Greek sources. Unfortunately all this continues to be taught even today under the general rubric of *ma'qulat* though at best they are of only historical importance now.

She then discusses madrasa system from Aurangzeb's time to the coming of the British in India. Jhingran says, "For the first time, Aurangzeb (17th century) made a team of scholars to prepare a digest of Islamic law, later on called Fataw-i-Alamgiri. Then he granted Mulla Nizamuddin a mansion in Lucknow, known as Firangi Mahal where he established a madrasa. It was a predecessor of later madrasas and became a renowned centre of Islamic learning." It was here that Mulla Nizamuddin developed a systematic syllabus which is known as Dars-e-Nizami and is still taught in most of the higher madrasas. Mulla Nizamuddin had tried to create quite a balanced and flexible system by standards of that time, it later on became quite rigid and no change was contemplated. Ms. Saral Jhingran then discusses madrasas

after independence and also devotes one chapter to madrasa nisabs (syllabus) and an effort to understand them and a critique. Her critique is also well informed about Islam. I must say on the whole the book is a learned and scholarly study of madrasa system and what is taught in them, how relevant those teachings are and what reforms are needed. This book will greatly help in dispelling many misunderstandings prevalent among non-Muslims and to an extent among Muslims themselves. The critique developed by her invites orthodox Muslims to reflect seriously as to what modern madrasas should be like. Many Muslim modernists have also developed such critique. This book on the whole will be quite useful for scholars as well as for lay people. Her fear about madrasa system seems to be that it creates sense of separate identity among Muslim children. While this criticism may be valid from her point of view question is in a diverse and now polarized society like India can we avoid such separate sense of identity? Our whole political system is thriving on religious, caste, ethnic and linguistic identities and sub-identities. Though there is nothing wrong with separate identities, what is wrong is its politicization fight a complex problem.

SHIBLI NU'MANI AND NATIONAL POLITICS

My friend and noted Hindi writer Kamleshwar wrote an excellent novel *Kitne Pakistan* (How Many Pakistan?) and in that novel he counts Maulana Shibli No'mani as one of narrow minded Muslim. I told Kamleshwar he has done great injustice to Shibli. He was highly critical of Muslim League and its politics and great supporter of Indian national Congress and nationalist. Kamleshwar told me he will make the necessary change in the English version of the Novel which was being published by Penguin. However, soon after that he died and I do not know whether he could get time to make that correction.

Like Kamleshwar many Muslims and non-Muslims think a theologian or a religious scholar would always be narrow minded and is bound to support religion-based politics and in Indian context is bound to support Muslim League and its politics. It is very mistaken view. In fact it is strange irony that while most of the modernist among Muslims supported Muslim League which ultimately resulted in partition of the country, many 'Ulama, in fact majority of them, opposed Muslim League and its politics.

Maulana Shibli Nu'mani was one among them. He was highly critical of Muslim League and its narrow scope of politics and he supported the Indian National Congress and supported Hindu-Muslim unity. Those who opposed Muslim participation in national politics and quoted Sir Syed to justify their approach Shibli replied that what Sir Syed said had a definite context and that in any case *taqlid* (blind following) was not the virtue of living communities. And for Muslims except the Prophet (PBUH) no one is above error. One has to think afresh and in the context.

Shibli wrote an interesting article "*Musalmanon ki Political Karvat*" (Turning point of Muslim Politics) which is strong critique of Muslim League politics. He calls it 'strange thing'. He says in this essay that Muslims when asked about their politics mention one hypothetical and useless thing called Muslim league and say that this is Muslim politics. Today thousands of educated (Muslims) think this mirage as river of life. He then says that Muslim League cannot be a true political party even after thousand years.

He also raises fundamental questions like why Muslim League came into existence, why was it established and who established it? He even calls it a '*tamasha*' (mere show). He then ask three questions: 1) Does Muslim league's constitution conform to politics? 2) Does it have symptoms of politics? And 3) Can Muslim League be of some use as Muslim League?

This is very harsh criticism which even staunch nationalists did not attempt. He says that Muslim League

was founded as a result of Shimla Deputation and this spirit will always be reflected in it and that is why all it demands is that whatever rights for the Indian people the Congress has been able to get as a result of its thirty years of struggle Muslims' share be fixed in that. The League propaganda is nothing but that Hindus want to suppress Muslims and therefore we Muslims should secure their position.

He also compares the demands put forward by the Congress and the ones made by the Muslim League. He then says that while the Congress demands rights of all Indians Muslim League talks only about Muslims. It demands fixation of Muslim share in government services, Muslims should get representation in Municipalities and Boards and it feels sorry for efforts being made for Urdu's rights and wants an inquiry into Islamic waqf functioning.

He then observes that as a result of the efforts by the Congress India is advancing steadily towards self-government. He then also compares the method of functioning of the Congress and the League. According to him whereas the Congress agitates for its demands the League members do nothing except putting forward their demands and are not active enough even to answer what government says in respect of its demands.

Maulana Shibli does not approve of Muslims making separate demands but would like both Hindus and Muslims jointly struggle for greater participation in the government of India rather than fight each other. He also criticizes Muslim League for lack of sincerity, selfishness, lack of spirit of

sacrifice and finally for its moneyed, interest-bound and slavish leadership. Shibli also derides the Muslim League's financial dependence on a certain 'generous hand' (meaning perhaps Aga Khan), which controls its policies.

On the Muslim League demand that Muslim representation be assured for Muslims Shibli raises again some very fundamental questions. Wherever Muslim members have been elected or nominated what has been their record of functioning? What these Muslims members of Viceroy's Council have achieved? What questions did they raise? Which measures did they recommend for reforms of the present system?

Or the problems they raised were just commonplace or were studied measures. He even says that the Hindu members carefully studies all records, collects relevant figures and raises questions which result in important consequences. And our (i.e. Muslim) representative raises questions in accusatory way. According to Shibli this is not politics but lack of any sense of responsibility.

Shibli says that politics is world's great sentiment only equal to religion in its appeal. It enlivens human being's all emotions, it arouses all energies in him. It creates in human spirit of sacrifice and selflessness. Did our politics (meaning Muslim politics) create such noble virtues even in one person? Does anyone taking to politics is prepared for such selflessness? Does he feel within himself any firm resolve and courage to act?

Then he gives example of Servants of India Society and says did we produce a single person who despite being a graduate reserves his whole life for the community just for Rs. 30 per month? Have we produced any example like Gurukul in which 300 persons are getting education?

This criticism we must see in the background of Muslim League members who were mostly wealthy jagirdars and moneyed people and wanted to exploit Muslim sentiments only for their own benefit. Maulana Shibli saw on the other hand the Congress leaders who were prepared for sacrifices and were mostly selfless and ever ready to go to jails and sacrifice their own interests.

Shibli wanted politics based on national interest and therefore, required nothing but sacrifice and selflessness. That is why he compares it with religion. For person like Shibli who was great scholar of Islam and always ready to defend Islam and its teachings, to compare politics with religion, is of great importance. In other words for Shibli politics should be as pure as religion.

Politics should never be based on self-interest and should not be divisive and exclusive. It should be inclusive of all sections of people in the country. Politics, according to him should never reflect petty interests. He was therefore, great advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity and joint struggle for common goals.

However, Shibli was also realist and despite his utter disgust with Muslim League's demands he considers Muslim League as an accomplished fact of political life and would

like to see it reformed and function, like another political party in addition to the Congress. It could be like liberal, conservative and radical schools and groups in the politics of England.

He recommends that the League should include all proposals of the Congress in its program and should fight for them legally like the Hindu moderate group. He feels that Justice Ameer Ali's recent proposal for a joint Hindu-Muslim stage for common problems should be adopted. And he says that Muslim League executive committee should be rid of big land-owners.

It does not mean that Shibli did not give any importance to certain specific needs of Muslims and need for separate political platform. However, he remained skeptical of Muslim League providing such a platform. League continued to be an anathema for him till the very last. According to Mrs. Meher Afroz Murad (*Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu'mani*) "...more basic reason for Shibli's almost total rejection of the League was that he could not stomach the very rationale offered for a separate political platform for the Muslims."

Criticizing Wiqar al-Mulk's article Shibli wrote:

"[It] could have been the voice of a truly courageous Muslim, had it not contained this incorrect logic that, if we join National Congress, our existence will be destroyed in the same way in which small rivers vanish into the ocean. If the Parsees numbering only one hundred thousand can preserve their existence in the midst of one hundred and ninety million Hindus and fifty million Muslims, then fifty million

Muslims should not be afraid that their existence will be destroyed." (Muhr Afroz Murad ibid)

Thus we see that a great scholar and historian of Islam like Maulana Shibli never agreed with Muslim League politics and would have opposed partition vehemently had he been alive in the critical period of forties. We must get rid of stereotype that all Muslim thinkers, religious personalities and intellectuals stood for partition of the country. In fact it is only vested interests as repeatedly pointed out by Shibli Nu'mani who promoted separatism in their own interests.

MUSLIM PARTY : SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT BE?

These days some Muslim leaders are throwing up the idea of forming a separate Muslim party. Recently some leaders from Maharashtra got together and said Muslims should not vote for Congress-NCP Alliance nor for Shiv Sena-BJP and since there is no third alternative hence a hurried conclusion was drawn to set up a separate Muslim party. Will it be a wise move to form a separate party? It has given rise to this debate.

At the outset I must say two things: one, it is within any ones democratic rights to form such party and seek alliances with other parties already in existence; two, the situation today is very different from pre-partition days and forming any such party cannot lead to separatism. That fear is quite unwarranted and perhaps no one now raises such fear either. So much for forming a Muslim party.

Having said that one must really seriously reflect whether forming such party would at all be for good of Muslims? Unfortunately answer does not seem to be very favorable. Often on such occasions Muslim leaders tend to give example of Assam where a separate outfit was formed and won 10 seats. At the time of last U.P. elections too some Muslims had thrown up this idea-giving example of Assam but ultimately drew blank and no such party was formed.

And then situation in Assam is very different. It has 28 per cent Muslim population with several Muslim majority pockets from where it is possible for a Muslim candidate to win. Whole of India, or even Maharashtra is not Assam. Kerala

is another state where a separate Muslim party exists. Kerala again is a very different kind of state with more than 20 per cent population and also 20 per cent Christian population and thus has a very balanced population and a separate party can be effective. Moreover this separate party there has existed right from the beginning.

In Assam there was no such history and Jamiatul Ulama had been a Congress ally. But of late Jamiat in Assam developed grievance that Muslims are not being given tickets and many other grievances of Muslims were not being attended to by the Congress party. The Congress party neglected these grievances and out of sheer frustration a separate party was formed by Mr. Ajmal, a rich businessman who has been a supporter of Jamiatul Ulama. The Party could register some success because of anger among Muslims in Assam against the Congress.

However, right from the beginning of separate party there was debate among Muslims in Assam whether it was a wise step to form a separate outfit. Many Muslims told me in Assam it was a wrong step and nothing much was gained by this step. It was more of an ego question than a wise move. Prof. Munirul Hussain of Guwahati University from Department of Political Science also felt that forming a separate political party leads to more polarization in the society and thus becomes harmful for the community. And there was limited success in terms of some seats because Ajmal is very rich businessman and gives money for madrasas and mosques in remote rural areas and thus those Muslims support him. In urban areas and educated Muslims he hardly has any support. He may again join Congress when his grievances are addressed.

Mr. Ajmal was present when question was being discussed by Maharashtra Muslim leaders to float a separate outfit and was egging them on to do so. I feel Muslims should

not fall into this trap and instead develop well thought out strategy so that their grievances are addressed. Ultimately wisdom rather than knee jerk reactions or worse, emotions, should prevail.

The Muslims should use the system wisely, even if it takes longer time. Such steps which seem obvious to some prove very costly and even harmful. It would undoubtedly lead to polarization and only communal forces would benefit. In Maharashtra it is even more dangerous as Shiv Sena-BJP alliance is waiting to seize that opportunity. Today they are on back foot and any such move can give them an issue, an emotional one at that, to use in forthcoming election.

Firstly, let us remember India is too diverse and what happens in one state should not be and cannot be imitated in another state. Even if one model succeeds in one state it may fail in another. One should learn a lesson from Republican party also. It has been divided today in several factions and different factions ally with different parties, some even hobnobbing with Shiv Sena.

These days every one is talking about Barack Obama. Even these Muslim leaders can learn a lesson or two from him. Before him in late eighties J.C. Jackson, also an African American leader formed a separate Rainbow Coalition and contested presidential election and lost very badly. Today Obama, contested from mainstream Democratic party and won hands down. Though he is also African American but the white population of America backed him up against another white candidate because of his balanced and wise approach addressing problems of whole country rather than only African Americans.

He acted wisely rather than using mere rhetoric which alienates majority population which is what J.C. Jackson did and failed. In sixties African Americans were facing severe discrimination and Martin King Jr. fought for human rights

and made famous speech 'I have a dream'. Obama could realize his dream successfully, not through minority rhetoric but addressing majority grievances.

Indian Muslims have much to learn from Barack Obama and his wisdom. Maulana Azad had displayed such wisdom before partition but educated Muslims were infatuated by Muslim League rhetoric and suffered. His speech from steps of Jama Masjid after partition bloodbath when Indian Muslims were going through severe crisis, was full of wisdom and restored confidence among them.

Rhetoric is very infatuating and that is why communal forces, using high pitched rhetoric succeed temporarily but ultimately prove highly destructive. Majority community too tested this at the time of Ayodhya controversy and experienced the disaster. Minorities and marginalized forces are more tempted to be infatuated such rhetoric. This rhetoric tends to become an alternative for concrete action.

In democracy various forces contend with each other and it is for a wise leadership to understand various trends and choose one which would be beneficial not only to minority, or any one section of society but for all. This is precisely what Obama did and convinced the entire nation. No one can rule out a Muslim becoming a prime minister one day if she/he rises to that stature.

May be country is passing through great political crisis and one does not see any chance today of any Muslim or Dalit becoming chief executive of the country. But who thought until yesterday that a Sikh could become Prime Minister. First he was thought to be mere puppet but he proved through his action and wisdom (though one may differ from him on many things) to be a leader in his own right.

Muslims have often been victims of their own rhetoric, now they should learn to carry whole nation with them and with welfare of whole nation in their heart. They will have to

face complex forces and learn to successfully use democracy with wisdom and benefit of all. Today there is no political leader among Indian Muslims who commands respect of all sections of Muslims.

And in order to rise to highest status one has to command respect not only of the community but of the whole nation. Could Obama rise up to become President of USA had he represented or commanded respect of only African Americans? African Americans are roughly 12 per cent of American population and Muslims are 15 per cent of Indian population. Like African Americans they are poor and backward. Yet Obama managed to rise up to national stature.

Indian Muslims have all along been victims of political rhetoric be it of Muslim League before partition or of leaders of small stature after post-independence. Leaders like Maulana Azad or Zakir Husain did not live long to guide Muslims. Both of them were leaders of great stature who had good of the nation as a whole at heart. Both were good and most sincere Muslims but they avoided reducing Islam to a mere rhetoric and instead practiced its teachings and values.

There cannot be any contradiction in being good Muslim and good Indian. In fact both are quite complementary. However, some selfish political leaders for their own short-term gain make Muslims feel as if two are somehow antagonistic. We should guard against such rhetoric. Muslims in particular and country in general benefit only by developing complementarities of both. This needs great vision.

Communal forces have done great harm to our country. They generate sense of insecurity and inferiority among Muslims. Again, Muslim leaders try to fight this only with minority rhetoric and this further inflames majority communalism. Muslims have to decisively come out of this trap with the help of people of India and developing concrete secular action plan for the nation as a whole. The secular

parties also have to shed their fear of communal forces by boldly developing strategies to fight communalism by taking minorities and marginalized sections with them rather than getting paralyzed by communal rhetoric.

SECTION-III

MINORITIES & DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY : INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION?

Barack Obama, who is in the race for being nominated as presidential candidate for America, made a remarkable speech on race relations in America. It was not merely complaining about discrimination against blacks (African Americans) but it was about extending hand of friendship towards whites so that people of America could stand together and form a more perfect union.

In fact he began by referring to the opening sentence of the constitution of America "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union" The Indian constitution also opens with "we the people of India". Obama was seeking reconciliation as a statesman and a country looks to such leaders who have grace, a future vision and seek to unite and refrain from dividing.

Those who seek to divide for the sake of power will ultimately be thrown on the dustbin of history. They may come to power momentarily but will never rule the hearts of people, would never command any respect. Hitler though most powerful in his country, was hated in his own lifetime and in his own country it is crime to take his name and Hitler is no exception.

And we live in a democratic system and democracy is nothing if not inclusive. A true democrat tries to include everyone in power and fruits of development. Democracy unites everyone through inclusion as exclusion of any section of the population would prove to be divisive. Fathers of our constitution reserved jobs and parliamentary seats for the

Scheduled castes and tribes precisely for this reason so that they are also included. It was based on future vision of unity and inclusion.

The African Americans were excluded from power structure in America for long. They were brought as slaves and treated as slave even long after slavery was abolished. It needed leader like Martin Luther King to campaign for their inclusion in early sixties. He also did not adopt the way of conflict but of non-violence and reconciliation. He adopted Gandhian way and infused confidence in African Americans in USA and gave them sense of pride and equal partners in American system.

White racialists tried to exclude them, hated them and deprived them of their due rights. White racists lost and blacks won and policy of positive discrimination was adopted by America in order to do justice to African Americans. Barack Obama addressing the people of America thus said, "What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part –through protests and struggle, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience and always at great risk – to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and reality."

He also said, in the same speech, "Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country. In South Carolina, where the Confederate Flag still flies, we built a powerful coalition of African-Americans and white Americans." It is great moment for America that it has risen above its white racialism, though after a great struggle. It is moment of glory indeed, perhaps the moment when we can say slavery has indeed been abolished, not only from the constitution but also from the hearts and minds of the people.

India also produced great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru who rose above all communal prejudices and struggled to make India secular. But like America it is taking long time to become truly secular. America abolished slavery from its constitution long ago but it took more than a century to abolish it from hearts and minds of people. We in India abolished communalism from our constitution and all forms of discrimination in 1950 itself while proclaiming our constitution but both caste and communalism is still well entrenched in our hearts and minds.

Our politicians further keep on dividing us to satiate their lust for power. After Gandhi and Nehru and Maulana Azad we have failed to produce any statespersons. On the eve of partition when communal bloodbath was taking place it was this trinity of Gandhi, Nehru and Azad who again enthused sense of unity and confidence, especially among the people of India. Maulana Azad with his great speech delivered from the steps of Jama Masjid to build the confidence among the completely shaken and shattered.

However, the coming generations of leaders could not build upon this, though our constitution did imbibe these ideals. The gap between ideals and the real has increased over the years thanks to petty political interests. Mahatma Gandhi and others launched civil disobedience movement to break the colonial stranglehold. Now, like Martin Luther king Jr. we have to launch a civil rights movement to make our democracy truly inclusive changing our hearts and minds.

True test of our democracy would be when any deserving citizen of India, be he/she tribal, dalit, Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Sikh can become prime minister of India. It is true a Muslim, dalit and Sikh have risen to the office of President and a Sikh is now Prime Minister but President's post is decorative one, not executive one. True test lies in making a dalit or Muslim or Christian Prime minister of India.

Yes, theoretically a Muslim, Christian or dalit can become Prime Minister too but that ideal has not yet been realized. India is the largest democracy in the world but our hearts and minds are yet to capture true democratic spirit. It is undoubtedly a great revolution that we have given right to vote to lowest of low and poorest of poor but our society is far from being equal in spirit.

It is heartening that an African-American, until yesterday being looked down upon, has risen to this height he is competing and so far nearly winning the candidacy for President ship of most powerful nation of the world. And whites are voting enthusiastically for Obama. No one thought until yesterday that an African-American, can ever achieve this. Racialism in America, though not dying, is undoubtedly diminishing.

However, in India, let alone dying, communalism and castism, is increasing. Communal parties and outfits are promoting rank communalism for the sake of majority votes. Even secular parties have no serious tryst with destiny. The very idea of destiny which Nehru had envisioned when power was being transferred to India on the midnight of 15th August is dying out.

Communalism and castism are penetrating deeper into our political processes. Dalits and minorities are living in fear as riots break out on petty quarrels. Christians had not faced such situation after independence right up to nineties which they are facing today. In Orissa Christians witnessed communal frenzy on the eve of Christmas. And now BJP ruled state after state are passing laws against conversion ironically calling them 'Freedom of Religion Act'. Even a Congress ruled state (Himachal Pradesh) passed such a law. So much for its commitment to secularism.

Today Communal parties are on the offensive and secular parties (with the exception of communist parties) are not only

mute witness but also ally with them. Janata Dal (Secular?) which had broken from Janta Dal (United) on the question of allying with the BJP, itself allied with it BJP in Karnataka to come to power. Without including minorities in the political processes and making them equal partners, India cannot become true democracy.

BJP is, on the other hand, making all possible efforts to exclude religious minorities and making only symbolic gesture towards Scheduled castes and tribes. The moment Congress makes some symbolic gesture towards Muslims like BJP makes towards SCs, it raises bogey of appeasement and Congresses looses its nerves. Today a large section of bureaucracy and the police also has been communalized and police does not hesitate to openly play partisan role in communal riots against Muslims and Christians.

BJP, during NDA rule communalized vital organs of Indian state though it failed to revise Indian Constitution to remove article 25 to 30 guaranteeing rights to minorities. Mr. L.K. Advani, then Deputy Prime Minister and now aspiring to be Prime Minister, if NDA comes to power again, openly praised Narendra Modi after Gujarat riots though whole world was condemning what happened in Gujarat and holding Modi to be responsible for genocide in Gujarat.

India's glorious past and its composite culture (right from beginning of its history) can make us all proud and India will be able to play that role again only when its leaders resist the lust for power and dedicate themselves to its moral and spiritual values. All communities, including religious minorities, have contributed richly to India's glory. India is, and has always been, an alliance of religions and cultures and never a monolith which communal forces want it to be.

BJP can also contribute to future of India provided it gives up its anti-minority obsession and adopts open door policy. Though BJP claims to stand for 'justice for all and

discrimination against none', it is nothing more than a hollow at best and deceptive at worst, slogan. One wishes it adopts this slogan with true heart and it will indeed contribute to India's future.

DISCONTENTS OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is supposed to be the best form of governance but experience both of western and eastern countries show a wide gap between theory and practice. Nothing that pertains to human beings can approximate, let alone be equal to ideals. Philosophers also say real is not ideal and ideal is not real. Democracy is no exception. Democracy is an ideal but its practice within a given society makes its operation extremely complex.

Freud had written a book *Discontents of civilization* and pointed out complex problems of modern civilization. Democracy too has its discontents as human beings who operate it have their own interests and clashing interests create explosive situation. Our modern democracies are more of representative rather than participative. Common people who are supposed to benefit from it become victims rather than beneficiaries.

More often than not, our modern democracies are secular too in which religion will remain private affair of citizens and will not interfere with the affairs of the state. In USA constitution lays down the doctrine of 'wall of separation between the church and the state' and Indian constitution is also secular in content though the word 'secular' was added only in 1975 though the constitution was implemented in 1950 itself. Undoubtedly it was secular in spirit from the beginning.

However, government policies are far from secular. Religion has come to play supposed to enjoy not only full security but also equal religious, linguistic and cultural rights.

India's record in this respect is anything but ideal. Frequent occurrence of riots, even genocide against Muslims, makes India's record a matter of shame.

Elections must be fought on the basis of people's issues and their religion, caste or language should play no role whatsoever. All candidates are set up on the basis of their religion, caste and language most unabashedly and hardly any party (perhaps communists to some extent) is an exception to it though all these parties swear by secularism. It was Maulana Azad, fired by ideals of secularism had refused to except ticket in first general elections from Rampur just because he was Muslim and Rampur had substantial Muslim population. After the first generation of freedom fighters secularism was given a goodbye in the electoral process.

As such it is a great challenge to maintain strict religious neutrality in a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society. Democracy becomes rule by religious majority rather than by political majority. In a democratic set up it should be rule by political majority and there should only be political majority and political minority. But in our 'secular' democracy it is religious majority plays main role.

Religious majority pushes its own agenda most aggressively though minorities too at times get quite aggressive. On the Shah Bano agitation it was minority, which became most aggressive and forced government's hands to overturn Supreme Court decision. But when minority becomes aggressive and forces government's hands on some issue it later pays heavy price in terms of communal violence.

The majority community showed its aggression subsequently on the question of Ramjanambhoomi issue and the 'secular government' of India allowed Babri Masjid to be demolished in a most flagrant manner. And its demolition was followed by widespread communal violence in various parts of India, particularly in Mumbai, Surat, Bhopal, Kanpur etc.

This communal massacre then made some Muslim criminals to keep bombs in public places in Mumbai and kill more than 300 innocent Hindus.

The Central government was either negligent or terrified by the Hindu right and did not enforce any law of the land. Openly provocative speeches were made against Muslims by various BJP-VHP-Bajrang Dal leaders and no action was taken at all. It was complete failure on the part of government. The rightist elements in majority community always go on the offensive and require minorities to submit to the majority.

The latest instance is of transfer of land in Kashmir valley to the Amarnath Temple Trust and the agitation that followed in the Kashmir valley, which forced the hands of J&K Government to annul its decision. The majority Muslim community in the valley resorted to aggressive and violent agitation in the name of kashmiriyat and got the transfer of 100 acres of forestland to the Temple trust annulled.

Now the Hindu majority in Jammu indulged in similar aggressive violence against annulment of transfer of land demanding restoration of land to the temple trust again. And the BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal have given call for all India Bandh and violence erupted in many parts of India, particularly those ruled by the BJP. In Indore, in M.P. where BJP Government is ruling 4 Muslims were killed for refusing to close shops.

In fact the BJP-VHP are indulging in violence in the name of Amarnath Temple with an eye on coming Parliamentary elections. Strictly speaking this issue pertains to J&K and any bandh observed in J&K is quite understandable but to hold whole of India to ransom is highly anti-democratic. The Supreme Court hearing a PIL also lambasted such bandh which results in gross inconvenience to the people. Crores of people are made to suffer for partisan ends of political party.

The BJP which is supported by hoodlums of Bajrang Dal and other religious fanatics, how can it ever aspire to rule over secular India and claim to be 'disciplined party'. If elected, it will take oath in the name of secular constitution. It uses other religious fanaticism be it Ramjanambhoomi or Sethusamundaram and Amarnath Temple land issue for electoral success.

The Kashmiri people also have weakened their cause by resorting to such violent agitation and displayed such aggression on the issue of land transfer to the Amarnath Temple. They could have held dialogue with the Hindu brothers on this issue. But in J&K too elections are due and politicians launched this aggressive agitation with a view to win elections.

The ordinary Kashmiri citizens were helping the Hindu yatris who were so much inconvenienced. They even opened langar for them and served them food in Srinagar. Unfortunately this was not so much highlighted by the media. The vernacular media does not so much serve people and inform them but panders to the majority sentiments to maintain or increase its sale.

Democracy also ensures fundamental freedoms but our democracy in view of its degradation is not even able to ensure these freedoms. The mobs are let loose by fanatical parties and organizations to disrupt film shows, drama performances and other functions if dissenting views are expressed in them. Mr. Kumar Ketkar, Editor, Loksatta, wrote an editorial against installation of Shivaji's statue in the sea and his home was destroyed. The Maharashtra Government hardly took any worthwhile action.

Before that Maharashtra Nav Nirman Sena (MNS) openly attacked Hindi speaking north Indians working in Mumbai, beat them up and burnt their vehicles and government looked

the other way. After lot of hue and cry by the public they promised action but hardly any action was taken.

Many more instances could be multiplied as to how our democracy is being misused. As public opinion greatly matters for functioning of democracy the media both print as well as electronic is controlled by powerful vested interests who create desired opinion by manipulating information. There is hardly any newspaper or T.V. channel, which honestly presents facts as they are or disseminates information to help create proper opinion.

The education system again is very vital to protect democratic values and secular ethos in a multi-religious society. But today less we talk about our education system better it is. Our textbooks still continue to spread sectarian rather than secular democratic values. Our children grow with anti-democratic and anti-minority values. They learn to hate the religious other rather than accept him/her.

A Rajasthan textbook of 12th standard writes that fascism is the best ideology as it enables the supreme leader to take right decision at the right time and Gujarat textbook idealizes Hitler, the German Nazi leader. This is in the BJP ruled states but the textbooks in the Congress ruled states too distort history and project minorities in a very poor light. That is why educated middle classes are much more communal than the illiterate masses.

Thus our education system has become a vehicle for dispensing prejudices than create rational thinking and critical mind. What is more shocking is that our education system does not teach fundamental human values like human dignity, compassion, forgiveness, justice and so on. In this age of technology education is becoming highly competitive rather than cooperative.

To promote secular democracy our education system must be thoroughly overhauled and it should be made a

powerful instrument for creating a new citizen of secular democratic India and who will provide leadership to usher in new horizons of value-based knowledge.

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND DEMOCRACY

Religious extremism is very negation of religion. The extremists are unable to understand this. There is no religion which encourages hatred, anger and revenge, let alone teaches such destructive doctrines. Yet religious extremism results in all this. Hindu philosophy teaches tolerance and non-violence and treats whole humanity as a family and yet Varun Gandhi, the BJP candidate delivered highly provocative speech saying he will cut the hand which is raised against Hindus. He could be young angry man but what about top BJP leadership? They also did not denounce it and not only that turned down Election Commission request not to give ticket to him to contest election.

The acts of Hindutvawadis in Gujarat and Orissa (Kandhamal anti-Christian violence) was perpetrated as an act of revenge, anger and intolerance of other religious minorities. Hundreds died and thousands became homeless and are still continued to be hated by these extremists without any trace of repentance or guilt. Can it ever be justified by religious teachings?

The Talibans on one hand, and al-Qaida, on the other, keep on killing hundreds of people in the name of Jihad which, they proclaim, is the Islamic doctrine. Al-Qaida and Taliban are reacting to US policies and violence in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is true but their extremism is more than what US policies warranted. First thing, even if jihad be used in the sense of war (which it is not) it is certainly not an act of revenge but an act of defense.

Both al-Qaida and Taliban have killed thousands of innocent people and are continuing to kill in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. It is even difficult to count how many people have already died in suicide bombing and bomb blasts, most of them not Americans but Muslims. Jihad is supposed to be defensive war and certainly not offensive, much less seeking revenge.

Seeking revenge itself is irreligious act. Qur'an too, like other religions, asks believers to suppress their anger and described as *kazim al-ghayz* (one who suppresses anger and wants believer to follow Allah Who is Pardoner and Merciful i.e. *Ghafur al-Rahim*. One who seeks revenge can never be a good human being much less a good Muslim. Yet we see Al-Qaida people and Taliban go on killing innocent people by way of revenge though they have not done any thing. How could it be an Islamic act, let alone jihad?

Even today we see every day bomb blasts take place in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq and innocent people get killed although Obama is trying to re-orient his policies and Bush is no more on the scene. As good Muslims they should have taken resort to dialogue even when Bush was at the helm of affairs failing which they could have resorted to violence with some justification.

But they are using violence recklessly much after Bush is no more the president and Obama is trying to mend the situation. It is high time they should go for dialogue and do every thing possible to bring about peace in the area, if they have any trace of goodness among them. In fact Al-Qaeda and Taliban are acting not as Muslims but as tribal. They are following tribal traditions of revenge.

Those who resort to extremism create certain myths and refuse to see reality and try to act to prove the myths as reality. For example the Hindutvawadis in India have created powerful myths both about Muslims and Christians and

through their acts of rioting, violence and killing, try to prove these myths right. No amount of arguments based on facts would ever convince them.

They have created a myth that all Muslims are terrorists, jihadis and loyal to Pakistan or Arab countries and no argument will convince them to the contrary. They also believe that all Christians convert and they would refuse to believe that Christian population in this country has not increased for decades which would have happened if Christians were converting on mass level as Hindutva propaganda maintains.

All extremists are light years away from reality as reality would destroy all their myths. Now some extremists really believe in these myths and they are mostly foot soldiers. Other extremists deliberately create these myths so that their foot soldiers could be motivated to act according to these myths. Leaders create myths in order to achieve political objectives but foot soldiers act by way of their 'faith'. They are made to believe they are 'protecting' their faith.

Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaida know very well what their objectives are and how to go about it. But all those young people who blow their lives as foot soldiers either believe in the myths created by their leaders or have their own compulsions like poverty, unemployment or fear of their own lives in case they refuse to become suicide bomber. In that case they would die unsung death. But if they blow up their life as suicide bomber their families would be taken care of and also in many cases they believe, they will straight go to paradise and live their eternally with *houries*.

Also, there are certain economic interests in perpetrating violence by extremists. They can collect huge funds from certain fellow religionists in the name of jihad or for protecting religion. Not only this they start smuggling drugs as Taliban are known to be doing on a big scale (in their case it is CIA

which taught them this). Thus extremists, including political extremists too, do not believe in right means for right end.

They believe, on the contrary, wrong means can be used for 'right end' (right end according to them but in fact their end itself is vitiated by immorality). Even if it is morally correct act it would be vitiated by wrong means. Drug addiction destroy thousands of families and drug smuggling by Taliban make drugs available to young addicts and make even others drug addict.

Debate about ends and means is very old and there is sharp division between those who justify wrong means for right ends and those who insist on right means for right ends. In my opinion right means are a must for right end. A truly religious person would never accept wrong means for right ends. Gandhiji also decisively rejected theory of wrong means for right ends.

In case of religious extremists even end is wrong so for them use of wrong means can hardly create any problem and once they start using wrong means they develop strong vested interest in that as it brings lot of money and comforts of life. They then create huge establishment with that money and then want to control that establishment. Chief of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, for example, controls huge establishment in Pakistan. They bring money from huge Arab charitable organizations by in all probability lying to them that they will spend that money on madrasas, schools and poor people.

They spend small amount on that and rest of funds are spent on terrorist acts. Most sophisticated weapons are purchased and youth trained to use these weapons. The Hindutvawadis also bring lot of money by way of charity from NRIs and multinationals in the name of helping dalits, tribals and poor and they use that fund for hate campaign. Some secularists in USA collected all relevant data and exposed the Sangh Parivar that they are bringing money from various

multi-nationals in USA in the name of helping poor dalits and tribal and how instead they use that money for hate propaganda against minorities.

Thus these extremists control huge amount of money and would never like to go for peace through dialogue. If they do so they will be robbed of their huge illegal income. They will never let go such golden opportunities. Their interest mainly lies in perpetrating the conflict which they often artificially create though not always.

Taliban and al-Qaida people control huge pile of arms. We know the LTTE had not only automatic guns but also aircrafts, anti-aircraft guns and even naval ships. How could they acquire all these weapons? Of course, through drug smuggling, apart from collecting donations from their supporters. Also, these extremists network with other similar extremist organizations. There were links between ULFA, LTTE and jihadi organizations based in Bangla Desh.

Thus extremism, particularly religious extremism has emerged as a great challenge in the contemporary world. It is also worth noting that religious extremism is billion dollar industry today. The armament industry is also in league with these extremists. How else they would acquire such sophisticated weapons? Though Governments may impose bans on export of weapons but industry as well as extremists find ways to violate the ban and occasionally with the connivance of the government machinery.

Though much energy is spent on condemning terrorism and governments themselves spend huge sums of money on fighting terrorists using weapons form these manufacturers, no one investigates how these extremists have easy excess to these weapons? Thus armament industry benefits both ways by selling arms to terrorist organizations and to the governments who fight them.

Who will expose all these vested interests?

ISLAM IN DEMOCRACY

A friend of mine from USA recently wrote to me that can you persuade Darul Uloom Deoband to issue a fatwa to strengthen secular democracy which will help defeat communal forces. I wrote back to him that I can do so but Darul Uloom has always actively supported secular democratic causes. Before my friend perhaps read my e-mail Darul Uloom issued a fatwa that all Muslims should vote and should consider it their religious obligation.

The fatwa says, A vote is as important as a testimony or witness in Islam, hence it must be utilized and correctly. A vote must not be kept back and wasted". The fatwa was issued in response to a question. The questioner wanted to know whether a Muslim could vote for a candidate who is a criminal and if a Muslims should make their choice after testing the candidate or the party on the fundamentals of the Qur'an.

The Darul Ifta' (department in charge of issuing fatwa), "India is not an Islamic country but a secular democracy, hence it would be out of place to look at its politics in Islamic perspective and test the parties and political leaders on the principles of Qur'an and Hadith. This would bring nothing but disturbance and confusion." The fatwa, therefore, advised Muslims, "One should vote for the party and the leader who is better for Muslims and the country as well." Other members of clergy from Lucknow and other places also supported the fatwa.

The Ulama from Lucknow supporting the fatwa appealed to Muslims and non-Muslims alike to vote on the polling day in large numbers. They said, "It is our duty to vote. In a

democracy, since we choose our own leaders, we can't blame anyone else for the state of affairs", said Maulana Khalid Rashid, a prominent Suuni 'Alim. Similarly a prominent Shia 'Alim Maulana Kalbe Sadiq too, emphasized the importance of votes and said, "We must make the right choice instead of sitting back and lamenting on the state of affairs. Casting a vote doesn't take more than twenty minutes. This is all our system wants for us to deliver for the next five years. But we often do not realize the value of votes and let them go waste."

Contrast this with some sectarian 'ulama in Islamic country who keep on denouncing secularism as ungodly and participation in secular democracy as *haram* (prohibited) in Islam. In fact even founder of Jamat-e-Islami-Hind Maulana Maududi had advised Indian Muslims while departing for Pakistan in 1948, not to participate in secular democratic government and if they did, it will amount to raising banner of revolt against Allah and His Messenger.

The Jamat-e-Islami thus kept aloof from all electoral offices for a long time but realized its mistake and has, ever since, come a long way and now actively working for promoting of secular democratic values. Not only this in the current Lok Sabha elections it is supporting Left Front candidates in Kerala. It is great advance indeed and must be acknowledged.

Indian liberal climate does not indeed encourages religious extremism. Islam, though it has played vital role in shaping Indian society and culture, it never acquired extremist overtones, perhaps with very few exceptions. Indian Muslims are deeply hued in Indian ethos and culture. Muslims, though quite large in number, always remained in 10-25 per cent minority until partition and were reduced to 10-15 per cent minority in post-independence India.

Unfortunately our country got divided in 1947 and now in Pakistan religious extremism of Taliban variety is thriving and

is acquiring ever increasing extremist overtones. Had India remained united this perhaps might not have happened. Democracy in almost all countries is often reduced to majoritarianism and it is majoritarian arrogance which gives rise to religious extremism.

In other words religious extremism flourishes in certain political conditions. In India Hindu extremism can be real danger as in Pakistan it is Islamic extremism which is real danger. Pakistan is an Islamic country and a country where religion becomes part of governance there are greater chances of religious extremism thriving. In India which is a secular state religious extremism should have no place and yet majority religious extremism has found opportunity to flourish.

Though secular forces are a countervailing force but what is unfortunate is that our governance has failed to rise up to religious extremism. Elections, however, provide great opportunity to common people to assert themselves and contain extremist forces. Our country can be justly proud of the fact that we have vibrant democracy and people have a chance to reject certain political forces encouraging religious extremism.

In Pakistan too, whenever elections have taken place, religious extremists have been badly defeated. However, defeated in elections these extremists resort to violent methods but nonetheless their defeat is important as election can give them legitimacy which they do not deserve. Defeated they must be.

The fatwa issued by the ulama of Darul Ulum acquires added significance. All, Muslims or non-Muslims, should actively participate in elections to defeat extremist forces or those encouraging it. Islam in India has thrived in secular democratic atmosphere and has proved to the world that Islam is certainly not incompatible with secular democracy. And

secular democracy is the only effective counter to religious or for that matter any kind of extremism.

Once in Malaysia I was invited to speak on Islam in India and one of the participants in my lecture asked how you can live, as a Muslim, in a secular democracy. Islam and secularism is quite incompatible. In reply I told him that Islam has better chances of manifesting its spirit in the secular atmosphere of India than even in Islamic country where it often assumes extremist tones.

I also told him that our ulama have always supported secular democracy. Not only that many of them have taken part in elections and have been elected to Parliament. The best example is of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was a profound scholar of Islam. He actively participated in electoral processes and also became minister in the cabinet. He actively opposed two-nation theory and supported secular nationalism.

Not only Maulana Azad, a large number of ulama belonging to Darul Uloom Deoband also supported secular nationalism as against concept of two nations. Maulana Husain Ahmed Madani, the then head of Jami'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, effectively refuted two nation theory profusely quoting from Qur'an and hadith and Darul Uloom and Jami'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind have stood up to this tradition with firm resolve until today.

Thus it clearly shows that Islam is neither incompatible to secularism nor to democracy. And, what is interesting to note in India, no section of Muslims – all sects of Muslims and political opinions included – rejects secularism and secular democracy. This moderation is possible only in secular democratic atmosphere. And let us note that India has largest Muslim population after Indonesia.

Also, if certain traditions are firmly established a religion can remain moderate even where it is in majority. Turkey, for example, is a Muslim majority country and yet, because of

Kemalist secular traditions Islam remained a moderate force and Turkish Muslims have rejected religious extremism. In fact religious parties could not be elected there until recently.

And now when a religious party has been elected it had to adopt moderation for acceptability. Kemalist revolution went a long way in containing religious extremism in Turkey. Secular traditions are so strong (though not so for democracy) that a woman is not allowed to wear hijab in any public institution like Parliament or university or government office. And yet people of Turkey consider themselves as good Muslims.

So it will be putting cart before horse to argue that Islam is anti-modern or anti-democracy. It all depends in what political or socio-economic atmosphere it thrives. If there is already political authoritarianism in the country or traditional ulama firmly holding reins of power, Islam will be interpreted accordingly. Saudi Arabia is its best example.

Thus Islam in Turkey and Islam in Saudi Arabia have found very different, nay, totally opposite polarities. In Turkey it is Kemalist ideology which shapes understanding of Islam whereas in Saudi Arabia it is purist and extremist Wahabi ideology which has given shape to Islam. Thus it is socio-political conditions which determine contours of religion, not otherwise.

In India it is secular democracy which shapes contour of Islam in contemporary period and even during medieval ages Sufis adopted Islam to Indian cultural milieu and those ulama who believed in Puritanism never succeeded despite their associating with ruling establishment. Thus we do not find extremist movements thriving in India at any period of time though Islam flourished in India abundantly.

DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND MINORITIES IN INDIA

The General elections in India are about to take place within three months and all political parties are readying themselves to draw up their winning strategies. Elections are like a day of judgment for political parties. And, they have to stand before their voters and render account of their deeds and misdeeds. They have begun to woo their voters once in five years again. They have to woo different castes and religious groups and reconcile their conflicting interests in the context of the complex Indian reality.

The Muslims constitute 15 per cent of Indian population and play crucial role in the victory or defeat of the political parties. In the two big northern states of the U.P. and Bihar no political party can win without Muslim support. The Congress once used to win both these states without much problem as the Muslims voted for it for four decades after the independence. However, it lost both the states as the Muslims withdrew their support. The U.P. was lost as soon as Rajiv Gandhi laid foundation stone of *Ram Mandir* in Ayodhya after instructing the district magistrate to open the lock of the Babri Masjid for the Hindus to worship Ram. The Congress has not been able to rehabilitate itself again in the eyes of the Muslims.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) once rode to power in the U.P. on the 'wave of Ram Mandir' but such waves cannot be generated again and hence the BJP has met, with its speed breaker. During those hey days it even said, 'we do not need Muslim votes', but it set up its own minority front, promising

heaven to them, through some Muslim members like Shah Nawaz and others. It is also projecting Naqvi as its spokesman.

But the BJP does not want to give up its *mool mantra* (basic formula) of Ram Mandir to woo hard core Hindu votes. Mr. Rajnath Singh, its President, said that it would construct *Ram Mandir* if it came to power and even would persuade its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) allies to agree to pass a law for constructing the *mandir*. Even Advani asked what was wrong in constructing a *mandir*. Once they demolished Babri Masjid and committed one wrong; then what is the harm in committing second wrong by constructing *mandir* on the site of Babri Masjid?

The election calculus shows that the BJP would find it extremely difficult to increase its present tally in Parliament. 'The Terror Card' did not pay even immediately after the Mumbai attacks in November; and the BJP lost the election in Delhi. Thus 'terror card' no longer arouses emotions to be electorally exploited. The BJP had found one more card when prices began to rise, but as its ill luck would have it, the rise in index fell to and has almost stabilized at below 6%. And raising 'Ram issue' is flogging a dead horse.

Thus whatever its electoral acrobatics the BJP will find it very difficult to increase its tally of seats won over the last general election in 2004. Moreover, what the lumpen elements of the Sangh Parivar have done in Orissa and Karnataka will hardly help its image. Those who sympathize otherwise with the BJP will also find it difficult to defend its violent attacks on Christians and women. There was a time when some Christian leaders had begun to join the BJP, but after the Orissa events even leaders like Fernandes will be hard pressed to defend the BJP. The BJP has thus increased its opponents.

There is tough competition between Ms. Mayavati the present Chief Minister and Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the leader of the Samajwadi Party in the U.P. for the Muslim votes.

Ms. Mayavati, in order to win over the Muslims, has promised 25 per cent tickets for the Lok Sabha elections for the Muslims. It is, no doubt, for the first time any party has taken such a step. The Muslims of the U.P. should welcome it and the Congress has a lesson to learn from it. It is a known fact that the Congress has never done justice to the Muslims in this respect.

However, while welcoming the Mayavati's step, the real question is: how many seats to which Muslims will be given the tickets, will be winnable ones and what her party will do to see the Muslim candidates win? Also, what will be the stature of those Muslim candidates? These are important questions. It is difficult to expect Ms. Mayavati to give ticket to those who have some stature of their own and are independent by nature.

Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav has entered into a friendship pact with Mr. Kalyan Singh who has the notoriety of overseeing the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 as he was then the Chief Minister and had taken pride for his misdeed. Muslims have hardly forgotten this. Mr. Mulayam Singh claims that he has done so to wipe out the BJP from the U.P. But this strategy is likely to misfire or backfire as far as Muslims are concerned.

Let not Mulayam forget the fate of the Congress in the U.P. after it laid the foundation stone of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Mulayam made Kalyan almost to apologize for the demolition of the Babri Masjid under pressure from the Muslims, but the way Mulayam is expressed his solidarity with Kalyan may backfire. The Congress has also expressed its displeasure for this newfound solidarity of the SP leader with Mr. Kalyan Singh, but that only has provoked the Mr. Mulayam Singh to ask the Congress to mind its own business, and he even said that he and Mr. Kalyan Singh are farmers and, what is more *pehetwans* (wrestlers)! It is surprising, even enigmatic, that a shrewd politician like Mulayam was making such statements!

The way Muslims are reacting to the alliance with the Kalyan Singh apparently shows it would be hardly politically wise for Mulayam to shake hands with Kalyan, if he is interested in Muslim votes in the U.P. After all he may not have the last laugh in this complex game of politics and electoral arithmetic. Mayawati may have the last laugh, after all. If the Muslims of the U.P. vote for Ms. Mayawati, both the BJP and the Congress may not gain much in the U.P. The Congress may, perhaps, gain marginally but the BJP may not benefit even that.

In Bihar the BJP has no independent base at all. It is beholden to Nitish Kumar the present Chief Minister of Bihar is unhappy that the BJP is creating problems for him by raising Ram issue again. Nitish Kumar is Bhumihar. Yadavs are not his electoral base. He also got two Muslims working for the OBC Muslim cause nominated to the Rajya Sabha. However, that may not mean much electorally in complex caste politics of Bihar Muslims.

However, it appears Nitish too does not have brighter chance and may not be able to improve his tally of seats won over 2004 elections. He has failed to deliver his promises and the Koshi flood disaster may prove a millstone a round his neck. The BJP may not be able to reap much depending on Mr. Nitish Kumar, who is the only support for the BJP in Bihar.

It will be seen from above that Muslim votes, like other non-Muslim votes, are now determined by regional politics. For quite sometime past Muslims have been voting for the regional parties, and the Congress has only some regions like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh etc. where the only alternative happens to be the Congress. It is a healthy development that the Muslims are less swayed by emotional issues and now realized that it would be a political disaster. But, for that matter, even, some Hindus, at one time, were swayed by the Ram Mandir issue, and the OBCs (Other Backward Classes) by Mandal Commission issue; and these two issues brought some

crucial change in Indian politics and both issues were highly emotional in nature.

As the Muslims have now come out of that emotional phase they should do bargain hard with regional parties, and the aim should be: (1) to isolate and defeat communal forces and (2) to extract promises of implementation of economic and educational benefits along with proper share in political power for Muslims. For this they must shun emotional rhetoric altogether and have to be hard bargainers.

It is important to note that since the Muslims began to vote for regional outfits in the U.P. and Bihar, the epicenter of communal violence has shifted to Maharashtra, and Maharashtra has emerged with the dubious distinction of a state with highest communal incidents in the last few years. The government's own statistics show this. The media have also reported these statistics. There are other dilemmas too for the Muslims in Maharashtra.

These incidents have taken place during the Congress regime, especially during the chief minister ship of Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh. Mr.R.R.Patil of the Nationalist Congress party also failed to handle the communal riots properly. At Dhule is its worst example. But again only alternative to the Congress in Maharashtra is the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance which Muslims cannot opt for. There is no other regional party here like the U.P., Bihar etc.

It is indeed very challenging situation for Muslims in Maharashtra. Again separate political party of Muslims is no solution. It is a remedy worse than the disease. Besides voting for clean secular candidates in whichever constituencies available, the Muslims should go for frank dialogue with the present Congress leaders, preferably at the Central level. Regional leadership often colludes with the Shiv Sena and is under the awe of Mr.Bal Thackeray. Even Mr.Sharad Pawar,

Mr. Bhujbal and other Congress leaders meet him, touch his feet and have dinner with him.

In democracy, only hard bargain pays, nothing else. Our elections are based purely on caste and religious identities, nothing else. The weight of minorities must be felt by the political parties.

SECTION-IV

TACKING TERRORISM

TERROR ATTACKS: IS THERE ANY WAY OUT?

It is often maintained and rightly so that it is very difficult to define terrorism as ones terrorist is others freedom fighter. But in our case there is no such ambiguity. These people whatever they call themselves Indian Mujahidin or something else, there is no doubt that they are terrorists pure and simple. It is great insult of the word mujahid as mujahid is one who struggles for higher causes, for humanity, for justice and is most compassionate to others suffering.

No one can be termed mujahid who kills innocent people, women and children and in case of Ahmedabad even those sick and injured. Let alone mujahideen they cannot claim to be human beings. A mujahid does not seek revenge. Qur'an condemns seeking revenge and describes Allah as *ghafoorur Rahim* i.e. a Pardoner and Merciful. Murderers cannot pass themselves as mujahideen in any case.

In history it has been common that we legitimize our actions by religious verbosity or religious rhetoric. I would appeal my country people not to be misled by any ones religious rhetoric. In our country the Hindutva forces too use such rhetoric for their own political purposes. The issue of Ram temple raked up by BJP and the rath that Shri Advani rode was noting else but to play with the devotional sentiments of Hindus towards Lord Ram in order to come to power.

In modern day democracy there are gross injustices of all kind and to cover up those injustices our politicians are very

apt at invoking religious rhetoric. Mr. Narendra Modi exploited to the hilt the Godhra train incident to romp home to power on 2000 corpses using strong Hindutva rhetoric. After bomb blast in Ahmedabad on 26th July, when 19 bombs exploded in that unfortunate city.

Just 24 hours before after Bangalore blasts Narendra Modi had boasted while speaking at Chetpur, Saurashtra that terrorists may attack Jaipur or Bangalore but they dare not step into Gujarat and next day BJP state President while speaking in Virpur village of Kheda district had said that as long as Narendra Modi is there in Gujarat, no terrorist dare attack. Earlier during election campaign also Narendra Modi had boasted that it needs 36" chest to face terrorists which Congress does not have. And Ahmedabad had such terrible terrorist attacks and next day even Surat had 18 bombs placed in diamond hub area which fortunately did not explode due to tactical glitch. What face Modi can have now?

He summoned army within half an hour and appealed for peace. One wishes he had shown such behaviour after Godhra train burning. Godhra train burning was as condemnable as the bomb blasts in Ahmedabad in which 49 innocent people lost their lives. But Mr. Modi's behaviour was greatly different after bomb blast. After train incident he was worried about coming elections and after this bomb blast he already had won elections few months ago.

If Modi had employed his Hindutva rhetoric as he did after train incident one shudders to think what would have happened. How many more innocent people would have lost their lives. Of course credit goes to the people of Ahmedabad that they maintained peace and bore such tragedy with great patience and fortitude. And I am sure the people of Gujarat would have borne the Godhra train tragedy with equal degree of patience and fortitude had Modi not let loose his murdering hordes on innocent Muslims.

It is such a sad commentary on our 21st century secular democracy that it runs on the blood of innocent people and corruption as we witnessed the other day in Parliament on voting for or against the confidence motion. Democracy is based on principle of partnership of people in governance has been hijacked by powerful vested interests who use democratic rhetoric but do exactly opposite, it manipulate people through murder and corruption.

Terrorism is a political response to a political situation. It would be futile to look for its roots in any religion. As Hindutva is not product of Hinduism but that of politics of rightwing Hindu party, jihadis are not product of Islam but of politics of rightwing Muslim political outfits. In principle our secular democracy should keep religion at a distance from governance and politics should be based on secular issues pertaining to people and people alone.

However, in all countries of the world including western countries and much more so in countries of Asia and Africa religion often determines direction of political events. It is indeed a sad commentary on our modern day democracy and the role of powerful vested interests. The communal politics played in our country since nineteenth century resulted in vivisection of India and we are still facing consequences of division of our country. Earlier we understand better it is for us.

Other experts are discussing failure of our intelligence agencies and other factors responsible for such terrible blasts. These are all very important and must be thoroughly discussed. But here I am more concerned with its political side. How far our politics is responsible for such terrorist violence or communal violence or Naxalite violence for that matter? The causes may be different for communal, terrorist or Naxalite violence but the common thread is violence and terrorist violence at that.

No such violence would take place without political failures and gross political injustices. Even after independence and vivisection of our country we never shed communal outlook and communal politics. Our politicians were hardly made of secular democratic stuff. Our administrative machinery was hardly any different. Majoritarianism was seeped through our political nerves. We had no will to secularize our education system. Gandhiji, Nehru and Zakir Husain had painstakingly emphasized structural change in our education system and to thoroughly purge it of its colonial overtones. But we continued with it.

Our administrators were also products of same education system and neither politicians nor administrators were willing to take stern action against those who provoked and executed communal violence. We did not even solve our ethnic problem in North-East. The mainstream politicians came from North India and they were simply not sensitive to problems of people of North East. Thanks to our insensitivity the North East also exploded and AASU and later ULFA resorted to violence to focus attention. Though AASU by itself did not resort to violence but soon communal forces hijacked its agenda and there was so much bloodletting in Neli in Assam. Today whole of North East is on fire.

Our politics was never based on social and economic justice and the Naxal problem is outcome of gross socio-economic injustices. We know that either tribal or dalits constitute the core of Naxal movement. They have suffered for centuries injustices at the hands of political and economic elite and caste system dehumanized poor low caste Hidnus. Now modern communication system and dangerous and murderous weapons have enabled them to seek revenge and they feel time has come to seek revenge. We think Naxal violence can be solved through jackboots of our police and thus we create more forces and equip them with more weapons and Naxalite violence does not subside. We are not

ready to address their real problems as we do not want to give up our privileges and our hegemony over economic resources.

The terrorist violence is no different. Terrorism can be fought simply by better intelligence and better equipped police. It may help but only to a very limited extent. The problem is much deeper. Our police have failed to trace a single culprit and more and more such terrorist attacks are taking place. It is much more than failure of intelligence. The deep rooted prejudices in our administration and police force is the biggest obstacle in solving this problem apart from our political failure to do justice to minorities and secure peaceful life to them.

All our police force has succeeded in doing is to arrest poor helpless Muslim boys after every terrorist attack and torture them into 'confessing' their role. It is happening terrorist attack after terrorist attack. And these boys when they get released on bail dare not speak a word against the police for fear of being arrested again and tortured. For our police the only effective weapon available is torture and torture hardly ever succeeds in bringing out truth. Only a solid work in the form of hard evidence and painstaking investigation with unprejudiced mind can yield some result. Our police are hardly made of such authentic stuff. The greatest barrier for our police in reaching truth is their own a priori assumptions and prejudices.

There is social and political turmoil in our neighboring countries too and it has its own impact on our country and society. The role of ISI in Pakistan is beyond control of Pakistani politicians. Recently there was announcement that ISI has been given under control of Home Ministry but soon it had to be taken back. The military constituency has much deeper roots in Pakistani politics and civil society does not enjoy real autonomy, much less hegemony.

Thus one thing should be clear to all of us that terrorist problem afflicting whole of subcontinent today (as other parts of the world including western countries) is basically political and cannot be tackled merely as law and order problem. Also both ruling and opposition parties will have to cooperate in solving the problem. We know very well this is not the situation. These parties indulge in mudslinging whenever any such attack takes place. The pet theory of the BJP is to enact POTA like draconic law. Let Mr. Advani answer a simple question whether he has succeeded in solving problem of terrorist attacks in Gujarat even after applying POTA on 100 persons 80 of whom are still in jail under POTA after Godhra train incident. Whether they are guilty or innocent no one knows. They are under POTA for last 6 years.

Such draconian laws cannot solve the problem. It will only add to them and will enable police to arrest more innocent people and torture them. It can be a rightwing party agenda and not solution to the problem. If we love our country let us not politicize problem of terrorism and put our efforts to solve it through sincere means.

TERRORISM: HOW NOT TO COMBAT IT?

Terrorism today is engaging attention of whole world though we are more concerned with terrorism in our own country. There is hardly any country, which is not affected by terrorism today though reasons are widely different. In many countries terrorism is fired by separatist fire. Many regions were included in colonized countries by imperial powers to suit their own convenience least knowing that increased awareness and democratic movements in future would ignite separatist movement and when their aspirations for autonomy or independence are denied violence would be used.

Basque in Spain, South Ireland, North and North East in Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Nagaland and Assam, Tripura and Manipur in India and in several other regions in other countries separatist violence would break out claiming large number of lives and destruction of properties. What colonial powers did for their convenience in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, present generations are paying price for the same.

Add to this list the sins committed by American imperialists in 20th and 21st century to satisfy their lust for raw materials and oil in the third world countries and Middle East and we know the violence it has resulted in and the price thousands of innocent people are paying for it. The powerful media, however, sees Islam as the root of violence and ascribes genesis of terrorism to Islam. What an easy way out of ones own guilt.

The remedy for this terrorist violence is also simple. Declare war against terrorism, do away with concept of human rights, find some puppets to fight its war against terror, put some suspected youth in jails and torture them till they die or go mad and feel safe from further terrorist attacks. Who commits sins and who pays? What do authorities care? They care only for their lust for power and money.

A survey was done recently by an international agency WorldPublicOpinion.org of several countries to find out how many people support torture as an effective method to combat terrorism. The survey was to gauge how many people support abolition of torture by the state as it is totally against human rights and human dignity. Largest number of Indians, though not surprisingly, supported retaining of torture to 'save innocent lives. 59% Indians said torture is necessary to combat terrorism.

People of 14 countries favour abolition of torture, even in the case of terrorists who have information that could save lives of innocent people. But four nations, including India lean towards favouring an exception in the case of terrorists, according to the WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 19,063 respondents, released ahead of 'International Victims of Torture Day'.

Majorities in India (59%), Nigeria (54%), and Turkey (51%), and a plurality in Thailand (44%) want exception for terrorists. Among all nations polled in both 2006 and 2008, India also has the largest increase in support of making exception for torture in the case of terrorism – 32% two years ago to 59% now. But it is also to be noted that those who believe torture should be totally abolished also has risen in India from 23% in 2006 to 28% in 2008. But large majorities in all 19 nations favour a general prohibition against torture. On average across all nations polled, 57% opt for unequivocal rules against torture. Thirty five percent favour an exception

when innocent lives are at risk. Just 9% favour the government being able to use torture in general.

It is also interesting to note that support for unequivocal abolition of torture was highest in Spain (82%), Great Britain (66%) and France (66%), followed by Mexico (73%), China (66%), Palestinian Territories (66%), Indonesia (61%) and the Ukraine (59%). Here the question is why support for torture is so high in case of terrorist violence? Answer is not very difficult to find.

In India the Hindu right wing or Hindu communal forces constantly propagates that terrorism can be effectively fought only by implementing laws like TADA or POTA and using torture as an effective tool. Leaders like Bal Thackeray even said that the Hindu youth should become human bomb and get away with it as the government has no moral courage to take any action.

The second reason is also connected with this. It is generally propagated by the media that it is Islam which is responsible for terrorism, being a religion of jihad. Whenever any bomb blast takes place the police immediately come out with a theory that HUJI and SIMI are involved, much before even any investigation begins. The police give such statement because its mindset is also after all product of general atmosphere in the country.

Add to this the fact that there has been general atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim conflict for close to one and a half century since the advent of British imperialism and it is thought that all terrorists are Muslims and they should be taught a fitting lesson. Even otherwise in our country awareness of human rights is very low and since British time police have been nurtured on the philosophy of torture as an effective way to make suspected people confess to their crime.

Also our communal approach has been so hardened that even if 'Ulama of Darul Ulum, Deoband issues fatwa against

terrorism and constantly campaign against terrorism through huge rallies and Bal Thackeray publicly states that the Hindu youth should become human bombs, still only Muslim youth will remain suspect in every bomb blast case and would be tortured.

The communal approach has been so hardened that in a TV discussion after two bomb blasts in Navi Mumbai and Thane by activists of Sanatan Sangathan when the moderator asked if this organizations should be banned like SIMI, most of the participants said no as in their view no Hindu organization be anti national like SIMI.

What is more unfortunate that leaders of secular parties for fear of alienating public opinion do not challenge communal forces effectively and let menace of communal polarization grow in the country. After Bal Thackeray's statement not a single leader of any political party countered him, let alone demands his arrest. Their only concern is votes, not secularization of the country.

As USA has miserably failed in solving the problem of terrorism by using torture; and ruining lives of hundreds of innocent people in Gantanamo Bay, India and for that matter any other country, can also not succeed in solving this problem simply through torture. It is a political problem and has to be solved politically. Political policies, not the jackboots, can solve such problems.

All the experts on terrorism have opined that USA has miserably failed in tackling the problem of terror and its so called war on terror has succeeded only in increasing terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places. Its arresting innocent Muslim youth and inhumanly torturing them in prisons has miserably failed. USA is least prepared to find political solution as its lust for power and oil resources in Middle East is insatiable and it desperately needs support of

Israel in that region and hence, does not want to alienate it by solving Palestinian problem through lasting peace.

In India too terrorist problem is linked up with so many problems and it would be utter shortsightedness to think that it is due only to Islam and Muslims and allows utter police inefficiency to get away by blaming HUJI and SIMI and keep on torturing innocent Muslim youth. Earlier Government of India understands this better it is for the country. Otherwise terrorist incidents would keep on recurring and innocent people keep on dying and some innocent Muslim youth suffering without ever solving the problem.

In no blast so far police has succeeded in nabbing real culprits who have escaped conveniently. After Hyderabad twin blasts police as usual arrested poor Muslims mostly rickshaw pullers or vegetable vendors and so on and mercilessly tortured them. They were all innocent and after public campaign half of them had to be released on bail and some are still inside jail continuing to suffer. Police generally chooses poor and voiceless youth as they carry no clout and can be easily made scapegoat.

After Jaipur blast too few poor Muslim youth and imams were rounded up, tortured and released. How long will this go on? The real culprits easily escape and have the last laugh. The communalized police with such shortsighted approach would succeed only by aggravating the problem. I am of the firm opinion that torture has no place in democratic India with respect for human rights.

Torture, at best helps corrupt and communal and inefficient police officers only who do not collect solid evidence painstakingly. Their inefficiency and communal outlook becomes powerful block. An efficient and honest police officer would confront the suspect person with such evidence that he would not be able to deny. Our judiciary is also partly responsible for allowing the police to torture the

accused in their custody. In a seminar on State, Society and Terrorism held in Jaipur on 22nd June a retired Session Judge Mr. Bajwa even talked of 'judicial terrorism', which caused furor among the participants.

Let us hope the authorities would realize these problems soon and try to evolve a sound policy to combat terrorism though as complex an approach as the complex problem terrorism is.

TERRORISM, POLICE AND MINORITIES

The police as such has strong minority bias right from the dawn of freedom. Our freedom came at the cost of partition and partition further increased Hindu-Muslim divide and the police could not remain unaffected by communalization of society. Though communalism and communal violence has changing graph in India it reached its crescendo during Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy and during the decade of eighties communal discourse became almost mainstream discourse and BJP indulged in this discourse blatantly and unabashedly while the Congress, being a secular party, had to exercise caution in using it. But nevertheless Congress too displayed its communal bias in a more restrained and sophisticated way.

The police was also communalized in the same way as political rhetoric. Even when the Congress appealing to minorities to support it in return for its secular credentials and also tried to assure minorities of protection and security, it never tried seriously to inject secularism into the minds of security agencies. The police record, as various inquiry commission reports into various major communal riots show has been extremely poor and tainted.

While the Congress Government shunned from giving proper ideological training the Sangh Parivar made constant efforts to communalize the police in various ways. Apart from the fact that it recruited those trained in RSS *shakhas* (branches) into the police force whenever in power in states or Central

Government, its strident communal rhetoric deeply affected police mind.

To what extent the police have been affected by the communal virus became abundantly evident during its conduct in investigating terror attacks. What happened in Delhi in Batla House on 21st September is indeed hair raising story of police prejudice against Muslims. It is indeed great mystery as to who is behind terror attacks in various places. When Delhi had bomb explosions on 13th September the police as usual assumed that SIMI is behind it who has assumed the new garb of Indian Mujahidin (IM).

It raided Batla House on the morning of 21st September where five students, all from Azamgarh district studying in Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi. Let me emphasize one thing here that Jamia Millia Islamia has been the centre of Nationalism and it was established at the height of civil disobedience movement in post 1st World War by Nationalist Muslims of great stature like Zakir Husain, Mohammad Ali Jauhar and others at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi and when number of Muslim teachers and students boycotted Aligarh Muslim University.

The Jamia has ever since has maintained its nationalist character and Zakir Saheb and others made great sacrifices to keep it running despite severe economic crunch. Later it became Central University. Even today it has strong nationalist and secular credentials. It is unimaginable that those studying there would be so badly affected by communal ideology so as to turn terrorists.

But the police suspected these students and in fact claimed that Atif (or Atiq) was the mastermind behind Delhi, Jaipur and Ahmedabad blasts and was responsible for sending the e-mail in the name of Indian Mujahidin. The Delhi police killed Atif and Sajid in 'encounter' and a police inspector Sharma was also killed. The police also claimed to have found

AK-47 and a country revolver in the place where these students lived. It arrested one Saif and claimed that two other escaped.

All leading human rights activists who carried out investigation on the spot found serious gaps in the police claim and raised several questions blasting the police theory of 'encounter'. Inspector Sharma who was killed was 'encounter specialist' in Delhi Police Force. Not only Delhi police, but police all over India, particularly in Maharashtra, Gujarat are known to carry out false encounters in league with underworld dons and accumulate phenomenal wealth.

The police has not been able to answer these questions raised by human rights activists and there seems to be genuine concern among people about killing these 'dreaded terrorists'. They might have been quite innocent. Police claimed that Sajid was 22 or 23 years old without producing any proof. His parents showed certificates to prove his age was 18 years and he had come to Delhi only three months ago to seek admission in 11th standard in Jamia Millia Islamia.

This has created strong feeling of alienation among Muslims throughout India. The police, after every blast arrests innocent young Muslim boys, mostly from lower middle class and, accuses them of being involved in the conspiracy to carry out terror attacks despite total lack of any proof. After arrest it manages to obtain 'confession' from them and gives out story of having cracked the case. It is well known how this confession is obtained.

What is more unfortunate is that the media publishes these stories uncritically and describes these boys as 'dreaded terrorists' and masterminds. The police changes after every explosion the names of masterminds and even then the media – both print as well as electronic – does not question the police version. Some human rights activists or the *Tehelka* team has

done splendid work in exposing serious flaws in the police claim.

Why this police approach? One obvious reason is its natural assumption, due mainly to its communalization, that no one else but Muslim boys belonging to SIMI who have also assumed the name of IM can do it. Despite lack of any proof except self 'confession' they do not change their track. Many Bajrang Dal youth were caught making bombs but police downplays these explosions and completely ignores any possibility of their role.

Secondly police, apart from being infected by communal violence, is under pressure to 'solve' the case as any delay exposes it to not being able to do its work efficiently. Thirdly, it has found easy way out to arrest some innocent youth, obtain their confession, and claim they have 'solved' the case. Thus they are also able to satisfy their political bosses under pressure from public to solve the case and stop further terror attacks.

Such casual and communal approach on the part of police has serious consequences for the country. After every police claim that it has caught the mastermind further terror attacks take place as if to ridicule their claim. Thus it is resulting in continuous terror attacks. In no time after Batla House 'encounter' wherein police claimed that it has nabbed the masterminds of Delhi blast and even killed them another blast took place on 27th September in which one boy of 12 years was killed on the spot and another killed later in the hospital and several persons seriously injured.

Unless police sheds its communal bias and does hard work through collecting credible evidence terror attacks cannot be stopped. However, no one, much less the media, is prepared to buy the theory that police is lacking in its duty. In every blast several innocent people are killed. The Governments, state as well central, are failing to provide

protection to its people. How many more will be killed in such blasts?

The BJP, on the other hand, is further communalizing the situation in the hope of getting more Hindu votes by demanding enactment of POTA or POTA like law to nab the terrorists. It was BJP which had enacted dreaded law and despite POTA several major terrorist attacks including one on Parliament took place. More terrorist attacks will give more advantage to the BJP in coming elections. Should this dimension also not be taken into account for these repeated attacks despite claim that real masterminds have been arrested?

The police approach is also creating anguish and anger among Muslims. In several meetings with important Muslim leaders and intellectuals that we held in different towns and cities, they said what is the guarantee that my son's turn will not come tomorrow? Today they are feeling quite alienated and isolated and it is not healthy for a multi-religious country like India to alienate the largest religious minority to such an extent.

The Sangh Parivar has seriously damaged the secular character of our country. It has completely destroyed its secular character and its age-old tradition of tolerance and human values for its lust for power and for making India Hindu Rashtra. Now the Christian minority is under similar attack, Christians who have contributed so richly to modern India. Christians are also anguished today like never before. It is highly regrettable that our Prime Minister described these attacks on Christians as 'sporadic' during his trip abroad.

He also described these attacks as 'shameful', which is more honest description. Remember Mr. A.B.Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister, had said after Gujarat riots of 2002 what face will I show abroad? And now Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has to face embarrassing situation in France. Then why

does he not act firmly against communal forces? Why is he so soft towards the Sangh Parivar. Why does he not ban Bajrang Dal and VHP for attacking Christians in Orissa (Kandhmal district) and in Karnataka? The role of police has been no different in Orissa and Karnataka. Its sympathies were obviously with Sangh Parivar when Christians were being attacked.

Is not our country inching towards fascism?

TERRORISM, COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND POLICE

The role of police in democratic society is very different from that of police in colonial society. However, it is 61 years now that India became independent and there is no change in the role of police a wee bit. Today our police have become even more colonial in its attitude. The British colonial rulers had enacted the police an act in 1861 to use the police for suppression of people's movement and to terrorize colonized people. Our police too is terrorizing innocent people fighting for their rights.

Though human rights are really very central to functioning of democracy and human dignity even more important for functioning of any secular democratic set up, irrespective of caste, creed or color. Yet our police are highly caste conscious and communal in attitude with few honorable exceptions. Over and above all this corruption has deeply seeped into the force. Also, our IPS officers are totally subservient to political bosses who use them for their own political interests. They are even ready to kill in false encounters innocent people at the instances of political bosses without any compunction as we saw in Gujarat.

I am writing this article because of gross misuse of office by the police in many cases of arrest of innocent people after bomb explosions and open cases of partisanship in communal

violence in recent riots. It is my considered opinion that if ruling authorities do not take these cases of police excesses, it will have serious consequences and would create serious problems. There is no sense of fairness and respect for law the way police has been working in India in almost all the states.

First I would refer to the public hearing of the victims of police excesses in the name of 'solving' the bomb blast cases. The organizers of public hearing Anhad, Human Rights Law Network and PEACE, Delhi had constituted a jury comprising distinguished people. Justice S.N.Bhargava (retired Chief Justice, Sikkim High Court), Justice Sardar Ali Khan, retired High Court Judge, Asghar Ali Engineer, K.G.Kannabiran (National president, PUCL), Prashant Bhushan, Advocate Supreme Court, Dr. Ram Puniyani (retired professor IIT, Mumbai) Prof. Rooprekha Verma (retired Vice Chancellor, Lucknow University, Mr. Kingsukh Nag, Editor Times of India and Lalit Surjan, Editor Deshbandhu, Raipur. This was indeed very distinguished jury and cases of police excesses and torture we heard were really very disturbing.

Since there were distinguished judges and an eminent lawyer on the panel well conversant with law they cross examined the victims and satisfied themselves. Every case appeared to be of false arrests and torture by police for confession. The interim observations of the jury were that the testimonies showed that a large number of innocent young Muslims have been and are being victimized by the police on the charge of being involved in various terrorist acts across the country. This is particularly in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, though not limited to these states.

The panel of jury also observed that "In most cases, the persons picked up are not shown to be arrested by the police until many days after their arrest in gross violations of the law. Their families are also not informed about their arrest. In many cases they have been tortured in police custody and made to 'confess' and sign blank papers. The police has been often humiliating Muslim detainees on the ground of their religion. The testimonies show widespread communalization of the police across states in the country."

The jury also observed that in most of these cases, the Courts are routines allowing police remand and not granting bail, merely on the police statements that they are required for further investigations. They do not examine whether there is any evidence against the accused. Unfortunately, the media too uncritically publicizes the charge and allegations leveled by the police. This has resulted in the destruction of the lives and reputation of a large number of persons so picked up by the police who have later been found to be innocent.

This is alienating the community besides allowing real culprits to escape and it has grave consequence in the sense that bomb explosions continue as real culprits are never nabbed. The communal discrimination is also very obvious when persons belonging to Sangh Parivar like VHP or Bajrang Dal are found making bombs, they are either not arrested or if arrested, easily released on bail. Though Bajrang Dal and VHP cadres have been found involved in number of violent activities, the political set-up headed by the Congress, has never thought of banning these organizations.

One can say it is becoming world -wide phenomenon as Muslims are being treated like this even in USA, UK etc.

Though it is true but that cannot be an excuse for the police of a secular democratic country like India to behave in this lawless manner. On top of it the Sangh Parivar is demanding re-imposing draconic laws like the POTA which will prove to be an absolute disaster. In this law self-confession is treated as valid proof and we all know how the police obtain such 'confessions'. If such laws are ever brought the innocent citizens who are tortured to obtain confession will have no legal remedy and police will run amok.

It is high time the Central Government gives serious thought to such mal-functioning of the police and lawlessness in this force which is supposed to be guardian of law. It may be too late. And if it is true (though by means proved) that bomb explosions in Ahmedabad or earlier blasts in train in Mumbai were acts of revenge, one can imagine the consequences of such unlawful acts of police in states above named. Not only that real culprits will escape for failure of police to nab real culprits and finding easy solutions by arresting innocent people, but also those tortured by the police and harassed may seek their own revenge. In any case, even if that does not happen, it does not bode well for future of our democracy.

POLICE AND COMMUNAL RIOTS

The partisan behavior of police in communal riots is a well-known phenomenon. The government has never taken serious steps to remedy the situation. I have myself investigated several communal riots and found the police behavior towards Muslims totally unacceptable. What happened recently in Digras and Pusad towns of Yewatmal

district of Vidarbha is a hair raising story of police behavior towards Muslims.

In fact these riots were provoked by members of Sangh Parivar after some Muslim youth attacked some shops of Hindus after a copy of the Qur'an was found on the road with shoes kept on it. The Sangh Parivar took out procession shouting provocative slogans and police never tried to stop them. The Parivar members attacked Muslim shops and communal violence broke out. Before that many Muslims had gathered outside Jama' Masjid Digras and were quite excited.

But Sheher Qazi Syed Bashiruddin pacified them and asked them to disperse peacefully. He saved a bad situation from worsening. But when Sangh Parivar people attacked Muslim shops some Muslim boys from Gauripara and Sambhajinagar came out with swords but were stopped by the police on the bridge on Dhavda River. And then the police launched an offensive on Gavdipada and Sambhajinagar where there are 80 per cent Muslims.

They crashed into Muslim houses and looted everything there and even smashed TV sets fridges and everything that there was in their houses. They even smashed drinking water pots and disconnected water connection to these two areas. It is Hindu neighbor who provided drinking water to these Muslims. From one house the police took away 80,000 rupees which a poor man had saved for his daughter's marriage.

The police smashed Skoda vehicle of Noor Mohammad who is ex-president of Digras Municipality. Besides that they smashed many other vehicles etc. belonging to Muslims. This police operation was ordered by SP Police Shri Shivaji Rao Bokhade and boasted before Mr. Suresh Khairnar, a human

rights activist who had gone there for investigation that I have taught them (Muslims) a proper lesson and for coming 10 years they dare not raise their head again.

What is more shocking is that RAF and SRP people crashed into the house of Sheher Qazi who had pacified the Muslim crowd and disperse peacefully and beat up his brother who was dumb and smashed his sewing machine and struck blows to his son Maulana Zafar and broke his hand. The Muslims of Digras said there is no problem between Hindus and Muslims but between Police and Muslims. Hindus actually helped us and took care of us.

Chief Minister Deshmukh was made aware of all this by a delegation of Muslims from Digras but he took no action at all and today (i.e. 30th August) he went for a function to Yewatmahal but did not bother to go to Digras which is in that district despite knowing fully well what the police did there. As pointed out before police is the most lawless force in our country. I am simply horrified by all this.

The role of police in Orissa has been equally shameful. It stood by when Bajrang Dal and VHP hoodlums attacked Christians and looted or burnt their properties. Not only that the Police remained mere spectators when these hoodlums did all this when curfew was in force. Our police force is highly communalized and these prejudices become powerful block in preventing any violation of law. Our secular democracy is indeed in grave danger at the hands of the police force more than the communalists themselves.

I had seen all this during Jabalpur riots in 1961 how brutally police had behaved with poor Muslims there and how PAV had looted Muslim houses. It was then that I had

resolved to fight against communalism and devote my life for inter-religious harmony. And after 47 years same thing is happening in our country. Did I achieve anything?

TERRORIST ATTACK ON MUMBAI: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

I was in Singapore for a seminar on secularism when horrible terrorist attack took place in Mumbai on the evening of 26th November. I came to know about it through BBC television report. From there I had to go to Istanbul for another seminar on religion and democracy and returned to Mumbai on 1st December when all was over and hence could not react to these barbaric events in time.

Many questions are troubling our minds – who were these terrorists and why did they carry out such horrific operation resulting in death of nearly 200 innocent people (nine of them terrorists themselves who cannot be called innocents). The Government of India and security authorities say they belonged to Lakhkar-e-Tayyiba of Pakistan and they were given rigorous training for more than six months to carry out this operation. They say they have concrete evidence. It appears to be true as one terrorist who has been arrested has given details and other things seized from those dead also provide some indications.

However, other theories which might appear rather fantastic are also circulating on internet. One Mr. Ameresh Mishra writes that it was a joint operation by RSS and MOSSAD of Israel to avenge arrest of Hindutvawadi Sadhvi, the self-proclaimed Sankracharya Pande, Lt. Col. Prohit and others. And the ATS Chief Hemant Karkare and his team were eliminated in one go. One Marathi News paper *Maharashtra Times* has reported that two terrorists at Cama Hospital were speaking with someone they suspected to be security guard in

fluent Marathi and so question arises how Pakistanis could speak in Marathi. Also, one who was shooting down at CST railway station was fair skinned and appeared to be a foreigner.

Also, it has been pointed out that before this operation certain Jewish religious personalities had come from Israel to meet sadhus and religious personalities who are known to be supporters of Sangh Parivar and probably this operation was planned then. Mr. Mishra also claims that Hemant Karkare was "inches away from arresting Pravin Togadia" and some other high profile Hindutva personalities and hence Hemant Karkare had to be got rid of and he was got rid of through this operation.

But to be frank all this does not appear to be quite convincing. Hemant Karkare, if at all that was the objective, could have been eliminated without such a massive barbaric operation. Also, though it may be true that Israel and its intelligence agency MOSSAD is sympathetic to RSS or entire Sangh Parivar, why should it undertake such massive barbaric operation in Mumbai? RSS and MOSSAD would not target Tajmahal and Oberoi Trident Hotels in any case and a Jewish Centre in between.

Also, on the other hand, how 10 terrorists whatever amount of ammunitions, AK-47s and other explosives with them could hold massive Hotels like Taj and Oberoi to ransom without being overpowered in addition to shooting at Jewish centre, CST (railway station) and Cama Hospital simultaneously? At different times different numbers were given, 15-17 or more but finally authorities have confirmed they were no more than 10. It hardly stands to reason how so few terrorists could kill on such a scale and hold on for 72 hours. It appears to be incredible.

In my opinion we have to be very patient until the whole truth comes out. Not only that we should not spread rumors

and also refrain from spreading fantastic theories about the incident. Whole world is watching and several countries are sending their ace sleuths to help India establish the truth. This terrorist attack has shaken the world by sheer scale of its operation. The criminals responsible for it may not go unpunished.

It is also very important that peace in the subcontinent be maintained at any cost. If we think of war with Pakistan as some people are saying, it would really be playing in the hands of terrorists and their organizations. They are out to provoke war between two countries. Also, Pakistan has entered democratic era after a long spell of military rule, we should not do anything to push people of Pakistan again into dark era of military rule. Perhaps that could be one of the objectives of this barbaric attack, if Lashkar-e-Tayyiba is involved. Military is getting increasingly pushed away from political arena and this may not go down well with hawkish military officers of Pakistan.

Peace with Pakistan is indeed very important for entire subcontinent and particularly for peoples of two countries. Chauvinistic nationalism only leads to war and sober elements in both countries should try their best to maintain peace between these two neighbors. Also, we should rise above narrow religious feelings, as religious chauvinism is as ugly as national chauvinism. Central teaching of all religions, besides truth and justice, is tolerance. Mutual tolerance would ensure stability of our culture and civilization.

There should be zero tolerance for terrorism in a democracy but then terrorism flourishes for number of reasons, not in a vacuum or only because of religious fanaticism. It is true certain religious discourse is used to arouse sentiments and mobilize people but role of religion stops at that. It is gross injustices, nationally and internationally which arouses anger of people and ready them

for revenge and only then religious discourse is used to provoke youth to wreak revenge.

Terrorism cannot disappear simply through military or security operations. We must address the root causes while simultaneously exhorting our youth to imbibe highest values of our religion, culture and traditions. Mere moral discourses would be as ineffective as security operations. All three things go together – namely addressing root causes, moral exhortation and security operation to address this complex problem.

Often a misconstrued example is given of USA successfully preventing any further attacks after 9/11. Such people demand strict security measures and monstrous laws adopted by US government to prevent any further incidents. They do not know how these laws destroyed the finest values of American political traditions and how hundreds of innocent citizens were tortured inhumanly on slightest suspicion without having any legal redress.

The example of USA is not comparable with that of Pakistan and India. The dynamics of terrorism in India and Pakistan is derived from internal situation of two countries and also of mutual antagonistic relations due to certain factors. Terrorist attack on USA on 9/11 had entirely different dynamics and was on account of US foreign policy as far as Middle East countries are concerned.

There were no internal problems as in India which fuel terrorism or antagonistic relations with any neighboring country to breed terrorism. Also, Al-Qaeda was a small group based in a foreign country like Afghanistan without any backing from powerful military force of any government. How such a group could pose great danger to USA beyond a point. Afghanistan is a weakling depending on military forces of so many countries for its own survival and security. 9/11 itself exhausted all the resources of al-Qaeda and it is also not

known whether Osama bin Laden is alive or dead. It was thus easy for USA to prevent further attacks.

Let us not forget that people of USA were quite resentful of monstrous laws and wars USA waged and it was for this reason that they rejected Bush and his aggressive policies and elected Obama who displayed wisdom and maturity and assured US people of peace and stability.

Thus while strongly condemning barbaric attack on Mumbai we must maintain our cool and create atmosphere for transparent, unbiased and truthful inquiry. We should also press for an efficient intelligence and that our security forces should take note of intelligence inputs more seriously than they do today. We should also do everything to create a just society, a society which takes care of basic needs of all its citizens and ensures complete security for all its citizens without religious, caste or linguistic discriminations. It is only then that all terrorist designs will be defeated.

Our real tribute to those killed in terrorist attacks would be to make determined efforts to create such a society, not mere chauvinistic slogans of revenge bomb for bomb or life for life or attacking neighboring country, carpet bombing and so on. That will only help forces of terror and violence. Peace efforts with Pakistan should not be interrupted and only then terrorists will be isolated.

We should also do everything possible to strengthen democratic and peace loving forces in Pakistan and it is peace loving people of Pakistan who can help us fight terrorism than mere monstrous laws demanded by rightwing forces in our own country. Let us fight terrorism with concrete social and political action rather than mere slogans. A multi-pronged approach is needed to fight a complex problem.

JAMMU ON FIRE? HOW TO DESTROY INTEGRITY OF THE COUNTRY?

First there was agitation in Kashmir Valley against the transfer of the land to Sri Amarnath Shrine Board which forced the Government to take back the land allotted to The Board and now for more than a month Jammu is burning, demanding the land back for the Sri Amaranth Shrine Board. What has sustained the agitation so long in Jammu? Who provoked it and for what? Is the peace of land a real issue? These are important questions which must be answered satisfactorily.

Before we answer these questions it must be said that this is very dangerous agitation and if it is prolonged indefinitely, can result in very serious political consequences. It is indeed very irresponsible and thoughtless agitation, at least the way it is being conducted. I am not judging whether the agitation is justified or not – it is altogether a different issue – but the violent way it is being conducted.

It need not be stressed that it is BJP which is trying to cash in on this agitation and is having its eye not only on election in Jammu and Kashmir but on forthcoming Loksabha election in early 2009 In an article before “Discontent of the Democracy”, we had pointed out that democracy is being grossly misused by all sorts of vested interests be they communal, separatists or casteists. These interests do not stop short of even breaking the country, if it serves their interests.

The politicians, even if they are not communal or separatists do everything with an eye on winning elections. Power, not the people, is their priority even if they employ

pro-people rhetoric. Today's democracy has strayed far from ideal of pro-people governance and draws its dynamics mainly from hunger for power. Each election further reinforces this conclusion.

Before we throw light more on this issue of Amarnath land in J&K we would like to comment on agitation going on in Jammu. The agitators claim that no party controls the agitation and that people of Jammu – meaning Hindus of Jammu themselves are leading the agitation, not any political party. Though not wholly but partly it is true. Jammu is really on fire.

The agitation in Jammu is indeed draws its dynamics not from 'land for Amarnath' issue but it is highly complex thing. There has long been simmering against "Kashmir Raj" in Jammu region of the state. Basically it is regional divide but unfortunately now it is being turned into communal divide mainly by the BJP by raising the Amarnath land issue. The noted scholar and journalist Shri Balraj Puri who has for years dedicated his life for just and fair settlement of J&K issue has repeatedly pointed out that different region of J&K are given regional autonomy. He also headed a commission to find solution to this problem appointed by Farouq Abdullah Government. However, the report prepared by the Commission, was thrown into the dustbin.

One important argument in favor of uniting three regions i.e. the Hindu dominated Jammu, Buddhist dominated Laddakh and Muslim dominated Kashmir Valley is to emphasize secular nature of the country and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is indeed a laudable argument and this unity of all three regions must be maintained. However, the communal and so-called secular politicians too can hardly benefit from such ideal unity. They, on the other hand, exploit such regional divide, for their own end and play with communal sentiments to win elections.

In short term of course the Amarnath land issue will have to be resolved to the satisfaction of both the regions of the state but for the long term solution issue of regional autonomy will also have to be addressed and if a solution combining the two is found it may result in greater stability in Jammu region. But it is election time and issue of regional autonomy may have to wait until after the election. But flames of Amarnath issue must be doused through political wisdom.

The Hindus of Jammu should not play into the hands of politicians and should accept solution which is reasonable and acceptable to people of Valley also. The agitators are usually sown on T.V. Channels saying this agitation will go on until land withdrawn is returned to the Shrine Board. May be they are exaggerating the demand as it is usually done. But they have to be wise while actually resolving the conflict.

Think of it what will happen to valley if land is returned to the Amarnath Shrine Board? Will the valley be not on fire again? And separatist forces are quite active in Kashmir. Who will benefit from such a situation? Will it not push Kashmir further into the lap of separatists? Will it be in the interest of integrity of the country? Will Hindus of Jammu be serving a sectarian or national cause?

The Hindus of Jammu have not only used violent methods and make Muslims of Jammu feel insecure? They have blocked road to Kashmir valley stopping supplies of essential commodities, even medicines. Even if Kashmir had not been facing separatist movement, it would have been highly undesirable to do so. Now medicines are being airlifted by pharmaceutical companies and the Union Government.

It is so strange that Mr. Jaitley, General Secretary of BJP is flatly denying that trucks carrying provisions to Kashmir or trucks bringing fruits from Kashmir have at all been stopped. There is limit to lying and indulging in falsehood. Something which is being witnessed by the whole world is being

flagrantly denied and by the party which claims to be a party with a difference.

It is having dangerous consequences in the valley. Now the apple growers and other orchardists have readied their trucks to be taken to Muzaffarabad in POK otherwise their fruits will rot. Now Mr. Shivraj Patil, the Union Home Minister has announced compensation for the apple and other fruit growers. The Hindus of Jammu should think in whose hands are they playing? Is returning of land to Shrine Board is more important than integrity of the country?

The Shrine Board issue can be resolved through dialogue with the people of Kashmir but it would be very difficult to douse the separatist fire in the Valley, And as for the BJP and Mr. L.K. Advani, less said the better. His prime ministerial ambition has blinded him to all the consequences of his communalizing the Amarnath issue. It is totally futile to tell him that it is not communal but regional issue and has to be handled with great care and caution.

A regional issue is not only being starkly communalized but also being grossly misused to win Loksabha elections. Mr. Advani is saying that those who oppose return of land to the Amarnath shrine are opposed to Kashmir being integral part of India. What a superb logic Mr. Advani! Until yesterday those who opposed Ramjanambhomi issue were being described as anti-national and anti-Hindu. Now Mr. Advani himself has totally forgotten Ramjanambhoomi issue as it is hardly likely to yield political result.

I was horrified the other day to watch on NDTV trishuls being raised by BJP leaders in presence of Mr. Advani and provocative speeches being made. Amarnath issue has come as a godsend to fulfill Mr. Advani's prime ministerial ambition does not matter if Kashmir is pushed to the brink of separation.

Of course no one can expect Mr. Advani to give up his prime ministerial ambition by starkly communalizing the Amarnath land issue. We can appeal to the wisdom of people of Jammu not to play in the hands of BJP and communalize what is a regional issue. Also the real solution, some maintain, and this is based on the interpretation of the Shri. Amarnath Shrine Board Act (SASBA) by the court.

According to the sources stick to two things: The Amarnath Shrine Board Act passed by the J&K Assembly in 2000 and the court directions interpreting its powers and functions regarding the *Yatra*. The rest – land transfer, its revocation and everything else – be treated as null and void. And one can have dialogue in the spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of both the regions and problem can certainly be resolved.

Let us remember whatever the merit of agitation for return of land in the Kashmir Valley, the agitators never communalized it. The *Yatra* was carried out in peace and not a single *yatri* was attacked by the agitators in the valley. It is true the politicians in the Valley also exploited the issue to the hilt in view of the coming elections but *Yatra* was not interfered with. No one has pointed out a single instance of *Yatra* being blocked or *Yatris* being harassed.

We have full trust in people of Jammu and those of India as a whole. Let the BJP communalize the issue and exploit it for its electoral politics but I am sure people of India would use their wisdom to reject such communalization of this controversy. Here I would like to reiterate that we must give up first past the poll method we use for declaring a candidate elected. It has done enough harm to our democracy by making it more and more sectarian and go for 51% minimum votes to win the election which will make it more inclusive as our country is highly diverse. First past the poll method is quite exclusive in nature and communal and casteist parties thrive in this system.

AND THEY STRUCK AGAIN

The terrorists struck again and this time in Delhi at the time and place of their choosing on 13th September in the evening when maximum number of people go out shopping. As usual before the investigations began police officer concluded it is SIMI pattern and hence SIMI is involved. And not only that they also knew the Mumbai based Tauqir the tech-savvy bomber who is the mastermind and is at large, is behind it.

After every bomb explosion and killing of tens of innocent people our police claims they have got at the mastermind and again until next explosion takes place they pat themselves that all masterminds have been rounded up. They are then equipped with their confessional statements and names of all those involved and details of conspiracy and people of India heave a sigh of relief that now no one will rain death on them.

And they are again here and the police come out with names of other masterminds as if out of nothing and search begins for the mastermind again and again valuable lives will be lost. The real culprits are still at large and let alone any mastermind even other lesser beings involved in the whole operation have not been arrested. Those arrested are mostly innocent people whom police has tortured and brutally and obtained confession written by police themselves.

There are two reasons for this gross failure on the part of the police. Firstly they target youth from one community and

do not think on other lines at all despite many obvious indicators and despite repeated attempts to draw their attention to these other indications by human rights activists and others. Secondly, they are under pressure from ruling political bosses to solve these cases and from opposition politicians to target one community.

Ability of SIMI to organize these bombings without being detected has been blown out of all proportions. The Government was shocked out of its senses when the tribunal judge (of Delhi High Court) refused to extend the ban for lack of any concrete evidence. It rushed to the Supreme Court to get the ban extended and got stay until October. In Supreme Court too it would be far from easy to get the ban extended. There is indeed nothing concrete on record to convince the highest court to agree to continue ban on SIMI.

The UPA Government is being misled by the intelligence agencies and also it is afraid of BJP that if SIMI is not banned it will launch high pitch propaganda and it will loose Hindu votes. Unfortunately our politics is based entirely on caste and communal considerations and all parties flagrantly violate all constitutional principles. The UPA Government which professes to be secular, in fact bases all its policy decisions on how BJP will react to them.

One aggressive statement from BJP and UPA Government readily changes its affidavits in the highest court or readily changes its policy directions. It has lost political courage to take on communal forces and fight them politically. For BJP the universal solution for tackling terror is enactment of POTA so that more innocent Muslim youth could be arrested and tortured. It evades reply when confronted with question that

so many terror attacks including on Parliament took place when it was in power and POTA was very much in force.

The UPA Government has no courage to get its police honestly and objectively investigate the terror attacks so as to lay hands on actual culprits. The SIMI office bearer denies its involvement in violent activity. Shahid Badar, the organization's president when it was banned first in 2001, stated on oath before the tribunal including the high court judge Geeta Mittal (who refused to extend the ban) that "SIMI has ceased to exist after the first ban." "SIMI does not endure any illegal or violent activities and has issued strong press statements condemning illegal and violent activities",

SIMI even otherwise was an insignificant organization before it was banned. It being an extremist student organization it was disowned by Jamat-e-Islami whose front organization it was. Thus it lost support of the Jamat who had set it up. It was left to fend for itself. There is no doubt it had militant views and talked completely out of senses without understanding India's social, political and religious reality. It had no support among Muslim masses or even intellectuals. It was banned after Kanpur riots in which SIMI had played a role by putting up provocative posters with a caption Mahmood Ghaznavi India is waiting for you. It was then immediately banned. All responsible Muslim leaders and intellectuals had condemned SIMI for putting up such provocative posters.

Thereafter there was not much evidence of SIMI being involved in violent activities and hence even Mulayam Singh Yadav had withdrawn cases in U.P. when he was Chief Minister. We suddenly hear of SIMI after these bomb blasts

began. By now the police have arrested all its top leaders and when Safdar Nagori and others were arrested from M.P. the police had claimed the entire top leadership has been arrested and now all terror attack cases including Mumbai train blasts will be solved. Nothing of the kind happened and Safdar Nagori and others are in police custody and no case has been solved as claimed by the police.

Then Ahmedabad and Surat incidents happened and several people were killed in Ahmedabad and not a single bomb exploded in Surat. It is really mystery as to who planted these bombs more than 20 in number and they were found everywhere on trees, on advertising boards on bridges and so on. How so many bombs could be planted without anyone noticing is a question remains unanswered until today.

It is obvious that someone is playing behind its hand behind the scene and police is unable to reach at the real culprit. After every bomb blast meeting of top police and intelligence officers from states and centre is held and declaration is made that hence forward all agencies will coordinate and prevent any further incident. Again it happens and intelligence officers are caught napping. Why it is happening again and again? How long people of India will lay down their lives just because police and intelligence agencies are not ready to do hard work and are not ready to get rid of their prejudices and biases.

The police have started playing the same game after Delhi blast i.e. arresting innocent Muslims under suspicion. One Abdur Rashid has been arrested who runs Universal Knowledge Trust and is working for spreading educational awareness among Muslims and his social work is well known.

The Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat has strongly protested against his arrest. Again one does not know how many innocent Muslim youth will face police wrath.

I was member of jury in public hearing in Hyderabad held from 22-24 August and we heard several cases of such victimization of innocent Muslims. After arresting all these victims we heard in Hyderabad police had claimed that it has solved the case and masterminds have been arrested and they had to be released by the court as no evidence except self confession (naturally obtained through torture). That is why the Sangh Parivar wants to enact POTA so that confession will become admissible as evidence and they can show that they have solved the cases.

Since POTA continued to be applied on those who were arrested before it was withdrawn many still continue to be in jail simply on the basis of their confession. Some 100 persons were arrested after Godhra train incident most of them poor and voiceless are still in jail without any sign of trial. In between POTA review committee even opined that there is no evidence against those arrested under POTA but Modi Government was not prepared to release them. They are not being tried even after six years precisely because there is no other evidence against them. It is anybody's guess how long they will continue to languish in jail.

The emails being sent moments before explosion clearly show that some very intelligent people are involved using the name of Indian Mujahidin who are not only expert in hacking others e-mail addresses but also have grip over Islamic history on one hand, and Muslim situation in India, on the other. It is not a work of any novice. Their English also seem to be

flawless. And mostly those arrested under the label of SIMI so far are definitely of this caliber. This itself gives lie to police claims that they have arrested top leadership and masterminds.

One cannot expect anything from the police in BJP ruled states as it is part of BJP politics to target Muslim youth as it feeds to its Hindu vote bank. But will the UPA at the Centre and the Congress Governments in states will reflect on these hard facts and try to save the country? There is no hope as of now. As pointed out above the Congress has lost will to confront communal forces and it cannot afford to displease them. It is they who set the agenda.

The civil society is fragmented and is not strong enough to put pressure on Government to rethink its approach towards investigation of bomb blast cases. And supposing SIMI is involved as claimed by police is it not again police failure that it could not keep watch on the activities of this organization after it was banned? After all it is a small organization and Indian police is a mighty force compared to that organization. It could have easily infiltrated SIMI with its informers to paralyze its functioning.

Also to organize such blasts SIMI needs vast financial resources. Where the money is coming from? If it is coming from other country (or countries) intelligence sources have completely failed to detect illegal transfer of money. This also shows gross failure of our intelligence forces in performing their duties and protecting lives of innocent people of India. They need to be sacked for their gross inefficiency.

I think some powerful sources and organizations are behind all these terrorist activities and it requires great

ingeniousness, political will and unbiased approach to solve this mystery. Otherwise people of India will continue to suffer for long time to come and the enemies of India and the terrorists will have the last laugh. The police investigation must change its direction, if they want to succeed in curbing terror.

Also, ultimate solution lies in winning over hearts and minds of the community rather than alienating it through arbitrary arrests and harassment of youth. Cooperation of the community will greatly reduce the risk of terrorism as ably argued by Mr. Julio Rebeiro, the former Director General of Police, in his article in *Times of India* on 16/9/08. Will the ATS and Government authorities listen?

ISLAM-MUSLIMS AND TERRORISM

Islam is being invariably associated with terrorism both in media as well as in political circles, especially in Western countries. When they hear it being condemned by Muslim theologians, it is celebrated as something unusual. It is strange irony of both misunderstanding and motivated propaganda that if a small band of Osama's followers give call for jihad, it is taken as authentic Islamic call and if it is condemned by mainstream Islamic theologians, it is accepted with mixed feelings of celebration and skepticism. The mainstream condemnation of terrorism is somehow not accepted with conviction.

When the Darul Ulum Deoband, a leading Islamic seminary in Asia, held an anti-terrorism conference the media spotlighted it and number of articles and editorials were written in mainstream media. There was underlying skepticism that how thousands of 'Ulamas and imams could gather together in such large numbers, to denounce terrorism. In fact, when media unceasingly targeted Islam for terrorism, these 'Ulamas thought it necessary to do so to convince their non-Muslim friends that Islam does not stand for terrorism.

In fact it was hardly necessary to do so as all Muslim theologians know fully well that there is no link, whatsoever, between Islam and terrorism but due to such continuing attacks, Muslim theologians had to issue a declaration condemning terrorism. Let it be noted that not only Osama bin Laden but not a single leading member of Al-Qaida is a qualified theologian. They are all modern educated youth or politicians. Among Taliban too, there is no theologian of any

credible standing. Some of them may be product of madrasas in North West Frontier province of Pakistan but they never went for higher Islamic studies. They never got beyond preliminary Islamic education. It was their political bosses who decided course of action and formulated policies invoking 'jihad' to justify their acts of terrorism.

Never any major theologian ever justified acts of terrorism. One of major Islamic thinker and theologian from West Asia issued any fatwa approving of terrorism as jihad. Yusuf Qardawi, a well-known theologian and highly respected by orthodox Muslims, condemned terrorism and suicide bombing killing of innocent people. A conference of leading Muslim scholars also condemned suicide bombing as un-Islamic. Qur'an is so clear on the issue along with hadith literature that save on political grounds, no one can approve of acts of terrorism.

There are in all 41 verses in Qur'an on jihad and not a single verse uses it for war or violence. In early twentieth century when terrorism, like today, was not the issue, a noted scholar of Islam Maulavi Chiragh Ali wrote a scholarly book on Jihad and showed that not even once word jihad has been used for war or violence in Qur'an. It is really a landmark work for those who want to understand meaning of jihad in Qur'an.

The prophet of Islam (PBUH) himself never fought any war of aggression; he fought battles only in defense. Most of the battles Prophet fought were in and around Madina where he had migrated to, to escape severe prosecution from his and Islam's enemies in Mecca. It is opponents of Islam who attacked Madina and Prophet fought back. He followed the injunction of the Qur'an, "And fights in the way of Allah those who fight against you but be not aggressive. Surely Allah does not love aggressors. (2:190)

This Qur'anic verse is self-explanatory and does not need any elaboration. How prophet could have violated this injunction from high on in his own lifetime? The real problem is that one fails to distinguish what is theological and what is political. Many Muslims had their own political interests and they conveniently invoked doctrine of jihad for their political project as Osama bin Laden has been doing in our own times.

The invocation of jihad for political purposes is post-Qur'anic development. The Prophet would have never approved it. Those who kept away from political struggle for power like Sufis gave jihad a very different meaning. According to Sufis love and peace is the basis of Islam and jihad is spiritual struggle to control ones desires. In other words real jihad is war against ones own desires, as it is selfish desires which require human beings to resort to violence.

In fact Sufis always kept themselves away from political power struggle and believed in leading peaceful life and emphasized doctrine of *sulh-i-kul* (total peace and peace with all). Since they never involved themselves in political power struggle they led simple life and busied themselves in suppressing their desires and tried to achieve what Qur'an calls *nafs mutma'innah* (i.e. peaceful and satisfied soul). This could be possible only if one controlled ones desires.

It was Sufi Islam, which was most popular among the masses, as Muslim masses also had nothing to do with wars for political domination. Sufis believed in controlling themselves rather than control others. One needs violence only when one wants to control others, rather than oneself. Since Sufis controlled themselves they avoided violence and politicians desire to control others and hence justify use of violence.

All empire builders use violence and then justify it in the name of religion or patriotism or security. America today uses violence on largest scale imaginable and causes havoc because

it wants to control whole world for its material resources. It attacked Afghanistan, Iraq and Vietnam before, only to control oil and other resources. And as Vietnamese were forced to fight in their own way now Osama and their followers are fighting against America.

Of course there is big difference between Vietnam's fight against American aggression and Osama bin Laden's use of violence. Vietnam was a country and it was defending itself and Osama is a fugitive from Saudi, represents no country and leads a group founded by him al-Qaida and uses hit and run tactics and involves innocent citizens in his attacks. Osama has not been authorized by any country; much less by any religious authority, to attack all leading theologians always condemned him for his terrorism.

The problem with media is it never goes in depth. It has no time for it. Its news is related to events and particularly negative events. What we call investigative journalism is rare and again in depth analysis appeals to intellectuals, not to average readers. Then add to this hostile attitude, political agenda of certain vested interests, Zionist lobby in USA and USA's own justification of war of aggression against Muslim countries and one can understand why western media projects Islam as religion of jihad and terrorism.

There is great need to understand various parallel trends in the Islamic world today. Media reporting and statements of certain political leaders has developed a stereotype that Muslims are essentially jihadis and united in their fight against non-Muslims. When we are hostile to a community or a nation, we homogenize it and look for negative traits ignoring diversity and complexities.

It is no different when it comes to Islam and Muslims. Since theologians tend to speak of Islam and not Islam's, a message goes that there is one single understanding of Islam and all Muslims fall in line with this theological Islam. A

sociological and cultural difference in understanding of Islam is totally ignored. Apart from Sufis there are several Muslim sects who do not approve of use of violence as integral part of Islam.

It would be of great interest to know that among all other Islamic sects Isma'ilis consider jihad as one of the seven pillars of Islam (generally Muslims believe in five pillars) as at one time in history Ismailis were involved in long struggle for power with Abbasids and yet today Ismaili communities throughout the world are most peaceful communities. This clearly shows that violence is political, not religious necessity.

Christians too, despite Biblical doctrine of love and presenting other cheek if slapped on one cheek, came out with the theory of 'Holy War' during crusades and the Geeta pronounced concept of dharmayuddha. We find so much violence in Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand. Thus it would be seen that all religions talk of love and peace and all religions permit use of violence in defense. But the followers often misuse the concept of defensive violence for aggressive purposes.

Media may have its own compulsions, politicians may have their own needs, but scholars should not buy their formulations. They must fight their own prejudices and go for in depth understanding of issues. Intellectuals and scholars should be committed to quest for truth as peace and non-violence is not possible without truth. Gandhiji insisted on truth and even said truth is God in order to promote peace and no-violence.

War needs propaganda for its justification and propaganda is based on half-truths and outright lies and peace needs truth and nothing but truth. It is quest for truth which brings peace of soul – nafs-i-mutma'innah or shanty. Desire for controlling others and political power creates unrest and violence. Today Middle East is a war torn zone as it sits over

unlimited source of oil. It is control over oil which tempts America to attack Arab countries and people like Osama indulge in reactive violence. Terrorism is reactive violence whereas state violence is active violence. Thus terrorism is not all about jihad but reaction to American violence for its lust for oil.

AND NOW HINDU TERRORISTS?

Muslims for long had been objecting to the term Islamic terrorists and when the term Hindu terrorists was used by a section of the media the Sangh Parivar members protested how can one use the term 'Hindu Terrorists? The first to object to this term was Mr. Ram Madhav of RSS told *The Asian Age* "There is no such thing as Hindu terror at all. It is an orchestrated campaign to protect the real terrorists." Also when asked about the Sadhvi Pragnya's arrest, he immediately tried to distance RSS from her. The "involvement of individuals, he said, "had nothing to do with any Hindu organization."

Similarly Mr. Advani, the opposition leader, also distanced BJP and RSS from the Sadhvi. He claimed he had no knowledge as to who Pragnya was till now. Advani told *Times of India* that it seemed obvious that she would have parted ways with the parivar outfits because her thoughts and methods did not match with those propagated by the organizations which she may have belonged to. This was reason enough for her to move out of them."

Mr. Advani went on to cite the example of Nathu Ram Godse who killed Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. "Godse was associated with RSS earlier in his life but left the organization way back in 1934 because he did not agree with its ways", he pointed out. Mr. Advani at least admitted that Nathu Ram Godse was associated with the RSS which was denied earlier.

Well it is Mr. Advani's view that RSS does not believe in violence. Mr. Advani himself was in the RSS for long time and

who knows better than he that very beginning of RSS was to train Hindus to fight Muslim bullies and all RSS branches give training in wielding lathis. Then it also set up other organizations to give training in arms. Even Durga Wahini gives training to its women members in using firearms.

Mr. Advani also must know very well that RSS has great admiration for Hitler and even today in some BJP ruled states like Gujarat and Rajasthan Hitler and Nazism is admired and described as the only solution for the country as the country needs a strong leader to take right decisions in right time. And Hitler was not all about peaceful means. To claim that Hindutva organizations do not believe in violence is to say fire does not burn at all but heals.

Everyone knows what VHP and Bajrang Dal were up to in Gujarat and what kind of violence they indulged in during Gujarat carnage of 2002. It is VHP cadre along with BJP leaders who killed or prompted others to kill 2000 Muslims most brutally. Was that no violence? Or was it no belief in violence?

Mr. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, the BJP vice-president tried to argue after arrests of Sadhvi and her associates that "To protect real terrorists, the artificial terrorists are being shown." He clearly implies that Sadhvi and her two associates are not real terrorists and the police have arrested them only to protect real terrorists. Mr. Naqvi thinks real terrorists could be only Muslims? But he also said, "There can't be either Muslim or Hindu terror."

Was this not what all secularists and Muslims maintained all along? Terrorists have no religion but the Sangh Parivar in particular and the media in general always used the terms like Islamic terrorists or Muslim terrorists and the police, whenever arrested some Muslim boys without any proof invariably described them as Muslim terrorists. And even if these boys whom police arrests are in any way involved in those horrific acts of terror it does not mean Islam teaches

terrorism or Muslims in any way believe in killing innocent bystanders.

But RSS continued to propagate what has now almost become a proverb "All Muslims are not terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims." Now that their own people have been found involved in Malegaon bomb blasts, all Hindutva organizations and their leaders are maintaining that Hindus cannot be terrorists and Hindu culture does not believe in violence. As long as Muslims were being arrested it was quite alright to maintain that it is Islam and Muslim culture which produces terrorists.

The real fact is that neither Hinduism nor Islam nor does any other religion preach terrorism. It is possible that some individuals or even group or organization may employ religious terminology or employ religious rhetoric to justify their condemnable acts but that does not hold that religion or religious community to be responsible for that act of terrorism. The group or concerned organization can alone be held responsible for its acts, not the religion that the group belongs to, much less entire religious community.

Here those Hindutva leaders are cleverly saying that how Hindus or Hindu culture can be responsible for such violence. The Hindus as individuals or as a groups believing in violence can certainly be responsible but not Hinduism. Hinduism is a religion of peace and non-violence as Islam is also religion of peace and non-violence but some Hindus or Muslims or some organization consisting of some individuals form these communities can certainly be responsible for terrorist violence.

The arrests of Sadhvi and her associates has at last brought out in open what was all along known that some Hindutva organizations were making bombs and they should be investigated in terrorist attacks in places like Malegaon (2006), Mecca Masjid blasts in Hyderabad etc but the police

turned a blind eye to this demand and arrested only Muslims indiscriminately.

Now after arrests of Pragnya and her associates many Muslims feel that the UPA Government arrested these persons only on the eve of election to soothe Muslim frayed nerves, especially after the Batla House 'encounter' which human rights activists and Muslims thought had raised many questions. Thus Muslims and secular forces in the country feel these arrests of some Hindutva activists were done to satisfy them and after elections again the police may continue to harass Muslims.

Also, the Malegaon blasts of 29 September 2008 it was almost impossible for police to arrest some Muslims as all former SIMI activists were under jail already and secondly if Muslims were arrested this time again, Muslims would have protested severely and UPA Government would have suffered another credibility blow on the eve of elections.

I had investigated Malegaon blasts of 2006 and had made all political leaders across party lines and common people and intellectuals and no one was convinced that those arrested after the blasts in 2006 in which more than 50 persons were killed could have been carried out by those arrested by the police. It was important festival and Friday and the bombs went off just when the Friday prayers ended. No Muslim would go for blasting bombs at such a place on such an occasion.

Yet the police was determined to blame it only on some ex-SIMI members and would listen to no arguments. The 2006 blasts should be reinvestigated and I am sure something else would be revealed. I have seen the charge sheets filed by ATS in 2006 Malegaon blasts. It totally depends on confessions obtained in police custody and is bound to fail in any court of law. The real culprits would certainly escape.

The Nanded blasts in which two Bajrang Dal activists were killed had taken place just before Malegaon blasts of 2006 and there was every possibility of involvement of some of those persons in Malegaon blasts. Similarly the Mecca Masjid blasts of Hyderabad should also be thoroughly reinvestigated as it also took place on Friday just at the end of Friday prayers when thousands of Muslims were coming out of the Mosque.

And all those arrested in Mecca Masjid blasts were also mostly innocent persons. I have heard them in a public hearing in Hyderabad and human rights activists and civil rights group worked hard to get them released on bail as there was nothing by way of credible evidence against them. The courts had to give them bail. The Hyderabad police could not, or did not want to lay its hands on real culprits.

The involvement of some army officers even of the rank of major should not be surprising as many RSS sympathizers are regularly employed and after retirement they become active in Hindutva organizations. The army usually claims to be quite secular, and probably it is, but it should be much more careful while recruiting soldiers and officers. No one with communal background should be recruited. This principle is not being rigorously observed at the time of recruitment. Many people who come out of RSS controlled schools and colleges are recruited in army.

I think it will be better if all terror blast cases be investigated by the police of credible conduct under the supervision of retired high court justices. This will reduce possibility of biased investigation though may not all together eliminate it. It is in the interests of the internal security of the country. It appears communal riots are fast being replaced by bomb blasts and some people suspect, it is new strategy of the communal forces. Major communal riots are becoming increasingly difficult to organize.

The civil society should also become vigilant against all terrorists of whatever religion or group. As communal riots were major danger in twentieth century, terrorist attacks are for 21st century.

SECTION-V

COMMUNALISM: CONFLICTS,
CONSEQUENCES

COMMUNAL RIOTS: A CASE STUDY

When the year 2008 began it appeared it might be riot-free year for the first time in 60 years after independence. However, soon this hope was belied and riots began to take place as every year. Though again most of the riots were not major towards the end of the year even that hope was belied. Also as usual police behavior was totally partial though with few exceptions and minorities received drubbing.

Another peculiarity of 2008 was major communal violence against Christians for the first time in post-independence India. Though Christians have been under attack for several years but it was dubious distinction of 2008 that it saw major communal violence against Christian minority in Kandhmal district of Orissa. The Sangh Parivar was never in such foul mood against this tiny minority, which has rendered great services in the field of education and health.

In fact the first riot occurred against Christians in Kandhmal district on 1st January 2008. In fact riots against Christians had erupted on 25th December 2007 and situation was already simmering. Several houses belonging to Christians were burnt in the villages of Sripala, Rebingia, Nuapadar and Kasinapadar in Kandhmal district. Some 10 houses were set ablaze in these villages. During these incidents several people fled to jungles or to other villages.

It would be interesting to mention here that former chief Justice of India Justice V.N.Khare on 19th January called for setting up of an autonomous body to deal with communal riots cases stating that it is the state's *rajdharm* (duty) to protect the minorities, Justice Khare said that communal riots

should not be treated merely as a law and order problem. He said that such "riots are a serious problem" and a serious view of the matter should be taken. Justice Khare also demanded that a special law be enacted to promote. He also observed "Where is the right to life if minorities are victimized and those who victimize are not persecuted and instead go Scot-free"?

But who would listen to this voice of sanity and year after year minorities suffer in these riots and rioters indeed go scot-free. The UPA Government could not even enact the Communal Riots Bill for which it had given solemn promise. It is still gathering dust and now there will be hardly any Parliament session to take it up before next elections take place and the Bill will naturally expire. So much for secular government. Its priorities are hardly to seriously prevent communal violence.

Riots regularly breakout on the occasion of certain religious festivals, especially Holi. On March 23rd rioting broke out in Chittorgarh and Tonk, both in Rajasthan in which several people were injured and, 12 shops were burnt and vehicles burnt. About 30 people were arrested. Jamshedpur, in Jharkand also witnessed minor communal violence on the day of Holi. One person was injured. It was result of eve teasing by members of one community whereas woman belonged to another community.

On 4th April Jalna, in Marathwada witnessed communal rioting when some Hindutvadis began to sing songs about constructing Ram Mandir in Ayodhya during after noon prayers outside a mosque. Eight persons were injured including a police inspector. Three persons were critically injured. Though some people brokered peace but at night again people belonging to Bajrang Dal attacked a Muslim Mohalla and trouble erupted. After Jalna, Jalgaon also witnessed outbreak of communal violence in which 4 persons

were injured and 21 were arrested. This too was a result of dispute between youth of two communities.

Baroda in Gujarat is another extremely communally sensitive place where of and on riots break out between Hindus and Muslims every year. This time again Baroda witnessed communal violence on 10th April. Five were injured and 4 cars were set ablaze and 25 persons were arrested.

Kerala is normally a peaceful state and except on certain rare occasions communal violence is witnessed. After 15 April four communal murders were reported in Kasargod, a Kerala district bordering Karnataka. The spate of murders took place after some people belonging to BJP supporters got down from a car to urinate near a bus stand from where a mosque is not far off. When someone objected crowds gathered and violence erupted. People shut their shops after series of murders were reported though there was no call for *hartal* (strike).

On 18th April there was violence erupted in Bhirari village when some people tried to set two Muslim families on fire. Again trouble began when some members of Bajrang Dal began to sing "*mandir wahin banaenge*" (we will construct temple at that place only). When some Muslims offering prayer at the time objected, trouble began. One hotel and 4 Muslim shops were set ablaze in addition to several two wheelers. Several people were seen coming from other villages raising the slogan "*Jai Shri Ram*". Subsequently violence spread to other nearby places like Rawer and Chopra also.

In Chopra police resorted to firing in which 2 persons died. Here too the eruption of violence was result of singing *Qasam Ram ki khate hain, Mandir wahin banaenge* (We take vow in the name of Ram that we will construct temple there only). Chopra witnessed communal violence for the first time. 32 persons were arrested. It is also said that violence was result of money matter between a Hindu and a Muslim.

On 13th June for no reason it seems, some people began stoning Muslims coming out of a mosque after Friday prayer. Police dispersed the mob and yet again they gathered and set fire to 6 motor cycles and few auto rickshaws. Police resorted to firing in the air. Some eye witnesses said that a Dalit boy was hit by a motor cyclist and that became the cause of rioting.

On 28th June Jabalpur saw communal violence on the question of land near a Jama Masjid in which 35 persons were injured and curfew had to be clamped. Police also resorted to lathi charge and police force had to be increased in view of communal tension.

Indore, in M.P. has emerged as another communally sensitive city under the BJP regime. Indore was known for communal harmony but since BJP came to power in M.P. VHP and Bajrang Dal have become much stronger and of and on they attack Muslims and Christians. When Amarnath issue in Kashmir erupted the Bajrang Dal and VHP along with BJP tried to enforce Bandh and began enforcing it in Muslim dominated areas and violence erupted. Four persons were killed on 3rd July and 20 persons were injured. Curfew had to be imposed in several police station areas.

Police was seen openly siding with Hindutva organizations. Many social activists pointed this out. A delegation of national Minorities Commission also visited Indore and said in its report that riots were pre-planned. Several NGO representatives came for investigation. On 4th July again trouble erupted in new areas and three more people were killed. Thus 7 people died on 3rd and 4th July communal violence. In all 200 persons have been arrested which includes 3 policemen who participated in communal violence.

On July 6 in Govandi area of Eastern suburbs of Mumbai a small incident of urinating assumed serious proportions as the boy urinating belonged to another community and those playing cricket nearby belonged to another community. 15

persons were injured in these clashes and there was rioting for almost three hours. According to the police Hindu and Muslim boys were playing cricket and fight broke out between them. In all 12 persons were arrested from both sides.

On 27th July Digras and Pusad in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra came under the spell of horrible communal violence apparently due to incident of insulting Holy Qur'an. However, police maintained there was no such incident. As usual Bajrang Dal, VHP and BJP supporters took out a *morcha* which turned violent and rioting broke out. Here two persons were killed in police firing.

It must be said that police role was extremely partisan and the SP of the region was heard saying "I have taught lesson to these Muslims and they will not be able to raise their head for next 10 years". These words were uttered before our investigator (convener of All India Secular Forum, Maharashtra unit) Suresh Khairnar. According to him police entered Muslim houses and destroyed everything they could lay their hands on. Later on many Muslim activists from Digras corroborated this account.

Muslims of the area were terrified and all this happened in the state ruled by Congress and Nationalist Congress, not by BJP. There is no doubt that police has been greatly communalized over the years and no steps are being taken to improve police functioning. Delegation of Muslims from Digras met Home Minister R.R.Patil and the then Chief Minister V.N.Deshmukh and showed video clippings of 'police action' in Digras but no action were taken against the guilty policemen. The SP was not even transferred, let alone be suspended. The Chief Minister visited Nagpur but did not go to Digras though it was just about 100 km from there.

On August 14 six persons were killed in Tenkasi town of South Tamil Nadu when a group attacked them in "retaliation" for the murder of a local Hindu outfit leader last

December, the police said. Five persons were seriously injured in Trinulveli district. Though the police maintained it was merely retaliatory action the fact the Hindu leader murdered last December was Hindu Munnani leader, it couldn't be non-communal action, police made it out to be. However district collector G.Prakash cited religious ideologies behind the clash.

Tamil Nadu too, like Kerala was communally peaceful until late eighties but Hindu Munnani, a VHP outfit communalized parts of the state in late eighties and Hindu Munnani along with RSS became very active there. RSS has by now successfully spread its tentacles in Kerala and Tamil Nadu and since then these two states have also experienced communal violence.

Orissa which had witnessed communal violence in Kandhmal district right in the beginning of the year came under intensified communal violence after the death of Laxmananda Saraswati, a VHP activist who was busy converting tribals and dalits to Hinduism. Four others were also killed with him. It is still a great mystery as to who killed him and 4 others. The naxalites claimed they killed them and a Naxal leader, hiding his face, spoke on a T.V. Channel and said we have killed Laxamananda Sarasvat.

The VHP, disbelieving Naxal claim went on killing spree in the last week of August and news became to pour in from Kandhmal and Phoolpur districts of killing of Christians. Even Pastors had to run away into woods to escape the wrath of VHP marauders. More than 40 persons were killed in violence spread over three months. A nun was raped just a stone's throw from the police station. The police became a mute spectator and took no action against VHP killers.

Never in last 60 years of India's independence was such communal fury witnessed against Christians. It is important to note that BJP is the part of ruling alliance in Orissa and hence even Chief Minister Navin Patnaik found himself helpless to

take any effective action. The Central Government provided Rapid Action Force in adequate numbers and even then communal fury could not be controlled as there was no effective cooperation by the local police.

BJP is determined to widen its political base in Orissa and as in other states; it does so by targeting minorities. Today it is junior partner with BJD of Navin Patnaik but it is struggling to emerge as a major force in Orissa in future. Those who are in know of the BJP politics know very well how it expanded its political base in Gujarat by repeatedly organizing communal carnage in Gujarat from 1969 onwards and finally succeeded in thoroughly communalize Gujarat and come to power there with thumping majority. It seems to have similar plans in Orissa. Unfortunately Navin Patnaik has given opportunity to BJP to do so in Orissa.

The Orissa communal violence assumed such proportions that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described it a national shame. The Central Government even threatened to move if the State Government does not take effective steps to stop riots. Yet, riots continued and many Christians even converted to Hinduism to save their life. According to the Indian Express report dated 31 August "After days of violence, Kandhmal continues to be battle ground of conversions. In last two days, reportedly over a hundred Christians have been converted to Hinduism." said Satyabarat Sahoo, Revenue Divisional Commissioner of the area. Similarly Sajan K.George, national president of the Global Council of the Indian Christians said at Bhubaneshwar, "We have proof that Christians are being forcibly converted to Hinduism in Kandhmal. We have brought to the notice of the authorities... the police and the state government is not doing anything to protect them. According to our estimates, 50 Christians died in the recent violence..."

On September 8 Azamgarh in U.P. witnessed communal violence in which 2 persons were killed. This happened when

BJP M.P. and Hindu extremist leader Aditya Nath Yogi's rally was passing through Muslim dominated area and provocative slogans regarding Ram temple were being raised. 5 Vehicles were set afire and several people were injured. The Yogi who heads *Hindu Yuva Vahini* (The Hindu Youth Organization) threatened to burn entire Azamgarh. The rally being taken out by Adityanath was called 'anti-terrorist Hindu Awareness Rally'. The riot started after some people threw stones at the rally when highly provocative slogans were raised.

On September 9 communal confrontation took place in Agra between Hindus and Muslims when a woman was injured by a motorcyclist. Two groups threw stones at each other and two shops were set afire. A house belonging to Muslims was also burnt down. One Siraj Qureshi noticed it and brought inmates out safely otherwise a major incident would have taken place.

Also on 10th September communal clashes broke out in Gonda, in U.P., Bundi, in Rajasthan. In Gonda VHP gave call for Bandh in protest against attack on the rally of Adityanath Yogi and Hindus and Muslims fought. VHP activists attacked many Muslim houses and beat up many Muslims. In case of Bundi, in Talera town 12 persons were injured when some dispute between children took communal turn.

On 14th September and following days number of Christian churches came under attack by Bajrang Dal activists in places like Mangalore, Bangalore and several other places. In Karnataka BJP is in power and police dared not take any action against VHP and Bajrang Dal activists. These attacks also continued for several days.

On September 15 Baroda in Gujarat again saw communal violence erupt on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi in which one person was killed as police opened fire. As usual Ganesh procession became the cause of violence. Three shops below a mosque were burnt down. One Rajesh Pawar was arrested by

the police for not obeying its orders to wind up procession in time. Similarly three shops below a mandir were also burnt down by the rioters.

Thane near Mumbai erupted on 1st October on the question of installing a gate for Ganesh mandap in the Rabodi area of Thane. One person was killed and 65 injured of which 39 were policemen. Property worth lakhs of rupees were destroyed. DCP Sahebrao Patil was suspended for failing to control the situation by Home Minister R.R.Patil of Maharashtra. Police fired 80 rounds to control rampaging mobs in which one Mohsin Khan (25) was killed. There was widespread destruction of properties and Muslims suffered much more comparatively.

Dhule in Maharashtra went up in flames on 5th October. It all started when the VHP put up anti-terrorist posters which were highly provocative with anti-Muslim slant. Some Muslim Youth allegedly tore off some posters and it sparked trouble. It was also very a major communal riot though human lives lost were comparatively few i.e. 9 people died and 70 persons injured but more than 230 houses were set on fire. Most of the houses belonging to Muslims were blasted with gas cylinders. The police as usual either remained mere spectators or helped rioters. The maximum economic losses were suffered by Bohras who are mostly businessmen. There shops were looted and goods carted away allegedly right under the eyes of policemen. One Bohra businessman alone suffered loss of more than a crore (ten million rupees). The then Home Minister R.R.Patil visited Dhulia but did not visit Muslim areas which had suffered major losses. Several Muslim families were completely ruined. Whereas they lost properties and houses worth lakhs of rupees compensation given to them was ridiculous seven and half thousand.

Assam though faced with terrorist problem at the hands of ULFA was free of communal violence except terrible riots in Neili district in 1983 when 4000 Bengali Muslims were killed.

On October 9 however, some districts in Assam went up in flames 100 persons were reported to be dead. It was between Bodos and Muslims. The Sangh Parivar has made deep inroads into these districts and is trying to capture North East also and its pet project is to communalize the region to create its base.

According to official sources 47 people were killed but non-official sources maintain it has exceeded 100. Though it is said the rioting spark came through some misunderstanding between Bodos and Muslims when reportedly a Bodo on security duty was killed in a Muslim village while on night watch but in fact it was a well planned riot. A green flag hoisting from a mosque was described as Pakistani flag and it was maintained that Assamese Muslims are pro-Pakistan. This was obviously BJP planted stories to spark off trouble. Like in Gujarat in 2002 a pregnant woman was killed during the riots. More than one and half lakh people had to take refuge in refugee camps. In refugee camps also there was constant fear that miscreants might set them to fire. There were no policemen around and hence this fear. Since most of the Assamese Muslims wear *lungi* and sport beard and cap, they are dubbed as Bangladeshis and attacked. Before the riot skirmishes were going on between Muslims and Bodos.

Burhanpur in M.P. was affected by communal flare up on 10th October in which 10 persons died of which 3 died in police firing. Rioting started on Friday after noon prayer near Jama Masjid when provocative slogans were raised. About 18 shops and 15 houses were burnt by the miscreants.

On 12th October Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh witnessed communal violence in which 6 persons in a house were burnt alive which included 3 children. Communal violence broke out in Bhensa town also which is in Adilabad district. CPM accused RSS and its front organizations for Bhensa and Adilabad riots. Even Christians were attacked in Bhainsa town by RSS activists.

Latur in Maharashtra witnessed communal violence on 29th December resulting in death of 2 persons in Pangaon of Latur district. Several Muslims fled from Pangaon and took refuge in nearby villages.

This is brief account of riots that took place in India during unfortunate year of 2008. It proved to be worse than 2007. It is unfortunate and shameful that so many riots take place every year in our country and hundreds loose their lives. Neither government is serious about checkmating these riots nor do we have strong secular institutions in our country. Our whole polity has been communalized and communal parties, along with secular parties are responsible for these riots. All our institutions have been affected by communal outlook. Police and administration has been deeply affected. RSS infiltration has taken place in all our institutions.

Let us hope the coming times prove little better.

MALEGAON BOMB BLASTS AND HINDUTVA EXTREMISTS

Now the BJP leaders are protesting, and rightly so, on use of the term 'Hindu Terrorists'. But they would have been indeed more consistent if they had similarly objected to the use of the term 'Islamic Terrorist's. Mr. L.K.Advani who is so exercised at the use of the term 'Hindu Terrorists' is not known to have ever objected to the term 'Muslim Terrorists', let alone 'Islamic Terrorists'. I wish he had objected to use of the term 'Islamic Terrorism', he would have sounded much more authentic.

He only lately began to say that terrorists have no religion and there are no Hindu or Muslim terrorists. But this was only after media and police started using the term 'Hindu Terrorists'. Yes, the terms like 'SIMI' or 'Hindutva terrorists' certainly has justification but not Hindu or Islamic terrorism. The liberals, human rights activists and Muslims kept on objecting to use of the term 'Islamic terrorists' but no one cared, much less the Sangh Parivar which is so agitated today.

The Sangh Parivar, particularly RSS even sent SMSs to the effect that 'all Muslims are not terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims'. Now it is having test of its own medicine. Any way whatever Sangh Parivar might have done on account of its partisan politics or aversion of Muslims, we must be consistent in our principles and totally refrain from using the term 'Hindu terrorists' and also object to use of such terms by others.

No religion in the world teaches, violence, much less terrorism. Religion is meant to be for spiritual guidance though in certain context and with certain stringent conditions it may permit use of violence as all religions like Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism etc. do. Lord Krishna's sermon to Arjuna or certain Qur'anic verses or concept of Holy war among Christians point out.

However, that does not or should not mean that violence could be used as part of ones religion. Normatively speaking religion is nothing but moral and spiritual guidance, everything else is secondary. No form of violence can ever be a normative concept. Many Muslims grossly misused concept of *jihad* for their own selfish motives just to create emotional ambiance for their wars of territorial aggrandizement. Similarly some Muslim youth in our own time or Al-Qaida leaders have been grossly misusing concept of *jihad* for their own selfish motives.

In fact both anger and revenge are anti-religious emotions. All religions, especially religions of books like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism etc. exhort their followers to control anger and refrain from revengeful acts. Because all human beings have these instincts and get carried away by anger and feeling of revenge. As far as Muslims are concerned Prophet's forgiving all his persecutors and enemies after bloodless conquest of Mecca. He refused to take revenge.

Unfortunately those misguided Muslim youth belonging to SIMI or Al-Qaida are seeking nothing but revenge while resorting to terrorist violence. How can then it be construed as Qur'anic *jihad*? Real *jihad* would be suppressing ones anger and feeling of revenge, and not terrorize innocent people and kill them.

It is no different for Hindutva organizations. They too, as per their own statements, have been motivated by revenge and anger. Ms.Himani Savarkar, President of Abhinav Bharat, the

organization involved in Malegaon bomb blast of 29th September 2008 that we believe in 'bomb for bomb' and since Muslims are killing Hindus so Hindus are killing Muslims. But SIMI, Al-Qaida and Abhinav Bharat do not represent Muslims and Islam and Hindus and Hinduism.

It is surprising that Mr. Advani, who never tired earlier demanding application of POTA to SIMI or Indian Mujahideen terrorists and kept mum about complaints of inhuman torture on Muslim boys arrested by the police, guilty or not rushed to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh about Sadhvi Pragya's complaint about torture. Mr. Advani who is projecting himself as Prime Minister in waiting, how can he be so distinctly partial in his behavior towards one community? Mr. Advani, if he wants to be Prime Minister of a secular democratic country, cannot be so obviously partial in his behavior.

He never even once condemned application of torture on Muslim youth for confession. Not only that he demanded application of stringent laws like POTA to curb terrorism and promised in order to attract angry Hindu votes, to enact such a law once BJP comes to power. Now, Mr. Advani, instead of condemning terrorist acts perpetrated allegedly by some Hindutva extremists, is refusing to condemn terrorism on their part and even rushing to Prime Minister to asking him to inquire into Sadhvi's complaint of torture.

Let me make it very clear here we are against use of torture on any citizen of India irrespective of his/her caste or creed as it is gross violation of human dignity and democratic rights. The police have to work hard to collect evidence and confront the accused with the evidence rather than obtaining 'confession' through torture.

Also, it has been reported that ATS has applied MCOCA to these Malegaon blast accused. We are against use of such draconian laws against all citizens of India be they Hindutvawadis or supporters of SIMI and Indian Mujahidin.

Only normal laws should be applied so that confession does not become the only evidence against them. All human rights organizations, including Muslims leaders should oppose application of MCOCA on the accused of Malegaon blasts.

The police should try its best to collect hard evidence against all the accused to get them convicted. Now perhaps Sangh Parivar will understand why POTA like laws should never be enacted, in the first place, let alone applying them on any kind of accused. The police authorities then are tempted to use torture for obtaining confession instead of collecting hard evidence which requires very hard and honest work without any prejudice.

What ATS has revealed so far about activists of Abhinav Bharat, if true, is indeed shocking. They had allegedly planned murder of two RSS office bearers for being lenient to Muslims and it is alleged that VHP office bearer Pravin Togadia also allegedly financed Abhinav Bharat for executing bomb blast in Malegaon. These are very shocking revelations indeed.

Resorting to violence can indeed be very dangerous. All violent groups are basically most intolerant. They do not believe in dissent and settle dissent only by eliminating dissenting person. RSS itself is an extremist Hindu organization and there are more extreme than RSS that want to eliminate its office bearers. RSS claims to be a patriotic and nationalist organization which it is not. One does not become patriotic just by declaration. It is practice which is real test. If it considers an important part of its population as suspect and alienates it how can it be patriotic? It is disservice to the country as it impairs the unity and integrity of the nation. A true patriot has to ensure unity of the country and should respect its entire people, not only its co-religionists.

It is not surprising that RSS, instead of waiting for law to take its own course has characterized arrest of members of

Abhinav Bharat as a political move on the part of the UPA Government to hide its own failures. Also, it is wrong to say that arresting members of Abhinav Bharat on charges of terrorism amounts to branding Hindus as terrorists as arresting some members of SIMI cannot amount to branding entire Muslim community as amounting to characterize Muslims as terrorists. What was objected to so far be using terms like 'Islamic terrorists'.

What RSS can do is to see that no innocent Hindus are victimized. In fact any human rights activist would be seriously concerned if innocent citizens irrespective of their religion or caste are victimized. Moreover no police officer has been ever accused of being anti-Hindu though there are some officers who have bias against Islam and Muslims. It is very well documented. And these police officers develop bias against Muslims and consider them as anti-national or terrorists and hence after every bomb blast police officers think only of Muslims being responsible and arrest many innocent youth.

Many Hindutvawadis are openly talking of Hindu youth becoming terrorists as Bal Thackeray once gave a public statement to that effect and recently Himani Savarkar as pointed out above said in an interview to *the Outlook* that we believe in bomb for bomb. No Muslim leader can give such statement and get away with it. No one, in fact, ever do that. It is not only peculiar with India. In all countries police has majoritarian outlook though there are always few honest and committed officers also.

One can get rid of curse of violence only when one believes in democracy and secularism. Any Islamic or Hindu politics is bound to lead to extremism as it is our day today experience. Politicization of religion is in fact anti-religious as unless religion is strictly understood in value terms as Mahatma Gandhi did in our own times. All those who politicize religion, use religion for their own motives rather

than being inspired by religious values of justice, love and compassion for all.

All those who have politicized religion in our country should deeply reflect, are they serving even their own religious community or bringing only disaster for them?

WHITHER BJP NOW?

BJP is preparing to assume reigns of power again at the Centre. It has assumed as if it will come to power and Mr. L.KAdvani will be the Prime Minister of India. The success in the southern state of Karnataka has tremendously boosted its morale. Though BJP knows it cannot come to power of its own, it is preparing for striking alliances both in north as well as in south. In south it may try to woo TDP again.

How TDP would respond one cannot be sure. But one can be sure for one thing, If TDP makes mistake of allying with the BJP it may have to pay heavy price in terms of Muslim votes. TDP lost last election in Andhra Pradesh because of its alliance with BJP at the Centre. That is why it severed its relation with BJP after its defeat. It is therefore, TDP leadership will think twice before supporting BJP government even from outside. At least there may not be any pre-election alliance.

In Tamil Nadu AIDMK might support BJP as Jayalalitha is pre-disposed towards Hindutva ideology, herself being Brahmin and inclined towards the Hindu right. But to some extent she also depends on Muslim vote. Not only Muslim vote but she had to pay price in terms of Christian votes also when she passed anti-conversion law and lost election. Subsequently she withdrew the bill. However, one can hardly predict what decision Jayalalitha would take.

In the north U.P. and Bihar are large states which send more than 125 M.P.s to Parliament. In U.P. Mayawati seems to be going strong and she is striving all her nerves to keep her alliance with upper caste Hindus alive. Also, unlike in 1989 and 1999 Hindutva issues have lost their shine. To raise

Hindutva issues is like whipping the dead horse. And Brahmins have been disillusioned with the BJP anyway and Mayawati is prepared to share power with them.

Mulayam singh is likely to go with the Congress, if some newspaper reports are true. Thus U.P. may not pay rich dividends to BJP much that it tries. The position of the Congress is no better in U.P. though Congress is trying to woo dalits through Rahul Gandhi. It may pay some dividends in Amethi constituency but certainly not all over U.P. The electoral equations do not favor it.

In Bihar things are quite different again. But there Nitish Kumar seems to be in command and BJP at best is a junior partner. The way Nitish is handling the Bhagalpur riots issue; he is improving his image among Muslims. He got guilty of Bhagalpur riots punished and also offered some compensation to them. The Central Government has also declared compensation package for Bhagalpur riot victims and Nitish was shrewd enough not to let Lalu prasad Yadav run away with the credit.

The BJP may win some seats from Bihar in general elections but only as a junior partner of JDU. Nitish Kumar may not jeopardize his Muslims base which he is trying to build by letting BJP emerge as a force in Bihar. It seems he will play his card shrewdly in order to survive in Bihar. If he lets BJP emerge as a major force Muslims are likely to switch over to Laluprasad once again. BJP thus may not improve much over its last elections tally.

In M.P. and Rajasthan situation is not so certain. There certainly will be anti-incumbency factor because of BJP's failure on many fronts. Gujjar agitation will eat into BJP's votes as more than 40 Gujjars have been killed and yet BJP is not prepared to concede Scheduled Tribe status to them. It is trying to throw ball into Centre's court. Besides Gujjar front there are failures on other fronts too. Christians have been

attacked repeatedly in Kota and other places and Muslims of course are alienated from it. The terror attack in Jaipur has yet not been solved and there seems to be no headway either. Before that terror attack in Ajmer also seems to be deadlocked. Except blaming HUJI and SIMI nothing much has happened.

In M.P. BJP's image has been considerably tarnished on account of several corruption scandals involving ministers and Chief Minister himself. The BJP Government tried to divert attention by arresting SIMI members and even claimed that SIMI training camps were going on in deep forests near Indore. The forest officers themselves denied existence of any such training camps. Also, despite lot of press publicity about arrest of SIMI activists much has not been revealed of their involvement in terrorist attacks in Mumbai train blasts and other places.

Unlike Gujarat which is citadel of Hindutva and where polarization between Hindus and Muslims have gone deep, M.P. and Rajasthan, though being ruled by BJP are not citadel of Hindutva and anti-incumbency factor can make lot of difference. Anyway, even if this factor does not work it will be very difficult for BJP to improve its tally over last election and BJP can hope to come to power only if it improves its tally over last elections in these states. It seems difficult, if not impossible.

In Karnataka it is likely to improve its tally in Parliament over last elections and it is victory in Karnataka (though it fell short of simple majority); which has made BJP so ambitious. After Karnataka results it is going all out to form government at the Centre in 2009. It is scouting fresh faces for being nominated for Loksabha elections. The Saffron Brigade is pushing to establish its roots across the Vindhyas. Unlike the Congress BJP is ever alert and has already begun feverish preparation for the forthcoming Parliamentary elections.

One more advantage it has is that it is cadre-based party and apparently has a cause of Hindutva to inspire its cadre and to work hard for Hindutva victory. The Congress, on the other hand not only does not have cadre but also has no cause which can inspire people. Only those who love power are attracted to it. In states like Gujarat its members are so much in awe of Hindutva that they have lost even lust for power and are not prepared to fight Hindutva ideology. They have just surrendered.

BJP is aware of the fact that all Hindus are not behind it and Indian diversity is a stumbling block for it. It is, therefore, not willing to forego Muslim votes altogether. It thus wants to play both the cards: that of Hindutva and wooing minorities in very subtle manner. In his opening address in its executive meeting in Delhi in early June its president Shri Rajnathsingh mentioned Hindutva agenda and said that BJP will demand uniform civil code and deletion of article 370 from the Constitution. However, Mr. L.K.Advani, aware of the fact that Hindutva agenda will put off potential allies like TDP, he omitted any reference to it in his speech. He talked mainly of rising prices and increase of oil prices which has adversely affected people. He also referred to terrorism which he alleged is increasing during UPA rule and internal security is quite fragile.

Thus both Rajnath Singh and L.K. Advani together want to address separate constituency. While Rajnath Singh, who is not, and cannot be, prime ministerial candidate is addressing Hindutva hardcore constituency, L.K. Advani, carefully cultivating his image as 'moderate', is catering to general constituency. During late eighties Advani was indulging in extremist discourse on Ramjanambhoomi issue to ensure more votes for the BJP, Vajpayee was cultivating his 'moderate' image. Both together succeeded at last in 1999 election.

BJP on the whole would lie to project moderate image and would try to raise only issues of general interest like price rise

and internal security not only to Hindus who dislike its Hindutva agenda but also to try and win a small percentage of floating Muslim votes. BJP has set up its own minority front mainly wooing some Muslims to woo these floating Muslim votes who raise issues of minority concern.

But no one should have illusion about its Hindutva agenda which it can never forego as it has strong ideological links with the RSS who is determined to establish Hindu Rashtra in India and is silently and steadily working in that direction. Let us recall that the then Jansangh did not sever its relations with the RSS even when it took wove to accept secularism and merged itself with Janata Party formed by Jaiprakash Narain to defeat Congress in post-emergency period in 1977. The dual member controversy brought down Janata Party government but the Jansangh refused to break relations from RSS.

It would thus be knave to expect BJP to become really moderate and pursue secular agenda. But it may, for tactical reasons, subordinate its Hindutva agenda to win elections as it no more can ensure its victory. But it would only be a temporary measure. Once it manages to win elections it would let Sangh Parivar members to pursue Hindutva agenda silently or openly depending on political conditions.

Since its birth in early fifties Jansangh has never given up its ideological goals and there is no reason to expect any change in 2009. Whenever it comes to power it would do everything possible to strengthen its ideological goal and will go all out to help financially and otherwise to various constituencies of Sangh Parivar like RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. It may not be able to build Ram temple in Ayodhya (which is hardly its goal) but it would work consistently for establishing Hindu Rashtra. One need not have any delusion about it.

Let the Congress understand this and revive its secular ideology in a more determined manner and to inspire common people to build secular India. It is in its own interest also, besides that of India.

INDIA IS DARUL AMAN, MR. SINGHAL!

The ulama in medieval ages had broadly divided the world into two categories: Darul Islam and Darul Harb i.e. abode of Islam and abode of war. In those days there was no democracy and there were monarchs and autocrats everywhere. There was no concept of citizenship but the ruled were treated as subjects. Where monarchs or sultans were ruling those regions were called Darul Islam and where non-Muslim monarchs ruled and persecuted Muslims, those regions were called Darul Harb i.e. abode of war.

Let us remember this division in Darul Islam and Darul harb was done by the ulama, not by the Qur'an or by the Prophet. The Qur'an divided people into three categories i.e. Muslims, *ahl-al-kitab* (those who had revealed scripture with them) and kafirs and mushriks (polytheists) who possessed no scripture for their guidance nor they believed in any formal religion. Qur'an or the Prophet (did not divide the world as such into Darul Islam or Darul Harb. Mr. Singhal, the International President of VHP has demanded from Indian Muslims that they declare India as Darul Aman i.e. abode of peace which is neither Darul Islam nor Darul Harb. One can only regret at the lack of knowledge on the part of Shri Singhal or he has been misinformed by some of his informants. The

Ulama in India has never considered India as Darul Harb except for a short period during the British rule. Even then the ulama and Muslim leaders were divided.

Shah Abdul Aziz, son of illustrious Alim Shah Waliyullah and himself a great Alim, had declared India Darul Aman during British period and issued a fatwa that Muslims could serve in the British army. Also, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his followers never considered India as Darul Harb. As there is no church in Islam different ulama can have different opinions on any issue. In fact India was never declared Darul Harb and Deoband ulama declared it Darul Harb only during Khilafat agitation when many of them migrated to Afghanistan and set up there a provisional government under the leadership of Raja Mahindra Pratap. Mahindra Pratap was president and Maulana Ubaidullah Singhi was prime minister of this transitional government. It was then that India was declared as Darul Harb and it was made obligatory for Muslims to migrate to Darul Islam i.e. Afghanistan as a Muslim king was ruling there and wage jihad against the British Government. However, it was politically immature decision and it proved to be great disaster as the King of Afghanistan drove away these Indian Muslims under pressure from the British Government and thousands perished while trying to flee to Central Asian region. Except for this brief period India was never declared as Darul Harb.

Also, it is necessary to understand that these categories were evolved by the ulama during medieval period and does not apply in modern democracies. Even USA under the Bush government was not declared by ulama as Darul Harb through

it had invaded two Muslim countries and was aiding and abetting Israel vis-a-vis Israel as United States also treats Muslims as citizens and fully guarantees their political and religious rights.

These medieval categories evolved by the ulama of that time no more apply to the modern democratic world. Let alone India, no other country today qualify for Darul Harb. Even Israel may not qualify as Darul Harb for many as the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel have also been given rights as citizens of Israel. Mr. Singhal should check his facts before writing such letters. He has also demanded that Hindus be declared as not being kafirs. If Mr. Singhal carefully studies Muslim literature in India he would get to know that many sufi saints like Dara Shikoh, Mazhar Jani Janan and others considered Hindus as *ahl-al-kitab* i.e. people of the book like Jews and Christians. Mazhar Jani Janan has made many interesting observations in this respect in one of his letters to his disciple who had asked Jani Janan whether Hindus could be declared as kafirs. Mazhar Jani Janan said in his letter that Hindus cannot be treated as kafirs as kafirs are those who hide the truth and Hindus possess scriptures like Vedas with revealed Truth from Allah. Also, he observed Hindus believe in *tawhid* i.e. one God as Ishwar in Hindu tradition is *Nirgun and Nirankar* i.e. without attributes and without any shape which is the highest concept of *tawhid*. Not only this he also said that in Qur'an Allah has said that he has sent His prophets to all the nations and so how can he forget India. He must have sent prophets to India also and may be Ram and Krishna; highly revered religious personalities might have

been prophets of Allah. Other Sufi saints also have opined that Allah must have sent his prophets to Hindustan as Muslims believe Allah has sent in all one lakh and twenty four thousand prophets and Qur'an has not given all the names any way. Buddha was also accepted prophet of God by many Muslim scholars and a book on him *Buzasaf* (translated into Arabic and Persian) was quite a popular reading in Muslim houses until my childhood. Iqbal also describes Ram as Imam-e-Hind i.e. Imam of India, highest tribute any Muslim could pay to Ram. And any way even if some people consider Hindu as kafirs Qur'an permits Muslims to peacefully coexist with kafirs (see chapter 109).

It permits war against only those kafirs who fight and persecute Muslims, not all kafirs. It is great misunderstanding created by either some extremists among Muslims or among non-Muslims that Muslims cannot coexist peacefully with kafirs. In fact ulama have divided kafirs into two categories *harbi* and *ghayr-harbi* kafirs i.e. war monger and non war monger kafirs. As for non-war mongering kafirs it is duty of Muslims to coexist with them. It was heartening that Jami'at al-Ulama-i-Hind immediately replied to Shri Singhal's letter and declared that India has always been Darul Aman except for a short period of British rule. They also issued clarification about kafirs. It is also must be noted that The Deobandi Ulama never supported Jinnah's two nation theory and strongly refuted it and supported the concept of united nationalism. Not only this Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, the then President of Jami'at wrote a book *Muttahida Qaumiyyat Aur Islam*. i.e. united nationalism and Islam. All Muslims in India

since partition have stood by the concept of united and secular nationalism. Even partition was supported by a small minority of Muslims, not more than 5 per cent. It is unfortunately the Sangh Parivar which still talks of Hindu Rashtra and wants Indian Constitution to be amended and its secular character removed in favor of Hindu Rashtra. In fact all secular citizens of India – Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis and Sikhs should write to Mr. Singhal demanding that he refute the concept of Hindu Rashtra and come clean on this. They can also demand from Mr. Singhal that he guarantee all Muslims and Christians, safe and secure life as it is members of his parivar who kill members of minority communities. Two thousand Muslims in Gujarat and more than 40 Christians in Orissa were brutally done to death. And this is just two riots. Hundreds of such riots have taken place in post-independence India and Muslims hardly feel secure and now Christians have also joined their ranks. Also, in secular democracy like India every one has right to live unconditionally. Perhaps Shri Singhal has never believed in secular democratic culture and hence he wants to lay down conditions for minorities to live in India. Entire Sangh Parivar has been doing this and is becoming of late shriller in this respect. No one can stipulate conditions for anyone to live in secular democratic India except that everyone will abide by the law of the land and if they violate the law they will be punished in keeping with the law of the land. Even a lawbreaker cannot be deprived of his citizenship, only can be punished. India has always been plural and diverse and pluralism and diversity has been great strength of India. Indian people have been most tolerant

except handful of extremists in modern times. It is the British rulers who divided us and created, for the first time, a political category called communalism. We had never known this phenomenon before. Now a section of Indian politicians is exploiting this category for their own political survival. Let me once again reiterate for Shri Singhal that Muslims and other minorities have always considered India as Darul Aman and all of them have strong sense of loyalty to this great country which is their only homeland. They would never dither from this position. And this author strongly believes that all human beings, whatever their religious beliefs or cultural values, should coexist in peace and harmony. Our politics should never be based on religion, caste or language. It should be based only on our common problems. Unfortunately our politicians are using all these categories (religion, caste and language) for their petty political interests and destroying our unity. People of India should categorically reject such politics.

NEHRU, JINNAH AND PARTITION

Mr. Jaswant Singh, a senior BJP leader from Rajasthan has written a book on Jinnah which is expected to be published shortly. He has, according to a news item on NDTV, called Jinnah a secular person and thrown responsibility for partition on Nehru. Earlier Mr. L. K. Advani had also described Jinnah as secular while visiting Jinnah's mausoleum in Karachi and paid heavy price for it as RSS asked him to resign as president of BJP. And now Jaswant Singh, a fairly independent minded leader has called Jinnah a secular person.

No doubt Jinnah is a highly controversial figure. He is greatly admired and is father of the nation in Pakistan. He is often referred to as Baba-e-Qaum by Pakistanis. But he is hated by many in India and is considered mainly responsible for creation of Pakistan and hence a villain of the peace. Such extremes can never adequately define a person, let alone being understood adequately.

The motives for describing Jinnah as secular by two top BJP leaders may be different but there is an element of truth in what they say. Shri Advani was speaking as a politician during his visit and may be he tried to peace his hosts in Pakistan. Mr. Jaswant Singh is under no such obligation and is speaking as a scholar as he is known to be of fairly independent mind and

may not be much concerned about what RSS and BJP leaders might think.

It is not only in India that Jinnah is subject to different interpretations, some hating him as breaker of India and some absolving him of total responsibility for partition. Jinnah is subject to different interpretation in Pakistan itself some moderate and liberal Muslims describing him as secular and often quoting his speech in the Constituent Assembly as a proof of his secularism. The conservatives and orthodox Muslims, on the other hand, projecting him as believer in two nation theory and true Muslim who created Pakistan for Islam and Muslims.

We have the same problem with Mahatma Gandhi in our own country. Some Dalit and RSS leaders hate him again for different reasons. Dalits hate him as an upper caste Hindu leader who upheld the concept of caste, if not of untouchability. And RSS leaders hate him, though publicly they may not take such position for obvious reasons. They hate him as they consider Gandhi as betrayer of Hindu cause and supporter of Muslims. They even indulge in propaganda that Gandhiji is responsible for partition of the country.

Many people hold Nehru as responsible for partition and among those who hold Nehru as responsible there are all types of people – secular as well as communal. The question arises who is really responsible? We Indians and Pakistanis while holding our own leaders as responsible we have completely exonerated the British rulers of their responsibility for partition.

Though secular elements at times do refer to the role of the British, communal forces in both the countries have completely absolved British. In RSS propaganda main culprits are Muslims led by Jinnah whereas in Pakistani propaganda it is Hindus led by Gandhi who are mainly responsible for partition. If one studies the complex developments carefully in mid-fifties it is difficult to fix total responsibility on any one person or one party. Different actors played different role adding up to partition of the country.

First let us see the role of Jinnah since he is at the centre-stage of partition. Before this we also have to look at him whether he was secular or communal. It must be noted that we cannot go by western definition of secular and communal. We have accepted these terms in our own sense and in our own context. Gandhiji was secular despite being highly religious in his attitude. Nehru, of course, was secular more in western than in Indian sense.

Similarly Jinnah was also secular more in western sense. Both Nehru and Jinnah never were religious as Gandhi and Maulana Azad were. Nehru was closer to Jinnah than to Gandhiji and Maulana Azad was closer to Gandhiji than to Jinnah. Maulana Azad also was deeply a religious person like Gandhiji though he was more liberal in religious matters than Gandhiji.

Jinnah was thoroughly westernized person right from his younger days. He never had any religious training. He did not observe any Islamic taboos like liquor and pork. He never observed religious rituals. He even disagreed with Gandhiji about involving Ulama in politics and he opposed Gandhiji

taking up Khilafat question. He believed in separation of politics from religion. He was described as Muslim Gokhale by friends. Gokhale was liberal and so was Jinnah.

Jinnah was certainly secular in this sense. He until 1935 described himself as Indian first and then Muslim. And, until 1937 he had never thought of partition even in his dreams. He even entered into an informal understanding with the congress in 1937 elections in U.P. His differences with Indian National Congress had begun from 1928 onwards when his demands were rejected by the Nehru committee set up by the Congress to solve communal problem. He had even ridiculed the concept of Pakistan initially propounded by Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge University student.

The two nation theory was deeply flawed and Jinnah had formulated it as a sort of political revenge on the Congress leaders like Nehru who refused to take two Muslim League nominees in the U.P. cabinet after Muslim league lost 1937 elections and Nehru was responsible for this. Maulana Azad tried to persuade Nehru to take the two nominees but unfortunately Nehru did not budge. Some scholars suggest that Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, an influential Congress leader from U.P. prompted Nehru. Whatever the reason political it was unwise not to take two Muslim league nominees. Maulana Azad has pointed this out and has criticized Nehru on this count in his political biography *India Wins Freedom*.

For Jinnah it was outright betrayal and he decisively turned against Congress and gradually it led Jinnah to propounding two nation theory. Thus two nation theory was a politically contingent proposition rather than any religiously

grounded proposition. Had Nehru shown little political sagacity this theory would not have come into existence at all. And in no sense of the word Jinnah ever wanted to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan. Jinnah would not have even approved of Pakistan having Islam as an official religion. That was not his bent of mind. If one goes by Jinnah's speech in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly it is doubtful if he wanted even a Muslim state, let alone an Islamic state. He was all for a secular state in Pakistan.

Then if we call Jinnah communal in what sense can he be described as one? Or can he be? In those days when we were fighting for freedom of our country communalism was not opposite of secularism, but of nationalism. Anyone who was anti-national was described as communal. Thus if at all Jinnah could be described communal it is in this sense. And as pointed out above, Jinnah opted for partition not as a part of his conviction but as a result of political contingency.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible in a way as he was not very happy with the Cabinet Mission Plan as it would have resulted in weak centre as except defence, foreign policy and communication all residuary powers would have rested with the federating states. Both Nehru and Sardar Patel were not happy with this scheme. And as Azad has pointed out in his book *Nehru*, on being elected as president of the congress in 1946, gave a statement that Cabinet Mission Plan could be, if necessary, changed. This infuriated Jinnah as Muslim League had also accepted the Plan and a composite Government was formed after 1946 fall elections.

This finally drove Jinnah to accept nothing less than partition. The greatest culprit was British rulers as they also wanted India divided so that they could easily establish intelligence and military base in Pakistan to stem the tide of revolution which by then had become a certainty in China. Nehru Government would have never allowed such bases in United India. Lord Mount Batten got Nehru, through his wife Advina to endorse the partition plan.

Thus it would be seen that apart from Jinnah the British and Nehru were also responsible for partition of the country. In my opinion the greatest responsibility of partition lay on the British shoulder. They cleverly maneuvered the complex situation in a way to make partition a reality. Partition, as Maulana Azad also pointed out, was neither in the interest of India nor in the interest of Muslims themselves.

The ultimate result of partition is that Muslims of Indian sub-continent stand divided into three units and Kashmir problem is also result of this tragedy. And both the countries are spending billions of rupees on their armies and now such powerful interests have developed in keeping conflict between the two countries alive that all efforts for talks fail. Now the only solution is in confederation of nations of South Asia, with no visa and common currency.

If European countries could form a viable union despite the fact that they were at each others throats until late forties why can't we in South Asia?

MAULANA AZAD AND PARTITION

In the current debate on partition started by Jaswant Singh's book every one is talking about the role of Jinnah, Nehru and Sardar Patel in partitioning of India but hardly anyone has mentioned what Maulana Azad, an important leader of Indian National Congress and an eminent scholar of Islam who held post of President of the Congress for six long years before partition, had done to avert partition.

It is true that Maulana was also party to the Congress Working Committee (CWC) resolution accepting partition but besides this Maulana Azad had never accepted partition and had warned Jawaharlal Nehru of certain of his acts which politically were not wise and may result in alienation of Jinnah or in partition. Pandit Nehru was not for weak centre and hence he consciously contributed to contribution but Azad had no such interest in partition and wanted to prevent it. He supported it only as something inevitable.

To understand Maulana Azad's viewpoint his own book *India Wins Freedom* and the 30 pages which were published 30 years after his death. About partition Maulana had definite point of view that cannot be ignored if we have to understand the genesis and causes of partition. Maulana Azad was an important leader of the Congress, on one hand, and on the

other, an important leader of Muslims and a great religious scholar. Hence his views and role assume added significance.

Maulana Azad had passionate commitment to freedom of India and as youngest president of the Congress in Ramgarh session had said, in his presidential address that if an angel descends from heaven with gift of freedom of India and declares from Qutub Minar that India is a free country I would not accept it unless Hindus and Muslims are united as if India does not get freedom it is India's loss but if Hindus and Muslims do not unite it is entire humanity's loss. Thus Maulana Azad was passionately committed to Hindu-Muslim unity and would in no case agree to partition for personal reason, whether centre remains weak or strong.

It would be interesting to mention here Maulana's views on Pakistan. Maulana writes in *India Wins Freedom*:

"I must confess that the very term Pakistan goes against my grain. It suggests that some portions of the world are pure while others are impure. Such a division of territories into pure and impure is un-Islamic...Furthermore, it seems that the scheme of Pakistan is a symbol of defeatism and has been built up on the analogy of the Jewish demand for a national home. It is a confession that Indian Muslims cannot hold of their own in India as a whole and would be content to withdraw to a corner specially reserved for them..."

Over 90 million in number, they are in quantity and quality a sufficiently important element in Indian life to influence decisively all questions of administration and policy. Nature has further helped them by concentrating them in certain areas. In such a context, the demand for Pakistan loses

all force. As a Muslim, I for one am not prepared for a moment to give up my right to treat the whole of India as my domain and share in the shaping of its political and economic life. To me it seems a sure sign of cowardice to give up what is my patrimony and content myself with a mere fragment of it.

The Maulana then examines the consequences of partition quite objectively. Thus he says:

“Let us consider dispassionately the consequences which will follow if we give effect to the Pakistan scheme. India will be divided into two states, one with a majority of Muslims and the other of Hindus. In the Hindustan State there will remain three and half crores of Muslims scattered in small minorities all over the land. With 17 per cent in U.P., 12 per cent in Bihar and 9 per cent in Madras, they will be weaker than they are today in the Hindu majority provinces. They have had their homelands in these regions for almost a thousand years and built up well known centres of Muslim culture and civilization there.

They will awaken overnight and discover that they have become alien and foreigners. Backward industrially, educationally and economically, they will be left to the mercies to what would become an unadulterated Hindu raj.

On the other hand, their position within the Pakistan State will be vulnerable and weak. Nowhere in Pakistan will their majority be comparable to the Hindu majority in the Hindustan States.

In fact their majority will be so slight that it will be offset by the economical, educational and political lead enjoyed by non-Muslims in these areas. Even if this were not so and

Pakistan were overwhelmingly Muslim in population, it still could hardly solve the problem of Muslims in Hindustan."

Also, the fear that if Pakistan is not formed the Centre with Hindu majority will interfere in Muslim majority provinces, Maulana counters by the argument (which was what the Cabinet Mission Plan was about) "The Congress meets this fear by granting full autonomy to the provinces. It has also provided for two lists of Central subjects, one compulsory and none optional so that if any provincial unit so wants, it can administer all subjects itself except a minimum delegated to the Centre. The Congress scheme, therefore ensures that Muslim majority provinces are internally free to develop as they will, but can at the same time influence the Centre on all issues which affect India as a whole."

Thus Maulana was not opposing partition only as a congress leader but also with full conviction as a wise Muslim who could foresee far reaching consequences. Maulana Azad, unlike other politicians, was a far sighted leader both of Muslims and of whole of India also. What Maulana has said in his opposition to Pakistan is clearly borne out in post-partition period.

Actually Indian Muslims as a whole lost much more than others. They were fragmented and divided. Had Pakistan not been formed today there would have been more than 33 per cent Muslims, a huge number in any democracy. In any case they would have formed their own government in the Muslim majority provinces and would have had stake in whole of India. Several Muslim leaders could have become prime minister of India.

Maulana says, according to the numbers of Muslims than in India that Pakistan will result in only 9 crores of Muslims in Hindustan, scattered throughout the country. Today there are about 15 crores of Muslims but are still a minority and face several problems as minority and also have to carry the guilt – wrongly of course – of having partitioned the country. Ironically there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan and yet they constitute only 14 per cent minority.

Also, Pakistan could not remain united and fell into two pieces as Bengali Muslims could not carry on with West Pakistani Muslims for more than 25 years. Thus whole sub-continent got divided into three parts. Had partition not taken place in 1947, what is Bangla Desh today would also have been part of united India. Also, democracy has eluded Pakistan in post-partition period and it has become totally dependent on American aid and military has remained, and will remain for foreseeable future, politically influential even if democracy lasts longer in Pakistan.

Though Maulana Azad does not mention it as that problem had not arisen then, there would have been no Kashmir problem either. Kashmir either would have become independent or would have enjoyed autonomy like other Muslim majority areas and thousands of Kashmiris would not have lost their lives as they did due to dispute between India and Pakistan today.

Also, both India and Pakistan spend astronomical sums on maintaining their armies. What for? Only due to fear of each other. There would have been only one army for the whole country and we would have spent much less on our

army and could have faced external threats, specially from china much more effectively. What is much more important thing is that we would not have faced terrorism as both Pakistan and India are facing today. Terrorism alone has consumed thousands of life and huge amounts on armament.

Maulana Azad, in those thirty pages which were published thirty years after his death blames both Nehru and Sardar Patel. According to the Maulana, Nehru made a mistake by refusing to take two Muslim League members as cabinet ministers after provincial elections in 1937 in U.P. It made Jinnah distrustful of the Congress leaders whom he began to describe as 'Hindu' leaders.

Second mistake committed by Jawaharlal Nehru was his statement to the press in July 1946 after taking over as president of the Congress in which he said Cabinet Mission Plan could be changed. Muslim League and Congress both had accepted the Plan and to give such statement in an atmosphere of distrust and mutual suspicion was certainly a mistake. That finally drove Jinnah to insist on partition. And British could achieve what they had wanted.

What Muslims in what is Pakistan today?

ON CONFEDERATION IN THE SUB-CONTINENT: SOME THOUGHTS

The partition of India has been a great tragedy and it has caused more problems than it could solve. The decision to partition India was taken by some Indian leaders not only in the heat of the moment but without seriously examining its dangerous consequences. Also, the British rulers were determined to partition India before leaving it, as they wanted their military domination in the sub-continent. They cleverly used our leaders to agree to partition. However, today we are in a much better position to judge the consequences of the partition. Even Jinnah had realized before his death that partition was not the best of thing and it needed rethinking. He had told his physician that if he happens to be alive for some more time, he would like to meet Nehru and talk to him again about partition. Partition hardly solved any problem. However, there is no question of undoing partition. Sovereignty of India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh has to be maintained. Some people raise the slogan of Akhand Bharat. That is a dangerous slogan, which may result in more animosities than otherwise. What seems to be desirable is a confederation of three sovereign nations or, if possible, of entire South Asia, which will also include Nepal and Sri Lanka. Surely, religion by itself is not a strong enough bond to bind a nation together. We saw it in case of Pakistan that its Muslim population was not homogenous one as the leaders thought then. Bengali Muslims, quite proud of their language and culture, refused to compromise on their cultural and

linguistic autonomy. Even before partition, the Pathan leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan had refused to accept partition on the ground that Pathans' Pakhtun identity would be seriously compromised. In the CWC meeting where partition resolution was passed, his was the lone vote against it. Maulana Azad had very well understood this that Islamic Pakistan will not be a homogenous state, but Muslims of different ethnic groups like Bengalis, Pashtuns, Baluchis, Sindhis and Punjabis will fight among themselves. Maulana had told many Muslim League leaders from U.P. that when common enemy 'Hindu' will not be there, you will fight among yourselves. In India, upper caste Hindu nationalism tries to act as hegemonic, in Pakistan, Punjabi feudal class Muslims try to establish their hegemony, and it leads to unrest. Indian experience shows democratic secularism proves to be stronger cement than religion alone. Only in crisis situation like religious polarization in 1947, both sides felt religious divide was a reality but soon its fallacy became manifest. Even since Pakistan was created it has been facing acute problems. It was not a result of any democratic movement but was a consequence of communal politics on both sides. Consequently, it could not develop political democratic culture like in India.

Soon military and other vested interests captured power and feudal classes established strong grip. The Pakistani military conjured image of India as an enemy number one and continued to rule over Pakistan in the name of 'protecting Pakistan'. Also, Kashmir became bone of contention. It became cause of wars between India and Pakistan. Kashmir remains on the boil. India is also facing ethnic conflict of serious nature on its North-Eastern border but Kashmir problem has become much more complex on account of religion and secondly Pakistan. Partition led to race for arms in both the countries. Pakistani military rulers want to even with India in military strength and want to acquire arms, saying India has more

arms. India also does the same thing. Today our defence budget is one lakh forty thousand crore and Pakistan spends almost one third of its budget on its own defence budget. It is certainly not a healthy thing. Worse, both countries have acquired nuclear arms also, saying the other has it. All this money can be spent on welfare of people. And then Pakistan has become pawn in the hands of USA and other western powers. The US armament industry is making hay at our cost. Pakistan has become a front state for USA to fight its Afghan war. It is a very bad situation. America has its own imperialist design in Afghanistan and West Asia, and Pakistan unfortunately is helping it in this regard. Also in the name of strategic depth, Pakistan wants to retain its stranglehold on Afghanistan. But if we work in the direction of forming a confederation of India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh, our resources, which are being burnt on gun powder today, can be saved and used for healthy economic development and elimination of poverty. The three countries have a huge problem of poverty, crores of our people live below the poverty line whereas we are busy fighting each other. The problem of terrorism has also developed due to our mutual animosities and is resulting in killing of thousands of innocent people. Besides this, it also causes additional expenditure of valuable resources. Both for Pakistan and India it is a massive challenge, which cannot be met without solving political problems confronting us. Confederation can be much better solution for this challenging problem also. What steps are necessary to bring about the confederation? The very first step is to ensure mutual confidence and agree to certain measures like giving visa on arrival and facilitate more goodwill missions in different fields like sports, journalism, film and T.V. productions, better facilities for literary conferences, seminars etc. Some of it is being achieved through SAARC agreements but that is hardly enough. Also, we have to start discussions about confederation, its possible modalities by

holding seminars and conferences on the issue. Today even the very idea of confederation is not being touched as if it would mean doing away sovereignty of federating units. It has to be made absolutely clear that sovereignty of all federating nations will be ensured in any case. We have European model before us. The idea of European Union was also not realized in a day. It began in early fifties and could be realized only in nineties. It was not easy to create this union among nations which had fought like cats and dogs until second World War. But today European Union is a reality with visaless regime and common currency. It is no mean achievement. One can travel across Europe today with one currency, Euro, and no visa at all. When I was travelling from Austria to Germany by road and I enquired how far the German border was, I was told we have already crossed it. But I enquired what about check post, I was told what for? There is no separate visa so no check post is needed. If it ever happens between India and Pakistan, it would be a dream come true for millions of people who are either divided between two countries (thousands of families have been divided) or want to visit the other country for one reason or the other. Today even near relatives do not get visa to visit their family members without producing any proof of marriage or sickness. In European Union each nation maintains its own sovereignty and yet they have European parliament to discuss their problems of common interest. Elections to EU Parliament are also held along with elections to national parliaments and there is no tension whatsoever between the two. National parliament has its own sovereign role. Each member country maintains its own army and has its own priorities and foreign policy. European nations have united in a most democratic way. What is being suggested here does not mean we are going back to the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946. No, it is out of question. According to the Cabinet Mission Plan federating units had to have a union government which would handle three subjects, i.e. defence, foreign policy

and communication. What we are advocating here is something entirely different. Cabinet Mission Plan is now a history. All the federating nations in this confederation would have their own armies, their own foreign policies and their own communication system as is happening with EU nations. We also have ASEAN model. In ASEAN countries, they have agreed to visaless regime, though not to common currency. There are series of agreements between ASEAN countries and all the countries are beneficiary of the union. In South Asia, we can achieve even better integration. ASEAN countries could not agree to have single currency but it would be easier for us to have a common currency. We have had common currency and though levels of development differ in all the three countries, due weightage could be given, as it happened in European, countries, to achieve this goal. All this would not be achieved in one go. We will have to work very hard indeed to achieve even elementary agreements between the three countries. But it is not something impossible to achieve. There is considerable public opinion in both the countries in its favour. But, unfortunately, no systematic efforts have ever been made to grow up this opinion. Given sincerity and determination, it is not something impossible to achieve, though it may be difficult. Let us make a beginning at least by initiating the discussion.

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