

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

January-March 1993
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40TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Have
We

gONE
Mad?

What Ails Our Muslims?

A.B. Shah

**Communal Riots in Bombay
in the 19th Century**

Maneesha Tikekar

Indian Muslims and Secularism

Hamid Dalwai



**YOU WEAR THESE TO PROTECT YOURSELF
FROM GETTING HURT.
SO WHY DON'T YOU WEAR A CONDOM
TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM
AIDS?**

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- Using infected needles and syringes
- An infected mother to unborn child

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- Make sure blood is HIV-free in case of transfusions
- Use properly sterilised/disposable needles and syringes



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Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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BETWEEN OURSELVES...

Once again the publication of this issue has been delayed and that too by as many as two months. We regret the delay and apologise to our readers particularly those who called to enquire whether the fact that they had not received the January-March number meant that their copy had been lost in post!

Those of our readers who live in Bombay city need not be reminded of the harrowing time we lived through particularly in January. In fact the main topic for the January issue was to have been "The Role of the State in a Market Economy". A symposium on this subject was planned for late December but could not be held. The symposium will now be held on March 20.

In the light of Ayodhya and the developments that followed this topic had to be put on hold. Meanwhile the Freedom First Foundation, the Indian Secular Society and the Department of Politics of the SNDT Women's University organised a seminar to discuss the question of secularism — what it meant and in the light of that meaning were we really secular in the light of the communal frenzy that was then on.

Despite the adverse conditions including the non-availability of transport and curfew in several parts of the city, the seminar was held and the discussions recorded. The main feature of this issue is based on the seminar proceedings. Its editing took time. Hence the delay.

Our report does not concern itself with the statistics of how many were killed or wounded or the value of property lost. It seeks to go into the question of the how and why of what happened. If the contents of this issue answer some of the questions or doubts puzzling you, it would have served its purpose. Of course we would welcome your comments on the important questions raised, which we can publish in the next quarter.

S.V. Raju, R. Srinivasan

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WITH MANY VOICES

"The deep moans round with many voices. Come, my friends
Tis not too late to seek a newer world" — Tennyson

Most Indians love criticising others but lack the stomach for self-criticism and introspection.

India Today, October 31, 1992

The Indian Civil Servant is a curious creature. Invested with unfathomable power to serve his people and his country he is usually engaged in his own welfare.

Sanjeev Varma, *The Sunday Observer*,
September 6, 1992

India has produced three ideas in 45 years. These are socialism, Mandal and Ram. All three were meant to expand freedom. They have failed.

Nirmal Goswami, *Economic & Political Observer*,
November 7, 1992

When one out of every three citizens has no access to toilets, the scatological situation is likely to get out of hand.

K. Govindan Kutty, *Indian Express*, September 6, 1992

Never in the history of India has so much reform been packaged in such a short period of time.

Union Finance Minister Manmohan Singh,
The Economic Times, July 19, 1992

The Million dollar question is: If we can import all other items for our comfort, why can't we import ministers from foreign countries to rule us!

S.N. Kabla in a letter to the
Indian Express, November 11, 1992

If MTV is allowed, why not Madonna's book (Sex).

Pranav Desai (a College student)
Indian Express, November 8, 1992

Of late when I contemplate Shri Ram it is the image of Mr. L.K. Advani that appears before me rather unpleasantly.

Dr. Ashok Mitra in a letter to
The Times of India, February 9, 1993

(For) India, the U.S. was a priority. But for the U.S, India was not a priority.

Dr. Glen Johnson, Director of
American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad,
The Times of India, November 18, 1992

Those who say that socialism is dead are wrong. Socialism is like a child which, once born cannot return to the womb.

CPM Politburo Member Sitaram Yechuri,
The Pioneer, November 15, 1992

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao should be the first to be arrested under the proposed anti-beggary Act, for going to the World Bank and other multinationals for money.

Ram Vilas Paswan, *The Times of India*,
November 22, 1992

When principles and politics collide, principles usually give way.

The Economist, December 5, 1992

In India, more often than not, the phrase "better late than never" sums up the working philosophy of the government.

Manoj Joshi, *Frontline*, November 6, 1992

The acronym for the Non Aligned Movement — NAM — has great relevance for its obituary: *Ram NAM Satya hai*.

R.S. Pathania in a letter in
India Today, October 31, 1992

Of course they are our very own — but who is more pampered — the Indian Airlines pilot or the Indian Test Cricketer.

Mr. G.N.M. Kurve in a letter to
The Times of India, January 13, 1993

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

"the time has come," the
walrus said,
"to talk of many things:
of shoes-and ships-
and sealing wax-
of cabbages -
and kings -"

- Lewis Carroll



A Renaissance in Indian Publishing?

Vikram Seth has been paid an advance of £ 250,000 (Rs.2.0 crores) for his yet-to-be-published book slated for release on March 25.

This is regarded as the highest amount paid in the London market for a literary book. Perhaps no India-born author has ever received this kind of money for all his life-work. It is natural therefore for Indian writers of English to be happy — particularly those who have made the grade.

Writers in English who have made the top grade have never had it so good financially. Not surprisingly many, we hear, are turning to writing in English.

A whole new generation of writers now write in English and new publishing ventures such as Penguins and Rupa publish between them nearly 400 titles annually.

There is an eager readership for these and to be reading these is the *in* thing. People would rather be found reading Khushwant Singh, or de Cunha than perhaps Dickens. But what is disturbing is that some readers seem to have lost their sense of perspective. In fact some called Seth's new novel another Tolstoyean creation.

That these are read by the yuppies and the bright young things doing literature honours is understandable. But is the popularity final? Will these creations last half a century? Does anyone read the *Forsyte Saga*? At least I have not seen this read by anyone for the past twenty years. Yet there was a time when this was read by one and all who

claimed to have any acquaintance with literary sensibilities. Nobel prize winner Galsworthy's books have gone the way of the writings of many Laureates so ennobled. It will be worthwhile to flip through the pages of the *Bookman*. Novels once regarded as masterpieces which had to be read such as R.C. Hutchinson's *Elephant and the Castle* have joined the pterodactyl. Charles Morgan was regarded a famous novelist; has anyone heard of him now? And C.P. Snow is now regarded as a prize bore.

My sense of patriotism of course makes me wish the best of luck to Amitava Ghosh, Upamanya Chatterji and others. But time alone can tell of the endurance of their works as literature.

Meanwhile, our *desi* writers who are equally good perhaps have yet to be discovered by the paperback entrepreneurs even established ones. It is odd that Anantha Murthy's short stories are yet to be collected: one has to hunt through several obscure publications to get these while any Kannada reader can find it all in any regional library. I wonder whether our English bred literates who are illiterate in the "colonial vernaculars" know that they are missing things which might be a shade better than what is available readily in "mod" bookshops?

RS

Of Humbugs and Hypocrites

When we, as a people let ourselves be ruled by humbugs and hypocrites we should not complain. We deserve what we get.

If there is one characteristic that the Congress and its various *avatars*

(including the Janata Dal) assiduously promoted in India after freedom, it was the quality of hypocrisy.

Many years ago I read Prof. Stuart Chase's excellent book on semantics "The Tyranny of Words". One phrase that stayed in my mind and which often stopped me from using words carelessly was this one: "The word is not the thing."

I was reminded of this phrase when I read reports that the ruling party had taken umbrage over hoardings displayed in various parts of Bombay city depicting the national flag with a red splotch in place of the Ashoka Chakra. The red splotch eloquently symbolised the present situation — when much blood flowed in the streets of Bombay — arising from communal hatred that continues to divide our people. The removal of the Ashoka Chakra was equally symbolic. The Chakra (from Emperor Ashoka's pillar) symbolises *Dharma* which disappeared a long time ago from our public life. I thought the hoarding was a brilliant visual.

The advertising agency which conceived this hoarding as a public awareness advertisement deserved to be complimented and not prosecuted.

However in the climate of hypocrisy and humbugging that the Congress and its minions have fostered it was logical to prosecute. For the Congress the Word is the Thing. The National Flag is a word (or two words). It represents the nation. But it is not the nation. The Congress did not show much concern when people were being killed or raped and property was being destroyed in the name of religion. Yet they got worked up over something done to a piece of cloth — for that's what it is.

SVR

Understanding India's Diversity

What is frightening about the fallout after the destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya is the attitude of the educated Hindu, who we all assumed, was basically secular (not in the atheistic sense but in the sense of not being overly influenced by religious considerations on matters temporal). Most Hindus irrespective of the 'class' (middle or upper) appeared to feel that the destruction of the mosque (or as the 'disputed' or 'dilapidated' structure as some preferred to the Babri Masjid) was not something over which one need shed tears. "It was time", many of them said, "that the Muslims of India were taught a lesson". Had this been the response of an RSS or a BJP (nee Jan Sangh) member or a member of the Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal or the Viswa Hindu Parishad one could understand. But this was not the case. The above quote could be attributed to a large number of highly educated Hindus. Hence it is frightening. Hence the hope that it was or is only a case of temporary insanity.

It is necessary to understand why this 'anti-Muslim' phobia? Why this intolerance against the Muslims and not against other minority communities in the country?

We are aware we are treading sensitive ground. Let us therefore before going further into an examination of the whys and wherefors, emphasise that *Freedom First* its publishers the Democratic Research Service are totally committed to secular (or as our Founder Mr. Minoo Masani would prefer to put it 'non-denominational') values. We are not anti-religion. We say religion is an intensely personal matter and it is better for all concerned that it is left that way.

If many among the educated Hindus feel the way they do could it not be a reaction to the acts of the more rabid among the Muslims. The 'to-do' raised by the community over the Anjuman Islam School allotting a part of its building to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to accommodate a school for journalism (see *Freedom First* No. 414 July-September 1992); demolition of an illegally erected bookstall which among other books, sold copies of the Koran; the dismissal of the Headmistress of a Muslim School in Bombay (Ms. Nafisa Diwanji) for "having allowed a skit on National Integration on August 15 depicting a Hindu family," Muslim children in a Kerala Catholic school insisting on wearing a cap forbidden by the rules and the strenuous objections to the singing of *Vande Mataram* on the ground that it was a glorification of Hinduism are cited as examples of Muslim intransigence. And, such examples can be multiplied.

Certainly these do not add to the glory of the community. But let us not overlook the fact that such instances are not exclusive to the Muslims. What about the agitation leading to the withdrawal of the *The Gazetteer* of Kolhapur which correctly depicted the role of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj; or Khushwant Singh having to eat humble pie over his remarks (admittedly in rather poor taste) on Shivaji; or the attempt to get Dr. Ambedkar's book *Riddles of Hinduism*, banned?

While these are (conveniently) forgotten the lapses of the Muslims are allowed to simmer and always with someone to ensure that they are not forgotten. There is however one difference. While large sections of the Hindu elite has been openly and vociferously critical of those Hindus who are responsible for the above, the Muslim elites (with notable exceptions like Mr. Ashgar Ali Engineer) have not been

forthcoming in condemning or at least criticising their co-religionists. Thus the shabby and wholly reprehensible treatment meted out to the pro-Vice Chancellor of Jamia Milia or of the Librarian of the Khuda Bux Library in Patna were not condemned by the Muslim intelligentsia at large. The allegations made in the press that the Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research played host on the premises of the Council to meetings of the Babri Masjid Committee does not add objectivity to Dr. Irfan Habib.

An immediate reaction on the part of a mean and glib section of the Muslim intellectuals would have done much to salvage some of the community's credentials.

This however cannot justify the persisting prejudicial myths against the entire community. The stereotype of the Muslims of India as being one homogenised mass does great disservice to the community. Like the Hindus and Muslims too are not one but many communities — each distinctly different from another from a different part of India. Thus the Tamil Muslim has more in common with the Tamil Hindu than with the Kashmiri Muslim. The social life of the Muslims across India are quite varied. Many know no Urdu at all except for a smattering. Not all Muslims are non-vegetarian — there are strict vegetarian Muslims in Gujarat, for instance. Marriage and family customs differ. In some parts of the country caste distinctions are extremely important, so much so, a particular Muslim caste can only get married to a particular Hindu rather than to a Muslim! This too in UP the heartland of Islamic reforms).

There is therefore urgent need to educate the majority. Books like those of Vaikom Basheer of Kerala which describe the lives of the average Muslims and which are intensely human need to be widely read. Myths about all Muslims getting married four times and producing numerous children need to be exposed. This has to begin at school and College where teachers and text books should deal with the *real* life of Muslims and other minorities and not the stereotype dished out to us by (for example) Indian movies — the Muslim living in decadent urban squalor with nautch girls, dancing and singing ghazals or Christian girls in tight jeans or revealing dresses tending drinking bars.

Minorities will remain minorities and there is nothing wrong with that. We need to emphasise the cultural mosaic that is India and pride ourselves on our democratic pluralist society. A Maharashtrian not only glories in his Maratha heritage but contributes to the large heritage of India.

A point we need to remember is that in all countries with sizable minorities there is bound to be civil unrest at one time or another. These should be viewed in the context of specific social situations. The German-Americans of the mid-West in the United States were against US involvement during World War I. Their loyalties were then divided. Today one could hardly suspect their loyalties. On the other hand the Quebecois are still not prepared to be assimilated and insist on minority rights as do the people of Belgium who are divided in their loyalties. A mature people take these difference in their stride and their leadership keep these difference within manageable limits without using them for short time political gains which has been this country's misfortune and responsible for many of our problems including the latest communal flare-up.

S.V. Raju, R. Srinivasan

Have We Gone Mad ?

Secularism: Precept & Practice in Contemporary India

The events in Ayodhya and the carnage that followed are evidence enough that even after 47 years of free India and despite the Constitution affirming India as a 'Secular' Republic, the goal of a genuinely secular community is as distant as it was in 1947. This, despite every shade of political opinion claiming that it stands for 'genuine' secularism as against 'pseudo' secularism.

The Indian Secular Society, the Department of Politics of the SNDT Women's University and the Freedom First Foundation issued an invitation on December 24 to a number of teachers, social workers, professionals, businessmen, executives and others to participate in a seminar on January 9, 1993 to discuss the precept and practice of secularism in India.

Little did the organisers realise that they would be meeting right in the middle of a recurrence of mindless violence the like of which Bombay city had not witnessed in the 300 years of its existence.

If was, as if, a whole city had gone mad.

Despite the killing, the arson, the looting and the curfew, the organisers persisted with the seminar which was attended by as many as 51 participants.

This is a report based on the proceedings of this seminar.

It may appear that while India and Bombay were burning, we organised an intellectual discussion on secularism, when what was really needed was some kind of urgent action to stop the carnage.

It is true that thought without action is futile, but action when not preceded by rational thought is not only dangerous but often leads to a result opposite to what was intended.

When India became politically independent, we, the people of India, resolved to build a secular democratic republic dedi-

cated to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. After 45 years it is clear that we have failed.

The current crisis is comparable to the crisis of 1947 when it threatened to tear apart the social and political fibre of our society. In 1947 when the crisis took place, all of us believed and accepted the possibility that Indian society would break up unless we ensured political stability in the country. Now, in a country politically stable for the last 45 years, this crisis occurs. Is it an indication that the country is in danger of breaking up?

Pre-modern India was very communal. If it was a Hindu state there was no equality before the law, there was no equality of citizenship, it depended on your caste, even punishment depended on your caste. These are the psyches from which we have to get out. If it was a Muslim state all others were second-class citizens. How can we deny this. In fact it is only in modern India that some concept of equality of citizenship and equality before the law is surfacing. And these are very precious. If we have learnt anything from the British, it is this concept of equality before the law. And if we are failing it is because equality before the law is not being practised. And unless we do that and try to arrive at some common factor — the lowest common denominator — acceptable to all of us secularism is going to be very difficult to accept and uphold.

On the other hand in pre-modern India, communal problems did not exist as we know them today. Perhaps the problem is not that we are pre-modern but that we are modern in a perverse way.

It is the classical Hindu right-wing view that right through the period of the supposedly Muslim rule, Hindus were languishing and waiting to be liberated. If Muslims were temple smashers so were a whole lot of others — Huns and other invaders. Perhaps it is not realised that at least 50% of the

Mughal elite were Rajputs. That's not a view which is consistent with the Hindu mass view that they suffered during Mughal rule.

School History Incomplete

Without realising it, most people seem to internalize the school level view of the Indian nation — an image created out of materials that are themselves questionable. Because if we are going to concentrate on a history that is exclusively North Indian, it automatically becomes a history of conquests masking all those other things which are equally important. School history does not have an adequate history of South India which would actually give you all that is positive in the Indian tradition. The history of trade, the history of relations with other countries, and also, more importantly, the fact that the Northern Hindu's interpretation of history automatically gives you certain constructs in terms of communal identity. You get a very definite Hindu articulation of Muslims and other communities. Whereas, if you had this "alternative" history of the sub-continent you would automatically see that the minorities — Muslims, Christians and others — far from being those festering sores as they are presented by some parties and organisations, have roots here which go back two millennia, and who have lived here in peace. The fact is that if we are going to remain blind to that whole layer of history it auto-

matically follows that we are working in ignorance, in an atmosphere which is a breeding ground for the growth of the communal virus.

Broadly there are two events which shaped the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims in India. One of them is probably the fact that Muslims were among the first invaders who attacked the Hindu religion as a religion in the course of which Hindu temples were broken. Carved images of Hindu gods had their noses or their heads chopped off. Visit any Hindu historical site for evidence. Maybe the Muslims weren't solely responsible, but they did sufficient damage for everybody else to attribute all these atrocities to them.

Creation of Pakistan

The second event having a bearing on Hindu-Muslim relations is the creation of Pakistan. That was less than 50 years ago. The general impression is that it was created against the wishes of a majority of the Hindus but had the support of the vast majority of Muslims, even those who had no hope of going to Pakistan or had no intention of doing so.

Now, when a nation is divided on religious grounds against the wishes of the community in an overwhelming majority, is the injury done to them easily forgotten? We

had an opportunity at the time of our independence to forget past wounds.

In fact a large part of the country did forget all about Pakistan. India was free: we were the masters of our own country. And there was hope — hope for a better future.

But we lost that opportunity for two reasons. One was the mistaken belief of free India's ruling elite that a Muslim minority would feel insecure in a state with an overwhelmingly Hindu majority; therefore much attention had to be paid to their sensitivities, in itself not a wrong attitude for such a danger did exist, but at that point it was the Hindu majority which was the injured party. However, greater attention was paid to Muslim sensitivities. Maybe it was not deliberate, maybe the Hindus were being taken for granted. Maybe the Congress party at that time considered that Hindus were in any case winners. But the sense of injury festered.

Secondly the hopes generated in August 1947 were shortlived. Politics and politicians became corrupt and the poor poorer. There was no silver lining discernible. In such a situation old sores reappeared.

If India's economy had progressed like that of Japan, Korea or Hongkong these feelings of injury could have been subordinated and the past truly put into limbo. But this too did not happen.

The very basic conditions which must exist in a country if a genuine dialogue on secularism was to take place thus did not exist. In fact they never existed except perhaps during the first four or five years after

Independence. So, when we talk of secularism we are essentially discussing communal relations between Hindus and Muslims, whatever nice name we might try to give it. It might be worthwhile if all secularists learn to discuss this openly and bluntly.

The concern is the state of the Hindu mind today. Has Hindu society given up on secularism? Every activity that is taking place, whether it is the demolition at Ayodhya or whatever, all suggest that an increasingly large section is giving up on secularism. The composition of India is around 82% Hindus and 14% Muslims. Hence Indian life is permeated with Hindu religious symbols; the Hindu way of life; the Hindu way of looking at a society. Therefore it goes without saying that it is the sensitivities of Hindu society, that are going to make or mar this country. If a substantial number of them can become secular, we will be secular. If not, we will not be so. But what we see in the last several years, is that to even discuss this can lead to your being branded a communalist.

Defining Secularism

What is secularism? What do we mean when we use the word? As expected there was no commonly acceptable meaning.

It may be of interest to note in this connection that the word 'secularism' is so completely alien to the Indian ethos that the word has no Indian language equivalent. And yet, the lack of such a word has not resulted in the destruction of the minorities. The sub-continent has had Muslim rulers and kingdoms for a thousand years. Yet

three-fourths of the population remained Hindus.

In some of the definitions of secularism it has been stated that there is no room for religious belief. Such negative implications should be avoided, because they do not achieve the ultimate objective of a secular society. This will needlessly put our peoples backs.

The basic dictionary meaning of secularism is atheism. That is why the Constituent Assembly refused to accept the word. It was included in the preamble to the Constitution much later, through the 42nd amendment.

Secularism has been described as a view of life based on the premise that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or excluded as a policy of government.

A society is secular provided every group in that society feels that it can go about its business confident that nobody will harm it on the basis of its religion. There will be general agreement that the Akali Dal, the Muslim League, etc., are non-secular, religion-based parties. When the Akali Dal formed the government in Punjab in the '70s there wasn't any group which felt insecure living under an Akali Dal government. Today the Muslim League is part of the government in Kerala but would we say that other sections of society in that state feel insecure? Therefore one way of defining secular society would be to see if there are sections of the people who feel insecure.

Individual is the Measure

The framework to define secularism should be the individual irrespective of the

Participants at the Seminar on "Secularism, Precept and Practice in Contemporary India," held on Saturday January 9, 1993. The seminar was sponsored by the Dept. of Politics, SNDT Women's University, the Indian Secular Society and the Freedom First Foundation.

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community or religion to which he belongs. Recognised as an individual and not as part of a community he will be treated as such; irrespective of where he was born or to which community he belongs. And all the rights, duties, entitlements and privileges which accrue, are of an individual, not of a group.

Moreover this concept of group, community or minority rights is dangerous because in the guise of minority rights, the minorities in that particular group can always be kept down. That's what the Syedna has been doing to the Bohras; that's what Islamic fundamentalists have been doing in Iran and elsewhere. Hence the need to talk in terms of the rights of an individual.

This will also solve another problem — of dealing with categorised groups or individuals who promote themselves as the spokesmen of this or that group or community. Neither Shahabuddin nor Bukhari speak for all the Muslims; nor does Advani or Rithambara or Singhal speak for all the Hindus; nor did Bindranwale speak for all Sikhs. The moment we accept the individual as the measure of everything, this presumption to be the spokesman of this or that community will end.

In our country we started on the wrong foot because initially our way of defining a secular state was negative in the sense that we felt that because we had very large minorities we wished to make them feel secure. And the whole attitude was that a secular state was one which gave protection to minorities, which tried to make them feel that they need not be afraid to stay in this country; that they enjoy equal citizenship rights, forgetting that in a country like India it is the majority that needed to be educated to become secular and the minority would follow suit.

Secondly, we took a wrong step because of our nationalist sentiments. In the sense that like all nationalists we wanted to emphasise what was distinct about us; so why not give a distinctive meaning to secularism. If you look at the statements of a person like the philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, he said that he was not concerned with the Western concept of secularism; that India had a long tradition of secularism and that what he meant by secularism was *Sarva Dharma Samabhava*. Thus we landed in a real crisis because we had to operate a secular state in a society which did not understand what secularism was all about.

Should the definition of secularism be absolute and therefore static or has it to be a definition which is continually evolving? If it is to be absolute and therefore a static definition then we are engaging in a purely theoretical exercise. If we do not wish it to be an absolute concept and accept the fact that it needs to evolve, then we cannot isolate the definition from the container of that defini-

Secularism

Some Dictionary Meanings

secular 1 worldly or material, not religious or spiritual; the State contrasted with the Church. **2** living outside monasteries; parish priests, etc. — **ism** the view that morality and education should not be based on religion.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English

secular 1. concerned with the affairs of this world; not spiritual or sacred. **2.** (of education etc.) not concerned with religion or religious belief. **3. a** not ecclesiastical or monastic. **b** (of clergy) not bound by a religious rule. **4.** occurring once in an age or century. **5.** lasting for or occurring over an indefinitely long time.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (New Ed.)

secular not connected with or controlled by a church; not religious: *secular music/education* **2.** encouraging or practising secularism; *our modern secular society* **3.** (of a priest) living among ordinary people (rather than as a MONK)

secularism a system of social organization which keeps out all forms of religion.

secularize to make (more) secular, esp. by removing from the control or influence of the church.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

secular 1. of or pertaining to worldly things or to things that are not regarded as religious, spiritual, or sacred; temporal. **2.** not pertaining to or connected with religion (opposed to *sacred*); *secular music*. **3.** (of education, a school, etc.) concerned with nonreligious subjects. **4.** (of members of the clergy) not belonging to a religious order; not bound by monastic vows (opposed to *regular*). **5.** occurring or celebrated once in an age or century; *the secular games of Rome*. **6.** going on from age to age; continuing through long ages. **7.** a layman. **8.** one of the secular clergy.

secularism 1. secular spirit or tendency esp. a system of political or social philosophy that rejects all forms of religious faith. **2.** the view that public education and other matters of civil policy should be conducted without the introduction of a religious element.

secularity 1. secular views or beliefs; secularism. **2.** the state of being devoted to the affairs of the world; worldliness. **3.** a secular matter.

secularize 1. to make secular; separate from religious or spiritual connection or influences; imbue with secularism. **2.** to change (clergy) from regular to secular. **3.** to transfer (property) from ecclesiastical to civil possession or use.

Random House Dictionary

tion and the two will have to be intermingled.

Sarva Dharma Samabhava

The very first reason why we failed in spreading the secular idea was in interpreting secularism to mean *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* — meaning equal respect for all religions. How does one have respect for beliefs which are patently wrong? *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* is really a glorified name for tolerance of beliefs and practices that are unacceptable in a civilized society.

Take the case of marriage. After the enactment in 1956 of the Hindu Code Bill a Hindu is allowed to have only one wife. But Muslims are not bound by this Law and are permitted four wives. Now if we want to go by the concept of *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* we have to respect the Shastric law, as also the Shariat. The first assault on *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* was made in 1956 when three laws — the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Succession Act and the Hindu Minority & Guardianship Act — were passed by parliament in the course of one

year which, to a large extent, modified the Shastric law which till then governed the Hindus. Here was a clear case of bias against the Hindus, for the Muslim law was not touched. If we wish to create a secular society this concept of *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* will have to be kept out.

On the other hand if we want *Sarva Dharma Samanya* (equality of all religions) or *Sarva Dharma Maitri* (friendship of all religions) no one can really object — though whether they are really attainable is another matter. Akbar tried this through his Din-e-Elahi and Guru Nanak preached this. Neither really succeeded.

This is hardly surprising because there are so many factors which are dissimilar, rather than similar among the different religions. Love, friendship, good neighbourliness, are all abstract concepts. When they are translated into commands, you will notice the difference among them. Therefore *Sarva Dharma Samanya* is not practical and *Sarva Dharma Samabhava*

inconsistent with the evolution and establishment of a proper secular state.

All the affairs of this world must be conducted according to temporal laws without reference to any religion. Take the case of Portugal. It is a 100% Catholic country. Yet, their civil code is totally secular. They implanted that code in Goa. In Goa there is a common civil code. Laws relating to marriage, succession or even partition of property are common to Hindus, Muslims, Christians, or any others though 35% of the population in Goa are Catholics. If we are to have such code for the rest of India how can we have *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* and still have a secular state?

The Religion Factor

M.N. Roy has been quoted as saying that the choice is not between one religion and another but between religion and no reli-

gion. The problem is that religion exists. It can't be wished away. Gandhi accepted the fact that religion exists; that there were religious dimensions.

When we talk about religion it is necessary to make the point that religion has spiritual values, which is something unconnected with the problem of secularism. An intensely religious man like Gandhi cannot be denounced as anti-secular. Religion cannot be done away with. It is the repository of the culture, the values, the customs of a society. It is not possible to ignore religion where the general mass of the people are concerned. The problem arises not with the moral basis of religion but with practices that have come down from the past. For instance is it possible, in a society like India where religion controls many an obscurantist custom, to practice secularism in the full sense of the term? *Sati* has been defended on the

ground of religion — should we therefore allow it? Sacrificing of children was once a religious practice — can we therefore permit it? Polygamy has been defended in the name of religion — can we allow it?

It is unfortunate that in this country the man who is least understood is Gandhi. This is partly due to the so-called secular and so-called communist influence on our academics. In 1919-20 he was saying "I do not want any synthesis between religions." Kabir and Nanak might have done their work in medieval India. Today what is required is tolerance, mutual understanding and co-existence. What Gandhi was saying was since you can't wish away religion, you must respect the other's religion.

The point is, you can reform religion, you can refine it, you can promote tolerance between religions, you can continue this process in schools, you can do it in the uni-

Sarva-Dharma-Samabhava is Not Secularism

M.S. Gore

To me to be secular means being engaged in the practice and development of a personal and social ethical code which is consistent with rationality and which aims at attaining a humane society in which every individual will have the opportunity to develop to his highest potential. I have not directly mentioned religion or transcendental faith. I am prepared to concede that a transcendental reality may exist, but I do not know about it. By definition its existence is not capable of being proved or disproved at the level of rational scrutiny. Since the existence of such a transcendental reality is a matter of faith — or, may be, even experience which is non-communicable — I concede that an individual who is a believer should have the freedom to so believe — so long as such belief does not express itself in action which adversely affects others or which conflicts with norms of rationality. I concede that all the rules that a society has devised at any given point of time may not be rational and may not be conducive to the promotion of the development of human potential. If so, the individual who sees the contradiction should have the right to point it out and to seek to get it modified.

Inconsistent with Secularism

But having said all this I cannot agree to Rege's suggestion that *Sarva-dharma-samabhava* is consistent with a secular ethic. I translate *sarva-dharma-samabhava* to mean equal regard for all religions. I do not in fact think that regard for any 'religion' is consistent with the concept of secularism. My reason is that most religions do not stop at positing the existence of a transcendental reality; they seek to use it as a sanction for the life-goals which they prescribe for their members and the rules of conduct through which — and through which alone — these goals can be attained. Even the goals prescribed are often in the realm of the transcendental. By so doing they remove the rules of conduct prescribed by them out of the realm of 'rational' discussion. To say this is not to deny that most major religions have helped in evolving a set of values that seem to have a universal appeal; nor does it mean that all the codes of conduct supported by different reli-

gions were necessarily irrational. The important point is that their validation was not sought at the level of reason and was often given in terms of transcendental goals and the authority of the past. By so doing the notions of right and wrong, of sin and virtue tended to become rigid, resistant to change and incapable of examination and validation.

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What exactly does equal regard for all religions mean? Equal regard for all the different forms of transcendental beliefs characteristic of these religions? — regard for their differing notions of life after death? Their different metaphysical explanations of human sorrow? This is possible either for a person who is equally indifferent to all of them or for one who subscribes to one of these and accepts the others as good enough for their own memberships. Hinduism sought to cope with this problem partly by enlarging its pantheon of gods as the need arose in the course of history, partly by introducing a hierarchy of higher and lower forms of metaphysical thought and worship — as in the caste system or by allowing, what American sociologists have identified as the simultaneous existence of the Great Tradition and several small traditions. However much of this is really an expression of genuine regard for all variations of belief, how much of it is condescending tolerance by the elite of other belief systems and how much of it is plain indifference to what other people think or do so long as an acceptable arrangement is worked out for day to day interaction at the social level is difficult to say. The arrangement in some cases consisted of separating the spheres of occupational activity, in other cases it simply consisted of a system of exploitation of the weak by the strong and the legitimization of such exploitation by a transcendental ethic.

There is one area where the Indian mind — Hindu, Jain, Buddhist or Sikh and even Islamic — seems genuinely accepting of differences. This is the acceptance of the concept of different paths to the attainment of spiritual goals. The Indian psyche is also open to a variety of forms of spiritual goals and paths. An Indian is also less shocked by differences in dress and differences in the religious ritual of daily life so long as the rules of social and economic interaction are adhered to by all different groups. But these rules did not recognize the concept of social equality as can be seen from the norms of caste. The Indian

versities, you can do it anywhere, but you can't wish away religion. If India were full of M.N. Roys and Jawaharlal Nehrus, there would be no problem. The problem exists because the masses of this country are wedded to religion often in the wrong sense and they are easily excitable. And they are made use of by selfish and unscrupulous politicians. So we have to now think of solutions, which will work, based on ground realities.

The man who was responsible for a secular constitution in this country was Gandhi. The Karachi Congress in 1931 prescribed the basic idea of a secular constitution. The state will observe neutrality between religions. And that is the basis of a secular state. It doesn't mean that the State will suppress religion. The American President is sworn in with the Bible in his hands, the Queen is anointed in Westminster Abbey by

the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet both the USA and England are no less secular for that. So it is not that religion has to be suppressed, religion has its own place. Gandhi's classic sentence was: "If all the population of India belonged to one religion, even then I would say that India should be a secular state in the sense that the state will be neutral between religions, it will have nothing to do with the lives of the people, the state will look after your secular welfare, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your-my religion. That is everybody's personal concern." (22nd September 1946)

There is also this feeling that when we speak of religion we normally understand it in the dogmatic sense not in the spiritual sense. For instance it is said that all religions preach love. This is at best a half-truth. Religion does not preach to you to love

those who belong to *other* religions. It preaches love among its own creed. In fact popular religious beliefs divide and not unite people.

The problem is that we operate in a society which is essentially non-secular. Hence those of us who are committed to secularism, rationalism and humanism are in a quandary. This was brought out rather well by Laxman in a recent cartoon where our Prime Minister is kneeling before a deity in a temple and his Home Minister standing with folded hands and praying to the deity: "We pray that please protect our secular state." This is the contradiction in which all of us are living today.

We have created a huge Frankenstein in India. Do we have the parallel of a politi-

ethos has the advantage of allowing protest movements to settle down as distinctive caste or community groups without major social or philosophical schisms, but they do not lead to the creation of a world of shared goals. The oft repeated claim to religious tolerance as a unique characteristic of the Indian ethos is at least partly a myth, a benevolent myth may be, but a myth all the same. It fails to take cognizance of Shaivite and Vaishnavite schisms in the south, of the persecution of Jains and Buddhists by Hindu kings egged on by the Brahman priesthood, and of the wholesale marginalisation and subordination of primitive ethnic minorities.

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Policy Not Religion to Blame

Sometimes a policy of *sarva-dharma-samabhava* is recommended as a way of avoiding communal bitterness. But the source of communal bitterness may not lie in religious differences *per se* though religious differences and religious identities often help to crystallize conflict along the communal divide. The source of communal — or, for that matter any other ethnic — bitterness seems to lie in the real or perceived failure of the polity to make opportunity equally available to all segments of the population.

It is often assumed that having adopted a Constitution which is 'liberal' in the best sense of the term we can claim that there is an area of commonly shared values. This is at best a wishful claim. Unfortunately, one finds that the consensus that is represented by the liberal provisions of the Constitution is no longer existent — not even among the urban, educated, elite whose representatives framed the Constitution. There is a back-slide on attitudes regarding untouchability, backward classes and the need to organize our polity on a 'secular' basis. Hindu chauvinism, Sikh militancy and the syndrome of Islam-im-danger are all signals of the failure to maintain and strengthen secularism. It is a matter of judgement as to whether the secular forces can be strengthened by an emphasis on separate religious identities or on a truly rational ethic.

It is a fact that religion is an important nexus of ethnic identity — not only in India, but to a degree in the world as a whole. The effort of the secular state should be to minimize the appeal of religion by ensuring that religion is effectively seen as irrelevant by the citizen in gaining access to opportunities in life. An attitude of *sarva-*

dharma-samabhava brings religion to the area of centrality in determining mutual perception and identification by individuals and groups. A politician must not emphasize religious identity — either his own or that of his audience. Unfortunately, the secularism of the politician, in fact of most of our elite, is of the verbal variety. It has no base in rationality even at the level of social interaction. He thinks that his credentials of being secular are best established if being a Hindu he joins in the festivities of Id or being a Muslim he joins in the celebration of Holi. This may be a good image-building gimmick, but the people see it for what it is and the image-building exercise leads to a sense of cynicism about the non-convergence between what one says and does.

No Public Worship by President or PM

Instead of showing the President of India and the Prime Minister visiting places of worship of all different religions it would be far better if the Head of State and Head of Government is shown and seen as scrupulously avoiding visits to any religious shrine as a part of his public commitments. If a Muslim President prays to his God in his house or in a mosque or a Hindu President chooses to go bare-bodied and prostrate himself before a deity in a shrine it is his personal concern. It would be far better if they were to avoid public exhibition of their religiosity. Our public men must be seen as being rational. On the other hand what we see and hear is about the visits of sadhus and sanyasins to the household of our rulers and their dependence on fortune tellers and horoscope readers. How can such behaviour on the part of the elite help develop a scientific temper or remove the cobwebs of obscurantism in our life.

There is probably a need to distinguish and emphasize the distinction between piety and overt ritual. Piety may unite people, but ritual often only divides them by emphasizing the separate identity of each group. Piety is of the individual and ritual of the group. Institutionalized religion cannot be extricated from ritual and separatist group identity. This is what limits the possibility of the concept of *sarva-dharma-samabhava* meeting the needs of a secular society.

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COURTESY: Excerpted from *The Secularist*, May-June, 1989

A Lesson in Religious Tolerance from Shivaji to Aurangzeb

The Hindu of February 4 and February 12 published the following interesting documents from Indian history which are of considerable relevance in the current context.

The first is a letter from Shivaji to Aurangzeb and the second (contributed by a reader of The Hindu — Mustafa K. Sherwani) is Babar's 'secret will'.

This is what Chhatrapati Shivaji wrote to Aurangzeb on the subject of religious tolerance in 1679 A.D. chiding the Mughal emperor for not sticking to the path shown by his ancestors.

"May it please your majesty! If you believe in the true divine Book and the word of God (i.e. the Quran) you will find there (that God is styled) Rabb-ul-musalmanin, the lord of the Muhammedans only. Verily, Islam and Hinduism are terms of contrast. They are (diverse pigments) used by the true Divine Painter in blending the colours and filling the outlines (of His picture of the entire human species)," wrote Shivaji to Aurangzeb.

"It has recently come to my ears that, on the ground of a war with me having exhausted your wealth and emptied your treasury, your Majesty has ordered that money under the name of *jaziya* should be collected from the Hindus and the imperial needs supplied with it.

"May it please your Majesty. That architect of the fabric of empire, Akbar Padishah reigned with full power for 52 (lunar) years. He adopted the admirable policy of universal harmony (Sulh-i-kul) in relation to the various sects, such as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Dadu's followers, sky-worshippers (*talakia*), malakia, heathens (*ansaria*), atheists (*daharia*), Brahmans and Jain priests. The aim of his liberal heart was to cherish and protect all the people. So, he became famous under the title of Jagatguru, the world's spiritual guide.

"Next the Emperor Nur-ud-din Jahangir for 22 years spread his gracious shade on the head of the world and its dwellers, gave his heart to his friends and his hand to his work, and gained his desires. The Emperor Shah Jahan for 32 years cast his blessed shadow on the head of the world and gathered the fruit of eternal life, which is only a synonym for goodness and fair fame, as the result of his happy time on earth.

"(Verses) He who lives with a good name gains everlasting wealth.

Because after his death, the recital of good keeps his name alive.

"Through the auspicious effect of this sublime disposition, wherever he (Akbar) bent the glance of his august wish, victory and success advanced to welcome him on the way. In his reign many kingdoms and forts were conquered (by him). The State and power of these Emperors can be easily understood from the fact that Alamgir Padishah has failed and got distracted in the attempt to merely follow their political system.

"They, too, had the power to levy the *jaziya*; but they did not give place to bigotry in their hearts as they considered all men, high and low, created by God to be (living) examples of the nature of diverse creeds and temperaments. Their kindness and benevolence endure on the pages of time as their memorial, and so prayer and praise for these (three) pure souls will dwell for ever in the hearts and tongues of the mankind, among both great and small. Prosperity is the fruit of one's intentions. Therefore, their wealth and good fortune continued to increase, as God's creatures reposed in the cradle of peace and safety (under their rule), and their undertakings succeeded.

"But in your Majesty's reign many of the forts and provinces have gone out of your possession, and the rest will soon do so too, because there will be no slackness on my part in ruining and devastating them. Your peasants are downtrodden; the yield of every village has declined, in place of the one lakh of rupees only one thousand, and in the place of a thousand only ten are collected, and that too with difficulty. When poverty and beggary have made their homes in the palaces of the Emperor and the Princes,

the condition of the *grondees* and the officers can only be imagined.

"It is a reign in which the army is in a ferment, the merchants complain, the Muslims cry, the Hindus are grilled, most men lack bread at night and in the day inflame their own cheeks by slapping them (in anguish). How can the royal spirit permit you to add the hardship of the *jaziya* to this grievous state of things? The infamy will quickly spread from west to east that the Emperor of Hindustan, coveting the beggars' bowls, takes *jaziya* from the Brahmans and Jain monks, yogis, sanyasis, *bairagis*, paupers, mendicants, ruined wretches and the famine-stricken, that he valours is shown by attacks on the wallets of beggars, that he dashes to the ground the name and honour of the Timurids!

"If you imagine piety to consist in oppressing the people and terrorising the Hindus, you ought to first levy the *jaziya* from Rana Raj Singh, who is the head of the Hindus. Then it will not be so very difficult to collect it from me, as I am at your service. But to oppress ants and flies is very far from displaying valour and spirit.

"I wonder at the strange fidelity of your officers that they neglect to tell you of the true state of things, but cover a blazing fire with straw! May the Sun of your royalty continue to shine above the horizon of greatness!"

Babar's 'Secret Will'

Even more specific than what Chhatrapathi Shivaji wrote to Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707) regarding tolerance to all religions are the words of the 'Secret Will' of Emperor Zaheeruddin Babar (1526-1530) to his son Prince Naseeruddin Humayun, dated 1st Jamadi-I, 935 AH (11th January 1529 A.D.) Babar's now famous Will written 'Nastaliq' on a parchment embellished with artistic floral design and sprinkled with gold dust is preserved in the Sultania State Library, Bhopal. The Will is in Persian and a literal English translation is as follows:

"All Praise Be to Allah". Secret Will of Zaheeruddin Mohammad Babar to his son Prince Naseeruddin Mohammad Humayun. May God prolong his life. Written for the strengthening of the Empire.

Of my son: The Empire of Hindustan consists of various religions. Domination and the sovereignty whereof has been bestowed on you by the Grace of Almighty. It is incumbent that religious bigotries should be wiped off the tablet of the heart and justice meted out to each religion according to its tenets. Specially abstain from sacrifice of cows as this would tend to win the hearts of the people of Hindustan and the populace of the country would be adherent to Royal favours. The temples and places of worship of whatever religion under the Royal authority may not be desecrated. Such justice may be adopted that the King may be pleased with the Rayyat and the Rayyat with the King. The advancement of Islam is better achieved with the weapon of obligation rather than with the sword of tyranny. Overlook the dispute between Sunnis and Shias since such weakness still persists in Islam. Establish administration with the Rayyat of various communities in accordance with the four principal elements so that the body of the Empire may be free from different diseases. The model work done by his late Majesty Temur Sahibqaran should always be kept before the mind so that you may become, mature in the work of Administration. 1st Jamadi-I, 935."



COURTESY, R.K. Laxman and *The Times of India*.

cal party anywhere else in the world which has as its number one agenda, the construction of a temple! Why? For votes of course. How and who is going to contain this monster we have created? Surely it can't be by the present Prime Minister or his Home Minister, who prostrate themselves publicly before a Satya Sai Baba? They are incapable of fighting this 'Frankenstein'.

Every session of parliament commences on a Monday. But the last winter session commenced 24 November which happened to be a Tuesday, because astrologers from Andhra Pradesh predicted that Monday is an inauspicious day! Unfortunately for these soothsayers the last winter session happened to be one of the worst sessions, with India burning. So what happened to the auspicious day and where are the astrologers? Are these the people to work towards building a secular society?

The only way to promote secularism is through education. We have to change the outlook and the attitude of people. We want secular politics. And to have secular politics we need a secular culture. Therefore, we need to bring about a cultural change for the secularisation of society.

Then there is this business of religious sensitivities. Because one religious 'sensitivity' was hurt when 'Satanic Verses' was published a ban was imposed and a ban is sought when another religious 'sensitivity' is hurt when Ambedkar's 'Riddles of Ramayana' are published. If we want an open, democratic society, where the scientific method of intercourse and intellectual discussion are to be promoted, then we must oppose every move to stifle dissenting views.

The Compromise with Communalism

One extremely important dimension of secularism that needs to be emphasised is a sense of tolerance consistent with public order. Tolerance of other creeds, other opinions, with which we are not in sympathy. Secondly, we have to emphasise that secularism is an absolute value, absolute in itself independent of any other social context,

apart from public order. We must remember that secularism need not contribute to national integration. I think it is very pernicious to identify secularism as contributing to national integration. Because in such a stand what would happen would be that national integration would be more important and secular values less important. Tolerance would be at a low level and would wipe out dissenting opinions. Whether secularism would contribute to national integration is a different question. It may well not. Secularism is valuable for its own sake even if it leads to the possibility of a national breakup. This as an important dimension which we should neither ignore nor minimise.

We borrowed a number of progressive ideas from around the world when drafting the Constitution to govern our political and social life. But we have not been able to give these ideas the content that is necessary. The educated classes have failed their duty in this respect, because, although they have learned science, in actual life they have been living in the past. This attack on secularism is therefore a by-product of our democratic system. During the last ten years, if our secularist parties had not, in their search for power, compromised with openly communal parties, we would not have reached the situation that we have reached today. If Jayaprakash Narayan had not included the Jan Sangh in his Janata Party and if later the Janata Dal had not included the BJP in their alliance, we would not have reached the situation we have reached today. So political opportunism has contributed in a very large way to the development of this communal consciousness.

Until recently voting by a majority of the Hindus was essentially based on factors like language and caste and not religion. On the other hand, the voting pattern of the Muslims generally was on communal lines. The party that came to power at the Centre

generally did so with the help of the Muslim vote. In the light of the multiplicity of parties contesting elections, the minority Muslim vote often made the difference between victory and defeat.

India is secular not merely because of its Constitution, Judiciary or Parliament, but because of the character of the majority community. Let's put it this way: of what use would these Institutions be to the minorities if the very character of these institutions are changed by the majority. Take for example, Pakistan. The minorities there may have some voting rights, but they are confined in a very narrow field. In fact they even have reserved seats in the legislature.

It is in this context that the character of certain political parties has to be discussed. For example, if the majority was really communal, then the history of India would have been quite different. But parties like the Hindu Mahasabha were wiped out of the political field. And even the Jan Sangh or its present incarnation the BJP, struggled politically. They never went beyond 50-60 seats at the height of their power. What was required was the most perverted secular policies to make the majority rally round issues like Ram Janmabhoomi. And this is why even a political party like the Janata Dal has some of its members on the Babri Masjid Committee. And the Janata Dal does not see anything wrong with this. This is precisely what has provoked the backlash. Or take the Congress Party. How can one call it a secular party? We know Congress leaders go to Jammu & Kashmir during election time, to warn Hindus against the Muslims. In Punjab they warn Hindus against Sikhs. In the rest of India they warn Muslims against the Hindus. In Mizoram they assure a Christian state. If we do not face these facts squarely there is little hope of secularism being practised in the true sense of the term.

This situation could not go on indefinitely particularly in a climate of poor economic

Non-Denominational, Not Secular

Many years ago, no doubt at Mr. Krishna Menon's suggestion, Jawaharlal Nehru brought the word, "secular" into circulation in this country.

In fact, there is no country less secular than India. Supporters of all religions are devotedly so to the extent that some of them are prepared to kill those who adhere to other religions for no other offense.

Most of our holidays are not secular. There is hardly any reason why I for instance, who am neither a Hindu nor

a Muslim, should go into ecstasies over Dassera or Divali or Id. Why should I stop working as I do at present?

India should only have three or four non-denominational holidays like Republic Day and Independence Day and all the rest should be made sectional holidays by those who observe a particular religion.

The use of the word "secular" by those who do not even understand its meaning is quite nauseating and it is high time that we stopped using this term in the present context.

Minoo Masani

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Vinod's Body Confidence Soap. Cinthol.

growth. Economic well-being has to keep pace with emotional needs. The mismanagement of the country's economy gave an opportunity to the BJP to get closer to the people, largely the Hindus, by engineering the Ayodhya demolition. In other words the emergence of the BJP as a strong contender for power is perhaps indicative of the fact that there is some kind of consolidation of the majority community which leads the BJP to conclude that the minority vote is no longer vital to come to power.

This fear or policy of not standing up for secularism is not confined to political parties alone. In the workplaces, in spite of the terrible things going on all around, the atmosphere community-wise was completely peaceful and cordial. But the consciousness of our trade union leaders is still lagging behind. At a recent meeting of trade union leaders gathered to discuss what trade unions should do, most of those gathered were afraid (or reluctant) even to discuss this subject at their own union meetings. They thought that if this matter was brought up most of their membership would desert them.

Blanketing all non-BJP parties as secular is misleading. In fact one would not be far wrong in stating that all political parties in India are communal parties of various shades and descriptions using communal elements as vote banks.

There weren't many complaints when Mrs. Indira Gandhi built a vote bank which was known as the KHAM (Kshatriya Harijan, Adivasi and Muslims). Today we do not bat an eyelid when somebody in Bihar says he is building a vote bank of Yadavs and Muslims. So if some party thinks of building a vote bank comprising 82% of the population and apparently succeeding at it, then it is no better or no worse than what other parties are doing.

Secularism in the Indian Constitution

Where a society is multi-ethnic or multi-lingual, or multi-religious, the state has to step in to keep the balance between the various groups. This is inevitable if a society is to remain democratic with equal opportunities. Even a theocratic State like Pakistan with its Ahmadiyas, Shias, Sunnis, Hindus, Sikhs and Parsees cannot evade this responsibility if it wishes for a genuine plural society.

Hence fundamental rights which are there for the purpose of protecting the minorities, so that should the majority ride rough, then the courts of law are available. A civil society, a civilised society accepts that when an injustice is done, it has to be set right not by breaking heads but by referring differences for arbitration by the judiciary. Moreover the minorities that are sought to be protected by fundamental rights are not just religious minorities; they include even the minority that does not believe in God.

We have Relapsed into Savagery

Many men surmise that they will have a full innings, unmindful of the fact that some pace bowler will have them out, in no time! "Till there's life there's hope," the saying goes. But till there's life, there are pace bowlers too!

Most of our warrior-princes of yore were "pace bowlers" who scuttled the established batsmen and overran their territories. The history of the Rajputs and the Marathas is replete with episodes of foul "matches," compared to which those between England and Australia, in the late '20s, were not a patch.

The most gruesome games were played by the Moslem invaders, where fathers and sons knocked out each other. But let's turn to our own crafty players. The Rajputs were more at one another's throats than at the invader's.

We have the Sisodia and Kachhwaha Rajputs; the Rathors; the Hara Chauhans and the Deora Chauhans; the Jhalas and Naruka Rajputs; the Jadon Rajputs and the Jadon Bhati Rajputs...and endless other clans. One sect which specialised in banditry and for more than three centuries exerted their unsettling (pace bowling) influence were the Taggaras. The Chandrabansis, the Parmars and the Solankis were also in the game.

To make the game more ferocious, there were the different sects of the Jats. No one, on the pitch, was sure of himself. The only thing certain was uncertainty, till the advent of the British. Whether we like it or not, and whether we admit it publicly or privately, this is an indisputable historical fact.

India was a "dense jungle" and everything was so uncertain. Peace was short-lived, and intrigues went on and on. Long-distance travel was unsafe; trade was localised within, say, 200 miles' radius and a man from a neighbouring state was suspected to be a spy, in most cases. The Thugs and the Pindaris policed the primitive, inter-state roads, much as one finds the dacoits patrolling the highways in Rajasthan, UP and MP today (to say nothing about today's Punjab).

The games were games of intrigue, internecine warfare and financial gambles. Many bankrupt states permitted their troops to pay themselves through loot and rampage. That was the degree of uncertainty. Until 1900 AD the Pindaris used to pillage Navsari town in Gaikwad State (about 150 miles north of Bombay), till the British exterminated them. The Thugs were eliminated 75 years earlier.

The British suzerainty laid down the rules of the game in a firm manner and certainty, security, predictability, re-entered India after a lapse of over seven centuries. It was rightly said, "Any Indian can go from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, jingling his gold coins, and he will be safe and unmolested."

It's a terrible indictment of our central and provincial rulers that we have relapsed into barbaric savagery in the Punjab, UP, Bihar, MP, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, AP and Tamilnadu in just 43 years after Independence. (In fact, lawlessness and instability started over 20 years back, not in 1990). We have undone the efforts of 190 years (1757 - 1947) in just 43 years!

Uncertainty has come to stay. There are no laws of the pitch. The politicians believe in no laws, only in games of self-perpetuation and self-aggrandisement - a situation we share with Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The entire region knows no rules! End result: continuing anarchy, crumbling economies, flight of capital and intellect, the collapse of the judiciary, arbitration by arms and the law of the jungle. Collapse of both decency and democracy. Democracy is the political facet of decency, just as peace is its legal manifestation, and prosperity its economic one.

We have relapsed into savagery - which passes for patriotism! It's a costly and irreversible folly.

B.T. Dastur

COURTESY, *Kaiser E Hind*, December '91.

Ayodhya — An Eyewitness Account

Ruchira Gupta

How far will the events of that Black Sunday stretch into the future? I am an Indian but I am also a Hindu. And felt ashamed of being both that day, and frightened for myself and my future. It seemed that the very democracy and freedom I had taken for granted were frozen for five hours and all the institutions which guarded them were helpless. When I think of the day many images crowd my mind — the orgasmic delight on Sadhvi Ritambra's face as she screamed "*Ek Jhatka aur do, Babri Masjid tod do*" (Give one more push to break the Babri Masjid) and the frenzied mob — half-naked Hindu holy men, bare-footed pilgrims, saints, sadhus and kar sevaks with brilliant flashes of vermillion and saffron, tridents, rods, sticks in hand, echoing the war-cry as the Masjid crumbled to rubble in front of us. And a way of life ended for liberal Indians.

Another picture: The sheer helplessness on Advani's face trapped between the promise he had chanted through his whistle-stop *yatra* from Varanasi to Ayodhya inviting *Ram bhakts* and kar sevaks to Ayodhya on Dec. 6, *kasam Ram ki khate hain, mandir wahin banayenge* (we have taken an oath in the name of Ram to build the temple there), and the inability to distance himself from the mania he had unleashed. "I hope the kar sevaks do not get injured," and "where is my NSG?" were two questions he managed to ask during the demolition, loudly and clearly. The rest was subdued whispering with RSS thinker S. Seshadri and VHP suprema Ashok Singhal.

The Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia weeping with joy as she hugged BJP MP, Uma Bharti saying after the demolition, "finally my eyes can close in peace". An Indian Delhi-based journalist from a video unit hugging Singhal and thumping congratulations. Acharya Dharmendra on the mike. The slogan: *Bhutton ne kaha Jai Siya Ram, Supreme Court ne kaha Jai Siya Ram*. Amazement that Advani who had so meticulously guarded all the proper constitutional norms in Parliament did not utter a word to protest the open mockery of our judiciary, let alone walk off that terrace.

There were three other MPs too, Pramod Mahajan, who kept telling us that the Centre would send the CRPF any minute. Uma Bharti embracing Murli Manohar Joshi, B.L. Sharma tenderly guarding *Ram Lalla* idols removed from the Mosque some minutes before it fell. Advani announcing the imminent arrival of the CRPF on stage and telling people to put up benches and lie down on the roads to block them. Vijaya Raje Scindia exhorting *Ram bhakts* to get off the domes, they would get hurt. Sugar being distributed on the terrace where the top brass of the VHP, RSS and BJP sat. Advani eating it. The arrival of the Kotharis on the roof, parents of the boys who had died in the 1990 kar seva, people touching their feet. Announcement after announcement, bhajans intermittently as the frenzy built up.

Smoke on the horizon from Muslim shops and jhuggis being burnt in Ayodhya. And Vivan Mehra, our photographer coming back back absolutely shell-shocked. He had been beaten by kar sevaks. Had to give up his camera and two rolls of film in exchange for his life. At 11.40 a.m. his attention had been diverted to the Mosque when BJP MP Pramod Mahajan broke off a speech he had been giving, relaxing in the winter sun on the terrace of the BJP-VHP-RSS camp office in *Ram katha kunj*, munching peanuts and trying to identify the different state contingents, and collecting copy for a mood article, our attention was suddenly diverted. Two figures were atop one of the domes, waving saffron flags. When I turned to look for Vivan he had already scurried off to the Mosque 200 yds away to get "better pictures".

Vivan was clicking furiously. Suddenly two kar sevaks ran screaming towards him and started hitting him with *lathis*. He ran for shelter to a group of policemen. But he got no help there. In

front of them he was surrounded by five kar sevaks, one brandishing a knife, and forced to hand over the film he had shot. When he tried protesting he was told to either give the film or they would kill him. Then one of them snatched his camera. When he requested the police for help, they simply told him to stop photographing and save his life.

Mutely we saw dome after dome fall. At first it seemed the kar sevaks would only plant a flag on the middle dome and get off. But suddenly the two turned to hundreds, ropes were let down in a systematic manner for more to climb up. Giving the lie to intelligence and police reports, kar sevaks, armed with pickaxes, knives and sticks began hacking away at the domes. It was obvious that the Supreme Court order had been flouted. We learnt from other journalists that the Supreme Court observer had been kept locked up in another camp office surrounded by hundreds of kar sevaks. We knew that the UP government would now have to be dismissed. Sadhvi Ritambra at this point went from person to person saying: *ab Sarkar to jaane hi wali hai, phir sasuri masjid kokyar choden* (now the UP government is going to be dismissed, then why the hell should we spare the masjid). But we were still naive enough to believe that the CRPF would arrive and the mosque would not be demolished.

We were wrong. No arm of the government came to save the situation. No CRPF, no PAC, no RAF, for the whole day. Two of the domes fell and it was only a matter of time before the third did. Along with three other journalists I decided to go for one last glimpse of the *garba griha* in the Babri Masjid where the *Ram Lalla* idols were kept. I left my pen and notebook behind. The other three put on saffron scarves and Ram badges. On reaching the trench dug around the mosque, two of them saw the frenzy and decided to wait outside. The third decided to go telling me to stay back with the other two. But I thought I was secure because of the press badge given to me by the VHP. With that on I rushed in. When I reached the dome, someone asked me if I was a kar sevika. I said no, a reporter. My name? Ruchira Gupta. She is Muslim. *Mussalman*, "*Mussalman, Babri ki aulad*" filled the air as hands began clawing at my throat. I was quickly being strangled. And no words could come out. I tried to run, but they held on. And then one of them said, not here in the Mandir, let's kill her outside. So I was dragged out with my shirt dangling from one arm and still a hope that I would escape. I did. They threw me into a trench. On the other side the two newsmen with me spotted me and sent some kar sevaks to the rescue. Fortunately one of them recognised me from a chat with him two days ago and agreed. He was hit on the head during the rescue, he bled and sprained his leg but got me out.

Again I was taken to the terrace — the only safe place. I tried to tell one of the BJP MPs I knew what had happened. But he brushed me aside and asked, "tell me how long will it take for the rest of the mosque to fall" Dazed I sat and saw the last twenty minutes of the demolition. Someone called me to watch shops burn through binoculars. Like an automaton I did. Kar sevaks began to disperse. Announcements on the mike told them to stay, not leave. I lost track of who was speaking. A Rajasthan minister who had resigned to join the kar seva asked me what had happened. I said, you know. He wanted to hear me say it. I could not, the words would not come.

I wanted to run away. But all the reporters on the terrace felt we should move out only in groups. After an hour we held out.

MS. RUCHIRA GUPTA is a correspondent for Business India. This article is excerpted from her account to the PUCI Bulletin (January 1993).

Secular Human Values

No one can live his personal life without principles. Society would be a nightmare if it did not maintain values upon which people can rely.

Moral values are simply those values which over a course of time, come to be regarded as essential to the good conduct of personal and social life.

While moral values have reference to a man's relations with his fellows, spiritual values refer to such qualities as intellectual integrity, courage of one's convictions, humility, self-respect, and the conquest of fear and pessimism.

So long as the traditional social order based on the religious mode of thought, the perspective that went with it, and the values linked to it remained unquestioned, people cherished these values because of their presumed special origin — the ancestors, the gods, the prophets, the supernatural.

With the spread of knowledge and a modern concept of man as a part of, and within nature, and subject to its laws, the need for a scientific and rational basis for moral and spiritual values became necessary.

It is, therefore, desirable to declare a set of secular human values which are important and necessary for the promotion and establishment of a secular democratic society based on freedom, truth, reason, and compassion.

Source of Values

Dignity of the human person as an autonomous agent endowed with reason is the ultimate source of all values.

Reason

Reason is an essential human faculty in promoting the progress of mankind, enabling human beings to have a world-view which motivates their thoughts and actions. Cultivation of rational thinking is, therefore, an intrinsic human value.

Critical Intelligence

The essential nature of human beings is to question, examine and understand. It is essential to subject all beliefs to the scrutiny of reason and critical intelligence, in order to eliminate error. An unexamined belief is not worth having.

Truth

The aim of all rational thought is the discovery of truth. Truth consists of beliefs about reality, resulting from rational thinking and experience. Quest for truth is, therefore, a supreme human value.

Tolerance

Tolerance of differing ideas and viewpoints is essential for the discovery of truth. Absence of tolerance leads to denial of freedom and the suppression of creativity. Tolerance is, therefore, a basic human value.

Creativity

All social progress is the result of human creativity. Rooted in the individuality of a human being creativity can flourish only in an atmosphere of freedom.

Freedom

Respect for the dignity of the human person demands that the freedom of every human being, ought to be ensured in all spheres of life, consistent with the freedom of all.

Equality

Respect for the human person implies that all human beings shall be treated as equal in dignity and rights irrespective of birth, religion, colour or sex.

Justice

The principle of justice which dictates equal consideration for the well-being of every individual shall inform all social institutions and relations between individuals.

Man and Nature

Man being a part of nature necessitates his living in harmony with it. Concern for all life and the quality of the environment ought to guide all human activities.

Universal Culture

It should be the aim of all human endeavour to evolve a universal culture based on freedom, truth, reason and compassion.

The above are excerpted from a "Declaration on Human Values" issued by the Indian Secular Society.

atheists are in a hopeless minority who too have the right to express their views and who have the right to State protection under the law when their right is threatened. This was how the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution tried to ensure that there was civil peace which would help development in the context of a plural society. This was the scheme and this must be protected and respected by all communities.

It is true that the word secular was not originally in the Indian Constitution. But when we decided to establish a democratic

republic dedicated to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity in the context of a multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-lingual state, it had to be on the basis of secularism. Democracy and secularism have gone together. One cannot do without the other.

On the other hand there is the argument that the provisions in the Indian Constitution do not envisage a secular state at all. On the contrary there are several provisions which militate against the view that India is a secular state. For example, there is no provision which categorically separates religion and

the State.

Appeasement or Opportunism?

We have permitted obscurantism to grow. How else does one explain the fact that a so-called secular party like the Congress (I) reverses the judgement by the Supreme Court on the Shah Bano case merely to please (not appease) a section of the male Muslim community. The Shah Bano case reversal has injured Muslim women. They dislike it. They hate it because no woman would be happy with polygamy

Uniform Civil Code

Draft Proposal Re: Marriage and Matrimonial Remedies

If we wish to create a modern liberal nation, an open democratic society in our country, then the basic rights and obligations of all citizens ought to be the same regardless of religion, language, caste or community.

A uniform Civil Code for all the citizens of India as directed by Article 44 of the Constitution of India is a precondition for growth of a feeling of common nationality and national integration. This demand is based on respect for fundamental human rights and universal moral values and is not motivated by antagonism to, or aimed against any religion or community.

While the need for a Uniform Civil Code has been voiced from many quarters, no concrete proposal or blue-print has so far been presented for discussion. However, in September 1986, a Seminar on a Uniform Civil Code was organised by the Indian Secular Society in collaboration with the ILS Law College at Pune. The Seminar was inaugurated by Justice V.D. Tulzapurkar, and attended by 50 social workers, lawyers, sociologists, professors, and journalists. As a result of the discussions and on the basis of consensus on the various provisions a Draft proposal for a Uniform Civil Code (in regard to marriage and Matrimonial Remedies) was prepared. This has been published by the Indian Secular Society (850/8A Shivajinagar, Pune 411 004) and is available for Rs. 10/- per copy, post free. The second part on Inheritance and Succession, Adoption, and Custody is under preparation.

The following is Dr. S.P. Sathé's introduction to the Draft proposal on Marriage and Matrimonial remedies.

A. Solomon

President

Indian Secular Society

There has been a heated controversy on the subject of uniform civil code in recent times. This was particularly provoked by the decision of the Supreme Court in the *Shah Bano* case. In fact, very few people really know what a uniform civil code would be like. The Hindu opinion is wrongly under the impression that only the Muslims would be opposed to such a code. The Muslim opinion thinks that a uniform code would mean their subjection to Hindu law. The debate on uniform civil code must be freed from such communal overtones. A uniform civil law is desired not in order to satisfy Hindu chauvinism or to humiliate the non-Hindus. It is desired as a rational, humanistic and just law for human affairs.

Barring marriage, divorce, maintenance, adoption, succession and inheritance, there is already a uniform law in India. Even on marriage and divorce, the Special Marriage Act, 1954, is a uniform law applicable to those who choose to get married under it. There are laws such as the Dowry Prohibition Act or the Child Marriage Restraint Act which are applicable to all irrespective of their religion. Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code 1973 is a uniform civil law on maintenance of destitute wives. The definition of 'wife' in that section is wide enough to include a divorcee also. Unfortunately, the recent legislation enacted by Parliament entitled the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, has excluded Muslim women from the purview of Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure subject to the exception of both parties to a marriage agreeing to be governed by it. The constitutional validity of that Act has now been challenged

before the Supreme Court. The passing of that Act showed how the ruling party was prepared to throw its concern for helpless Muslim women to the winds in order to appease the fundamentalist and obscurantist sections. The story with other parties, if they hold power, would not be different.

Why do we need a uniform civil code? The reply is that in a secular state, the laws must be separated from religion.

The result of such an effort is bound to be a uniform code. But more important than such a doctrinaire commitment to secularism is the fact that our existing laws based on outmoded ideas such as inequality of sexes, feudal property relations and irrelevant traditions need to be re-examined from the standpoint of justice, equality and dignity of the individual. Modernisation of the laws with a view to making them consistent with the constitutional values would doubtless take us towards uniformity. We need not aim at uniformity for the sake of uniformity. India is a plural society and legal pluralism is bound to prevail. Any effort towards legal regimentalism is bound to impose unnecessary strain on national unity and integration. We have, therefore, come to believe that even in a uniform law, we might have to allow plurality of rules.

We have, therefore, set before ourselves the task of drafting a hypothetical uniform law of marriage, divorce and matrimonial remedies.* The purpose of such an exercise is to provide a basis for meaningful discussion on the question of a secular uniform family law. While drafting it, we have not been merely idealistic or aspirational but have essentially looked at the practical side of it. We

are envisaging such a code for a society in which religion plays a vital role. It is not religion as understood in a philosophical sense but as understood in terms of rituals that has a hold on the minds of the people. Although we must aim at ultimate secularization of the law, this can be achieved only gradually and therefore we might have to proceed cautiously. The law cannot be far ahead of the society because in that case, it would lack legitimacy. We have, therefore, followed the policy of permitting religious practices to continue without such practices being necessary for the validity of a marriage. The draft therefore has made compromises in order to allow innocent religious rituals to continue. The difference is that instead of actively enforcing such religious practices, our proposed draft tolerates them or leaves them out of the purview of the law. On matters such as prohibited degrees of relationship the draft allows religious practices and customs to continue. But the Code definitely recommends abolition of polygamy and unilateral divorce. It provides more comprehensive provisions for maintenance. It makes ceremonies of marriage legally redundant without encroaching upon the freedom of a person to observe them.

A Uniform Civil Code is a constitutional ideal but its main thrust is towards social justice.

Our main concerns are (1) to secularise the law; (2) to modernise it; and (3) to reorganise it with a view to making it subserve the ideals of liberty, justice and equality. Women suffer much more than men by the inequitous provisions of the existing personal and statutory laws which do not square well with the ideals of gender equality and dignity of the individual. The draft suggests improvement in this regard.

or uncontrolled divorce. They too want a change. But our politicians in their hunger for power are trying to please a few obscurantist leaders. That's the crux of the problem. We have been making policy on superfluous calculations (the centrepiece of which is the vote) and have pushed the country into the horrible condition which we are in today.

On the other hand cannot the following be termed 'appeasement': When somebody issues a "Fatwa" in Iran the first country to ban Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is India. When something happens in Saudi Arabia, shops are burnt in Hyderabad, Lucknow and Meerut. When something happens to somebody, laws relating to Muslim women are changed. So this process, what the BJP terms 'appeasement' takes place.

Uniform Civil Code

If we are all Indians, why should there not be one law for all Indians. Why should there be one personal law for Hindus, another for Muslims, a third for Christians, etc. The plight of Muslim women and some denominations of Christian women today is something which is not even being considered by society. Therefore, it is imperative that for the purposes of bringing in or propagating the concept of secularism and a secular state, we have a uniform civil code. To say that the Muslims will oppose it is not good enough. Wasn't there opposition from sections of Hindus to the Hindu Code Bill when it was introduced? May be the law and order situation will suffer a temporary setback. But from a long term point of view a uniform civil code will, once and for all, rid us of the communal canker.

The opposition compelled Nehru to bring in the Hindu Code legislation piecemeal through four different Bills. And when these became Law they replaced Hindu laws based on religion. We now have monogamy and divorce which are alien to Hindu Law or Shastric Law. We now have a law of adoption which gives a Hindu the right to adopt a female child. The Law goes further and gives the right even to a spinster. Shastric Law had restricted adoption to males so that he could offer ablutions to ancestors and perform the last rites.

Why didn't Nehru pursue the adoption of a common civil code with the same vigour. In one of his letters he said 'How do I pass a new Civil Law for Muslims with the vote of Hindu MPs'. In fact a uniform civil code was opposed not only by Muslims but also by the Parsees. In 1973-74 when Indira Gandhi proposed a Bill in regard to adoptions, it was opposed by the Parsees.

Nehru had no influence, with Muslims. Nor did Gandhi have any influence with Muslims. If they had there would have been no partition of India. It is impossible for any non-Muslim leader to have any influence

with the Muslim community in this country, and that leads one to the point that the Muslim community in India must have more self-criticism, more introspection. Nehru felt that personal civil law was something which was really a matter for a community first to prepare public opinion in its own community before passing a law.

The Plight of Women in a non-Secular Society

Women suffered much during these riots. All religions have been very unprotective, even cruel to women.

A team of senior women visited Surat towards the end of December and was horrified to discover the atrocities committed on women. To describe the deeds as 'beastly' would be an insult to beasts. Young girls of one religion were gang-raped in broad

daylight by men of another religion and most shameful of all, in the presence of policemen.

Horrendous as these are, even worse was the fact that even when the rapists were identified by their victims, they were taken to the lock-up one day and released the next.

What the government will have to do is to see that these offenders are brought to book and given the strictest possible punishment. Various women's organisations have organised dharnas and processions and have written to the Gujarat Chief Minister and also to the Governor about it. It is to be seen what action they take to ensure justice is done.

It is not only Muslim women but all women in this country who are subjected to discrimination and humiliation. Women must politically organise and mobilise them-

The Dilemma of Progressive Muslims

Some of us working in the Muslim Satyashodak Mandal at the grassroots level, get enough evidence to prove that secularism has not spread its ideas at the grassroots level. There should be a new dimension to secularism. The attitude of Muslim communities to secularism is a dilemma for progressive Muslims particularly when Muslims think that secularism is good when they are in a minority and want Islamism when they are in a majority.

When we try to express new ideas they ask us whether we are trying to teach them Islam if so, they tell us 'please do not tell us' and if we say it is not in Islam, then they ask 'then why are you telling us?' Their attitude basically is 'what is in Islam is Islamic and what is not, is anti-Islamic.' That is why secular Muslims find so many problems working among our community.

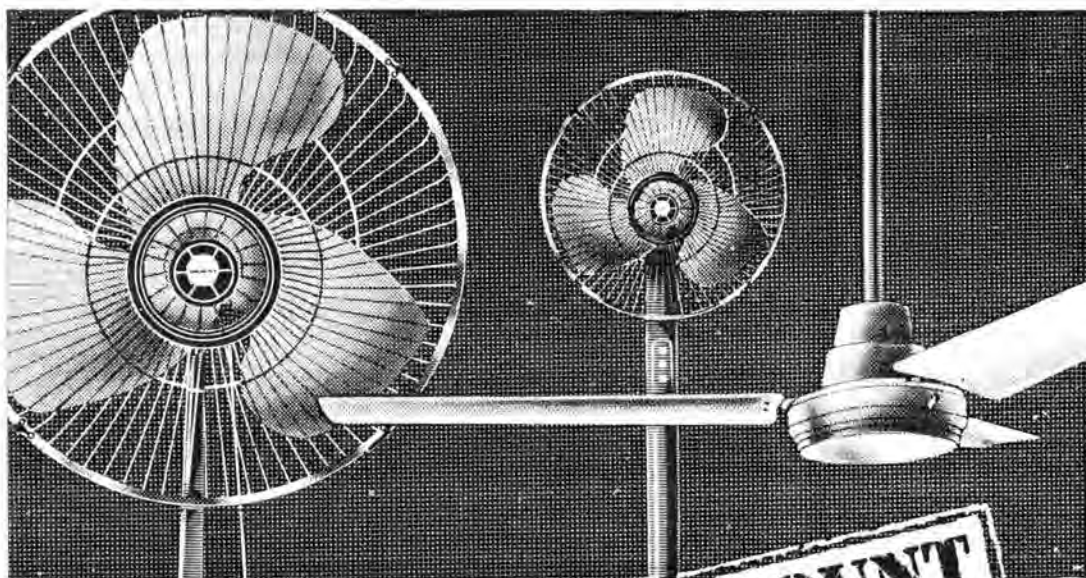
At the same time such misunderstandings about secularism are not only among Muslims but in other religious groups as well who look at secularism as being anti-religion. The Hindus look at secularism as an over-protective policy to protect the minority, particularly the Muslims. That is why the path of humanism and rationalism are very essential and an integral element of secularism. At the same time we think secularism needs a spiritual base. We need to promote a non-disruptive faith among the people.

Another example of the failure of secularism is the violation of human

rights in the name of secularism. Take the case of Muslim women. Such practices as oral divorce, polygamy, lack of maintenance, lack of child adoption are all a negation of secular ideas. Though we live in a secular country we do not have the right to secular laws which could protect the Muslim population. Therefore there is need for a new dimension to secularism. This is not an easy task.

The Indian people are so dogmatic and fundamentalist that the attempt to secularise our people is like trying to make an omelette from a boiled egg. While this is true of most people, it is particularly true of Muslims who are very much against coming into the mainstream of national life but prefer to preserve their identity. That is why they demand education through Urdu medium schools. In so many Muslim managed schools, particularly in Urdu-medium schools they are reducing the periods for science and modern subjects so that they can teach theology. Hence we find that the Muslim community is not becoming modern in its outlook. They keep away from science and technology because they think that if they learn science, technology and modern subjects it will shatter their faith in Islam and their faith in God. That is why emphasising the humanistic and rationalistic elements of secularism are very important.

(Remarks by an activist of the Muslim Satyashodak Mandal, made during the seminar)



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selves to put women in decision-making positions, so that their lot would change. So far, most women in politics have not been put there by women, and they have never really taken up women's issues.

Religious Education in Schools

In minority schools, there is no check on religious instruction. Religious instruction is not permitted in aided schools. This does not apply to Muslim, Christian and Sikh Schools where you can have religious instruction and also get the grant-in-aid. This has over a period, made it more difficult for minority communities to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

Secular modern knowledge is being pushed out of Muslim schools, and it is well known that schools and teachers who have an essentially upper caste background have been the spokespersons and disseminators of the communal attitude. Even in good middle-class schools, anti-Muslim statements are made openly by teachers. The larger point is, whether it is secularism or communalism, what we are talking about is the politics of civil society, which is often missed. State policy and constitutional politics are fine, but it is the politics of a civil society that ultimately matter. It is in educational institutions, in non-party organisations like the RSS and so on and movements like the Padayatra and so on, that the battle is fought, and it is there that the secularists have failed.

How Terrorism is Born?

By alienating the minorities in India, we have been creating terrorism. We alienated the Sikhs and a small fringe of Sikhs took to terrorism and practically brought the entire Punjab administration to its knees. Even today Sikh terrorism has not been fully brought under control. The danger is that if Muslims are alienated, a small fanatical fringe might resort to terrorism, and, in today's conditions, sophisticated arms are easily available; in fact even Hindu traders will sell arms to these Muslim terrorists! So this grave danger is there before us, and if terrorism spreads India could well be on the brink of a civil war.

How Sensitive Pockets Kept the Peace

During these riots there were certain pockets which served as rays of hope. How these pockets managed to keep the peace needs to be studied.

One of the these pockets is Bhiwandi. Bhiwandi is a town of powerlooms with the powerloom of a Hindu here, and the powerloom of a Muslim there. Bhiwandi was the scene of intense communal frenzy in 1970. This time round despite such provocation as the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya which had worldwide impact (for instance twelve temples were burnt in England), nothing happened in Bhiwandi. So was the case in Thane and Kalyan — potential communal power kegs. Bombay, on the other

hand, was considered a cosmopolitan oasis. There were no riots in the city since 1946, except one in 1984, which however was not on the scale of the December and January 1993 riots. Yet the peace was shattered in this oasis of cosmopolitanism, on an unprecedented scale. What happened? Was this due to the failure of the administration and the police in Bombay city?

The residents of Bhiwandi kept the peace not through peace committees appointed by the Governor, but through peace committees appointed by the silent majority, aided by an enlightened police administration.

There are fears that Varanasi would be the next target of Hindu fanatics. Moreover in Varanasi no proof is necessary that a mosque was constructed on the site of the Viswanath Temple. At least in the case of the Babri Masjid the site was disputable. Therefore Varanasi too is a sensitive pocket. But no riots broke out in Varanasi because the *Vyapari Mandal* which is a supporter of the BJP and which financed the kar sevaks' travel to Ayodhya, got together and ensured that peace would be maintained in Varanasi; because if there were riots no pilgrims would visit Varanasi, their (the merchants) trade would be affected, and they would be ruined.

The third example of a sensitive 'pocket' which kept the peace was the State of Bihar.

Bombay Burns

Those who thought the Babri Masjid issue was a historical argument about an ancient shrine, or even a religious argument about the birthplace of Ram, should see things in a new light after the riots that have paralysed Bombay. We are witnessing, fundamentally, a hate campaign against Muslims to put political power in the hands of the BJP and Shiv Sena... No respectable argument for Hindu nationalism can be used to justify the looting of Muslim shops, killing of Muslim taxi drivers or other communal horrors that have paralysed Bombay for almost a week. When religion is used in this cynical fashion to overturn civilised society, gangsters and other lumpen elements jump into the fray to settle scores. Many Tamils are fleeing Bombay.

This drives home the message that if you start terrorising Muslims using mobs, the same mobs will inevitably turn against other groups too, including Hindu Tamils. This monstrosity wearing the garb of Hindu nationalism cannot be the basis of nationhood, and will simply engender anarchy, injustice and counter-terrorism. However, there is more to the burning of Bombay than communalism. We are also witnessing the withering away of the state in very non-Marxian fashion. The police and courts have ceased to deliver justice and mafia gangs effectively rule parts of every city and of the countryside. Politicians have become so closely interwoven with goons that they have ceased to be upholders of due legal

process and become part of the destruction of that process... The Bombay elite found this acceptable as long as elite areas were free from violence. But now that even key business districts have come under attack by mobs, we have the astonishing spectacle of Mr. JRD Tata, Mr. Nani Palkhivala and other luminaries of Bombay calling for a partial emergency under Section 352 of the Constitution. There is certainly a strong case for giving the army full power to deal with the violence, but this can be done without declaring an emergency... If the business community is long-sighted, it could band together to try and combat the forces of Hindutva, that, in their search for power, are going to spread disorder and ruin the business climate. Unfortunately too many Hindu businessmen are closet RSS fans. And so many others see the BJP as a prime candidate for political power that they think it unwise to come out against it. Hence the appeal for emergency action by the army without pondering on long-term issues. But the country must look beyond its nose. The trouble is that the state is weak and lacks moral authority, since it is widely viewed as venal and hand in glove with criminals. Such a state is ill-equipped to deal with either communalism or other forms of violence. And the tragedy is that it will be called on to deal increasingly with communalism and violence instigated by political parties who see this as a passport to power. *Today Bombay is burning. Tomorrow, India may.*

Extracts from an editorial in *The Economic Times*, January 13.

Ignore the Naib Imam's Call

A public Appeal from 1000 Muslims

The Naib Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid gave a call to Muslims to observe India's Republic Day on January 26 as 'Black Day'. The following was the public appeal signed by social activist Shabana Azmi, journalist Javed Anand and 998 others asking Muslims to ignore the Naib Imam's call.

We the following more than 1000 Muslims from the city of Bombay come from different walks of life. Included amongst us are people from diverse background. We are moelvis, doctors, lawyers, teachers, students, journalists, industrialists, traders, social workers, political workers, housewives, and the unemployed. We are rich, we are poor. We are young, we are old. We are men, we are women. Some of us have been directly affected by the well planned and viciously executed week long pogrom against the Muslim community in Bombay.

We have the following to state:-

We fully share the anguish and anger of the entire Muslim community in Bombay and elsewhere in the country of the systematic killing of Muslims, loot and arson of their property and a citywide campaign of terror.

The law enforcement machinery not only failed to protect the Muslims from this all out attack, but there have also been widespread allegations of sections of the police force having acted in a partisan manner just as it did a month back. We hope the State is aware of the implications, of a large community through bitter experience, losing all faith in the ability or willingness of the State apparatus to protect its life and property.

We also condemn the killing of innocents and others acts of barbarity committed by some Muslims in the same period. We add without any hesitation that the large majority of Hindus and other non-muslims in Bombay and elsewhere have been equally shocked and angered by the take over of the city by the marauding mobs and the targeting of Muslims in the name of Hinduism. There are any number of cases where over the last ten days, non-muslims have taken personal risks to save the lives and property of their Muslim friends and neighbours.

We are shocked and pained at the call even by the Naib Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid to observe the Republic Day as a black day. He has also indirectly instigated Muslims to resort to arms. We have no doubt that both these stands taken together are fraught with disastrous implications for the Muslim community itself, not to mention the larger issue of National unity and integrity.

The Republic of India is not the private preserve of any particular community or political organisation. It belongs to every citizen and every community which considers India as its motherland. The demand to boycott the Republic Day function is tantamount to self abdication of the Muslim community's rightful claim to the Republic along with all other communities. Indirect instigation to Muslims to take up arms is nothing short of asking for a self invited calamity.

Therefore, we the Muslims of Bombay firmly and categorically oppose the boycott call and the indirect instigation to arms by the Naib Imam. We appeal to all Indian Muslims to do the same.

As for the Naib Imam's posture of representing the sentiments of all Indian Muslims, we need only point out that the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee is itself a divided house as is evident from the frequent somersaults and contradictory stances adopted by them.

The state's Chief Minister Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav aware of the fact that Bihar had experienced some of the worst communal riots in the past took some very firm steps to ensure peace. Consequently the post-Ayodhya violence was at its weakest in Bihar, a backward state in economic terms. On the other hand industrially advanced states like Gujarat and Maharashtra saw some of the worst riots since independence.

In the current post-Ayodhya problems we need to do a damage limitation exercise. In fact in certain localities an attempt was made to start such an exercise. The damage limitation exercise was to collect the affected community together and to tell them 'We cannot guarantee that no Ayodhya will take place. We cannot guarantee that somebody will not burn a mosque somewhere or that somebody will not burn a temple somewhere else. But it is not necessary that your mother and child should die because somebody has broken a mosque. So gentlemen, keep your own locality as a separate entity, and try to protect it. The times are bad.'

The response was extremely good.

Because, what was realised was, you get angry, you burn somebody's house, they burn somebody else's house. The short point is that in the damage limitation exercise you try to compartmentalise these troubles and say "please don't let this trouble, however provocative it may be, affect your locality."

The Bhiwandi experiment should now be applied to all such new pockets which have become 'sensitive.'

Building Bridges Between Communities

The most important group to back Gandhi in South Africa were the Muslim merchants. He had Gujarati Hindus, Gujarati Muslims, Tamil Christians and Parsees. He had to weld them into a united group to fight against racial discrimination. So his experience was gained from ground realities. The *Indian Opinion* once reported that Gandhi arrived in Durban when Diwali was being celebrated in the house of a Muslim merchant!

Then one finds Gandhi in London on a certain day having Dussera dinner with

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsee students. Now, unless we have occasions for meeting each other, understanding and respecting each other all the time, we cannot build mutual confidence.

At a recent seminar Sayed Naqvi, the journalist asked: "How many Hindus have ever invited a Muslim to dinner?" Turning to the Muslims he asked how many Hindus had they invited to their homes and observed that there appeared to be a kind of institutionalised apartheid in the country because we do not have contacts with each other. So one vow we could take is that in the next six months each of us will befriend at least one Hindu family, a Muslim family, a Christian family and so on.

The second point is to get Hindus and Muslims to get to know about each other better at the most elementary levels. Hindus do not go to a Masjid, they do not know what happens there, they do not know how clean and orderly it is kept. Conversely how many Muslim children have been to a mandir, where they are explained something about Hinduism?

There has to be exchange of information and this has to start not when there is trouble but has to be an ongoing process. By going to a mosque you may not get information about Islam, but you might get an understanding of the ethos or the atmosphere. It is like going to a Church; you don't get information about Christianity, but the atmosphere in the Church can influence you. To that extent, such exchanges are useful.

In other words there is need to promote greater social intercourse between the two communities, not as a kind of emergency measure but as an ongoing activity. For instance, there could be Muslim boys and girls coming to live as guests in ordinary middle-class Hindu homes, and Hindu boys and girls living in Muslim homes. This kind of programme could be pursued by schools or voluntary agencies.

The way in which various communities are segregated from one another also has much to do with insulating communities from one another. We have a 'Christian pocket', a 'Hindu pocket', a 'Muslim pocket' and so on. These pockets rarely intermingle — for it is very rare that we have social functions going on involving all communities. All our festivals are religious festivals. We need to organise functions in which all communities can come together and celebrate together.

"Unless you go out there, get to know the Muslim community, sit with them, eat with them and get them to accept you they are not going to be one with you. Let us not segregate them as minorities. Let us treat them as an integral part of the community we live in. Only then will they listen to you. They are very suspicious. When we went there, they were suspicious of us. It took us two years to establish rapport with them". This is the experience of a person working in the slums. This is how social change has to be brought about.

It is said that Muslims are against family planning. How many of us are really aware of the ground reality. One social worker had this to narrate: "A Muslim woman came to us and we arranged to have her sterilised. She was a mother of five. Her husband was so enraged that he wanted to give her 'talaq' because she hadn't taken his permission. Legally it was not necessary. Four other Muslim women who themselves were sterilised gheraoed him and made him accept his wife back.

Let the Silent Majority Speak up

We need a society in which no individual or group has the right to go against the common welfare. For instance — people ought to take the initiative in stopping all kinds of *bandhs* in this country, because those who are really affected by a *Bharat Bandh* or a *Bombay Bandh* or any other *bandh* are the common people.

Then we have a very strange dilemma of democracy. A minority-majority divide not in terms of community but in terms of numbers. The projection of India as a land of violence, as a land where the democratic structure is collapsing is created by not even 1% of the total population of this country. Wherever there have been problems, half the miscreants have been hoodlums and undesirable elements. Now the dilemma is how to organise the real majority of this country. When people have vested interests, they spend money, effort, campaign, do anything to get themselves served. But the right thinking people who constitute nearly 95% of the population, the silent majority,

Neighbours unmoved as girls get raped

Bhubaneswar, Oct. 28 (PTI): Indignation has swept across the city following the gangrape of two young working girls here last week and the strange reluctance of the residents of the busy Shahidnagar area to help the victims.

The police said that on Thursday night, hoodlums broke into an apartment rented by four girls, three of them working, and cornered two of them. The other two girls who managed to slip out, however, could not move the people in the area with their pleas to rescue the victims.

The two girls and a young brother of theirs, who stayed with them, went running round the locality — a market place — asking for help but none of the people sleeping on the verandahs came to their aid until one of the girls yelled at them for being cowards, the police said, adding that had the men responded earlier, the rapes could have been averted.

By the time the Shahidnagar police station was alerted it was late but two of the "rapists" were rounded up from the house by the police. There has been a demand for exemplary punishment against the culprits.

This has come on the heels of the fuss kicked up by the members of the Orissa Pradesh Mahila Congress over the alleged molestation of a lady chairperson of a panchayat samiti in Sundergarh district by the minister for panchayatiraj, Dr Damodar Rout.

Ruling Janata Dal MLA and editor of the Oriya daily *Dharitri*, Mr. Tathagat Satpathy, in a telling front-page signed editorial demanded to know whether "the Oriya race has turned into a race of eunuchs".

The Times of India, October 28, 1992

which is the strong majority — think they have nothing at stake. Actually, they have everything at stake. We should concern ourselves with the techniques, programmes and strategy on how to get the real majority heard.

India is not really changing into a soft democracy, it is not collapsing. But we have become spineless, we do not have the right to enjoy the benefits of democracy if we lack the courage to put the 1% miscreants in their place. We have indeed lost our courage. Witness the sorry spectacle of hundreds of men and women watching three women being molested by two men; one college girl being burnt alive in a college room while fellow students, boys, girls, teachers, policemen and principal watch on. This democracy will survive only if we can summon back the courage and conviction which we have lost. The problem is not communalism. The problem is the indifference and apathy of those who love this country.

Promoting Secularism

There are two essential prerequisites needed before we can even begin to think of secularism. One: Hindus should not be taken for granted, their national sensitivities in all policy making decision be taken into account; secondly: Muslim society has to modernise itself. If it does not modernise, there would be little chance of a dialogue between the two. And if there is no chance of a dialogue between the two, there can be no further progress towards secularism.

At the same time if we are willing to be more understanding and sympathetic to people who are not secular, we might be able to sell our idea of secularism to them more effectively. But if we insist that they accept all the basics of secularism, if we make them feel that their ethnic identity or their community or religion or whatever it is, is not acceptable to us they are not going to respond to our attempt to sell secularism to them. But supposing we were to say to them: Your beliefs, your religion, your politics and everything else may be entirely different from ours, but, if we have to go to a certain school or university there should not be discrimination in selecting the students for the school or college on the basis of or with reference to all these other factors, they will respond positively.

Conclusions

The immediate need is for as many people as possible to go to the riot hit areas to pacify the disconsolate and render relief to the victims.

We should also persuade, if we can, the press not to pour oil on fire by reporting in a manner that will embitter relations ever further. On the other hand the press should give prominence to news of inter-communal cooperation, of which there are

For God's Sake Go

K.F. Rustomji

When religion began to appear in politics at the instance of the BJP, what did you in the Congress do? You accepted, compromised with it, and left it to a few straight judges to say that religion had been wrongly used under the guise of Hindutva to fight the elections. The Congress party unabashedly used communal politics when it suited it, notably in Jammu and Kerala, did nothing to counter the BJP in its demand for a temple at Ayodhya; a demand which touched a responsive chord in every Hindu in the land. What was the way you countered the demand? The ruling party set up the Babri Masjid Action Committees to counter it, not because they were convinced of the incorrectness of the demand but because they wanted to deprive the BJP of the political clout that such a demand had given them.

Then ensued the endless parleys — which amounted to sinking secularism in a morass of discussions — refusing to see that each time there was more tension, more anger. We reached a stage when anyone could see that something terrible was going to happen...

After the 6th December every single decision taken by the prime minister, every single move by the Congress party has been wrong. The destruction of the masjid was not shown to be what it was — an act of mob hysteria — which was compounded by an administrative failure on the part of both the state and central governments. Any impartial tribunal would have held both guilty of negligence or at least inability to see the dangers of a situation going out of control. Instead central power was used to destroy the BJP governments in all states in a clear onslaught on the constitution. Numerous organisations were declared unlawful (though some were left out unaccountably), thousands of arrests were made without offering proof. Political vendetta went to the extreme limit under cover of the shock over the demolition of the structure.

One would imagine that the prime agency that should intervene to save the nation from such a contingency is parliament. The doors of parliament were locked because the house was scheduled to be used only for disorder and uproar. Is this what we elected you for — you distinguished sir and madam — who have desecrated the sacred temple of democracy. You prevented parliament from functioning because you felt it was an easy way to get power. Now we know that Bofors, reservations, all were political ploys to win power for a new set of political malcontents.

The prime minister in a voice shaking with emotion talks of being betrayed. Yes, we too feel betrayed by politicking, by dithering and indecision, by the sheer incapacity of the great Congress party in not being able to deal with communalism in the right way, and then in not perceiving the immense harm that was done by guarding the brick and mortar of an unused mosque and making the poor Muslims bear the brunt of onslaughts for the second time in two years, each time more than a thousand killed.

You, sir, of the Babri Masjid Committees must take a full share of the blame for your repeated rebuffs to any compromise plan. The damage that you have caused to the community is immeasurable and unforgivable. Yet would you say you have atoned for it? On the contrary you have come out to demand the reconstruction of the structure so that you can continue to imperil the lives and well-being of the community. You gentlemen have propped communalism up, made the BJP come up as a power in the land, and now speak of the need for secularism when your whole outlook has been arrantly communal. The way in which you have been left out of the arrest list needs some explanation.

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And you sir, representative of the Muslim League, have you not caused enough damage to the sub-continent. Your ever-present desire for confrontation, your refusal even to think of a settlement shows that your strength lies only in enmity. Do you expect the Hindus to reciprocate your goodwill when you have not shown any at all. Every word that you now say acts as an irritant and becomes anti-Muslim propaganda.

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We want a breath of fresh air, and you the present leaders of the nation have stifled us and betrayed the basis of our constitution and our traditions. Pack up and go for God's sake. Our only hope is that an election may get a young, purposeful and trustworthy government and a discerning and concerned opposition. If that election fails to give us the right people, we may give up hope of ever being able to manage our affairs competently.

Excerpted from Mr. K.F. Rustomji's Column "Perspective" in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, January 4, 93.

plenty of examples.

Perhaps there is need to ban all religion based parties and not allow them to take any part in elections. In fact our electoral system needs complete and radical reforms.

In a secular democratic context we have absolutely non-secular methods of political mobilisation. In other words, politicisation of issues has been the reason for the violation of the norms of democracy and secularism. For example, politicians haven't paid attention to real issues even in their manifestos. It has been a method of winning over people by arousing their emotions — on the basis of caste and communal sentiments. We have large neglected sections of people who

are deprived, discontented, uneducated. They are the ones who fall victims to the kind of appeal which political leaders make.

Secondly, how do we force our political parties to face real issues. It is very obvious that the Ayodhya issue or a similar issue does not touch even the periphery of the real problems which people face today.

Democracy is based on the assumption of a pluralistic society, a tolerance of other people's way of life and viewpoint. Democracy is essentially the feeling that you can agree to disagree and still be friends. When we talk of practicing secularism, you cannot divide the government from society. In a democracy a government reflects the

society, so how do you bring about a change? Herein lies the importance of moulding, shaping and giving the right ideas about democracy and secularism at a very young age.

This is an area in education which is neglected in this country. Unless we have the people who are the custodians of law and order carefully screened, recruited and paid effectively, at times of crisis, everything including, the secular principles fail.

For instance even while Articles 25, 27 and 30 of the Constitution ensure that the state does not support a particular religion, the state is not prohibited from using funds from the general revenue to promote one or

more religions. Hence we have the spectacle of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra going to Pandharpur every year to perform *aarti* on behalf of his State. A number of such instances can be cited. Who could have prevented the Chief Minister from doing it? No one, because there is no provision in the Constitution that prevents the state from spending money on religious affairs. This must be changed if need be by a suitable amendment to the Constitution.

In the United States the state is prohibited from giving any money to any institution, even if it be an educational institution which conducts prayers on the premises of

the school. In that sense the United States is a secular state.

In the Indian Constitution there is a provision that the state shall pay particular amounts out of the consolidated funds of the state (Kerala and Madras for example) for particular religious purposes. This is because in the days of the princely states the princes used to give money to the temples and therefore the practice was continued. Let us therefore be clear: India is not a secular state in the sense that the USA is a secular state.

Even in a theocratic state, or a state with an established religion, society can be secu-

lar. A good example of this is England. England has an Anglican church. It is necessary that the British monarch must belong to that church. Yet the affairs of Great Britain are carried on, not in accordance with the dictates of the Anglican church. Government business is carried on without reference to the principles of religion. In fact English society is more secular than in the USA even though the state in America is more secular than in England which is non-secular. Therefore secularism means an attitude of mind with corresponding practice built upon that attitude which separates religion totally from the affairs of this world.

Two participants at the Seminar submitted written presentations of their points of view. The following are extracts from their papers.

Ayodhya Crisis: A Failure of Political Leadership

Nitin G. Raut

Two wrongs do not make one right. It is the credibility gap of the Indian political leadership that has dealt secularism a body blow. The double standards on secular issues as demanded by political exigencies reduced secularism into a perverse political concept that maligned the Hindu majority only because it was not politically united and appeased the Muslim minority only because it was politically expedient to do so for electoral gains. A case of brazen exploitation where communal harmony was the casualty. If the destruction of the disputed structure was unfortunate so was that of scores of temples in Jammu and Kashmir. If the mayhem after 6th December '92 was abhorrent, the displacement of Kashmiri Hindus was inexcusable. If the majesty of the Law was to be upheld, so it should have been in the Shah Bano verdict by Supreme Court and not just for the Ayodhya issue. If there was a Hindu backlash so was there Muslim obduracy. If there is a move to punish some 'kar sevaks', so should the perpetrators of the anti-Sikh carnage in 1984 have been punished. If the Congress (I) justifies the dismissal of BJP governments, it should have abdicated from power after Indira Gandhi's assassination. And who is pontificating today? None but Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao who was the Home Minister then. But could

the political leadership with their perverse notions of secularism see beyond partisan and sectarian politics?

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's policy of consensus had some merit. But the policy of procrastination on Ayodhya and his laboured attempt not to appear anti-Hindu and yet be pro-Muslim neither made the desired progress nor stalled the inevitable. Ayodhya has become to Hindus what Mecca is to Muslims or Rome is to Christians. Under political compulsions an attempt to isolate the BJP-RSS-VHP alliance misfired. In the process, neither was the law upheld nor was the disputed structure protected. What could have been achieved by firmness and tact and with some political sagacity and finesse was instead forced upon the nation through violence, mayhem and by playing with the destiny of the nation. The question that arises is why was the judicial process not expedited or the Supreme Court verdict not sought to determine the rival claims. Decisiveness without being influenced by myopic political considerations would have not only averted a crises but would have conclusively sealed the issue. In its attempt to kill two birds with one stone, it neither won the Muslim populace nor prevented the construction of Ram temple.

The policy of appeasement pursued

by the political leadership in fostering sectarian exclusivity, may have reaped momentary political dividends but it has done incalculable harm to the Muslim community. Instead of striving for their economic and social progress, their destiny is left in the hands of fundamentalist and obscurantist elements who are patronised by allegedly 'secular' parties. The 'secular' political leadership has totally failed the Muslims who are merely treated as vote-banks. Organisations like the Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal in Maharashtra who are doing a commendable job in nurturing a non-sectarian and modern outlook among the Muslims are ploughing a lone furrow and naturally are of little help to the vote bank oriented politics.

Muslim in India are often inspired by pan-Islamic ideals. By itself it is harmless. But when pan-Islamism gains an extra territorial political character rather than a socio-cultural entity it sends the wrong signals. The plight of Bosnia and Somalia should be an eye opener. In Bosnia in spite of Serbian onslaught against Bosnian Muslims no Arab or Muslim nation has come to its aid. It is the United States and other Western democracies who are striving to alleviate the sufferings of the beleaguered Bosnian Muslims. In the case of Somalia it is still more glaring. Somalia is a

member of the Organisation of Islamic Countries and the Arab League, and inspite of bloody internecine feuds and acute starvation, no oil rich Arab or Muslim State has rushed to their aid. Again it was left to the United States, a genuine secular democracy, to launch massive relief operations under the UN flag as also send troops to ensure that food supplies reached those desperately needing it instead of being hijacked

by criminal gangs.

In the context of the Ayodhya crisis is secularism on the retreat or is it rendered irrelevant to the Indian political process in the pursuit of vote bank politics. It is neither. Political pluralism and secularism are the bedrock of the modern democratic State. It is not secularism but the political leadership that has discredited secularism. But secularism

takes a beating when one community is played against the another, when the sentiments of one section are ignored to pander to the wishes of the other; where political decisions are based on electoral mathematics; where political populism gets the better of statesmanship; and where petty political and personal considerations ride roughshod over national interests.

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Adjusting Nehruvian Development Paradigm to Changing Times

V.S. Sheth

When India became independent it needed a development model which would ensure socio-political stability with economic development. The partitioning of the sub-continent into two nation states, and the cold war conditions then prevailing put tremendous constraints on the national leadership.

The Nehruvian model of development, as it emerged in the first few years of post-independence period emphasised the secular aspects of social life, republican polity and state controlled economic development.

This development model found wide acceptance among Indian masses and the elites, as it promised economic development and socio-political stability for the young nation state.

Significantly this development model survived for nearly three decades after Nehru's demise. In recent years however, changing international and

regional forces of have fractured the Nehruvian paradigm of development.

To ensure socio-political stability and sustained economic development there is urgent need to redefine or adjust the development paradigm to changing realities. Secularism is only one aspect of the development model and as such it was a political instrument in the hands of the dominant political party. During the last few years, the Indian government has unfortunately, adopted an ambivalent stance in dealing with communal forces.

Many have traced the roots of domestic violence to the growing marginalisation of secular practices by the Indian elite. Re-emphasising our commitment to secular ideals alone may not help in establishing social cohesion. In an age of growing interdependence, nation states, in the pursuit of welfare

and security for their people, tend to domesticate international conflicts. The challenge posed by fundamentalist forces in our neighbourhood, and the conflict in the Gulf between western secular democratic forces and authoritarian forces enjoying the strong support of local socio-cultural political forces, have strengthened communal forces in our society, and introduced an ambivalence in the attitude of the ruling elites during conflict situations. We need to take a comprehensive view of this multi-dimensional crisis, understand the dynamics of changing domestic, regional and international forces, and harmonise the theoretical and practical aspects of the Nehruvian development model to the changing realities.

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Why the Hindu Upsurge?

Why has India changed so much? Why has militant Hinduism, which for so long evoked yawns and amused smiles, suddenly started looking like an idea whose time has come?

One reason is the rise, notably in the past ten years, of Sikh militancy in Punjab and Muslim militancy in Kashmir. Sikh secessionists have killed thousands of Hindus in Punjab and forced many more to flee. In Kashmir up to 200,000 Hindus have fled and some temples have been damaged. Hindus suddenly feel insecure, and are reacting as a community under attack. The BJP's call to them to unite no longer looks irrelevant. In this new atmosphere, the party has been able to revive old memories of subjugation by Muslim invaders, and to seek symbolic revenge.

This explains the extraordinary passion raised over the nondescript mosque at Ayodhya, built in the 16th century by the Mughal emperor Babar, possibly (historians disagree) after the demolition of a Hindu temple. In 1949 some Hindus smuggled idols of Ram into the mosque, and then claimed this as a miracle which proved the legend true. Outraged Muslims appealed to the courts, which have yet to give a verdict. Meanwhile, various militant Hindu groups claimed it was a matter of Hindu pride to demolish the mosque and build a Ram temple on the site. They also threatened to demolish 3,000 other mosques supposedly built by Muslim invaders on the sites of razed temples.

It took four decades for this issue to capture the Hindu imagination. The BJP, after repeated electoral defeats, had earlier felt that it must opt for moderation and woo non-communal Hindus. It climbed on to the Ayodhya bandwagon only in 1989. In the new ambience, this proved to be a huge vote-winner. The BJP won control of the state government concerned, that of Uttar Pradesh, the heart of northern India.

The new BJP state government hoped to get hold of the (disused) mosque through legal devices, reserving the option of force for use if these failed. But the Hindu fanatics whom it encouraged to demonstrate at Ayodhya ran out of its control. Last December passions peaked, and a mob of fanatics attacked the mosque and demolished it.

The nation's prime minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, reacted angrily, getting all BJP state governments (there were three

others) dismissed, and promising to rebuild the mosque. But so strong was the reaction among Uttar Pradesh Hindus the Congress politicians persuaded him to change course. It is now certain that the Ram idols will remain at the spot, and that the mosque will be rebuilt (if at all) some distance away.

The Decay of Political Morality

The BJP's harping on historical injustices could not have led to the Hindu upsurge but for another factor: the steady deterioration of political morality and governance since independence.

In 1947 Congress was a party of national ideas, exemplifying sacrifice and patriotism. So great was its moral authority that Nehru could, and did, with impunity assault traditional Hindu practices. He brought in the concept of equality regardless of race, religion, caste or sex. Hindu personal law, which denied women property rights, sanctioned dowry, permitted multiple marriages for men and forbade widow remarriage, was scrapped. Muslim personal law was left alone, a sore point with the BJP.

With each year that passed, however, Congress rule became more corrupt and less efficient. Political meddling and pay-offs sapped the morale and effectiveness of civil administration, the police and the courts. *Goondas* — hoodlums — began to be used to organise votes, then to seize control of voting booths. Some later became full-time politicians, then entered politics themselves, and no policeman dared arrest them. This criminalisation of politics gathered momentum in the 1980s, to the disgust of voters. Congress is the greatest culprit, though others are not far behind.



The police, says one former member of the Police Commission, now have four unwritten priorities: first, to harass opposition politicians; second, to protect crooks in the ruling party; third, to stem terrorist activity and protect VIPs; last, to combat simple crime. No influential criminal need have much fear of arrest. Things are worse in Bihar, where government has largely collapsed and private armies rule the countryside. But in every city large areas are falling under criminal control. Riots — witness the recent ones in Bombay — are switched on at will. State authorities find it increasingly hard to put them down. Sometimes they do not dare, or even wish, to try.

The decay of Congress and of the state has led to cynicism and the gradual disappearance of national ideals and goals...

The Role of the RSS

A third factor behind the Hindu upsurge has been the steady grassroots work done to organise Hindus since 1925 by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Dedicated to reviving the primacy of Hindus, its founders lamented that their fellows had acquired the mentality of a conquered race, and were weakened by divisions of caste and region. While resenting Islam, the RSS wanted to emulate Islam's ability to end internal divisions and unite under a religion-inspired vision of a great historic role.

For the RSS there were two enemies: Muslims and secular, westernised Hindus. It disliked Gandhi's non-violence, which it saw as an alien, Christian concept. It preferred the old warrior tradition of striking down the enemy; it was an RSS man who murdered Gandhi. In its indoctrination classes it drilled volunteers in the use of the *lathi*, a long staff, an ancient Hindu weapon. Rejecting the old Hindu philosophical stress on individual self-realisation, the RSS emphasised mass organisation, education and social service. Its activists were among the first to start relief camps after every flood or cyclone.

The RSS saw itself as a cultural, not a political, body. But in due course it presented the BJP with a ready-made cadre of highly motivated volunteers. These have played a key role in the latest Hindu upsurge.

Misconceptions

Since the world knows so little about the Hindu upsurge, it suffers from several misconceptions.

- One is that the problem in India is a

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Hindu-Muslim one. It fact it is an argument between secular and communal Hindus over the treatment of Muslims. The Muslims are far too few to prevent India becoming a Hindu theocracy, if it so chooses. But all the national parties except the BJP denounce the mixing of religion and politics. The main critics of Hindu militancy, measured in numbers, are secular Hindus, not Muslims. Even after Ayodhya, opinion polls suggest no national majority for the BJP. The lower castes remain suspicious of the party, which, for all its talk of a casteless society, is dominated by Brahmins.

- Second, that the Hindu upsurge is a form of fundamentalism aiming to take India back to the Middle Ages. Not so. Historically, a fundamentally Hindu India would have to be a pretty tolerant one. But anyway that is not the BJP's aim. It wants to transform Hinduism from an amorphous collection of quarrelsome groups into an organised society fit for the 21st century — a unified Hinduism such as has never existed.

- Third, that the Hindu upsurge could split India. It will certainly lead to bloodshed. But India has no big Muslim-majority region except the Kashmir valley. And the Sikh separatists in Punjab needed no Hindu provocation to set out on their campaign. The BJP holds that Hindu nationalism is the best glue to bind India together. Many fissures exist between different sorts of Hindus; witness the terrorism in Assam and Tripura, in the far east of the country, and inter-caste conflict everywhere.

- Fourth, that the BJP wants to usher in a Hindu theocracy. Far from it, says the party, theocracy makes no sense for a decentralised faith lacking authority and hierarchy. The BJP wants to use holy men for its own purposes, but not to share power with them. BJP leaders have always emphasised cultural unity rather than religious purity. They say Muslims should embrace Hindu culture, citing the example of Indonesia. That country was Hindu until nearly all of it was converted to Islam many centuries ago. But unlike Indian Muslims, those in Indonesia still embrace the legend of Ram as an intrinsic part of their culture.

The BJP has always claimed to be secular. It even has some token Muslims in party posts. It says that, if elected to national power, it would abolish the special status given to Kashmir in the constitution; decree a uniform personal law for all; and set up a human-rights commission. These, it says, are secular goals which would merely correct concessions made to Muslims.

The Essence of the BJP

None of this should conceal the truth about the BJP. Whatever the kernel of fact in what it says, the party is really looking for respectable reasons to communalise society. To attain ostensibly secular goals, it

adopts vicious communal means. The BJP has blood on its hands, and has little compunction about bloodying them further. Its call for Hindu unity takes the form of a hate-campaign against Muslims, which has over the years led to riots and murder. In seminars in Delhi, its top leaders talk sweet reason. In the districts, its cadres denounce Muslims as invaders and traitors who should go to Pakistan. Old RSS texts tell Muslims to accept Hindu culture or else face second-class citizenship, even disfranchisement. That is not the official BJP line, but that, at best, would be the result.

Critics of the BJP liken it to the Nazi party in Germany in the dying days of the Weimar republic. Like Hitler's crowd, it extols Aryan virtues, uses street bullies and spreads hate against a minority. The analogy has obvious holes. The Nazis did not have even token Jews in party posts. All Indian parties have used street mobs to promote their interests, not just the BJP. The Marxists hardly carry conviction as democrats; Congress is the party whose then leader, Indira Gandhi, imposed a bogus state of emergency in 1975-77 to prolong her own grip on power. It is not obvious that the democratic credentials of the BJP are worse.

Indeed, it likes to portray itself as the one party that has not been criminalised, and hence as representing good government. It wants to raise Hindu passions from time to time, yet genuinely fears an excess of violence, which would damage its claims and alienate the middle class.

Maybe, but the BJP is changing. Its hardliners feel that the moderates are too squeamish, and that militancy will pay bigger dividends than appealing to broader sentiments. Sundry militant groups are coming up headed by *sadhus* — Hindu holy men — who neither understand nor care for the law or democracy. There is no guarantee that BJP moderates will be able to control these militants, any more than they could at Ayodhya.

The Root of the Trouble

Do not, though, simply blame the BJP. It did not invent the Hindu upsurge. That upsurge is cause for real concern. But what it feeds on is something still more worrying, the decay of the state. The recent Bombay riots show that armed squads of Hindu and Muslim *goondas* are increasingly flexing their muscles, while government stands by, a helpless spectator. Indian democracy has proved resilient — to outsiders astonishingly resilient — since 1947. But history has many examples of internal violence and collapsing government that ended in autocracy. Hindu militancy is a symptom of the state's dangerous sickness, not the sickness itself.

Courtesy: *The Economist* February 6th 1993 (This is an extract. The complete article is recommended reading.)

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What Ails Our Muslims

A.B. Shah

All the so-called secular parties and the Muslim elite seem to have decided that they would rather see the Muslims live forever in their ghetto than risk unpopularity with them. Liberal Hindus and educated Muslims who believe that progress can be had without tears are living in a fool's paradise. The choice before them is not between courage and caution between going fast and going slow, but between dynamic modernization and aggressive obscurantism.

If the problems of the Muslims are in most cases imaginary or highly exaggerated, how is it that they have persisted for so many decades, especially, after Independence? Considering the fate of the Hindus and even of a dissident Muslim sect like the Ahmadiyas in Pakistan, the Muslims in India have not done too badly. For instance, Hindus in the then West Pakistan, who numbered about five million in 1947, are now barely 300,000 in strength and are mostly confined to menial occupations. As against this, the Muslim population of India has increased from about 40 million in 1951 to 61 million in 1971 and is estimated to exceed 70 million today. Nor are they confined to menial occupations; one finds them in business, industry, education, the professions and, most visibly, in separatist as well as integrative politics.

Why a Persisting 'Muslim Problem'?

In spite of all this, it is understandable that some problems of the Muslims should have persisted so long; they are mostly the same as those of other Indians — poverty, unemployment, educational backwardness — and cannot be solved overnight — or in isolation from the rest. Some of the problems, centering on the Muslim's 'acceptance' by the Hindus as a religiously different but in all other respects equal countrymen are rooted in history. The Christians, except those in some of the border states, do not face this problem. Nor does any of the other religious minorities, such as the Parsees, for example, have a sense of being discriminated against on the basis of language or religion. Why is it that the Muslims alone have this problem? Why is it that the 'Muslim problem' does not seem to be on the way to solution?

One answer is, of course, that the Muslims are too large in number — 61 million or 11.21 per cent of the total population — compared to the Christians, who accounted for 14 million or 2.6 per cent of the total population of India in 1961. Secondly, though the British who ruled over India for nearly 150 years were followers of Christianity, they did not seek to establish

Christian rule nor did Christian Indians constitute a significant and distinct section of the ruling class in India. The Muslims, on the contrary, were the ruling class in northern India for a number of centuries and they did not distinguish between politics and religion in their treatment of the Hindus. For instance, even under an enlightened ruler like Akbar, around 70 per cent of what may today be described as gazetted posts under government were held by foreign Muslims — that is, Muslims who themselves or whose ancestors had come to India from outside and were ethnically different from the natives. The remaining 30 per cent were divided roughly equally between native Muslims and the Hindus. For various reasons, including those of religion, the native Muslims identified themselves more with the foreign Muslims than with the Hindus. Consequently, over the centuries, the Hindus came to be alienated from the Muslims, native as well as foreign. They developed the feeling that unlike the Christians, the Muslims could not be an integral part of the new polity which the struggle against the British visualized and which Independence brought into existence. Even Gopal Krishna Gokhale, for whom Jinnah had great regard, was pessimistic about the attitude of the Muslims: as early as 1908, he was of the view that "they would be a danger in any reconstruction of India on a national basis."

Islam's God & Caesar are One

The difference between the Muslim and Christian attitudes goes back to the core of the Islamic and Christian traditions. There is nothing in the Christian scripture to prevent a follower of Jesus Christ from giving unreserved loyalty to the state of which he is a citizen. Indeed, Jesus himself asked his countrymen to "render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." A Christian, therefore, can without compromising his faith participate in the building up of a secular state. He can, provided he goes by the Bible and refuses to surrender to the Church his right to think for himself, even promote the emer-

gence of a secular society in India. Protestants long ago adopted this attitude; the Catholics, too, have started doing so.

Not so with the Muslims, for they still define self-identity mainly in terms of religion though religion has badly let them down. They do not realize that when, in the creation of Pakistan, they decided to stay on in India they also made, through that decision, a choice that is unique in the history of Islam. Till then Muslims had lived as rulers, as a persecuted or protected minority, or in unstable co-existence in a non-Muslim society. Never before had they shared power with others in a spirit of equality that transcended religious divisions. Neither history nor doctrine had prepared them for freedom and the obligations that go with it in a multi-religious society. For unlike the Bible, the Quran makes no distinction between the secular and the spiritual sphere of life. Indeed, in its fusion of the two Islam goes beyond Hinduism. The latter, or rather the dominant tradition of it, is world-negating in spirit and every school of Hinduism places emphasis on individual salvation through one's own efforts. It underplays the importance of the temporal order and thus, as illustrated by Vivekananda, makes modernization comparatively easy from one point of view. Islam, on the other hand, looks upon the religious community (*umma*) as the sole medium through which God's purpose as revealed in the Quran can be realized. The individual has no existence except as a limb of the community.

Islam thus rules out the rise of a movement that may question in any radical sense the ideological basis of Muslim society. For any such movement is bound to be of a few individuals in the beginning, and they can only survive if the fundamental doctrine of their society recognizes the ultimate value of the individual apart from his membership of the community. The fact that unlike Hinduism, Islam is a revealed religion, which also asserts that Muhammad was the last prophet, puts on the Quran a seal of finality insofar as man's social and spiritual evolution is concerned.

This is palpably absurd, however offensive the word may sound to believers. Since leaders of Muslim opinion, except the late Mr. Hamid Dalwai, would not do it for reasons of expediency someone else must point out that no scripture of any religion, revealed by God or 'heard' by the Rishis, can claim finality in any field. The knowledge that man has gained since the beginning of the modern age leaves no escape from certain conclusions regarding religion...

The problem of the Muslims in India is an aspect of the situation in which man finds himself in the contemporary world. Only, the parameters which define it are different. For instance, like their co-religionists in Pakistan or any other 'Islamic' country, Muslims in India have to come to terms with the spirit of modernity if they wish to move ahead from their present position in the rear of the procession of mankind. But being citizens of a non-Muslim state, unlike the Muslims of Pakistan or West Asia they do not have the option of stewing in their own juice till some kindly fate comes to their help. India has decided to forge ahead as a secular democracy based on a recognition of the rights of man regardless of language, caste, sex or religion. This commitment to human rights also distinguishes the situation of Muslims in India from that of their co-religionists in countries like the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China. For secularism under an atheistic dictatorship can only mean persecution as the experience of various religious groups, including Muslims, in communist countries amply demonstrates. It is only under a democratic system that secularism implies religious freedom, not as a gesture of generosity but as one of the fundamental rights of man, whose recognition lends moral sanction to the state.

A Challenge and an Opportunity

The challenge of modernity that Islam faces in India is therefore also an opportunity for its adherents to undertake a creative 'reinterpretation' of their faith. One of the purposes of such an undertaking would be to separate those elements of it which have universal significance from others which are essentially the product of the specific historical situation in which Islam arose and developed. That every religion has elements of either type is obvious and need not be argued out here. What is necessary is the formulation of criteria with the help of which a critical reappraisal of its cognitive and moral components can be carried out today. Apart from the criteria a scientific method in the field of discursive knowledge, I would suggest that the fundamental rights of the citizen enshrined in the Constitution of India, or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations, be taken as providing a reasonable set of norms for this purpose.

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Gandhi's Ram-Rahim Approach

It is against this background of the Islamic tradition, Muslim society and Muslim elite that the problem of Hindu-Muslim tensions, which sometimes explodes in bloody riots, should be considered. It is necessary to keep this background in view because usually communalism is regarded as an aberration from the 'real' teachings of religion — it being assumed that all religions preach only universal brotherhood, tolerance of differences and compassion for the weak and the oppressed. It is therefore proposed that the evil of communalism can be exorcised by taking steps to ensure that Hindus become 'good Hindus' Muslims, 'good Muslims', and similarly for the followers of other religions. The greatest exponent of this approach was Mahatma Gandhi, who said that Hindu-Muslim unity and abolition of untouchability together constituted the foundation of Swaraj. The fact that more than 30 years after Gandhi's martyrdom, both these goals — particularly, the former — are as far away as they were in his own time should make us think again.

It is clear that the Gandhian approach to the communal problem, which I would describe as the Ram-Rahim approach, does not work. While there is nothing in it to which one may take serious objection, its failure over a period of nearly 30 years when Gandhi himself was at the helm of our public life would suggest that, even if a necessary element of the strategy to fight communalism, it is not sufficient for the purpose.

Nehru's Marxist Approach

A second approach, a variant of which was tried out by Jawaharlal Nehru in the 'thirties, is the Marxist approach which rests on the assumption that all problems of society and culture can be understood, and therefore solved, in economic terms. Though this approach is adopted by the Communists and independent Marxists, it does great injustice to Marx himself. This is not the place to go into a theoretical analysis to show why it is so. It should be enough for our purpose to note that whatever Marx and Engels might have said about economic determinism, they attached great importance to providing serious critiques of religion, philosophy, law and other institutions which, according to them, constituted the superstructure. Marxism could not make headway in Hindu society at large because the Marxists in India neglected a critical study of the Hindu tradition and social structure. Even now, sixty years after the foundation of the Communist Party of India, one can mention only three Marxists — Professor D.D. Kosambi, Professor D.P. Chattopadhyay and Mr. Sharad Patil — who recognized the limitations of classical Marxism in its application to Hindu society. Of these, the first said that 'dialectics was no



substitute for thinking' and the third had to leave the CPI (M) and found his own Satyashodhak Communist Party of India. The failure of the Marxists to analyse the Islamic tradition and Muslim society in India has been all the more culpable. They have even gone to the extent of discovering secularism in the Muslim League in Kerala!

The Law and Order Approach

A third approach which is generally adopted is what may be described as the law-and-order approach. It is often suggested that communal violence breaks out because the police are not alert and the District Magistrate does not take adequate preventive action such as taking into custody anti-social elements, and that government and the politicians do not always stand by the police and the local authorities. It is also suggested, particularly by Muslim spokesmen, that the police force itself is infected by the communal virus and that its members often take a partisan stand. And as a remedy against this shortcoming, it is demanded that there should be adequate recruitment of Muslims in the police force, that the Superintendent of Police and the District Magistrate should be held responsible if they cannot prevent the outbreak of communal violence or bring it immediately under control if it breaks out despite efforts at prevention.

A variant of this approach is the solution recommended by the extremist section among the Muslim leadership. They suggest that Muslims should arm themselves for self-defence instead of relying on the impartiality and efficiency of the police force — recent events would suggest that this is already being done. I call this a variant of the law-and-order approach because both rely on the use of force as the most important element in the strategy for solving the problem. The law-and-order approach, including its variant, is the polar opposite of the Ram-Rahim approach. Like the latter, it too has been tried for a long time and has similarly

failed to eliminate Hindu-Muslim tensions.

Need for a New Approach

It therefore becomes necessary to think of a new approach which, while taking account of the three approaches discussed above, will go beyond them and in the course of time make endemic communal tensions a memory of the past.

At the outset it is necessary to realize that communalism does not express an aberration from the teachings of religion; rather, it is inherent in the attitudes fostered by traditional religion. Gandhi failed to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity because, ironically enough, his view of religion was highly refined and, therefore, one-sided. He only took what was common and ennobling in all religions as the core of their 'true' message; he overlooked the tribal, collectivistic aspect of religion and the role it had played in histo-

ry. Religion in this role unites men in strong bonds of fellowship, but at the same time it separates them from others who follow a different faith.

Importance of Modernization Process

To the extent that a society has undergone the modernization process and learnt to separate the chaff from the grain in the teachings of its religion, it would be capable of living in peace with others on the basis of shared values and aspirations. The fact of the Indian situation is that while Hindu society has undergone this process for nearly 150 years, nothing similar has happened to Muslim society in India or even outside from where Muslim Indians might take inspiration. The efforts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the experiment in Turkey under the leadership of Kamal Atatürk were too short-lived, and Sir Syed's too narrowly con-

ceived, to change Muslim attitudes in India by any significant extent. The failure of Maulana Azad and the Frontier Gandhi to carry the Muslims with them at the time of partition, and the success of Jinnah as soon as he threw off his liberal and donned the communal garb, were symptomatic of the time lag in the evolution of the two communities. Until this gap is bridged Muslims will continue to define their identity primarily in terms of religion and will be unable to live in harmony with others, much less play an effective role as citizens of a modern state. Worse still, their separatism will continue to feed Hindu chauvinism and aggravate the difficulties of building up a truly secular and democratic society in India.

The only solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem lies in a conscious and rapid modernization of our social and cultural life. It is

The Three Meanings of Secularism

M.P. Rege

Given the Indian context the first component in the meaning of secularism which one would naturally single out is the idea that the state as a social institution has to be secular. This means that there is a shared area of social affairs in which all Indians, irrespective of the religious communities to which they belong, have an equal status and equal rights. Further, the goals and norms which direct and govern these affairs are not derived and do not draw their sanction from any particular religious tradition. In this sense they are secular or 'rational'. They include such values as law and order, equality before law, economic welfare, egalitarian justice, promotion of intrinsically worthwhile activities like scientific research, pursuit of knowledge and the arts. These values have complicated relationships, both genetic and logical with the values which were developed and propagated by various religious traditions. But as a matter of fact, in modern times they have come to be regarded as autonomous, in the sense that they do not need any religious sanction and that they can be perceived to be an essential part of a good human life, in its social as well as personal aspect.

Historically Multireligious

In the Indian context, the idea of a secular state partly draws its significance from the fact that historically Indian society has been a multireligious society. It must be remembered that this character antedates the advent of Muslim and Christian communities in our country. One may remark in passing that it is the primary responsibility of the majority community to safeguard the secular character of the Indian state. Unless members of minority communities experience, in their day to day living, that they are treated on par with members of the majority communities in all situations which fall within the jurisdiction of the state the idea of a secular state embracing all Indians will lack all substance and reality. And it is the responsibility of all religious communities to reformulate their traditional values and norms and reform traditional practices so as to bring them in harmony with the values and principles which govern the secular jurisdiction of the state. For these latter represent the moral consensus of modern times.

Sarva Dharma Samabhava

Another, peculiarly Indian element, in the concept of secularism is the value of *sarva-dharma-samabhava*, i.e. the attitude of equal respect for all religions. This value has nothing to do with the functioning of the state. It is recommended as a social and also religious value. A society in which this attitude is widespread and deeply rooted will be a secular society in this sense of secularism. To describe as secular a multireligious society in which members of one religious community do not merely tolerate the presence of other religious communities but respect their individuality and autonomy certainly looks paradoxical. But it will not have this appearance for those who realise that the basic character of Indian society is that it is a group or federation of many religious communities and that these diverse religious traditions are living forces which determine the moral and spiritual values of their adherents, the goals they pursue in life, their whole way of life. Only a widespread attitude of *respect* for the autonomy of other religious communities provides a viable basis for a secular state in which individuals drawn from diverse communities treat and respect each other as equals.

Secularism Based on Rational Morality

The third sense of secularism is that it is a world-view which claims to be based on rational, i.e. scientific knowledge of things and rational morality, i.e. utilitarian morality qualified by some principle of justice. This is the aggressive element in secularism because it denies any place to the *transcendent* whether in the scheme of things or as a component in the human personality. Secularism even in this aggressive form has a positive role to play because it throws a challenge to traditional religions to put their houses in order, to purify, refine and develop their values so as to enable them to face the problems of contemporary life. But what place reason has in human knowledge and human life is a largely philosophical question which can have no agreed and definitive answer. As a world-view, secularism is no more than *one* member of a family of world-views, relations between which need to be based on the principle of *sarva-dharma-samabhava*.

PROF. M.P. REGE is an eminent scholar and editor of *New Quest*

Excerpted from *The Secularist*, May-June 1989.

true that such modernization presupposes economic development but it would be idle to imagine that economic development will by itself ensure the modernization of the ideas and institutions which shape the mind of the ordinary citizen. The experience of Japan and Germany before World War II, and of the communist world during the past 50 years, highlights the fact that traditional attitudes may well continue to co-exist with a modern economy. One has only to think of anti-semitism which is still alive in Poland and the Soviet Union, and the prejudices against the Blacks in England and America. Nearer home, the persistence of untouchability and, to lesser extent of the stereotypes of the Muslims and Christians in the minds of a majority of the Hindus even in economically advanced parts of the country should make one question the wisdom of basing social and cultural policies on economic determinism alone. Not only that; the failure of economic planning in developing countries shows that economic development is considerably inhibited or distorted in the absence of a suitable social and cultural milieu.

It follows that the modernization of Indian society and culture cannot be expected to come about as an inevitable consequence of the programmes of economic development. While it is obvious that modernization cannot be effectively carried out on a nationwide scale unless poverty and ignorance are banished, it is equally clear that a movement for modernization can be developed among the thinking sections of society. This in time will provide the necessary leadership to take advantage of the opportunities for expansion in the absence of which the progress of economic development may bypass modernization. The two processes have to go hand in hand.

Muslims and the Modernization Process

This is not the place to spell out the concept of modernization. Suffice it to say that it would involve, especially for the Muslim citizens of India, not only values and attitudes but also their concrete manifestation in education, personal law, sense of group identity and a host of other things which, in the words of Pakistan's Munir Commission (1953), make the Muslim the "archaic incongruity" that he is in today's world. The suggestions which follow are meant to indicate the lines on which a process of this kind can be initiated. Some of the suggestions are addressed to government, and some to voluntary agencies including the mass media. It should also be kept in mind that unless the latter create public opinion and bring it to bear on government, it would be unrealistic to expect any government in a mass democracy to take action on its own.

- The existing laws regarding the location of temples, mosques, darghas, the playing of music before mosques, unauthor-

ized killing of cows and the like should be firmly implemented.

- Government should keep a careful and comprehensive watch on tendentious propaganda, including the reports of communal tension or violence. This should be accompanied by firm and prompt action, with authoritative publication of the facts of the situation in each case without recourse to vague language or suppression of facts. If this recommendation is implemented in time, most of the incidents of communal violence are likely to be nipped in the bud.
- There is sufficient ground for the belief that certain Muslim groups in India receive funds from abroad, not all of which are utilized for the ostensible purpose for which they are given. The provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act 1976 should be rigorously implemented in all such cases.
- The government should see to it that reformist groups and movements among the Muslims are not subjected to physical or social persecution in the name of religion. The record in this respect is disgraceful for any government which swears by democracy and secularism. The experience of the reformist Dawoodi Bohras who have been fighting for freedom from the quasi-totalitarian power of their religious head, the Syedna and his establishment in matters that have nothing to do with religion as understood in a civilized society, the (fortunately unsuccessful) attempts on the life of the late Mr. Hamid Dalwai, and the dastardly attack on Mr. Vazir Patil of the Muslim Satyashodhak Samaj in April 1980 — and the hobnobbing of all political leaders, including Delhi and the *ulama* of Deoband — make one wonder whether government and the political parties are really interested in promoting a secular outlook among the Muslims.
- Producers' and Marketing Co-operative Societies should be encouraged among the weaker sections of Hindus and Muslims, especially women, in towns and cities and later in groups of villages. Besides improving their economic condition, such societies will help in bringing together Hindus and Muslims in common undertakings and bridge the gulf separating the two communities.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that competent Muslims with a secular, integrationist outlook on life are not discriminated against in government or private employment. If government persuades the private sector to take interest in the problem, it would go a long way in reassuring such Muslims that they have a place in the Indian sun and a stake in the growth of a unified secular society in India.

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- Special efforts should be made to draw out Muslim students from their own narrow world in order to take advantage of the facilities of education in composite institutions and in scientific and professional subjects. A large number of Urdu-medium schools in Maharashtra outside Bombay and Pune are reported to be neglecting mathematics and science subjects in order to provide extra time for the so-called Islamic subjects. This practice in effect disqualifies the students from taking up a scientific or professional course when they proceed to college. The practice continues because, among other things, the Inspectorate in the education department has on its staff hardly any non-Muslims who know Urdu and who may therefore pry below the surface and exercise a healthy supervision on the working of these schools. Government should therefore if necessary offer special incentives and over the next few years build up a large non-Muslim component in the Inspectorate with adequate knowledge of Urdu.

A similar programme would also be useful in other departments such as the police, publicity and administration at the district level.

- Government should make up its mind to modify the personal laws of not only the Muslims but also the Christians, the

Parsees and the Jews so as to bring them in line with modern ideas about the rights of women in matters of marriage, divorce and succession. It is true that comprehensive legislation in the form of a uniform civil code for all the citizens of India can only be enacted by the Union Parliament. However, State legislatures too are competent to enact these reforms for their territories since the personal law is included in the Concurrent List in Schedule 7 of the Constitution. They can also bring pressure on the Union Government to enact a uniform civil code as directed by Art. 44 of the Constitution.

I am aware that none of the measures recommended above is going to be easy, particularly since all the so-called secular political parties and the Muslim elite seem to have decided that they would rather see the Muslims live for ever in their ghetto than risk unpopularity with them in their own and the country's interest. But those who have the welfare of Muslim Indians at heart ought to remember that nothing worthwhile can be achieved without paying its price. Liberal Hindus and educated Muslims who believe that progress can be had without tears are living in a fool's paradise. The choice before them is not between courage and caution, between going fast and going slow, but between dynamic modernization and aggressive obscurantism. The writing on the wall is clear; only the blind may fail to see it.

I am aware that most of my Muslim readers and the Victorians among the liberal Hindus are likely to be unhappy over the position taken in this pamphlet. However, I am of the view that contrary to the tacit assumption made by many well-meaning liberals, Muslims are not inherently incapable of facing the truth. It is unfair to them to go on feeding them on pleasant platitudes, for doing so weakens the hands of the secularists among the Muslims as well as the Hindus. I shall therefore be satisfied if some like-minded readers somewhere react in a critical-constructive spirit. We are still at a stage where a free debate is more important than agreement.

A.B. Shah

This is excerpted from an article by the late Prof. A.B. Shah first published in the December 1980 issue of the Bombay Monthly *Mirror* and subsequently published as a pamphlet in 1981 by the Indian Secular Society. The pamphlet was reprinted in March 1992.

THE
COMPLETE
MAN.



He's a myth.
He's real.

He's a winner
No, not always.

He commands.
He rebels

He's unchanging.
He's impulsive

Demanding.
Daring.
Discreet.

A devil
A dilemma
A dream

Raymond's



UR44

Dear Editor

Our Republic Today

India's most priceless possession is its Republican Constitution ensuring secular values and equal rights for the minorities and their protection. However, regrettably, I cannot believe for a moment that any of the "netas" of the BJP or the Sena really have any respect for the Constitution, or believe in equal rights for the minorities. Far from it. It is the most natural thing for them to equate Hindutva with Hindu Rashtra and Hindu Rashtra with majority rule: they don't see any wrong in it. Others in the country must learn to toe the line and shut their mouths, or, get terrorised into submission; or flee the country.

The Shiv Sena demonstrated this in Bombay with barbarous success working with a meticulously planned campaign of destruction. Young boys, unemployed and frustrated, are encouraged and trained to loot, kill and burn; some say they are given arms; with sword in hand they run amok ripping open human beings — our 'citizens' of tomorrow! This is the 'new India' they are building!

More than sixty thousand Bombayites have fled the city. Not only the Muslims, but more than 20,000 of them are Hindus from the U.P. whom we

know as 'bhayyas' in Bombay. They have left their hearths and homes, and the railway platforms of Lucknow and Gorakhpur have turned into refugee camps for them. They are 'asli' Hindus, deeply rooted in *Ram-bhakti* and their mode of greeting each other when they meet, even today, is "*Jai Ramjiki*". This is not something implanted in them recently by the wretched politicians. But this reverence has been with them for generations and this *bhakti* has made them a warm hearted people. Still they are regarded as aliens in their own country by those who hounded them out of Bombay.

It must be remembered that the very first hate-target of the Shiv Sena were the South Indians, mostly Hindus, intelligent and educated Hindus: from Tamilnadu, Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Mangalore "who were snatching bread from the mouth of the local Marathi-speaking people"; now they want to exterminate the Muslims, as Hitler tried with the Jews in Germany.

Soon it will be the turn of other communities who have, all together built up this great cosmopolitan city: Gujaratis, Marwaris, Punjabis, Sikhs, Delhiwallahs, Bengalis and other mini-minorities who have contributed to the growth of the City far, far beyond their numbers. Matunga, alert! Soon it will be your turn again. You are far too clever and far too

many in Bombay to be allowed to 'snatch bread from the mouths of the sons of the soil'. Is the soil of Maharashtra any different from the soil of India? Are we not, all Indians, sons of the same Indian soil?

Today, nobody can say that it does not concern me. I am not a Muslim and this cannot happen to me. No. When the bell tolls, know that it always tolls for thee! There is no redress, no law. The Sena has amply demonstrated that they are not interested in the Rule of Law. The politicians, and therefore the police, are with them. Their only law is brute force, rule of the sword! And there is no redress. This is a gross violation of millenia of our spiritual heritage. Unfortunately, this desecration has been perpetrated by those who call themselves staunch Hindus!

They will destroy all our institutions, our precious values, our country and take us back to the dark ages. This is not the time to remain silent out of fear or tact. All right-thinking Indians must give voice to sanity and build up a strong cosmopolitan public opinion through speech, through writing, through campaigns in various media — and in every other possible manner — and every voice counts! The alternative is shades of Fascism and the scenario becomes all too grim.

Dinshah K. Malegamvala,

All This in God's Name!

As the nation is engulfed in flames reacting to the demolition of the Babri Masjid structure at Ayodhya, many voices are being heard for and against the action already done.

The Ayodhya issue has accounted for an unmeasurable amount of time, money and energy, from Parliament to street corners. And now it has taken its toll in the form of hundreds of valuable human lives.

If there is a God in Heaven, *He* could not but be bewildered that all this wanton destruction is being done by two contenders both calling out *His* name. No religion worth its salt could deem a thousand structures more valuable than a single human life.

If politicians of all hues and colours, from the BJP to the Congress to the others, find malicious pleasure and devious benefit in playing up these issues, are we all in this country lambs of slaughter, that we allow ourselves to be overtaken by such hysteria?

Who loses when there are *bandhs* and riots? Who weeps when innocent men fall to stray bullets of security forces? Who suffers when shops and factories go up in flames?

Whenever a youth is killed, whether the *kar sevak* in the debris of the crashing domes of the Babri Masjid, or the Muslim protester who succumbs to a police bullet, one more promising but misguided Indian is lost.

The prayer of Guru Rabindranath Tagore awaits patiently the awakening of this country. Will our generation go to its eternal sleep without being able to witness this awakening?

Ali Khwaja
Bangalore

British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was once asked: "What is your religion?" He said: "The religion of all sensible men." "And what is their religion?" was the next question, to which he replied, "Sensible men don't tell."

Indian Muslims and Secularism

Hamid Dalwai

If Muslims are to be integrated in the fabric of a secular and integrated Indian society, a necessary pre-condition is to have a class of Muslim liberals who would continuously assail communalist dogmas and tendencies.

Secularism in India, although embodied in the Constitution, is as yet aspiration. It has not permeated our social life. It is even in danger today. Within the Hindu majority, there is a strong obscurantist revivalist movement against which we find a very small class of liberals are engaged in a fight. Among Indian Muslims there is no such liberal minority leading the movement towards democratic liberalism. Unless Indian liberals, however small they are as a minority, are drawn from all communities and join forces on a secular basis, even the Hindu liberal minority will eventually lose its battle with communalist and revivalist Hindus. If Muslims are to be integrated in the fabric of a secular and integrated Indian society, a necessary precondition is to have a class of Muslim liberals who would continuously assail communalist dogmas and tendencies. Such Muslim liberals, along with Hindu liberals and others, would comprise a class of modern Indian liberals.

Liberal intellectuals emerge in any society only through a long and complex social, cultural, political, and historical process. Today Hindus have an influential liberal elite only because Hinduism is historically heterodox and can accommodate dissent. The modern Indian liberal tradition starts from Raja Rammohun Roy, who was a product of Hindu society. It leads through such secular (as against Hindu) liberals as Nehru to the present time.

Why Indian Muslims Lack a Liberal Elite

The target of Hindu liberals has been Hindu orthodoxy. And due to their continuous critical evaluation and leadership in social reform, Hindu society as a whole has been benefited to a certain extent. I do not wish to suggest here

that Hindu society has accepted the liberal democratic ethic and has modernized itself to any satisfactory extent; it has not. But this continuing liberal tradition places the Hindu community in a culturally better position than that of Muslims in India.

Why do Muslims in India lack a liberal elite? The answer has many facets. But one thing is certain. The explanation of Muslim backwardness is to be found in the very make-up of the Muslim mind.

Indian Muslims believe that they are a perfect society and are superior to all other communities in India. One of the grounds for this belief is the assumption that the Islamic faith embodies the vision of a perfect society and, therefore, being a perfect Muslim implies not having to make any further progress. This an unacceptable claim by modern criteria.

Islamic personal law runs contrary to the modern notions of human rights. Its anomalies are obvious to any one except Muslim males and need not be detailed here.

Delusions Need to be Dispelled

The second reason for this belief is the fact that Indian Muslims resent being a minority and still dream of spreading their faith throughout India or at least of ruling India. They suffer from delusions of grandeur and also from a persecution mania. I can cite a number of examples of this from the Muslim press in India and the statements of leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Majlis-e-Mushawarat. Another reason for this belief is found in the preparation of the history of Muslim politics in India. Muslims have always believed that they are a state within a state and a society within a society. Their ideas of representation are based on this claim and

therefore they run contrary to the concept of a democratic society itself. Today they believe in a parallel co-existence with the majority with complete autonomy as a community. This explains their resistance to a change in their personal law. But, going even further, Indian Muslims oppose family planning because they are obsessed with the idea of increasing their numbers to be effective in power politics. This is the same old dangerous attitude as led to the demand for, and creation of, Pakistan. Their failure to identify themselves as Indians becomes obvious in these and many other ways.

The only leadership Indian Muslims have is basically communalist. An exceptional Muslim liberal like M.C. Chagla has no place in Indian Muslim society. Nor will individual modern liberals suffice. Indian Muslims today need an *avant garde* liberal elite to lead them. This elite must identify itself with other modern liberals in India and must collaborate with it against Muslim as well as Hindu communalism. Unless a Muslim liberal intellectual class emerges, Indian Muslims will continue to cling to obscurantist medievalism, communalism, and will eventually perish both socially and culturally. A worse possibility is that of Hindu revivalism destroying even Hindu liberalism, for the latter can succeed only with the support of Muslim liberals who would modernize Muslims and try to impress upon them secular democratic ideals.

Enlightened Muslim Leadership Needed

I believe that the only remedy to Muslim communalism is an enlightened liberal intellectual leadership. This leadership, to have credibility and persuasive power, must emerge from

The Churchill Prediction

The following debate made a brief appearance in The Times of India in October 'before all hell broke loose with the destruction of the Babri Masjid also described as the "disputed structure"

Sir Winston Churchill had forecast the following for India: "Power will go into the hands of rascals, rogues and freebooters. Not a bottle of water or a loaf of bread shall escape taxation; only the air will be free and the blood of those hungry millions will be on the head of Mr. Attlee. These are men of straw of whom no trace will be found after a few years. They will fight among themselves; and India will be lost in political squabbles."

D.M. Shetty

I am inclined to believe that too much has been made of our so-called spirituality and culture. Indeed, as far back as October 2, 1936, Rabindranath Tagore wrote the following in his journal: "There is an inevitableness in the fate that has

overtaken Hindu India. We have divided and subdivided ourselves into mincemeat, not fit to live but only to be swallowed. Never up to now has our disjointed society been able to ward off any threatening evil. We are a suicidal race, ourselves keeping wide open for ages with marvellous ingenuity gaps that we are forbidden to cross under penalty and cracks that are considered to be too sacred to be repaired because of their antiquity."

All things considered Sir Winston's gloomy forecast seems to be well founded.

K.N. Prabhu

What people like Mr. Shetty don't realise is that only 44 years have passed since we attained independence, hardly enough time for building a perfect or near perfect society. More so when we have a population of over 800 million speaking 15 official languages and more

than a 1,000 unofficial languages.

We unfortunately did not have, unlike Japan and Germany, billions of U.S. dollars pouring in after the Second World War. They got "free aid", we got only "loans", that too very "meagre" loans. Moreover, we have not had a military coup, elections are still held, life expectancy has gone up, infant mortality has gone down, literacy is rising, less people are below the poverty line as compared to 1947, so what are we complaining about?

If Mr. Shetty's grouse is corruption, he should take a long hard look at Japan. If he's complaining about communal riots, is the "land of dreams", the U.S., any better, being perennially obsessed with race?

Sir Winston's so-called forecast was not a level-headed analysis of things to come, it was only the grumbling of an imperialist/colonialist who had gone senile, a complaint against the crumbling of the British empire.

M. Sudhir

amongst the Indian Muslims themselves. The first task of such a liberal leadership would be to destroy the hold of communalist leadership over Indian Muslim masses. The influence of organizations such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Majlis-e-Mushawarat and Tamir-e-Millat has to be eliminated. So called 'nationalist' Muslims, who are basically communalist, must be exposed. Also, Muslims who are today leaders of political parties such as the Right communists but who like Mr. Mohammed Ilyas of West Bengal are proven communalists, must be exposed. The *ulema* must be prevented from propagating anti-national ideas in the name of religion. The communalist Muslim press must be rendered ineffective. In short, the pervasive influence of all kinds of communalists has to be rendered ineffective.

There are some Muslims who are members of the Indian elite but who are afraid of their own community's reaction to modern attitudes. These uncommitted and hypocritical liberals are not only of no use, but are also a hindrance to the progress of Indian Muslims. They are either moral cowards or are apathetic to a great social problem which is also a problem of democracy in India.

They must make a choice now. If they do not provide liberal intellectual leadership to Indian Muslims, the younger generation has to commit itself and carry out this task.

The Real Conflict

It is often argued that Muslim communalism is only a reaction to Hindu communalism. This is not true. The real conflict in India today is between all types of obscurantism, dogmatism, revivalism, and traditionalism on one side and modern liberalism on the other. Indian politicians being short-sighted and opportunistic, communalism and orthodoxy is always appeased and seldom, if ever, opposed. This is why we need an agreement among all liberal intellectuals to create a non-political movement against all forms of communalism. If this is not done, democracy and liberalism will inevitably collapse in India. The stakes are high. It is a pity that few people realize the gravity of the situation. It is even more unfortunate that they are hardly informed about the true nature of the problem.

Excerpted from *Muslim Politics in India* by Hamid Dalwai, pp. 85-90, Nachiketa Publications, 1968.

Two plus two

Two plus two, as everybody agrees, do not always make four. But some of our leaders can make it sixes and sevens. That is the joke doing the rounds in the capital.

P.V. Narasimha Rao was asked "What is two plus two?" Rao smoothed his angavastaram and answered even more smoothly: "Such things cannot be decided unilaterally. A consensus approach is essential. A joint parliamentary committee can go into all the ramifications and if necessary, it can be referred to the Supreme Court for its opinion which will be binding."

The same question was flung at Arjun Singh. His response: "Why is this question being asked at this stage? Some people think they should question Arjun Singh before questioning those at fault. I had warned that this question would come up. The answer must conform to the Congress principles to which I adhere, despite the jeers and jibes of vested interests."

L.K. Advani had the answer ready even before the question was posed. He rattled off: "Pseudo arithmetic cannot solve this problem. After all, great Hindu mathematicians who invented zero had gone into this question centuries ago, before barbaric mathematicians invaded. As per Hinduism, two plus two is equivalent to removing three domes."

Sharad Pawar got down to brass tacks fast. He asked: "Are you buying or selling?"

COURTESY: The Week, January 10

An Open Letter to Mr. Advani

Prem Shankar Jha

Dear Mr. Advani,

Five weeks ago, when you, Messrs Joshi, Singhal, Katiyar and others went into detention, you did so as people who had either deceived the Prime Minister and sworn false affidavits to the Supreme Court, or had so little control over the movement you led, that you did not know what its cohorts were planning to do. On Sunday, you came out of your makeshift prison as heroes, considered by many to be victims of a political vendetta and of a wholesale attack on the Constitution.

You owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Congress for making all this possible. Yet, whether you are heroes or villains, nothing can alter, or redress by one jot the infinite harm that you have done to the country that you claim to revere. You have sought to deny the responsibility for this: your last words to the BBC on your arrest were that it was the Government and not your movement that was responsible for the murder and mayhem that were going on all around you. Pray, how was the Government guilty, Mr. Advani? By believing your assurances on the symbolic nature of the kar seva? By believing your Chief Minister in U.P. when he asserted that he intended to maintain law and order in Ayodhya? Yes, hindsight shows that the Central Government was a fool, but only because it believed that you were better men than you turned out to be.

It is a moot point whether the mosque was demolished by kar sevaks who got carried away by the madness of the moment, or by a core group that had intended to pull it down all along. For four years you tried to ride the tiger of Hindu fundamentalism. So you must bear the responsibility when it went out of control.

★

...Sooner or later the innate good sense of the "Hindus" whom you claim to lead will assert itself. They will realise that for all his faults, Mr. Narasimha Rao is a more decent man than you and your colleagues. That you traded on his decency — as an unscrupulous shopkeeper does with a trusting custom-

er. And in the end, when the dust settles, he will prefer to put his trust in Mr. Rao's decency rather than in your guile.

I believe that his distrust of you, your methods, and, above all, your professed goals, will deepen as he realises the full extent of the damage that you have done to our country and experiences its consequences in his daily life. Some of the carrion-eating birds that you released over Ayodhya on December 6 are already coming home to roost. Over 1,300 people have died in the past month, many of them victims of unspeakable sadism. A thousand people were killed between the end of September 1990 and mid-December of that year. For every one of them there is a wife, a mother, a father, a child, who will never know happiness again in their lives. Not one of them need have died.

★

Tragic as it is, the loss of life is only a small part of the harm that you have done. To say that India's image has taken a severe beating in the eyes of the world would be an understatement. The death of communism has left the free market and democratic countries face to face with new forms of unreason — Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and parts of the former Soviet Union, and neo-fascism in other parts of the former Soviet Union, and Western Europe. The world, many people soon realised, had become less and not more safe.

India stood out in healthy contrast to this rising tide of unreason. It was poor, but it was stable. Its democracy and its secularism seemed secure. A Government had preferred to sacrifice itself rather than allow the Constitution to be violated for the sake of a faith. So, the Western world waited with bated breath to see whether India would be able to set right its economic policies and fully enmesh itself with the world. If it succeeded it would become the most powerful bastion of peace in a region that stretched from the Mediterranean to the Sea of China. Ayodhya, and the prospect of a BJP/VHP victory in the polls on a tide of hatred towards the

Muslims has given a severe jolt to these expectations. Suddenly, India seems to be on the verge of both fundamentalism and fascism. Both politically and economically, therefore, other countries are distancing themselves from us.

While the Indian polity can stand ostracism for some time, its economy cannot. India needs foreign capital to get out of the debt trap. If it does not do so all pretensions of sovereignty will become a farce, and even its large and highly professional armed forces will become a millstone around its neck. It also needs large amounts of it to step up the growth rate from the presently possible five per cent to the eight per cent that is needed to keep up the present near parity in power with China. Today no one wants to come to India, and no portfolio investor abroad is looking at the Indian capital market.

While the West may simply withdraw, the Islamic countries are likely to become actively hostile. No one who has watched the happenings in Bosnia can doubt the growing political assertiveness of the Islamic countries.

The damage done to India's position abroad may appear severe, but it pales into insignificance before the damage that has been done at home.

But something even more precious has been damaged, perhaps beyond repair. It is my pride in being a Hindu, and I speak for far more people than you would like to believe. Like you I have taken pride from my earliest days in Hinduism's innate secularism. No other religion has ever said, as Swami Vivekananda reminded the world in 1893, that all religions are rivers that lead to the same peak. I know that Muslims hold a totally different view. But letting them seek their God in their own way is part of my religion. The essence of Hinduism is therefore not just tolerance but respect. And respect implies absolute equality.

You are at a turning point, therefore, not only in our history, but our religion. I hope you know which way to turn.

Excerpted from *The Hindu*, January 13

The Masani Viewpoint

When Gandhi Wept

I am afraid the fallout of the Ayodhya development is going to be with us for a long long time.

The recent disturbances in Bombay testify to the permanence of the mischief.

The other day somebody asked me what the solution was. I said the solution was that India and Pakistan should re-unite in a confederation. That would thus put an end to this unfortunate chapter in our relations and the arms war which has impoverished both countries.

"But", said my questioner, "Is that likely?". "I suppose not" I said "but it is no less easy to achieve than a divided India on a permanent basis".

All this mischief arose during the Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946. It will be recalled that in the Attenborough film on Gandhiji, Gandhiji asked Jinnah to remain in India as Prime Minister. When Jinnah suggested that Nehru should be asked about this, his suspicions were justified because Nehru said he wanted to be Prime Minister himself.

The partition was thus quite unnecessary and proved to be utterly mischievous. For this tragedy, Nehru and Mountbatten are both responsible.

In my memoir, *Bliss Was It In That Dawn*, I have mentioned how Jayaprakash Narayan confirmed that when he saw Gandhiji in Panchgani, Gandhiji wept at Nehru's speech denouncing the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The absence of leadership in this country is obvious but no section of the people suffers from the absence of leadership as much as the Muslims in India.

I was, therefore, glad to have the opportunity to hear Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, who I though had the right approach. He is the kind of leader the Muslims deserve, combin-

ing moderation with self-respect.

I wish his efforts to provide leadership to the Muslim community in India, all success. He has a distinguished record of service already.

Devoted to the serious study of contemporary issues and modern thought in the light of Islamic Learning and analysis of modern sciences, the renowned Islamic thinker from India, the Maulana has impressed a large number of people especially intellectual circles worldwide with the importance of his mission. His mission is to propagate the message of the brotherhood of man, tolerance, patience, humanity and love between man and man from the conscienceness of which can arise a God-oriented life ... leading to "Peace and holistic wellbeing of man through submission to the will of God".

The Maulana is the President of the Islamic Centre he founded in 1976. It is a non-political organisation. He is the Chief Editor of the Centre's official magazine, *"Al-Risala"* which is being published in Urdu, English and Hindi from Delhi. Through this organ he is trying to bring about a revolution in the thought and consciousness of the people which in turn should play a major role in the making of a just society.

He is known as one of the foremost Islamic scholars of this age. He has written over a hundred books. They have been internationally acclaimed. His exhaustive research work includes (i) Translation of the Koran (2) Modern Challenge to Religion (3) Religion and Science and (4) God Arises.

Several of his books have been translated in English, Arabic, French and many Indian languages. He has been honoured in India and also in many countries in the world.

Delhi Abolishes Octroi

I am delighted that Octroi has been abolished in Delhi with imme-

diate effect. As far back as the early sixties, the Road Transport Reorganisation Committee, popularly called the Masani Committee, of which I was Chairman, had recommended the abolition of Octroi as being a source of corruption and waste of petrol through idling at check-posts, but unfortunately, several State Governments have dug their toes in and refused to cooperate. This recommendation was accepted by the Union Government.

They have been shown too much patience already and the example of Delhi should now be followed in the rest of the country.

An Unfortunate Judgement

It is a great pity that the Supreme Court has upheld reservations of jobs and seats. They have, no doubt, done so under the idea that this is in furtherance of social justice. It is nothing of the kind.

Reservations are a cheap and useless method by which the caste Hindus offer crutches to Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Backward Classes. There are other and better ways of doing social justice.

As a living Member of the Constituent Assembly of India, I am in a position to say that even Dr. Ambedkar who was for such reservations agreed that they should not last for more than the first ten years of our new Constitution. Fifty years have passed and we still can't throw away these crutches. I do not doubt the motives of the Supreme Court but I deeply regret their decision which I don't think will help.

I am therefore in sympathy with the young men who are agitating against this unfortunate judgement. Good luck to them.

Where there is fear, there is no religion.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Communal Riots in Bombay in the 19th Century

Maneesha Tikekar

The Parsi-Muslim riots of 1851 and 1874 and the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893 in Bombay were the result of complex socio-economic factors that prevailed in the society at that time. To a large extent they were the result of changes inevitable in the process of modernisation.

Not much is known about communal riots in Bombay in the 19th century. Those in the know have generally dismissed them as mere outbursts of religious frenzy. However, a study of three communal riots in Bombay — the Parsi-Muslim riots of 1851 and 1874, and the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893 — will confirm the fact that communal riots in the 19th century were not very different from present day riots though, admittedly, post-independence riots are a more complex phenomenon.

Bombay city has generally been praised for its cosmopolitanism and high level of civic patriotism.¹ Though communal life in Bombay was strong it was rarely bigoted, and commerce was "a mighty solvent of particularism and intolerance".² On the other hand, the process of modernisation also contributed to the heightening of communal awareness among different social groupings. Each community was preoccupied with maximising for itself the advantages of the developmental process. The Parsis, the Khojas, the Bhatias, the Banias and the Baghdadi Jews of Bombay were considered to be the keenest trading races in the world. Parsi newspapers were critical of Hindus and the Marathi press usually bemoaned Gujarati dominance of the city.³ The Shia-Sunni divisions among Muslims were deep and Mohurram riots had become almost proverbial. The list of divisions among Hindus was unending.

Parsis Dominant

Parsis dominated the socio-economic life of Bombay in the mid-19th century. The Parsi entrepreneurs had amassed immense wealth. In fact a Calcutta newspaper *Friend of India*, estimated in 1835 that Parsis owned almost half of Bombay island. Parsis acquired their fortunes in the

cotton and opium trade with China dating back to the 1700s. Though the community constituted only six per cent of the city's population its representation in educational and public institutions and, later, in the Municipal Corporation was quite disproportionate to its population.⁴ With their position so well entrenched in the civic life of Bombay, the Parsis for a long time had no competitors in the China trade. The Khojas were the first to break the Parsi monopoly of the China trade when they also began to own ships. The Memons and Konkani Muslims too tried their fortune in this trade but with only marginal success. Being late entrants the Muslim communities had limited success in the China trade. In the cotton textile industry the competition to the Parsis came from the Banias and the Bhatias and not from the Khojas or the Bohras.⁵

Thus though the Parsis were a religious minority in Bombay city, they wielded tremendous influence on the city's inhabitants as well as with the administration.⁶ The Muslims in the city were known more as Khojas, Bohras, Memons, Konkani Muslims, Arabs and Siddees than as Muslims. Though they shared a common religion their customs differed. Despite constituting 17% in 1860s and 21% in 1880s — and with the exception of a few families — they were by and large conspicuous by their absence in civic activity.⁷

The First Parsi-Muslim Riot

The immediate causes for Parsi-Muslim communal riots of 1851 and 1874 were rather trivial.⁸ Muslims were angered by two articles written by two Parsis on the life of Prophet Mohammed. On September 23, 1851, Byramjee Cursetjee, a Parsi editor of *Chitra Dnyan Darpan* published an article on the Prophet's life along with his portrait. The portrait was somewhat disfigured due to wrong pencil shading. The article was a factual account of Mohammed's life and was said to be written in a matter of fact style without any reverence or irreverence to the Prophet. For nearly twenty-five days excitement kept mounting among the Muslims

and after the weekly prayers at the Juma Masjid on Friday, October 17, 1851, the riots began. Muslims who were determined to avenge a supposed religious insult pointed out that the article was written in a 'coarse, insulting and exaggerating style' and therefore it was their duty, 'to vindicate the sanctity of their Prophet'. Riots quickly spread to the other parts of the island and Lord Falkland the then Governor of Bombay lost no time in calling the military to quell the riots. By then rioters had plundered several shops, destroyed or looted a large amount of Parsi property. The riots were brought under control due to 'the prompt, decisive and judicious arrangements' by Captain Baynes, the Superintendent of Police and Mr. Spens, the Senior Magistrate.

When trouble broke out again on 19th October the *Samachar* published on that day warned the Parsis of the likelihood of greater outbreak in the course of the day and advised them not to trust the 'Mohammedan Police'. Every Friday that followed was full of tension and the Parsis regretted the fact that the police force was not adequate to guarantee peace in the city. A new round of riots occurred during the Mohurram week between November 4 and 12, 1851. The 'higher' members of the Parsi Panchayat and the Mohammedan community came together at joint meetings held on October 29 and November 24 and accused the 'low' Muslims and Parsis for the excitement and the disturbances.

The Second Parsi-Muslim Riot

A second serious clash between the two minority communities of Bombay occurred in February 1874. In June 1873 in a book entitled *Famous Prophets and Communities* written by a Parsi, Rustamjee Hormasjee Jalbhai, contained an article tracing the life of Mohammed. The article quoted Washington Irving who had used the word 'concubine' for one of the wives of Mohammed. Several eminent Parsis found the book very ordinary and therefore took no notice of it. But Muslim sentiments were offended by the Gujarati translation of the

This article is based on a paper presented by Dr. Ms. Tikekar at a Seminar of Political Scientists in 1986. She readily responded to our request to present a condensed version and rewrote her presentation for *Freedom First*

word 'concubine' and they took serious objection to the book. A Hindustani journal *Kasuful Akhbar* edited by a Muslim, denounced the article as a 'false and inept' description of their Prophet. The author of the book was referred to as 'an enemy of peace'.

In February 1874, a deputation of Muslims met Frank Souter, the then Police Commissioner and took strong exception to the book being allowed to be sold. The publisher of the book was thereupon ordered to hand over the unsold copies to Souter. Despite this measure, Muslims continued to be excited over the issue. The *Bombay Samachar* and *Jami Jamshet*, the two Gujarati newspapers, warned of forthcoming trouble and demanded the police to be alert.

Riots broke out on Friday, February 13, 1874. A mob of Siddees, Arabs, Pathans and Memons attacked Parsi houses and property. Three Agiaris were desecrated and there was large scale looting in the city's Parsi localities. This time the Parsis were not totally unprepared. In certain localities the rioting mobs faced great resistance from the Parsi men. Rioting resumed on 15th afternoon after the burial of a Muslim who had died in the rioting on Friday. The Muslims and Police Commissioner Souter, charged the Parsis with having started the trouble by stoning the funeral procession, while the Parsis on the other hand complained that the Muslims had come prepared with sticks and other weapons.

The Parsi-Muslim riots of 1874 were widely reported and commented upon by newspapers in India and abroad.¹⁰ *The Times of India* hinted that 'low' Muslims were instigated to riot and accused the Kazi of not keeping his word and Frank Souter for deliberately misleading the Police; *The Indian Statesman* attacked the policy of recruitment of the police in which 'European businessmen' were deployed as policemen. A number of letters published in *The Times of India* of February 18, 1874 asked where the Police were on the 13th and criticised the delay in calling the military. One letter demanded that the rioters be punished under sections 146 and 148 of the penal code. Another demanded the imposition of a 'fine of one lakh rupees on the whole Mohammedan Community'.



On February 19, 1874 the Parsis sent a Memorial to the Governor of Bombay signed by Jamshetji Jejeebhai II and 27 others. They lodged a complaint about police inaction and delay in calling the troops and expressed grave concern about the animus shown by the Governor against the Parsis. Another Memorial was sent to the Marquis of Salisbury, the Secretary of the State for India on April 13, 1874 signed by Jamshetji Jejeebhai II and 8431 other Parsis.

Reasons for the Riots

It appears that it was mainly business rivalry and the differences in the social status between the Parsis and Muslims that flared into large scale rioting in 1851 and 1874. Communal prejudice created by business competition resulted in the outburst of communal violence at the slightest possible instigation of the Muslims. Commenting on the 1851 riots *The Bombay Times* of October 18, 1851 pointed out that though the two merchant princes of Bombay, Jamshetji Jijibhai a Parsi and Mahomed Alloi Rogay, a Muslim were friends and partners in business of long standing, the business rivalry between the two was indeed evident.

The two riots indicate how religion became a powerful rallying point despite sharp internal differences among the Muslims. The significance of this point should be understood in the backdrop of the Shia-Sunni riots that annually characterised the Mohurrum festival in Bombay till 1912. Such differences easily dissolved when the interests of the 'community' as a whole were in question. Another significant point to be noted in this connection is that both the riots (as well as the riots of 1893) began on a Friday after the weekly congregation of Muslims in Juma Masjid. In both the role of the Kazi remained highly questionable.

It is difficult to attribute the riots of 1851 and 1874 to mere outbursts of religious frenzy. It appears the riots were well planned. The 1851 riots took place three weeks after the 'instigation' of Muslims, while the 1874 riots took place nine months after the publication of the book and despite the fact that copies of the 'objectionable' book had been destroyed. The second round of riots indicate that they were the result of a carefully thought out strategy to create disturbances. Though the riots involved only the 'lower' mobs — menial workers, drivers of vehicles weavers, etc. — there is a slender yet visible hint of 'higher' connections with the disturbances. The Parsi petition of November 11, 1851 to the Governor of Bombay clearly indicated such connections when it pointed out the futility of inflicting fines on the rioters as the fines would be paid by the wealthier portion of the Mohammedan community! *The Times of India* made a very pertinent observation on February 14, 1874 that

Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting the words "Jesus Christ," so that it should read, "A departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion," the insertion was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

The day that this country ceases to be free for irreligion it will cease to be free for religion — except for the sect that can win political power.

ROBERT H. JACKSON

"some persons are undoubtedly responsible for this outbreak as it is most improbable that the class of men who formed the mob would have done such acts without being instigated. Two thirds of them were probably unaware of the existence of the obnoxious book until told of it."

It has already been observed that the Bombay Administration played a very conspicuous role in the escalation of the disturbances in 1874. The behaviour of the Bombay Governor, Philip Wodehouse and of the Police Commissioner Frank Souter was most peculiar. Souter is reported to have said "I am very glad of it and should like to see Parsees killed". Were they deliberately trying to create a schism between the two communities by fanning Muslim 'communalism' in Bombay? It is a moot point. The time for the British favouring Muslims was not yet ripe. Indications of such a policy, however, were seen for the first time as late as the 1880s. Moreover, even if there were indications of British policy encouraging communal politics, it is difficult to believe that the administrators were oblivious of the fact that they were playing with a dangerous and double-edged weapon. The maintenance of colonial rule depended upon law and order and the general stability in society. Therefore, large scale communal violence could only threaten the very roots of colonial rule.¹¹ An explanation of the anti-Parsi behaviour of the Bombay Administration could be found in the composition of the Bombay Police. Twenty one per cent of Bombay policemen were Muslims and incurring their wrath could have created several problems of law and order in the future.

One interesting thing to be taken note of was that both in 1851 and 1874 the Bombay Hindus took the initiative to bring about conciliation between the two warring communities. In 1851 a well known Hindu citizen of Bombay, Jugannath Shankar Sheth figured prominently in the various

peace meetings that were held in the city after the riots. In 1874 Narayan Vasudeo spared no efforts to bring about peace.

The Hindu-Muslim Riots of 1893

The Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893, however, were indicative of the rapidly changing communal ethos all over India. The previous two communal disturbances in Bombay could be said to be 'trivial' compared to the one of 1893. Though the incitement to these riots was to be found in the Hindu-Muslim riots at Prabhas Pattan in Kathiawar in July 1893, communal matters had already become a divisive force in Bombay's public life in the seventies and eighties of the previous century. A large number of associations established by different communities in Bombay for the purpose of education and reform soon turned into instruments of collective voice for the protection of communal interests.¹²

Perhaps the most alarming was the growth of societies for the protection of cows which in the opinion of Richard Cashman were "another manifestation of communal tension and orthodox disquiet".¹³ The 'Bombay Gorakshak Mandal' was founded in 1887 and a more militant society 'Gopalan Upadeshak Mandal' was formed in 1893. Membership of these societies was constituted mostly of Gujaratis in the city who were followers of the Vaishnava and Jain puritan traditions. Among the Muslims-Islamic orthodoxy had set in and the Kutchi Memons who were observing Hindu customary law till then were now eager to obey Koranic injunctions. Muslim leaders had already issued appeals for communal solidarity and such appeals took the form of a movement at a popular level.

The policy of systematic suppression of the Muslims which continued till almost the end of the eighteen seventies created a gulf between Hindus and Muslims. Patwardhan and Mehta argue that the long period of government patronage had resulted in the emergence of a collective consciousness among the Hindus which the British Administration found alarming. Hence the sudden *volte face* in British policy and the pendulum swung in favour of the Muslims.¹⁴

British policy now preferred to support Muslim consciousness to Hindu consciousness as the latter were in a majority and such a policy would ultimately prove detrimental to British colonial interests in India.¹⁵ Therefore British officials were highly critical of the Arya Samaj and the cow protection societies. This was evident in the attitude of R.H. Vincent, the acting Police Commissioner of Bombay. He declared that the Bombay Cow Protection Societies were directly responsible for the riots. "I have not

the slightest hesitation in ascertaining the origin of ill-feeling between the two races to the anti-cow-killing agitation of the Hindus", asserted Vincent. "The Bhattias, Lohanas and Gujaratis have by their street preaching on the subject excited the Mussalmans, and the riots in connection therewith in other parts of India have added fuel to the flame".¹⁶

Shortly after mid-day on Friday 11, August 1893, riots began with the destruction of a city temple. Muslims attacked Hindus, and the Hindus retaliated. Stones, iron rods and other weapons were used freely. Vincent's description of the riots ran as follows: "the tumult was enormous, rioters spread like a flash of lightning. In about an hour the whole of the native town was in an uproar, and fighting and looting was the order of the day".¹⁷ This time the Bombay administration lost no time in calling in troops. But despite the posting of the troops in different parts of the city the mobs continued to gather strength. Rioting, looting and murderous assaults continued till the 13th before order was restored. By then nearly a hundred persons were killed (official figure 67), 800 injured and 1500 arrested. About 50,000 Bombayites left the city and business came to be suspended for ten days.

Leaders of both communities had contributed enough to incite the passions of their followers in Bombay after the riots in Prabhas Pattan. Leading Hindus of the city had convened mass meetings to denounce the authors of the outrages at Prabhas Pattan.¹⁸ This heightened Hindu consciousness was intensified by the demand for the prohibition of killing of not only cows but sheep and goats as well. This would have been a direct blow to the economic interests of the butchers most of whom happened to be Muslims. The Muslims too had long nurtured the grievance that the European system of administration tended to increase the influence of the Hindus at the expense of the Muslims and therefore acquired a feeling that their religion needed special protection.

Long Term Effects

The riots of 1893 had far reaching effects on the society and politics of Western India. These riots proved to be a precursor to a spate of communal riots in the Deccan between 1893-1895. The riots also heralded the rift between the 'Moderates' and the 'Extremists' in the National Congress. While the moderate leaders adopted a neutral stand and expressed their faith in the impartiality of the administration, Lokamanya Tilak, representing the extremist wing asserted that Hindus in Bombay needed a bold leader to assert their just and legal rights.¹⁹ The four great leaders of Western India, Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak and Agarkar

The riots of 1893 had far reaching effects on the society and politics of Western India. These riots proved to be a precursor to a spate of communal riots in the Deccan between 1893-1895. The riots also heralded the rift between the 'Moderates' and the 'Extremists' in the National Congress.

were involved in a long drawn verbal war over the Bombay riots. Tilak convened a meeting of the Hindus in Poona on September 10, 1893 to convey the feelings of Hindus to the Government. Ranade was opposed to the meeting, but despite his opposition Tilak and his followers went ahead successfully with their plan. According to Prof. Y.D. Phadke this meeting proved crucial in giving a new turn to public life in Maharashtra. With this meeting the conservatives in Maharashtra scored over the liberal reformists and Ranade's hold over Poona city and its activities almost came to an end.²⁰

Another development was the establishment of the Ganesh festival in the year 1893 by Tilak which subsequently developed into one of the chief features of an anti-British revolutionary movement in India. The rationale behind the public celebrations of the Ganesh festival was elaborated in several editorials in Tilak's *Kesari* in 1895 and 1896.²¹ Tilak used this festival primarily to establish Hindu identity and solidarity, to protest against the government's policy of favouring Muslims; and sought to offset the *Tabut* processions of Muslims during Muhurram which usually falls around the same time. The 'political recruitment of Ganapati' inaugurated a new era of mass politics which tended to be generally militant — until Mahatma Gandhi arrived on the scene.

The Parsi-Muslim riots of 1851 and 1874 and the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893 in Bombay were the result of complex socio-economic factors that prevailed in the society at that time. To a large extent they were the result of changes that were inevitable in the process of modernisation. Such changes are not always easy to discern and difficult to realise. It is easy to ascribe communal tensions and violence to the religious frenzy of mobs and to 'communal' leaders of different groups. The forces of modernisation created a collective consciousness and heightened self-awareness among the groups. It is easy for the leaders of various social groups to utilize religious symbols to

keep the groups together and to secure the benefits of modernization for one's own community.

In a traditional society new changes do not always drive away old maladies. In fact, some of the maladies receive a longer lease of life. According to Cashman, to affirm that the Hindu-Muslim Deccan riots of 1893-95 were the result of 'the music-before-mosque' issue — is an oversimplification of complex factors. The real cause according to him lies in the alienation of the Poona Brahmins from the British. The major cause of this alienation was that the Bombay Administration had proposed, in 1885, to reserve half the free scholarships for Muslims and other 'backward' Hindu castes, because brahmin boys had almost excluded other boys from a share in free student-ships.²² This meant a direct blow to the social and economic interests of the Brahmins.

It is incorrect to assume that modernisation and communalism are poles apart. Girilal Jain, has rightly pointed out that as the process of modernisation — in other words the process of secularisation — gathers momentum, the threat to the country's unity from communal forces may increase rather than decrease.²³

Notes and References

(This article is a revised version of the paper presented at the 7th Maharashtra Political Science Conference at Borad, Dhule in November 1986. The author is grateful to Dr. Y.D. Phadke for his valuable help in writing this article.)

1. Karkaria R.P. (ed), *The Charm of Bombay*, Taraporevala, Bombay 1915.
2. *Ibid* p. 169.
3. Dobbin Christine: *Urban Leadership in Western India*, Oxford University Press, London, 1972, p. 217.
4. The Managing Committee of the Bombay Association (1852) had 10 Parsis, 7 Hindus, 3 Muslims among others. In 1862 the Governor's Council consisted of 1 Parsi, 1 Hindu and 1 Muslim. In the three Colleges of Bombay, Parsi percentage ranged from 25 to 36 percent. Between 1873 to 1883 Parsis remained the largest single group in the Bombay Municipal Corporation.
5. The first cotton spinning factory in Bombay (and perhaps in India) was established by an enterprising Parsi merchant, Cawasji Nanabhoy Daver in 1851. The first Board of Directors in 1860 had 4 Parsis out of a total strength of 8. Out of 13 cotton factories established between 1855 to 1870, 10 factories had Parsi promoters. Gujaratis entered the cotton mill business in significant numbers after 1870. There appears to be only 2 Muslim promoters till the end of the 19th century — Ahmedbhai Habibbhai and the Curimbhoys (both 1874) — as against nearly 30 Parsi promoters in the same period. See Rutnagar, S.M.: *Bombay Industries: The Cotton Mills*, The Indian Textile Journal Limited, Bombay, 1927.
6. In 1834 when the Justices of Peace were appointed for the first time, out of 13 Indians 9 were Parsis. They were in large numbers on various committees and on the Bench of Justice in the 1860s.
7. The two outstanding Muslim families who wielded significant influence in Bombay were the Tyabjis and Roghays. But otherwise the community as a whole lacked influence. Between 1873 and 1883 not more than 4 Muslims were elected to the Bombay Municipal Corporation at a time. In the educational institutions too, they were found in small numbers.
8. Accounts of these 3 riots are collected from the following sources:
 - (a) *Judicial Department Records*, Vol. 110 of 1874, Vol. 173 of 1875, Vol. 194 of 1893.
 - (b) *Bombay Times* issues of October-November 1851, *The Times of India*, February-March 1874, August-September 1893.
 - (c) A Parsee: *The Mahomedan Riots of Bombay*, Bombay Samachar Press, Bombay 1856.
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 - (f) Edwards, S.M.: *The Bombay City Police: A Historical Sketch 1672-1916*, Oxford University Press, London, 1923.
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11. Chandra Bipan, *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1984.
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22. Cashman; *op cit* See Chapter II.
23. Jain Girilal: 'Communalism and Regionalism — Products of Secularisation', in *The Times of India*, Bombay, October 29, 1986.

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My Mob is Better than Your Mob

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar

The demolition of the Babri Masjid has caused me much anguish, so has the pale saffron line now adopted by Mr. Narismha Rao to mollify the mahants at Ayodhya. On this issue I find myself in the unusual company of the Communists and Janata Dal, and find that CPM leaders are even quoting my editorials. The Janata Dal and Marxists claim to be as concerned as I am at the flagrant violation of the law and court orders by organised mobs, at the twisting of historical facts to justify violence in the name of principles claimed to be more sacred than the law.

Admirable principles, you might think. But before the Janata Dal or CPM claim to be more principled than the BJP or Congress, consider another demolition job that also took place in December. A mob in Bangalore descended on the office of Cargill Seeds Inc., an American multinational, ransacked it and destroyed its data bases. The Karnataka State Farmers' Association accepted responsibility for the attack. So did Gene Campaign, an outfit that includes Janata Dal luminaries like Mr. Muchkund Dubey, former foreign secretary. These lobbies oppose foreign seed companies, and claim that farmers will be hard hit by changes in patent laws proposed in the Uruguay round of GATT.

I oppose such mob violence. But neither the Janata Dal nor CPM have condemned the Bangalore episode. The reason is obvious. They are vociferous opponents of the proposed GATT. The CPM has always hated American multinationals. And so the party, which waxes eloquent about the majesty of the law at Ayodhya, is silent (and indeed smiles quietly) about the demolition job in Bangalore. No political party is calling for the arrest of the organisers that happily admit to have instigated the mob.

The sad truth is that Marxists and most other Leftists have long used goons and violate the law to serve their ideology. They only object when goons

of a rival ideology take to the streets. This is opportunism, not principle.

This is not an isolated example. The Marxists invented and made famous the gherao, the forcible confinement of managers to pressure managements on wages and other labour issues. The courts declared that gheraos were illegal. But did the Marxists talk about the majesty of the law or sanctity of the Constitution? Of course not.

Indeed, Marxist ideology is contemptuous of bourgeois democracy (meaning the sort of constitutional democracy we have in India), and wishes to replace it by people's democracy (meaning a Communist dictatorship). Contempt for the Constitution is built into Marxism. So I find it hilarious that Marxists are suddenly talking about the sanctity of the law and Constitution at Ayodhya.

I agree with the Left that the BJP has twisted facts of history to generate mob hysteria at Ayodhya. But the Left is no less guilty of twisting facts to generate hysteria in its own agitations. As regard the GATT proposals, official sources have pointed out that critics are trying to raise passions by listing not only genuine Indian grievances but also several imaginary ones. Leftist criticisms of false claims are vociferous at Ayodhya, absent at Bangalore.

Congress governments are just as guilty. They have violated innumerable laws and abused the Constitution endlessly by misusing President's rule to serve its partisan ends. Last year Mr. Bangarappa, Congress chief minister of Karnataka, flatly refused to accept a tribunal's verdict on the sharing of Cauvery waters, and instigated a hate campaign against Tamils which forced lakhs of them to flee the state. This showed utter contempt for the law. It was an official instigation of hate against a particular community. On similar grounds, Mr. Narasimha Rao has sacked all BJP state governments. But did he sack his own chief minister

in Karnataka for such an offence? Of course not.

Some people will argue that the demolition of the Babri Masjid is a much bigger and more complex issue than the ransacking of the Cargill office, trade union violence, or even Mr. Bangarappa's peccadilloes. Maybe so. But the underlying moral principle — respect for the law and insisting on penal action against law breakers — is the same for all these episodes.

Seen in this light, the BJP has simply beaten the other parties at their own game. So don't blame Hindu fanaticism alone for the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The seeds of its destruction were first planted by other political parties.

The Times of India, January 3

Ayodhya's Impact on the Economy

It may sound cynical, but the rest of the world has severe problems as well. Issues such as the Maastricht agreement, the European exchange rate mechanism, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the American and Japanese economies have had a sobering influence on the developed world's views. While the government must restore the confidence of our people in the rule of law and the non-negotiable nature of secularism — albeit with belated but ruthless efficiency — we must not allow the tragic incidents of Ayodhya to be used to slow down economic liberalisation and the globalisation of the Indian economy.

Tiananmen square in 1989 was no less traumatic, but it has not slowed down the growth of the Chinese economy and its globalisation. Economies globalise because of their potential, not because of policies alone. There is a relentlessness in the dynamics of growth and social justice. No country has demonstrated this better than India. We could have done even better, but that is another matter. Fundamentalism and ethnicity are retrograde and must be destroyed by the leaders and people of India.

DR. ASHOK GANGULY, Director, Unilever plc. *Business Today*, January 7, '93.

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India in Changing Times

Adi H. Doctor

If India does not wish to be completely marginalised in the emerging global order, its national elites will have to re-examine India's foreign and economy policy goals carefully and establish appropriate priorities.

We are living in an era of sweeping changes, changes that have disrupted the old and the familiar and ushered in the new and the uncertain. The familiar cold war pattern, the East-West military and ideological confrontation are no more. The collapse of the Warsaw pact, German reunification and the upsurge of nationalist democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe, coupled with the rise of fundamentalist nationalism, have drastically changed the security environment in which we find ourselves today. Along with this, the world economic scene has also undergone drastic change. The economic success of the West, Japan and the newly industrialized countries of South East Asia has resulted in the growing realization that national prosperity requires economic freedom and global economic integration.

The billion dollar question before us today is: Does the collapse of the Soviet Union spell more security or less security for us? If India does not wish to be completely marginalized in the emerging global order, its national elites will have to re-examine India's foreign and economic policy goals carefully and establish appropriate priorities. One thing is clear. Given the new political, or security and economic realities, any attempt to revive a third world coalition against the advanced, industrialized nations may well be courting disaster.

Changed Superpower Equations

In Delhi the most basic factor in reassessing foreign relations now is the change in the world's standing of the relative influence of the two superpowers. Although the Soviet nuclear capacity still continues to be formidable and capable of obliterating any adversary, its internal crisis of authority, economic stagnation, Moscow's bid for western economic and technical assistance and

its desire to be integrated in international financial institutions, considerably limit Soviet power externally. Russia would now like to continue to play an important role in international relations but along with the USA and not in the old role of an adversary. In keeping with this new role President Yeltsin in his address to the South Korean National Assembly in November 1992, announced the withdrawal of Soviet nuclear presence from the Far East. Not only did he announce the withdrawal of sea based nuclear weapons from the Pacific Ocean region, but also ordered a fifty percent cut in the production of nuclear submarines, thereby signalling that he intended to leave future serious threats to peace and security in the Far East to be taken care of by the USA.

Impact on India's Foreign Policy

On the other hand the formidable US role in building a multilateral war coalition against Iraq and its recent role in sending a military force to protect the delivery of food and medicine to victims of famine and war in Somalia have established the perception that the US alone has now the will and also the military and economic means to operate globally as a superpower.

This major shift in the balance of international power between the US and the Soviet Union must eventually have a deep impact on the diplomatic priorities of India. The current decline in superpower competition has drastically reduced a key source of leverage we enjoyed in the past viz. the option of playing one superpower off against the other and now poses considerable new uncertainty. We can no longer count on the Soviet successor state to offer us the same level of support in security

affairs. Moscow is cutting its foreign burdens drastically. No doubt the Indo-Soviet treaty was renewed as recently as August 1991, but the simultaneous restoration of friendly Soviet relations with China after two decades of tension, must devalue for India the prospect of Soviet aid against a renewed Chinese threat.

China, we must not forget, has been the only nuclear power that has openly and clandestinely helped a non-nuclear state, Pakistan, to acquire nuclear capability. In April 1991 US intelligence revealed Chinese plans to supply Pakistan M-9 and M-11 ballistic missiles and also silkworm anti-ship missiles. The Chinese-Pakistan collusion has serious implications for us since it brings parts of Western India within the target range of these missiles. China in this regard reminds one of the cat that went to Haj after eating a hundred mice; that is to say, after having become a full fledged nuclear power, China, now does not want India to join the exclusive club and is putting pressure on us to sign the NPT and agree to a policy of a nuclear free South Asia.

India's Security Options

Given these global realities, it is necessary that we reposition ourselves. One option available to us is to guard against future Chinese (in collusion with Pakistan) nuclear blackmail by ourselves going nuclear. The second option for India, as the major regional power in South Asia, is to work out a new security relationship with the West, particularly the US. That India has not closed the doors to this option of building a new security relationship with the US is clear from several signals recently emanating from New Delhi.

The first clear signal came in the form of a statement issued by our Foreign Secretary, Mr. Dixit, in

Washington in March 1992. The Dixit statement (*The Times of India*, March 13, '92) is important on two counts. First, it states that before India signs the NPT, it would like to work out a closer and better security relationship with the USA. Second, it announced India's willingness to hold joint naval exercises with the USA, thereby heralding a new era of military cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

In pursuance of this new policy of arriving at a fresh security understanding with the USA, India agreed to a one day joint Indo-USA naval exercise, near our coastal area, in May 1992. Now, a second more advanced naval exercise is planned for early 1993. India will also be holding a joint naval exercise with Oman in early 1993. The exercise planned with Oman is particularly significant because it shows India's new desire to play an increasing role in future Gulf operations in partnership with the US and its allies.

The second signal is the recent Indian decision to participate in the humanitarian famine relief operation in Somalia begun by the US military under UN authorization. The decision to send the largest ever Indian contingent abroad to participate in an exercise in which the US is providing leadership is again a refreshing manifestation of pragmatism. It indicates, on India's part, recognition of the new ground reality that the resources Washington can deploy cannot be readily mobilized otherwise. This immediate context apart, the action indicates a distinct repositioning of India in the changed global context. We are now signalling that we are willing to play an active role, in partnership with the West, in the Indian Ocean.

Change in US Policy Needed

However, for India to open a new chapter in her foreign policy and develop a new policy of positive security co-operation with the US, requires, in return that the US show greater sensitivity to India's security concerns and interests. There are enough signs to indicate that the US has begun doing this. Thus the US has now acknowledged that India has been the victim of subversion and low-intensity war waged by Pakistan and is actively considering declaring Pakistan a terrorist state. Likewise the US is showing signs of better understanding India's strategic inter-

est in Kashmir viz. the need to man and defend our frontiers with China and the need to avoid a major communal holocaust that would inevitably follow the breaking away of Kashmir from India, not to speak of the encouragement to separatist forces in Punjab and elsewhere such a development would provide. It would appear that the US has, at long last, realized that India's *raison d'être* in Kashmir far outweighs any international norm that could legitimize Kashmiri self-determination.

The Importance of Economic Reform

The disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union has not only changed drastically the security environment for us, compelling us to revise our security policies; but has also profoundly affected the global economic scene, making it necessary for us to revise our economic policies. The emergence of market economies in Eastern Europe and China have posed both new challenges and new threats for us. While the threat may come in the form of western assistance being now magnetically drawn towards East Europe, thereby considerably reducing the assistance available to India and other developing countries the challenge comes in our ability to open up our economy through liberalization and becoming global competitors. We must now strain every nerve to put our economic house in order. Having realized that command economies are prone to serious disorders and ultimate failure, our twin objectives should now be: restructuring our economy on market principles and integration in the international trading system. In policy terms, what this means is liberalizing India's trade and tariff regulations, stimulating exports, reducing our debt and our deficit and restoring our credit-worthiness. Only if we do this and meet the challenge of our times, will we be able to extract financial and trade windfalls from the emergence of market economies in Eastern Europe and China.

In short, just as in the field of security we need to re-appraise our position and future role, likewise in the economic arena we need to re-formulate our policies on the premise that market economies have come to dominate the post cold war environment.

Postscript

(After President Yeltsin's Visit)

After this essay was written, President Yeltsin visited India. The visit showed that like India, Russia too, has awakened to a new realism and is re-positioning itself globally. This is clearly reflected in the re-negotiated Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty signed on 28 January 1993. Significantly (and as expected) the treaty drops all the earlier clauses relating to security and providing for mutual consultations in case of external threats. When specifically asked why the new treaty had no provisions regarding security arrangements, the President pointed out that the 1971 treaty was directed against western imperialism and in that sense against certain third countries. This (President Yeltsin emphasised) was no longer the case.

For us the message comes across loud and clear: Russia has buried the early special relationship with India and is now interested in developing bilateral relations not directed against any third country/countries. Now onwards all transactions (including those relating to the supply of critical spares) will be on the basis of trade in hard currency. Yeltsin, no doubt, agreed to give India cryogenic engines and expand space co-operation, but it is so be seen if western pressure and domestic public opinion (a powerful Soviet lobby is opposed to nuclear co-operation with India and insists that India sign the NPT and abandon its space rocket programme) will enable Yeltsin to fulfil this promise.

PROF. ADI DOCTOR is Professor of Political Science, Goa University.

How can you have order in a state without religion? For, when one man is dying of hunger near another who is ill of surfeit, he cannot resign himself to this difference unless there is an authority which declares "God wills it thus." Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet.

NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE

FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS

A Flawed Generation of Leaders

There is a generation of African leaders who have become so used to autocracy that there can be no question of letting go. The muddle surrounding the Kenyan election result provides ample evidence of this, but there are signs of it in many countries. Only in two cases, Zambia and Benin, have elections taken place which were widely perceived to be fair — where the former leader was prepared to accept the result and fade away quietly. But in many other cases where cruel dictators have suddenly claimed conversion to democratic values and have then been elected to office there are strong *a priori* doubts about the legitimacy of the votes. Why, after all, should people vote for their oppressors?

There may be something a little simplistic about this view of the matter. But it is a subject which has to be addressed at the outset of a year which should see about twenty elections in Africa south of the Sahara. If former unelected leaders are returned to power in all or most of these cases the idea will look substantially less simplistic.

But one thing is already abundantly clear. Angola shows it. Kenya shows it.

Ghana shows it. Nigeria shows it. Cameroon shows it. Each in its own specific way. It is not enough simply to decree elections, fix a polling date and say 'hey presto' when the votes are in — and then carry on as before. Elections have to be seen to be fair. The question is how to bring this about. Angola suggests it may be impossible. But a determined effect is being made by the Nigerian military, whose present leaders claim they have no political ambitions other than to do away with corruption.

Kenya is a good case study. Although it has been difficult to travel in some parts of the country because of violence — and there has been no clear distinction between ordinary violence and violence connected with the election — it is virtually an open society. There is plenty of clear evidence, subject to surprisingly little denial, of voting irregularities of what would be considered a most heinous kind in any western democracy. Votes were openly up for sale, with the clear implication that there would be no such thing as secret ballot — so that anyone could find out how anyone voted. Identity cards have been held up by local officials, and an

identity card is needed to vote. There was also much physical intimidation and tribal violence. But it must be emphasised that these techniques were used by both sides — and there is absolutely no way of knowing whether they affected the actual result of the election, except for the sneaking feeling we may all have that people would not have voluntarily voted for a tyrant.

Quite apart from the fact that the opposition seemed to have little more notion of democracy than the government, it was hopelessly splintered. There were seven opposition candidates, and President Moi finally won with 39% of the vote as declared. In addition, exactly half of his ministers were voted out of parliament — which does not really imply universal confidence. In spite of this, senior officials of the ruling party greeted the results with distinctly undemocratic remarks about people having to be taught a lesson and having to behave properly in future, etc. There is for the moment no evidence of any intention to tolerate dissent more than in the past or to react to the situation with any subtlety. An unpleasant interruption is over, and it is now business as before.

Action Against Iraq

The no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq are justified by UN Security Council Resolution 688 of April 1991 which condemned Iraq's repression of its civilian population when putting down rebellions by the Kurds in the north and the Shias in the south. This was followed by the establishment of a safe haven for the Kurds, although no such measure was taken to protect the Shias. The southern no-fly zone was established in July 1992 when UN Rapporteur Max van der Stoep stated that Iraq was continuing to defy Resolution 688 by repressing the Shia population.

The existence of this resolution automatically gives Iraqi repressive action

an external dimension by declaring it a threat to international peace and security. Intervention is justified in such cases both by the UN Charter and by customary international law. Action to ensure that aerial surveillance of the no-fly zones can be carried out rests on the same legal instruments as the establishment of the zones themselves.

Iraq has refused to comply with the ceasefire terms to which it agreed at the end of the Gulf war and with the other Security Council resolutions of the time in a wide variety of ways. It has refused all cooperation with the United Nations commission authorised to rectify the

Iraq-Kuwait border and has rejected its findings. This is at the origin of the frequent incursions into the former Iraqi areas now attributed to Kuwait. In addition, Iraqi government spokesmen have repeatedly stated that Kuwait is an integral part of Iraq and that its recapture is only a matter of time. There have been calls to Iraqis and other Arab populations to prepare for a holy war — or jihad — against the west.

The Kurdish safe haven itself is by no means secure. It is tenuously supplied with food and other essentials from Turkey and Iran, but Iraq has been operating a blockade in an attempt to starve the Kurds into submission. There

**THE GLOBE NEEDS
FREEDOM FROM US**



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is plenty of evidence that the Iraqi military are readying themselves for an invasion of the area, and Iraqi agents have been engaged in sabotage actions against international aid convoys operating in the safe haven.

The recent upsurge of defiant actions stems from a desire to take maximum advantage of the presidential transition period in the United States and to demonstrate to an increasingly restive population that Saddam Hussein's regime has not had all its teeth drawn in inter-

national terms. The fact that the United Nations has decided against piecemeal responses to piecemeal acts of defiance means that when the time comes a strategy of escalating response must be adopted — in the hope that the resilient Iraqi dictator can be finally forced out of power.

It has become increasingly clear that the Gulf conflict is still unfinished business. It was wrongly assumed at the conclusion of fighting that the terms of the ceasefire would be honourably observed. This was a serious mistake. In

terms of potential danger in the area, Iraq's refusal to observe the crucial clause of the ceasefire agreement binding it to accept the 1963 boundary and relinquish all claims to Kuwait raises the possibility that a further move to strike the emirate from the map will be made as a last-ditch attempt to keep the discredited regime in power. All action taken now must be targeted at preventing this possibility.

COURTESY: *Swiss Press Review*,

Palestinians Good and Bad

Palestinians used to have a high reputation as terrorists. This publication has always taken the view that a people cannot be terrorists and automatically have the right to freedom. The Palestine Liberation Organisation was indeed a terrorist organisation, but it was not truly representative — and for many years it imposed its sway by force.

Palestinians were afraid to criticise Yasser Arafat's murder gangs.

Now, however, the PLO has come in from the cold. It supports the peace process. Its transformation has been tacitly recognised by the new Israeli administration — and it is well on the way to becoming an accepted partner in talks.

But the murder gangs have not disappeared. They have simply moved out of the PLO. They are still killing and maiming other Palestinians. They still receive support from some Arab capitals, including Damascus. And they will do everything they can to prevent the spread of democracy to the lands of Palestine. This cause has not yet been won.

Why Bush Lost

George Bush is perfectly aware that he is not charismatic. A lifetime of public service — mostly carrying out important official duties — has instilled him with a fundamental sense of modesty, and he finds it difficult to strike poses. To use a typical tone of understatement of his own, he lacks the "vision thing". And he lacks it to such a significant extent that, except for the high point of the Gulf war victory which soon faded into sourness, there was something ineffably grey about his presidency. There was a sense in which people felt that neither their president nor his administration was imbued with the high ideals that they expect from the White House. And this is the fundamental reason why he was not elected for a second term. In his last days in office he quickly got over the disappointment of defeat and carried out his duties faithfully until his final day. It is to the lasting credit of President Bush that he handed over a going concern to his predecessor — and the only thing that was needed was a smart gear change.

There were other reasons why

George Bush lost the election, even though they are all tributary to his lack of "the vision thing". One was the luck of the economic cycle. You can argue long into the night about the extent to which one man or group of men can change fundamental economic trends — particularly in the age of the global village, where world economic activity is increasingly integrated. But the unhappy fact was that George Bush presided over four years which were marked by economic decline. History may view this as either the sign of a fundamental change in economic relationships or just a particularly bad blip on the line. But the fact is that American voters — egged on by the president's opponents — blamed George Bush for it. It is true that he was unable to keep his campaign promises on economic matters, and he had to eat his own lips on his famous "no new taxes" pledge. But this is a fairly common failure in post-electoral scenarios; and it is unlikely that Bill Clinton will be able to do all that much of what he promised.

President Bush was accused of devoting too much of his attention to

foreign policy. President Clinton may be on the verge of discovering that this accusation was not justified. In the first place, immediate positions have to be taken on foreign crises — whereas economic decisions are subject to delays inherent to the American system. President Bush was hampered in domestic decision-making by the fact that he was faced with Democratic majorities in Congress. These majorities were disposed to support him in foreign affairs but not in domestic economic matters. There is little evidence that Mr. Bush intended the economy to fend for itself or that he was callous about the concerns of ordinary Americans.

But the aspect where George Bush's lack of "the vision thing" was most serious was in his failure to make a clear distinction between normal middle-of-the-road opinions — which had attracted the famous Reagan Democrats — and right-wing extremism. He failed because he lost the middle ground — and Bill Clinton succeeded because this is where his cam-

paign came to rest. President Bush failed to make clear the difference between nice things like low taxes, limited government intervention and family

values on the one hand, and nasty things like authoritarianism, isolationism, even anti-Semitism on the other hand. President Bush himself was

tainted with none of the latter, but he failed to make it clear to those who were that he wanted no part of them.

Swiss Press Review

ORTON CHIRWA

Orton Chirwa, a nationalist leader who fought for the independence of Malawi, was the country's first Attorney-General. Malawi President Hastings Banda sacked Chirwa who fled into exile accused of plotting a revolt. He and his wife, Vera, were abducted from Zambia in 1981, tried and sentenced to death. This was committed to life imprisonment and as the multi-party democracy movement grew in Malawi he and his wife became symbolic prisoners.



Last year, Amnesty International heard that Orton Chirwa, who has died in prison in Malawi, aged 73, was being kept in a squatting position in handcuffs and legirons, which were chained to an iron bar behind his knees. He stayed like that for two days.

It was not the first time that Orton, the veteran Malawi politician, had suffered this sort of torture. For 18 months in 1982 and 1983, he had been kept permanently handcuffed in solitary confinement. He was arrested with his wife Vera in 1981, and, after a grossly unfair trial in a "traditional court" where normal rules of evi-

dence do not apply and without defence lawyers, both were sentenced to death two years later on charges of treason.

Following an international outcry, the sentences were commuted to life and the couple were adopted as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty. Neither had advocated violence, but were imprisoned simply for their non-violent expression of political beliefs.

Orton Chirwa qualified in London in 1958 to become the first African barrister in his country. He became active in the independence struggle of his native Nyasaland (later Malawi), and was a founder of the Nyasaland African Congress. With other members of the NAC he urged Dr. Hastings Banda to return home to lead the country.

Orton was dismissed from his position as Minister of Justice by Banda within weeks of Malawian independence in 1964, and went into exile with Vera, also a lawyer, in Tanzania and became leader of the opposition group, the Malawi Freedom Movement (MAFREMO), which sought "to restore democracy, justice and liberty" to Malawi.

In January 1992, Malawi radio announced that the Chirwas had been arrested with their son on Christmas eve 1981, and claimed that they had slipped back into the country to incite opposition to the government. Orton and Vera said they had been abducted by Malawian agents during a visit to a Zambian town close to the Malawian border.

Long years in the notorious Zomba prison followed, and in 1987 Banda apparently changed his mind about

the commutations and declared that the Chirwas did not deserve clemency and should not be allowed to live.

Orton's torture left him permanently ill. Like many other inmates at Zomba, a prison diet often of rotten vegetables affected him: he was almost blind from cataracts in both eyes and suffered from stomach ulcers.

Seven years younger than her husband, Vera is now 65 and also suffers from injuries caused by beatings. It was a small mercy that just a month before his death on 20 October, Orton was allowed a final meeting with Vera — their first in eight years.

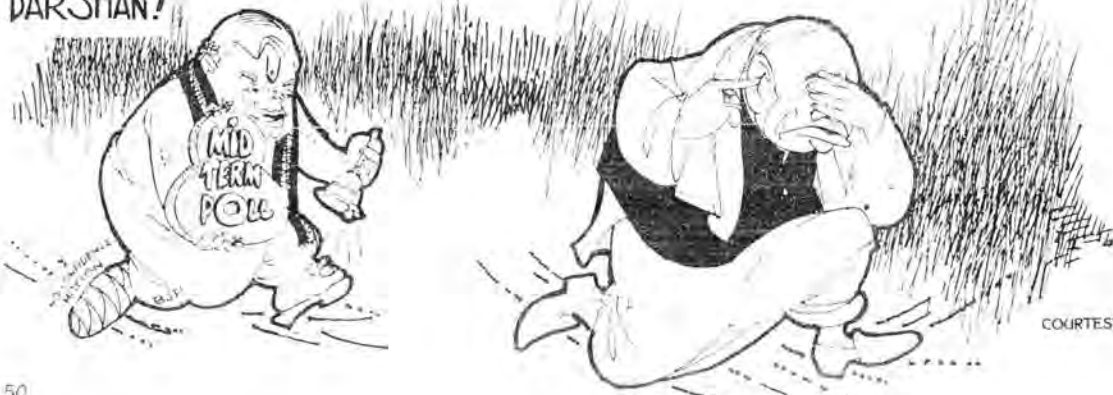
At a press conference in Lusaka, Florence Chirwa, the politicians' eldest daughter, said: "The government is responsible for his death because he died in their custody. Even if he died of natural causes as they claim, we are still going to sue".

His eight children returned from exile for his funeral but their mother was not allowed out of prison to attend. The children were allowed to see her in prison for 45 minutes, a meeting they described as "extremely sad and emotional".

Florence Chirwa said: "She is physically weak but was mentally well. We only wish the government could release her as soon as possible". Another daughter, Ronalis, said they were unable to discuss "concrete issues with her... But she kept whispering to us to keep it up and we knew that she meant we should continue with the struggle for democracy."

Shanti Sadiq Ali

DARSHAN!



COURTESY, The Week

BOOK REVIEWS

THE RIGHT TO KNOW by S.P. Sathe;
N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd., Bombay; 1991;
pp. 58; Rs. 50



Principal S.P. Sathe delivered the Endowment Lectures in the Campus Law Centre of the University of Delhi in 1990 and these lectures have now been published.

In about 50 pages the distinguished Professor surveys the vast field embraced in the concept of a right to know. It is an interesting survey.

Sathe obviously takes the widest possible view of this right. It embraces, according to him, not only the right of disclosure vis-a-vis the State but also the means to enable a citizen to demand such disclosure and, once made, to appreciate its effect. The right to know therefore necessarily takes into its ambit a right to education: Universal education till the primary stage and equal access to higher education thereafter.

Again, Sathe's concept of this right makes it available not only against the State and local authorities but against private individuals and organisations who carry on certain activities. A manufacturer must disclose the contents of his products; a Company its records,

and so on.

In his second lecture Sathe discusses this right and this discussion also reveals how widely he interprets the ambit of the right. He discusses the extent to which an individual must disclose information to another individual or to the State; when he or the State can withhold information and so on.

In the last lecture Sathe recommends changes in the law. He recommends Parliament enacting a Right to Information Act, as also a Constitutional amendment conferring specifically a fundamental right to information.

The lectures are fascinating reading giving nuggets of valuable information not easily available. We can read of a Pune case when a man was convicted of rape when he "married" a woman without disclosing to her that he was already married. He discusses a Bombay judgement giving an S.S.C. student the right to have his papers re-assessed and conferring a right to inspect them. Only a person taking the widest view of the Right to Know would have regarded either of these cases as having a bearing on the subject. The first only lays down that the woman's consent to sexual intercourse was secured by a false representation: it was, therefore, a case of sexual intercourse without consent. The second case conferred on the student the only means to ensure that his examination paper had been fairly assessed.

I would have thought that the Right to Know is in its essence a right a citizen of a democracy has, to know how the State functions. He can demand inspection of documents and information about policy decisions. This right is important as he cannot form an informed view of how the government is functioning in the absence of such knowledge. And if he cannot form an informed view he cannot effectively function in a democracy.

The State must, therefore, be compelled to function openly. To the extent possible, its functioning must be in

open meetings and few, if any documents, should be kept secret or confidential. The object of the various Freedom of Information Acts, several of which Sathe discusses, is just this, and no more. What have to be kept under lock and key are not public documents but the rubber stamps marking them "SECRET", "CONFIDENTIAL", and so on. No doubt, two classes of documents would have to be kept secret: (1) public documents involving defence, national security, etc. and (2) private documents furnished to the State by individuals such as income-tax returns. The first class are to be kept secret in the national interest; the second to protect the privacy of individuals.

A good example of a law which does this is the Australian Freedom of Information Act, 1992, whose object, as per section 3 is:

making available to the public information about the operations of departments and public authorities and, in particular, ensuring that rules and practices affecting members of the public in their dealings with departments and public authorities are readily available to persons affected by those rules and practices; and creating a general right of access to information in documentary form in the possession of Ministers, departments and public authorities, limited only by exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and the private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom information is collected and held by departments and public authorities.

The Act creates an elaborate machinery. In the first instance, and this is a vital provision to make the rights conferred by the act effective, it obliges public authorities to publish information about the organisation and functioning of different departments and agencies and to set out the categories of documents that are maintained. It then provides cases where applicants would merely get inspection and cases

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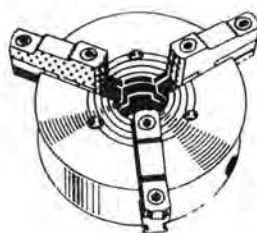


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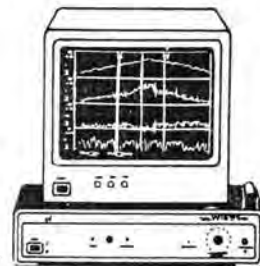
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where copies would be furnished. It has an elaborate list of exempt documents and exceptions to the rule of access.

A glance at the Act will indicate how complex the subject is. Unless the organisation and mode of functioning is published a citizen will not know what documents he should ask for. The department must also be protected from reckless applications made at random by busybodies or disgruntled persons as otherwise its personnel instead of doing their work will merely be responding to applications for inspection and copies. The lines of exempt and excepted documents must also be carefully drawn and drawn bearing in mind the need to balance the larger public interest of good administration and the need to ensure open government.

Reviewed by Atul Setalvad

In our country where copies of Gazettes and government publications are printed after an inordinate delay and are difficult to obtain much will have to be done if any right of such a nature is to be effective. It will also involve considerable expenditure in providing departments with xerox machines, etc. The Australian Act obliges the authorities to furnish the copy, etc. in 60 days. In India it is impossible to obtain even a reply from a public department in 60 days. This will indicate how much will have to be done to confer an effective right of information.

The last thing we need is the mere passage of a law which like many others remains a paper law.

Another requirement is to do things openly. Why cannot the public have a right to attend more committee meetings, more inter-departmental meetings and so on? Why cannot proposed laws or policies be made known to the public and the public invited to participate in the decision-making process by making suggestions? These are all facets of open government.

Sathe is absolutely right when he says that information is useless unless the recipient of the information can understand it. Again a law conferring a right to information would be useless unless people know of it. Literacy and education are, therefore, vital. An aver-

age Indian has to depend on a professional "writer" to make any application as he cannot read or write; even simple literacy would not suffice as even educated persons need assistance to fill in government forms! We obviously have a long way to go before we have an ideal democracy. Ensuring not only universal literacy but equal access to higher education is an absolutely vital need but it raises issues far wider than those raised by the concept of a right to know. To achieve this right in reality will take decades. But that is no reason why the right to know in the narrower sense cannot be made effective.

I hope Principal Sathe can go into the narrower subject in depth which a series of lectures cannot do. His next work on the subject could perhaps include a draft Public Information Act. He would be able to specify what documents should be excluded. He could perhaps advise on what the financial and administrative implications of such a measure are and how they are to be tackled. He will also no doubt consider how the same objective is to be achieved in respect of State administrations, local authorities and other public bodies exercising power over citizens.

Reviewed by MR. ATUL SETALVAD, Senior Counsel based in Bombay.

ANANDI GOPAL by S. J. Joshi (translated and abridged from the Marathi by Asha Damle); *Stree*, an imprint of Bhatkal and Sen, Calcutta; 1992; pp. 272; Rs. 85

Though Indian tradition ascribes the highest place to women, the unsavoury reality remains that they have been powerless and weak except for certain periods in ancient times. The issue of women's education has been largely neglected. Pandita Ramabai's evidence in the Town Hall, Poona, before the Education Commission (appointed in 1882 by the British Government) is a pointer to this. India's cultural norms and religious traditions have carved special roles for a woman — those of the ideal mother and wife. As new ideas started flowing into Indian society, efforts for women's education started around the second half of the nineteenth century. Institutions like the Gujarat Vernacular Society, the Deccan Education Society, the Ramakrishna



Mission, the Arya Samaj, the Seva Sadan and the Indian Women's University (later known as the SNDT Women's University) contributed significantly to the cause of women's education. The work of social reformers like Jyotiba Phule and D.K. Karve displays rare courage and commitment. In a society, where the belief is prevalent that if a woman receives education she will be a widow, the trials and struggles connected with such efforts are not difficult to visualise. A glimpse of such an effort is caught in the novel "Anandi Gopal" written in Marathi by S.J. Joshi and translated by Asha Damle.

The novel is a gripping account of the saga of Indian womanhood caught in two worlds. The novel is based on the true story of Anandibai of Maharashtra, who was a product of the orthodox society in Maharashtra and who went to America to become India's first woman doctor in response to her husband's wishes and efforts.

In an age when members of Indian society acted as puppets in the hands of the orthodox, the account of Anandibai's life stands as a symbol of both — a woman's strength against an oppressive social environment and a manifestation of the utter helplessness of a woman against the overwhelming commitment of her husband to educate her. Gopalrao disappointed, being unable to marry a widow, decides to start a trail-blazing trend by educating his wife. His indifference to any other issue is notable and so is his attitude to Anandibai. He even fails to appear at the given time of marriage. His obsession to educate his wife is so complete that Anandibai a

twelve year old trembles before her husband of twenty nine years as a lamb in front of a tiger.

Sneered by relatives and jeered by neighbours the couple proceed with their journey of learning, determined but isolated. After sometime the husband gives the highest place to the learning of English and not Sanskrit. The wife has no choice but to adjust. When he decides that she should be a doctor, she does not have any alternative but to accept. Slowly the picture that emerges is that of a girl maturing with experience, a woman achieving almost the impossible with sheer hard work and a sharp mind.

Reviewed by
Usha Thakkar

On the one hand, one is impressed with her strength and on the other, perplexed at her total submissiveness to her husband. Education is a liberating factor, Anandibai goes to America, masters the English language and completes her medical education with dazzling success. And yet never crosses the limits set by tradition and culture and never asserts her individuality. Before leaving for America she clarifies at a public meeting in Calcutta that she would be the ideal Hindu woman in behaviour, food and dress. Gopalrao, obstinate and eccentric, drives everyone crazy by his passion for teaching his young wife and not wanting her to waste her time in daily chores. His gifts of shoes and books to his wife; his sarcastic letters to her in America; his insistence on certain norms; and his jeering of the traditional ways of marriage by arranging a marriage of two donkeys display his complex nature.

The relation between husband and wife is also not easy to understand. Most of the time the husband is the teacher, the hard task-master and the wife is the bright and meek student. Then tragedy strikes when Anandibai's body devoured by malnutrition and beaten by cold, is unable to face the hardship of life. She has experienced friendly warmth and racial prejudice in America. She comes back to India with hopes to serve the community, but these hopes are shattered and she dies

young. Though there is very little tenderness extended by Gopalrao to Anandibai, she is understanding and generous to him till the end. Is it due to the conditioning of her mind or was it genuine affection. One wonders why Anandibai does not assert herself? Is this because of the way she was or has society and circumstances made her what she was? Had she lived longer perhaps, some answers would have emerged. Life-stories of Pandita Ramabai and Rakhmabai present different patterns of struggle.

S.J. Joshi, the writer of the original Marathi novel, has taken care to research the area before taking up the work on the subject based on the biography of Dr. Anandibai Joshi. This novel will remain for quite sometime the only near authentic account of her life in English. The novel was translated into Gujarati in 1973. It is heartening that *Stree*, an imprint of Bhatkal and Son, has brought out an abridged English translation, which will be of interest to all readers and scholars trying to understand Indian society and the status of women in India. The book is important as it helps us to have an insight into the troubled and turbulent times of the nineteenth century when oppressive social traditions, and discriminatory customs regulated the institution of marriage and when strong prejudices against women's education dominated the scene.

Reviewed by DR. USHA THAKKAR, Head of the Dept. of Politics, SNDT University.

POISONED BREAD — TRANSLATIONS FROM MODERN MARATHI DALIT LITERATURE, edited by Arjun Dangle; Orient Longman, Bombay; 1992; pp 328; Rs. 165.

One of the most heartening developments in India during the last three decades has been the explosion in the writings of the depressed among our community. Dalit literature has come of age and in Marathi it is recognised as having its own legitimacy and special place. One does not know if other regional languages (except Kannada) have anything similar. Among the Dalit writers are some of the most pre-eminent of poets, short story writers



and above all autobiographers.

Indians, like readers of *Freedom First* who have an awakened social conscience should not miss reading *Poisoned Bread* for it tears off the curtain that divides many of us from the raw life of the other half. It will be difficult to think of another collection of writings like the ones in this volume. There are poems, stories, extracts from autobiographies, public statements and analytical articles on the problems of the depressed classes.

The reader will do well to begin with the fragments of autobiographies which unfortunately are tantalisingly too few and the extracts too brief. Marathi has a long tradition of autobiographical writings; the recent ones of the dalits in this genre add glory to this tradition. Not only men but women too have written autobiographies and two of those are represented by extracts.

Both the autobiographies and the stories are a searing experience. They seem not merely to be literary creations but a cry from the heart, anguished and, more often than not, written in blood. The women's autobiographies seem to have had their recollections collected in tranquility. The stories as well as autobiographical extracts are set both in urban surroundings and in rural areas — but all of them are one unrelieved wretchedness and squalor. That poverty is de-humanizing is well known but when it is combined with centuries-old prejudices and contempt, it can cumulatively be degrading to the recipients of blows, insults and humiliation all the time, perhaps without a parallel anywhere on earth.

Reviewed by
R. Srinivasan

The upper castes with one notable exception (handsomely and fulsomely acknowledged) seem to resent the very presence of the dalits unless they be in a cringing, suppliant posture — starved and made to work hard for long hours under the scorching sun. They cannot tolerate attempts at self improvement and would not want a new generation to educate itself or to rise up socially. They would prefer them to grovel in their degradation and do the bidding of the upper castes — Caliban like hewing wood and drawing water. They would not mind scheming against their attempts at elevation, and would set fire to their homes. The aspirations of the lowly are but undeserved pretensions to them. How dare they put on airs?

Social and economic degradation is pointed out as leading to the corrosion of individual relationships and family ties. The one relief is in getting uproariously drunk and forgetting the surroundings. To survive, the older generation cringes and wheedles out concessions from the upper castes wallowing, all the time, in a mood of cynicism. All of these are a put-up show, an apparent humility for sheer survival. It is their economic condition that degrades them and social sanctions only add to their misery.

While the older generation is entrapped, the younger look for ways out. One is to run away to urban areas where the city air makes a man free. Here again while there are opportunities for earning a living, the social surroundings of the slum pull them down all the time. The worst victims in all these are the women who are abused by their husbands, exploited by their relatives and lustfully sought after by their neighbours and the upper castes. Their sex becomes the cross which they have to bear. The young have to pay the very heavy price of all round degradation.

The city therefore offers succour in a very limited sense. The other ways are education and organization. Attempts at education are thwarted individually by snide asides and remarks from teachers and by the placing of deliberate

obstacles. Yet, many clear these hurdles and are successful. The autobiographical narration by two women of how they succeeded warm the cockles of one's heart. Organizations of the dalits, and the threat of organization seem to frighten the upper castes. Unlike the older generation which sees no way out from an impossible complex social trap, the younger ones are in revolt and this is expressed either openly, covertly, or through veiled defiance. Some of the stories and the autobiographies record these memorably. To the new generation of dalits even the rudimentary education that they have had, opens up new sensibilities. They cannot tolerate the inhuman humiliation visited upon their elders for no fault of theirs.

In all these, the genteel civilized norms of behaviour and social intercourse are all thrown to the winds. Moral sanctions disappear in grinding poverty which degrades people all the time. The speech is rough and randy; references to genitalia and primary functions are not something to be camouflaged in obscure circumlocutions. There is an air of defiance and an atmosphere of revolt. All these are for the good — for, far too long have they been kept in abject subjection.

The book captures these very well indeed. We cannot afford to be deaf to the subterranean rumblings any more. Strongly recommended reading.

Reviewed by DR. R. SRINIVASAN, Editor
Freedom First.

'Great Reading'

Frankly speaking, only a few months back I came across a copy of 'Freedom First', managed to read some of the articles and found them of very high standard both contentwise and stylewise. 'Freedom First' makes great reading and I would heartily recommend it to my friends.

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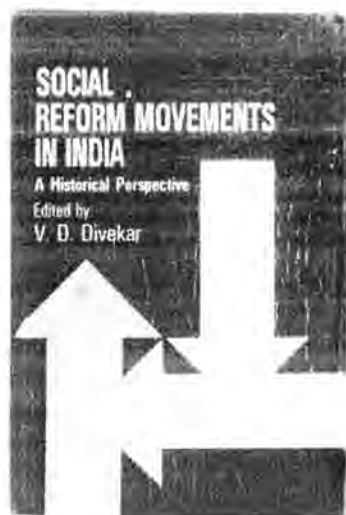
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SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN INDIA edited by V.D. Divekar. Popular Prakashan Bombay; 1991; pp 119; Rs. 150



The slim volume under review is a collection of eight papers presented at a seminar held to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Bharat Itihas Sanshodhan Mandal, Pune in May 1986.

It is a comprehensive attempt to sum up the social reform movements of India in the 19th and 20th century — but it is extremely selective in its geographical ambit. Some essays which are the nature of surveys help to put the theme in perspective. Debroy's 'Social Reform Movements in Bengal' is based on secondary sources and does not offer any new insight. Dr. K. Shripati Shastry's article 'Attempts at Social Reform in Karnataka' concerns itself mainly with the reform activities in the princely state of Mysore. Concentrating on the problem of the *panchamas* (the untouchables) it is sketchy in its scope. B.R. Sunthakar's article 'Social Reform Movements in 19th century Maharashtra' is strong on the material compiled but rather weak on analysis. Nevertheless, these articles give a general sense of perspective to the average reader.

Although Prof. J.V. Naik's article is based on a single document: *Dharmavivechan* by Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadar, it makes a valuable contribution by demonstrating how Dadoba advocated religious and social universalism based on rationalism and equality. While comparing this

document with Rammohun Roy's deistic treatise (*Tuhatal-ul Muwahadin*) the author aptly shows how it became a manifesto of the two early reform movements in Western Maharashtra: The Manavadharma Sabha (1844) of Surat and the Paramahansa Sabha (1849) of Bombay. He also advances the thesis that it provided the theoretical basis to Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj.

Reviewed by Arvind Ganacharya

Dr. Y.D. Phadke, taking up where Professor Naik leaves has succinctly pointed out the distinction between an essentially socio-religious *satyashodhak* movement and the political non-brahmin movement of the early 20th century. The former transforming itself into a movement which increasingly got involved in electoral politics. Thus, power which was sought in the initial stages as a means to promote the cause of the masses very soon became an end in itself.

Dr. Ashok S. Chousalkar in his paper mainly assesses the contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in giving the Dalit

movement a separate identity and in safeguarding their political interests during the national movement. His observations regarding the role of the Congress in the Gandhian era, at times tend to become lop-sided. The last article by Kumud Pore dwells on 'Women and Social Reform Movement in India'. The article lacks focus and gives information which is common knowledge. Often, the author indulges in generalizations.

These papers are prefaced by an introduction which attempts to set out some of the theoretical issues relevant to the study of social reform movements. The editor makes an erroneous distinction between social change and social reforms with the former being 'more natural' and gradual and the latter having an element of 'deliberate action on the part of a few in the society.' This point is debatable.

A general volume comprehensively covering social reforms is needed and within its limitations, the present book fills a vacuum. It will be useful for scholars and for institutions.

Reviewed by PROF. ARVIND GANACHARYA who teaches at the Ismail Yusuf College, Bombay.

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Freedom First affirms that much of the unrest and ferment in our society is a direct result of excessive State intervention in the day-to-day lives of our people. While the people's initiative has been stifled the

country is in a state of stagnation. The government that enforces the rule of law while India does not need is a model for government - the system so far that has led to improvisment, insecurity and instability.

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Since July 1990, the present Government in Delhi has clearly demonstrated that it does not wish to be "meddlesome". But this demonstration welcome though it is, comes not from conviction but from the compulsions of saving India from bankruptcy. And anything that does not come from conviction could easily change.

The beneficiaries of 'Nehruvian Socialism' — the corrupt politicians (in all political parties), the corrupt bureaucrats, the corrupt businessmen, the corrupt and power hungry trade union leaders have much to lose. They will not give up their fight easily. They will (indeed they already are trying to) fool the people into believing that the current problems of high prices and unemployment are due to the liberalisation process when in reality it is a direct consequence of 40 years of 'Nehruvian Socialism.'

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