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INDIA
Secularism Reconsidered

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93AS0421C Bombay NAVBHARAT TIMES in Hindi 26 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Mastram Kapoor: "What is Termed Secularism"]

[Text] It is said that man becomes careful after he has been kicked around. Society also learns after kicks and shocks. The whole nation was shocked by the 6 December incident and the events that followed it. This shock was felt at the national level. Are there any important lessons for us in this sad incident?

Our Constitution was written by people who were considered the most talented persons of that time. Not only this, these talented persons were above having any vested interests. The most important thing for them was the welfare of the nation. Therefore, they collected good things from constitutions from all over the world and included those in our Constitution. There were many aspects that other countries had developed after years of struggle and difficulties. These include such rights as the right to vote for all adults, equal rights for men and women, fairness to all social groups, and secularism. It was appropriate for the writers of our Constitution to include these ideas in our Constitution. Humans have made progress by learning from each other. It is not necessary that every nation go through the process from which a specific idea developed. For example, the struggle for equal rights for all citizens started with the Magna Carta in England, and about seven centuries later women and all citizens received the right to vote there. In our country, all citizens received this right suddenly through the Constitution!

However, it is not easy to learn from indirect experiences. One has to think hard for it. If it were easy, human beings would have no problems. Literature is an infinite source of knowledge. However, awareness cannot be attained without real experience. The concepts of social equality and secularism are included in the Constitution, but our society will understand them only after going through some difficult learning phases. We have been puzzled for over 45 years over social justice, and had to suffer the terrible riots that occurred in 1990 after the Mandal Commission report. The people will be able to understand it better now after the Supreme Court decision. The idea of a secular nation appears to be going through similar phases.

What does this concept mean? We have to study the history in order to understand it. The word "secular," which we use for "religious impartiality" here, was used to depict worldly or mundane aspects. The worldly aspects of the government have been emphasized in Indian culture. However, our Constitution writers did not limit the meanings of "secular" to worldly aspects; they expanded it. We will not be able to understand the real meanings until we understand the history of our freedom struggle. Lal Krishna Advani and other leaders of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] family call the secularism mentioned in our Constitution "pseudo secularism." The reason for this is that the RSS family has never participated in the independence struggle. Actually, it has opposed it.

The idea of a secular nation emerged in Europe after the long and destructive struggle between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. When these two factions of the Christian religion became tired of fighting with each other, they felt that neither of them was going to win in the end. In the Westphalia Agreement, they decided that powers should be divided between religion and government. The government was to be considered supreme over mundane things and religion over religious things. Thus, a secular state was established unanimously after going through a lot of bitter experiences.

We have adopted this concept, just like many other concepts, from Europe. However, we have expanded it according to our unique experiences. Our leaders have believed from the beginning of the independence struggle that we would give equal rights to Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Parsi, and other religious groups, and that no discrimination would be practiced because of religion. Therefore, they fought for a non-sectarian political system. The British tried hard to discourage this concept of the national campaign by encouraging such factional groups as the Muslim League Party. They worked with the Muslim League and introduced the idea of having two nations; however, our struggle for independence under Mr. Gandhi strictly followed non-partisan politics. Mr. Gandhi had to bear a lot of negative criticism over it. When he joined the "khilafat" [resistance] campaign, his goal was to defeat the British efforts to prove that the Congress Party campaign was a Hindu effort. This made both the Muslim League and pro-Hindu elements angry. Gandhi was opposed even within the Congress Party; however, he remained adamant on his decision. The British government gave special privileges first to the Muslims and later to other factional groups, and finally divided the nation. Our national campaign for independence has never accepted this kind of politics, and the leaders of our nation gave equal rights to all religions when they wrote the Constitution. They also made provisions to assure that no one is discriminated against because of religion. Mr. Gandhi had to sacrifice his life in these efforts.

Thus, the word secular in our Constitution means mundane as well as non-sectarian. At one time, we used the word "non-communal" for "secular" in the Hindi language. Acharya Narendra Dev, the pioneer political writer in Hindi, has used this word several times in his articles. The point is that "secularism" has generally meant worldly or mundane and non-communal. This gives neither a distinctive place to one religion nor neutralizes others. In Europe, where the word "secular" is used to mean mundane, several countries have national or official churches, such as the Church of England. India, because of its experiences during the

struggle for independence, did not make any religion or group the national religion. Therefore, the idea of a Hindu nation cannot be allowed constitutionally. Also, our secularism is confined to government, and has nothing to do with the "other world." This means that the government can neither give false hopes to the people about the great things that will happen in the other world, not can it blame the sins of past lives to justify poverty and famine. It can neither leave a criminal at the mercy of God's justice nor can it exempt religious leaders or places from following the laws. At the same time, it recognizes the people's right to practice their religion. It does not interfere in their beliefs and institutions. All religions are given equal freedom. However, if the basic rights of the people are interfered with in the name of the religion, the government can intervene.

Communal parties and groups have tried to ignore this idea of a secular state. The RSS family parties have called it "pseudo-secularism." This idea has been used like chants and repeated following Goebbels' principle. As a result of these efforts, this lie is being accepted as truth not only by naive people but also by some of our intellectuals. The idea of secularism was ridiculed during the Ayodhya campaign when some leaders declared religious beliefs to be above the Supreme Court's orders. This campaign trespassed all the limits of ethics and civilization. (The speeches made by the religious women and men, statements issued by the leaders of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad], and Bajrang Dal, and the actions of kar sevaks confirm this.) Ignoring the Constitution and the orders of the Supreme Court is the limit of imprudence. They went so far as to say the holy men were above court's orders. The truth is that the leaders of the Ayodhya campaign had invited trouble just like Shisupal by swearing too much.

The newspapers and other media brought this wrong conception of secularism to the gullible public. Not only Indian language newspapers, English language newspapers are also responsible. Even the literate people did not get the real meaning of secularism. Our education system, which is geared to preparing people for jobs, could not explain the real meaning to students in schools and colleges. A major segment of our educators also have a superficial understanding of secularism. All these give encouragement to the communal elements (both Hindus and Muslims), and they have become so bold as to challenge the Constitution.

We are all equally responsible for the tragic situation resulting from the Ayodhya incident. Neither any political party, nor the journalists or intellectuals, nor the general public is innocent. The Congress Party is directly accused of participating in it because it unlocked Babri Masjid and permitted the laying of the foundation stone. The government of P.V. Narasimha Rao had so much faith in the BJP and VHP that it did not make any preparations to control the situation in case something went wrong. It allowed the kar sevaks to run at will for 36 hours. The home minister did issue threatening statements on a daily basis, but he did not do what he should have done. The roles of Janata Dal and the left-wing parties were ridiculous. They wasted two valuable days of the Lok Sabha demanding the prime minister's resignation, and never even thought about passing a resolution condemning this situation. It would have passed if they had presented it on the first day in the Lok Sabha when the BJP leaders were in shock. V.P. Singh, who had deceived Mulayam Singh of his own party in 1990, and who had made secret agreements with the BJP, accused Narasimha Rao of making secret deals. Some people mentioned that V.P. Singh looked pleased after the mosque was torn down.

Now the unanimous view is that the government must rebuild the mosque immediately. The Congress government is also saying something to this effect. This, however, would be against the principles of secularism. The government should not undertake such a task. The Babri Masjid Action Committee has agreed to take back its claim if it is proved that the mosque was built over the temple. The government should work with the U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] government and ask the Supreme Court to make a decision over this issue under Article 138 (2). The Courts should excavate the site under its supervision and decide whether this was a temple or a mosque. It should hand it over to the Hindus if it was a temple, if not then to the Muslims. They can build a new mosque if they so desire and some financial aid can be given to them. This is the only solution to this problem.

Secularism Said Difficult To Define, Understand

93AS0421B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 30 Dec 92 p 4

[Editorial: "Secularism Upon a Touchstone"]

[Text] In our country, secularism and factionalism have never been properly defined or tried to fit into various criteria. As incidents happen, some are called secular and some are called communal, and only one's own side is presented. Recently, the BJP [Bharatiay Janata Party] leaders have started to use the words "pseudo secularism" in their speeches and have accused the Congress Party of following a policy of pacification. The Congress Party, on the other hand, has always supported unity of secular forces against factionalism. After the Ayodhya incident, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, who is also the president of the Congress Party, invited all secular organizations to unite in order to defeat the factional groups. The left-wing parties were helpful in the beginning; however, when they saw their political influence diminishing, they decided not to cooperate with the Congress Party over this issue. Recently, former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, at a press conference in Kanpur said, while commenting on the prime minister's invitation to secular forces to unite against factional groups, that the Congress Party should first define secularism. Until a clear definition is given, one cannot take sides. It is clear that secularism and communalism have

not been defined effectively. Therefore, it is important to discuss this issue and establish an acceptable definition.

As for starting a debate on this burning question, the Congress Party at the Center should take the initiative. The Congress Party passed a resolution at its convention this year accusing the BJP of encouraging factionalism among the majority religious group members and other non-BJP parties for doing the same among minority groups. The resolution said that these parties have encouraged the growth of factionalism in one form or another, while the Congress Party has fought factional groups all by itself. We have to admit the fact that political parties have tried to incite factionalism in order to realize their political and other vested interests. However, not all agree on exactly what factionalism is. The same is true about secularism. This word has been used a lot without much attention to its meaning. The English word, "secular" has been translated into Hindi whenever it is used in our Constitution. In Western countries, it was used to reduce religious influence on governments. The purpose was to stop the government from discriminating against any group because of religion. The other purpose was to prevent a religious leader from influencing the government by advising it. However, the citizens had the basic freedom to practice their religions. In this situation a citizen may also be secular. Here, "may also be" indicates that the picture of secularism did not emerge clearly there, either. Secularism was also adopted in India; but we still have to define it, as is clear from the statements being issued these days.

The fact is that defining factionalism and secularism instantaneously is difficult if not impossible. At present, we cannot say that any political party in our country is based totally on a religion. There are legal restrictions. Therefore, we cannot call anyone communal in such a situation. Accusations and counter-accusations at the political level to strengthen one's side is another story. It is deplorable, however, that political parties have used religion and factions improperly. How can we call religious practices, religious beliefs, and faith inappropriate. Even those who are not religious have some kind of faith in one form or another, and we have to respect that. All in all, this becomes an issue only when we call disputes among citizens communal for political reasons, and baseless propaganda in the name of factionalism is used to unnecessarily embellish the issue. We have to rise above this mentality to start discussions and define clearly such themes as secularism and factionalism.

Analyst Calls For Rethinking of Secularism

93AS0420A Varanasi AJ (Supplement) in Hindi
27 Dec 92 pp 1, 3

[Article by Muteshwar Pandey: "It Is Necessary to Reconsider Secularism"]

[Text] The corruption and separatist feelings embedded in the politics of votes and power is prevalent everywhere now. The hurriedly prepared reservation policy has pushed society to the brink of caste feuds. We hear about the heartrending news accounts of suicides of promising young women and men who oppose this policy. At the same time, artificially produced communal tension is spreading everywhere. People all over India are greatly distressed at the genocide being committed over the torn structure of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi and the riots that followed it. This genocide was planned by the politicians according to their vote count.

The question arises: Since independence, we have been continuously talking a lot about unity, secularism, communal goodwill, casteless society, and social justice. Then, why are we going in the opposite direction? We definitely must have blundered somewhere. Either, we are not fully sincere about these ideals, or we have a wrong or distorted conception of these high ideals. Our political leadership is concerned only with election policies and vote counts. The goal of every government and political action is to protect petty political interests. They are constantly worried about their vote banks and forming vote bank coalitions. They believe that only the Muslim community can be the largest source of wholesale votes because the Muslims generally make their religion the basis of their decision to vote, whereas the Hindus' votes are divided by castes and languages. Thus, these political leaders try to spread the fear of "majority community" and "Hindu aggressiveness" in the guise of secularism and try to fan the fire of Muslims' communal feelings. At the same time, in order to get the Hindu votes, they try to incite feelings about castes, language, and regions.

The truth is that their "secularism" is nothing more than snubbing the Hindus, and this practice has always been very negative in nature. They are not ashamed of forming coalitions with communal, linguistic, regional, and religious groups. While cursing the "majority group" and "the Hindu aggressiveness," these zealot agents of "false secularism" forget that, during the extremely violent atmosphere created by the partition of their motherland, this very "majority group" not only allowed these minority Muslims, who were the cause of this partition, to remain in their homes, but also included the ideal of secularism in the Constitution of independent India. These Muslims who were living on the piece of earth that is called "India that is Bharat" were in the forefront in demanding establishment of Pakistan. They ignored the wishes of their Hindu brothers and bargained with the British imperialists and wounded our country by dividing it in the name of religion.

These fake secularists forget that it is the Hindu tradition and Hindu mentality that they are always damning that is keeping India on the ideal of secularism, in spite of all this brutal atmosphere in our nation and abroad. Since India's independence 45 years ago, and repetition of the "song of secularism" day and night, it is the Hindu society that is supporting "religious neutrality." The number of people in the Muslim society who want religious neutrality can be counted on the fingers of one

hand. There is no doubt that some Muslim brothers are sincerely devoted to religious fairness, both in words and actions. However, they find themselves ineffective and isolated in their community, because most of the Muslim society supports fundamentalism and does not let them make any progress in their effort to reform it. It is clear from the notorious "Shah Bano" case and Iran's announcement of condemnation of noted writer Salman Rushdie. Religious fairness cannot be practiced unilaterally. We should not forget the fact that our national leadership has been tackling this difficult problem since 1885, when the Indian National Congress was born. They wanted to know how to encourage the Muslims to help their Hindu brothers in the struggle for freedom. Even influential and truthful leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru failed in getting the support of Muslims. Only a handful of Muslims helped them. The 1946 elections were held just to get the answer to the question of whether India should be divided or remain one nation. In this election, 99 percent of the voting Hindus supported "one India," and more than 95 percent of the Muslims ignored such nationalist leaders as Maulana Azad and voted in support of Jinnah's demand for Pakistan.

After independence, the British imperialists followed their "divide and rule" policy, and in the process of building Buddhist foundations, changed the meaning of the word Hindu from its original geographical and cultural meaning to a religious meaning. This way, they put it in the same category as organized and expansionist religions like Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is the name of a long and unending process which gave a common cultural identification to the various people with different backgrounds who live in the huge landmass. This historical process known as "Hindu" or "Hinduism" is the essence of nationalism in India. The historical development of the masses of people known as Hindus was not based on a religion; it developed on the principle of "unity of different races and people."

Everyone knows that the feeling of nationalism can be initiated only when every citizen has a feeling of ownership and pride about their forefathers and cultural heritage and love for their motherland. Only then are we pledged to lay down our lives to protect our motherland. However, the politicians practicing the politics of votes and intellectuals who support religious impartiality have not tried anything in this direction. If religious impartiality means showing equal respect to ceremonies of all religions, then why did we not ask the Muslims whether they agree with this principle? Only recently, Muslims all over the world welcomed the death sentence passed on Salman Rushdie. What does this point to? The Muslim problem has been the main hurdle in our lengthy independence struggle, and the politics of independent India has been hovering around it since the partition. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole Indian political system is mortgaged to the wholesale votes of the united Muslims. Various political parties are blindly competing for these wholesale votes. The Hindu community is fully patriotic; however, it is divided by castes, languages, and regions. Therefore, it cannot attract the vote buyers when compared to the joint Muslim vote. Therefore, the Hindu population is facing the old question of "Muslim identity" that was transformed into the doctrine of nationalism before independence and pushed the country into the deep chasm of division. We cannot deny the fact that the separatist campaign in the Kashmir valley is the sequel to the story of India's division.

Why is the campaign to build Ram Janambhoomi temple in Ayodhya being transformed into a questions of "temple versus mosque" and "Hindu versus Muslim?" What other reason did Babar have but to insult the vanquished? Was not this action an insult to the ancestors of today's Indian Muslims? Why are these phony secularists inciting the present generation of Indian Muslims to oppose the national demand to build a temple at that place? Why are they being encouraged to identify themselves with Babar, a foreign invader, instead of with the Indian national, Ram? According to Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Ram was the best representative of Indian thought and not just a religious leader of the Hindus. Do the religious neutrals really believe that the existence of thousands of monuments that are the living proof of the atrocities committed by the foreign Muslim invaders are important for creating an environment conducive to communal goodwill, nationalism, and secularism? Is it not important, in order to augment real secularism and national unity, that the modern Muslim openly sever its ties with the invaders of the Middle Ages and take steps to symbolically declare his separation from them?

It is unfortunate that the hint that it would rebuild Somnath temple that was given by the first Indian cabinet was not understood properly by the Muslim leadership. However, our phony secularists used their whole energies in encouraging the Muslims to oppose any such demand, instead of helping them ponder over it and join the mainstream. The left-wing intellectuals used their whole energy to prove that Ram was not human and Ayodhya was not his birth place. There is no evidence to prove that the present structure known as Babri Masjid was built after destroying a temple several centuries old. Moving this structure would be an attack on the Muslim identity. Even if we temporarily allow the idea that Babri Masjid should not be moved because several literary proofs are available in its support, what will we say about the thousands of other monuments that have undisputed proofs? Did these secularists take any initiative about them? Instead, they are digging into long Indian history and searching for a few incidents that can justify the carnage committed by the foreign invaders in the Middle Ages.

If these phony secularists believe that removing these monuments has no relation to our national pride and identity, they have to tell us what the need was for removing British statues and changing street names after independence? Why did the Soviet Union erect statues of Lenin and Stalin after the Bolshevik Revolution? Why

were many cities named after them, their bodies preserved, and their burial places changed into pilgrimages? And why are various former communist countries removing those statues after the failure of Marxism there? Obviously, because every nation considers it important to establish some concrete symbols to declare its new political or philosophical change. It is distressing that our Indian communist friends are neither willing to learn from the experiences of other nations nor are they trying to move away from the Marxist rhetoric.

The time has come for us to openly discuss words like "nationalism," "communalism," and "secularism," to define their meanings and connotations in the context of nationalism. I believe that, as long as the greater Indian society is divided over religion and caste, there will be no unity or progress. Therefore, at this time of national crisis, it is imperative that we rethink such concepts as "nationalism," "communalism," and "secularism," so that our nation moves out of the present irrational situation and moves toward unity and progress.

Ram Said Sketched Into Constitution

93AS0432I New Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS in English 11 Jan 93 p 7

[Quotation marks as published]

[Text] New Delhi—For the first time in Indian judicial history, a high court has used the sketch of Lord Rama figured in the original Constitution as adopted by the Constituent Assembly to define secularism, uphold rights of Hindu advocates to be heard, and allow them 'darshan' of Ram Lalla idols reinstalled at the Ayodhya site.

The 63-page verdict of judges H.N. Tilhari and A.N. Gupta of the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court in the case of the Vishwa Hindu Adhivakta Sangh Vs. the State of Uttar Pradesh, delivered on January 1 and available here now, states that by virtue of the sketch of Lord Rama in the Constitution, when it was adopted by the Constituent Assembly November 23, 1949, the Hindu god-king became a "constitutional entity and admittedly a reality of our national culture and fabric and not a myth."

The judges point out that the sketch of Lord Rama exists in the original Constitution among other illustrations given in the statute from chapters 1 to 22. Referring to the other sketches in the illustration, the judges hold that these indicate that "Shri Ram, Shri Krishna, Shiva and Guru Gobind Singh have been accepted by the Constituent Assembly as national figures and figures of national cultural heritage and adoration.

Reference has been made in one whole page of the judgment to the following 22 illustrations of the original Constitution: 'Mohenjo Daro period depicting the bull; vedic period depicting the scene from the vedic ashram or gurukil; epic period depicting the scene from the Ramayan of the conquest of Lanka and recovery of Sita by Rama; Shri Krisnha propounding the Gita to Arjuna; scenes from Buddha's life and Mahavir's life; Emperor Ashoka; Nalanda University; Orissa sculpture; Nataraj; Bhagirath's penance and descent of the Ganga; Mughal architecture; Shiva and Guru Gobind Singh; Tipu Sultan and Laksmibai; Mahatma Gandhi in the Dandi march; Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with other patriots; the Himalayas, desert and ocean.

The judges hold that through these illustrations the Constituent Assembly "expressed itself that these are the national and internationally recognized phases and features of our life, heritage, culture and the source of inspiration for adopting the concept of secularism."

Rejecting the Western concept of secularism, the judges point out that secularism in the Hindi version of the Constitution is stated as 'Panth Nirapeksh' or 'nonsectarian and noncommunal secularism'.

Accordingly the judges hold that "when the Hindus and the devotees of Rama claim rights to have a darshan and pooja of that deity whom the devotees worship as Bhagwan and framers of the Constitution treated as a great national figure of this country and its basic culture, it is something superficial to argue that the petition is not maintainable and should be dismissed on the ground of technicalities."

The Advocates Association had a claim and responsibility to the public at large to come forward and espouse the cause of many persons of weaker sections who could not come to the court to agitate their right enshrined under Article 25 in the Constitution of faith and religion and patriotism in the sense of love for the nation and for the national heritage and for all those great men, including Rama whom the people of this country worshipped as god and in the words of Iqbal as 'Imam-e-Hind' and who has been recognized by the Constitution makers.

The judges, having seen the illustrations, point out: "The Constitution shows that the Constituent Assembly accepted the history of Rama in relation to the places as a fact, a reality of national pride and cultural importance. One of us by the grace of God has got the privilege of having one of the copies of the Constitution as adopted by the Constituent Assembly... It is a document of historical importance and explains the concept of secularism and cultural heritage for the purposes of this case."

Constitution Said Not Purely Secular

93AS0427B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 7 Jan 93 p 1

[Article by Krishna Mahajan: "Ram's Name is Also in the Constitution"]

[Text] New Delhi, Jan 6. For the first time in the legal history of India, a High Court, in defining secularism and in permitting the Hindu lawyers to argue and to have

Lord Ram's "darshan" [holy sight], has leaned on references to Lord Ram contained in the Constitution. Justice H.N. Tilhari and Justice A.N. Gupta in their 1 January decision in the case of World Hindu Spokesman Sangh versus the Uttar Pradesh government said that, "In the Constitution, adopted on 26 November by the Constituent Assembly, by virtue of its being a written document, the existence of Lord Ram is not a mere fallacy anymore. Instead He has become a Constitutional fact and a reality of our national culture." The Justices have reminded us that the original Constitution contains descriptions of Lord Ram along with other examples. These descriptions are contained in Chapters 1-22. The Justices, citing other references, said that the Constituent Assembly had accepted with respect and dignity, "Lord Ram, Sri Krishna, Lord Shiva, and Guru Govind Singh" as national entities with national status and as legacies of the national civilization. The Justices have taken one full page in their opinion to cite these references. This contains references to 20 instances listed in the original Constitution: A picture of a bull from Mohenjadaro, a Vedic Ashram from vedic days or a scene from Gurkul, A scene from the epic Ramayana where God Ram is shown setting Sita free after his victory over Lanka, a scene of Lord Krishna's discourse to Arjuna on Gita, a scene each from the lives of Gautam Buddha and Lord Mahavir, Emperor Ashok, Art from the Gupta period, a scene from the court of Vikramaditaya, Nalanda University, the sculptures from Orissa, Natraj, dedication of Bhagirath and the piety of holy Ganges, Akabar and Mogul architecture, Shivaji and Guru Govind Singh, Tipu Sultan and Maharani Lakshmibai, Gandhi in Dandi march and Naokhali, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and other patriots, the Himalaya, the deserts and the oceans. The Justices have said that, through these depictions the Constitution itself confirms these subjects as nationally acceptable and that the cited references constitute our national heritage, our national life, and our legacy. These serve as sources of our inspiration in the acceptance of the principle of secularism. The Justices have disregarded the Western concept of secularism. They said that in the Hindi translation of the Constitution the word secularism has been used to mean "equal tolerance." In our country secularism has been accepted in the sense of "not narrow and non-communal." Afterwards the Justices said that, "When the Hindus and the followers of Ram assert their right to his "darshan" and worship, and the fathers of the Constitution have already accepted him as a national figure representative of the original civilization of the land, then it is not true that this petition is not qualified for approval or that it should be dismissed on technical grounds." The Justices further said that it is the responsibility of the members of the spokesmen of the Sangh that they should come forward and represent the weaker sections of the society, who themselves cannot do so, to secure for them their rights. This right is described in the Section 25 of the Constitution. Based on these instances the Justices said that it appears from the Constitution that the Constituent Assembly had accepted Lord Ram's history, relative to locations, as a subject of real national pride and its importance as a fact of civilization. With the blessings of the God one of us had a copy of the Constitution approved by the Constituent Assembly. This historic document provides a description, for this case, of secularism and defines the term legacy of the civilization and culture. It is interesting to note that a few years ago the Supreme Court dismissed a petition favoring the public good at large. It contained an appeal to instruct all publishers to illustrate the Constitution with all depictions. The petition had argued that it is the real Constitution, not the one published in written form alone. Muhammad Abbas a resident of Lucknow, through his attorney Shakil Ahmed, has appealed to the Supreme Court to rescind this judgement of the Allahabad High Court.

Constitution Seen Inadequate

93AS0514A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 26 Jan 93 p 16

[Article by Manjit Singh: "People Need To Change the Constitution"]

[Text] After 43 years we are feeling the need to amend our Constitution. We elected a government system and began to dream about a prosperous India. However, after four decades, we want to stop and think whether the path we chose will lead us to our destination or not. Perhaps, we will end up in the center of the earth! Some people say that there is no problem with our Constitution, and our government system is fine too. The defect is in our character! This character flaw cannot be corrected by amending the Constitution; we have to change the people—from within and without.

When our Constitution was adopted in 1950, the people were full of zeal and enthusiasm because of our independence. The members of the Constitutional Assembly were all experienced and tested people. They knew India's weakness very well. They were not only interested in preparing a document for running the government; they also wanted to light the fire for social justice, rights, equality, and freedom in the mind of every Indian citizen. These words now belong in books only. The situation is so bad that everyone is saying whatever he wants and does not care about the Constitution. This defiance of the Constitution is forcing us to reflect over it. The religious politicians are complaining most of all. At one time, the Akalis burned the Constitution; another time, Shahabuddin accused it of being too pro-Hindu; and still another time, the holy men said that the Constitution gives special privileges to the minorities and is unfair!

The critics blame the Constitution for never gaving us equal rights. Some people have been discriminated against on the basis of religion and others because of their caste. The situation was not so bad in the beginning; however, we have eliminated all impartialities in the Constitution through amendments. The situation has deteriorated so much that most of the people have begun to believe that we must rectify the problem before it is

too late. Some are suggesting that we call a new constitutional assembly. Some believe that calling a new constitutional assembly is a very complex task, and suggest that a commission be appointed to study the whole Constitution and make recommendations. This commission should get opinions from intellectuals and politicians all over the country and make some decisions.

Various differing opinions are being expressed over the secular nature of the Indian Constitution. The word, "secularism" was not included in the Constitution in the beginning. Mrs. Indira Gandhi added "secularism" and "socialism" during emergency rule through the 42d amendment. These two words have caused new debates in India now. Lal Krishna Advani of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] calls this secularism, "pseudo secularism." In other words, the government is supporting religion and factions under the guise of being secular.

The word, "socialism" is being considered worthless, because now we have adopted the market economy. We have relinquished the policies to remove regional imbalance and have given permission to the investors to do their business and become rich. We have opened our doors to the multinational companies. Thus, the use of the word "socialism" is not appropriate here.

Secularism was discussed at length in the Constitutional Assembly. At that time, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedakar said that the word "secularism" was not included because our Constitution was not secular. It does discriminate against people because of caste, religion, and language.

It is a fact. Indian philosophy has a very different meaning of secularism than the West. The need for adopting secularism was felt in the West to end the increasing interference of the church in the government. They included the word "secular" in their constitutions in order to end the atrocious interference of the clergy. In India, however, religion has kept a separate place. Our government system was secular even in ancient times. The Rig Veda tells us about the liberal attitude of the Aryans about life. The relics found in Harappa and Mohan Jodaro indicate that the elements of secularism and goodwill were present even during the Sindh Valley civilization.

Emperor Ashok was a secular ruler. He respected all religions equally. Babar and Aurangzeb during the Mogul Period put a blemish on the feeling of cooperation and goodwill prevalent in Indian culture. However, Akbar knew that destruction of India's secular nature would result in his own destruction.

When Mohammad Ali Jinnah demanded that Pakistan be established by raising the slogan of two nations during the independence struggle, the fabric of our secularism was once again torn.

The next few years after independence passed peacefully. We arrived at the present point later when religious factionalism became strong. Rajiv Gandhi's submission to the fundamentalists in the Shah Bano case forced the citizens to think that we cannot even follow the equal rights laws. They wondered what the first promise of democracy was!

In our Constitution we recognized discrimination on the basis of language, caste, and religion. Articles 25, 26, 30 (1)(2), and 31 (2) provide religious freedom and special privileges. Article 30 (1) gives religious and linguistic minorities permission to operate educational institutions according to their preference. The provision in Article 30 (1) is to help religious and linguistic minorities protect their cultural identities. However, we have noticed that such minority educational institutions are abused politically. At the same time, the majority group is feeling that the government is following a policy of pacification.

The problem is not just about religious rights, or rather privileges; the influence of the government system is also decreasing. Our democratic institutions are becoming weak. All this is caused by the politics of votes and the increasing affinity toward dictatorship. We saw this face of dictatorship in the form of Indira Gandhi during emergency rule. Now some people are challenging the Constitution in the name of religion, and they seem to have full control over the government. The present governmental system is heading toward failure. The hold of our political leadership on our bureaucracy seems to be slackening.

The institutions that were to implement our Constitution have been becoming complacent during the last few years. The main reason for their inactivity is their being misused. The judicial branch was first ignored during the emergency. The Public Service Commission and the Election Commission were used for political and party interests.

Mr. T.N. Chaturvedi, the BJP legislator and a former bureaucrat, says that, if these institutions are not allowed to function, we will be in trouble. He says that these institutions have their duties and rights, but they need the support of the administration to do their duties. Our governmental system will become unreliable if we continue to ignore these institutions.

According to Vasant Sathe, a Congress (I) leader, a presidential governmental system would be the most effective. In this system, only a person with national-level character and personality can become the leader. The legislative system can continue even in the presidential system.

Ajit Singh, of the Janata Dal, supports having a new constitutional assembly and a commission to restructure the states. He states that many problems have risen because of the flaws in our Constitution. Therefore, he says, we need to call a new constitutional assembly. Ajit Singh believes that smaller states make progress faster. This was proved by Punjab and Haryana. The regional imbalance is also eliminated by this system.

Another fact supporting this search for a new course and a new constitution is that the Constitutional Assembly before independence was not called by India; it was formed according to a resolution passed by the Cabinet of Great Britain. The Constitutional Assembly was formed of Vidhan Sabha members. These Vidhan Sabha members represented only 11 percent of British India's population following the Indian Government Act of 1935. Smaller kings had influence and not the people living in their provinces. Not only this, the Constitutional Assembly had to write the Constitution within the framework of conditions given by the Cabinet Mission.

On 9 December 1946, 210 members participated when the Constitutional Assembly was inaugurated. All groups in British India were given representation. It was composed of 155 (160) Hindu members, 30 (33) scheduled caste members, 6 (7) Sikh members, and 6 (6) Muslim members. The number of Muslim representatives was lower because the Muslim League had boycotted the Constitutional Assembly in favor of their demand for Pakistan. Mohammed Ali Jinnah had kept trying to kill the idea of a Constitutional Assembly.

Thus, we learn that, even though our Constitutional Assembly had experienced and proven members, they had to work within the restrictions imposed on them. That is why Pandit Nehru said on 7 July 1946 that we have to call a revolutionary constitutional assembly in the future. Has that time arrived not yet?

Definition of Secularism Absent

93AS0514B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 26 Jan 93 p 16

[Article by Subhash Kashyap: "Dharmanirapekshata: Is not Defined"]

[Text] [Question] The so-called religious leaders are challenging the Constitution and are talking about not recognizing the Constitution. Is this not a dangerous situation?

[Answer] Not having faith in the Constitution is inappropriate in any situation. Our Constitution should be respected by every citizen of our nation. There can be differences over the Constitution, everyone has the right to express an opinion on it, and its flaws should be discussed. We have always reexamined the flaws in our Constitution and have made 71 amendments to date. We cannot say how many more amendments will be made in the future.

[Question] Is it not necessary to discuss the whole Constitution? Can we call a new constitutional assembly for this purpose?

[Answer] I think it is not possible to call a new constitutional assembly. There are both constitutional and practical problems. I believe that a constitutional commission should be appointed to find ways to remove the flaws in our Constitution. The commission should identify the kind of amendments that are necessary and whether these amendments can be made under the articles of the present constitution, as well as explore other alternatives.

[Question] Why are these so-called religious leaders talking about disregarding this Constitution? What are the reasons for their stand?

[Answer] I believe that religious people have no reason to complain about the Constitution. These are the politicians who are using religion as a medium. They want to gain power, whatever it helps—be it religion or caste or faction. I call such people power-dealers. I believe such political parties are guilty of creating this situation. Some politicians want to get into the government using religion, and some practice the politics of votes behind the facade of secularism.

[Question] The word "secularism" was added later to our Constitution and the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] calls it "pseudo secularism."

[Answer] There is no definition of secularism in our Constitution. It is hard to decide what secularism means to us if we study its meanings given in various dictionaries. The meanings in these dictionaries are not applicable to us. Our leaders define it as they wish, and that is our major problem. The second thing is that we did not have the word "secular" in our Constitution. It was added through the 42d amendment. This was discussed at length in the Constitutional Assembly, but was not included in the Constitution. Later, Dr. Ambedakar had said that this word was not included because he believed that our Constitution was not secular. Our Constitution is not secular because it recognizes religion and castes and provides special treatment based on these. The discriminations that were not present in the original Constitution were added later through amendments. Now if we consider the "all-religions-are-equal" concept, we will agree that there should be no discrimination because of religion. Is it true now? I do not think so. All kinds of discriminations are being practiced because of religion.

[Question] Do you not think it is necessary to reconsider secularism?

[Answer] If we really believe in democracy and the rule of law, all people should be equal in the eyes of the Constitution. Religion is one's private matter. No one should be discriminated against because of his religion. No one should be given special privileges, either. Nothing should be taken away from anyone over religion.

Meaning Disputed

93AS0514C Varanasi AJ in Hindi 21 Jan 93 p 6

[Article by Dr. Avadhanarayan Dubey: "Dharmanirapekshata: Surrounded by Disputes"]

[Text] The concept of secularism matured in Western Europe during the latter part of the Middle Ages. The Holy Aunk presented this concept to the world in 1846 in his book, Origin and Nature of Secularism. Aunk believed that using God, the human mind can do things just like one can solve arithmetic and geometry problems in this world. This is secularism. Thus, secularism is a product of life, humanity, and worldliness. According to Webster's Dictionary, secular is what is not bound by religion. A secularist is one who believes in mundane things and not in religion. According to the Oxford Dictionary, secularism means not protecting religion.

Religion has been defined in Indian culture as a system or way of life that helps human welfare and provides support to high values and ideals. Opposed to it, there are definitions of religion that have caused division among people in the world. One definition of religion in India is that whatever is written in the Vedas is religion and anything against the Vedas is sinful. Every religious group says the same thing about its religion. Therefore, we have to accept a definition of religion that is logical, tested, empirical, replicable, and scientific.

Believing in every word included in the Vedas, the Bible, the Koran, and other religious books is not secularism, because all these disagree. Secularism is the agreement of these books on specific doctrines. The ideologies on which they agree need to be examined objectively. Only then, can secularism be established. If we test various religious doctrines on this criterion, most of them will fail. All these differences, bloodletting, and violence are caused by these, and all strict religious people are unyielding about these doctrines. That is why secularism is not working. If we do not give up inflexibility, obstinancy, and blind faith, the dream of peace and brotherhood will remain a dream.

The Hindi translation of secularism in the Indian Constitution is not "dharmanirapekshata" but "panthnirpekshata" [non-sectarian]. This translation is appropriate from every perspective. However, it is surprising that our politicians use the word "dharmanirapekshata" instead of "panthnirpekshata." "Panthnirpekshata" and "dharmanirapekshata" are not synonyms, and they do not compliment each other, either. "Panth" and "majhab" [Urdu religion] are synonyms. The mistake we made was that we decided that "dharam" is a synonym of "majhab" and began to use it to mean "way of worship." "Dharam" is very different than "way of worship." The English word, "religion" does not mean "dharam" in Hindi. Unfortunately, it was translated wrongly and was used so widely that "neutrality on way of worship" began to mean secularism.

Secularism is essential for expanding democracy and nationalism in India. Keeping these ideas in mind, the goal in the Constitution was equal treatment of all religions. The word, "secular" was added to the Constitution through the 42d amendment. This gave it more importance. Article 25 of the Constitution is related to religious freedom. It gives equal rights to all citizens to believe in religion, practice it, and spread religion. Article 26 gives the right to establish institutions for religious purpose and make arrangements for religious practices. It is clear from these that not only citizens but the government has to practice secularism. These Articles also signify that India is not apathetic to religion. Keeping this in mind, Article 30 allows the minorities to establish educational institutions. The Constitution provides for all citizens to have the right to maintain their linguistic and cultural identities.

The Constitution also provides other privileges to the minorities to help them feel safe and make progress. Admission to educational institutions cannot be barred because of one's religion and caste. All citizens have the equal right to jobs. No discrimination can be made over religion, caste, or place of domicile. Similarly, no religious qualification is required for various political positions.

This provision makes India a unique secular state. It is clear that our government is not apathetic to religious issues. We do not have separation of religion and the government like in the United States. The government here takes interest in religious issues and treats all religions equally. That is why those in government try to use religion as a weapon to remain in power. Can we call India secular in such a situation? The two important aspects of secularism are religious freedom and equal treatment of religions by law. These are both practiced in India; however, special attention is given to the minorities, and it is practiced in a strange way.

All political parties accept that secularism does not mean atheism or agnosticism. It means that all religious groups have the liberty of practicing their religious beliefs, and the government's duty is not to interfere in it. Unfortunately, this definition of secularism is not acceptable to the Indian politicians because it interferes in the realization of their political goals and hinders strengthening their vote banks. All Indian political parties that consider themselves secular compete for the minority votes. Even worse than this is the practice of spreading fear among the minorities, especially Muslims, that they are not protected and that only a specific political party can defend them. Factionalism is encouraged by this practice, causing them to began to consider themselves unprotected. The Congress, the Communist Party, and the Janata Dal all consider themselves secular. However, the way they bow down and beg in front of mullahs, mowlvis, and the clergy is no hidden fact. The way the Congress Party ignored the Constitution and recognized the life-style of the Muslims as defined by the mullahs is also not a secret.

There should be no mention of religion in the Constitution. Until this is not done, India cannot be secular. We have seen the ghastly results of using religion in politics—our country was divided. We do not need to repeat that mistake. India must amend the Constitution and separate religion from politics.

The Indian Muslims must stop taking advice from Muslim countries to solve their problems. They are our brothers and their problems can be solved right here. The UN interference will only complicate these problems.

The important nations in the world like the United States and England have one law for all. The same is not true for our country. We have demands for separate laws for the minority religions and Shari'ah is brought in. We have seen in the Shah Bano case, how the government favored personal laws over the Constitution. It gave permission to the Muslims to marry four times just because their religion permits it. What reason do we have for not giving special legal provisions mentioned in religious books to the Hindus?

Meaning of Secularism in Indian Context Examined

93AS0419B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 14 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Devnath Prasad: "In The World of Indian National Politics"]

[Text] If a country is ruined economically, it can be rebuilt. If its national culture is destroyed, then reclamation of the country and the people would be very difficult. The politicians of today practice the politics of vote wearing the mask of nationalism. They have nothing to do with the nation and do not even want to learn about their nation's history.

Some new words have been propagated very aggressively during the last decade. These words include secularism and national unity. We will discuss these words now. According to the dictionary, the word for secular means "no religion." These leaders want to create such a society. What kind of well-being do they expect from a society without religion? This is a subject worth discussing. The world "dharam" has a wide range of meanings and it does not just connote religion itself. The ten important characteristics of humans combined are called dharam. In the Mahabharata, Kuruchhetar [battle field] was called dharamchhetar [religious field]. Some leader should tell us which religion that field belonged to. In the Hindu religion, Brahma is depicted as living in the whole universe. Thus, one starts with the family to the community and expands to the whole world. That is why the Hindu religion believes in "the whole world is a family."

The English word "secular" has been wrongly translated as "dharamnirpeksha." This word is based on European experience and was used to break ties with the Pope by the kings. Later, Marx's atheism supported this concept. This word "secular" has no importance in India. The word "secular" seems so petty when compared to the concept of "the whole world is a family." In India, our gurus have never interfered in government work and have given guidance only at the request of the kings. The gurus lived like hermits and without any interest in the worldly things. Ram's guru Vashishta, Chander Gupta's prime minister Chankya, Shivaji's guru Samarth Guru Ramdas are examples of this practice. Expecting to do a good job without the help of these gurus would be chasing a mirage.

Can a secular (religion-less) society be expected to help in people's welfare? The animals do not have religion. They do not have feelings like mercy, which is important in religion. They have the selfish feeling and not the feelings to help others. They do not have the feeling of protecting others. Where there is the feeling for religion, there is God. Only with sympathy can they have the supreme feeling. That is why Bhratari Hari paid his homage with, "I desire to help others." Our holy men have called it understanding relativity. Relativity is the step that we can use to reach our prime goal. Only God knows where this "lack of religion" will take us.

India was a nation even before the Vedic Age, and it has but one source of its culture. Even with our variety in languages and ways of life, our culture always has been the same, and cultural heritage creates a nation. Our leaders have forgotten this basic principle and are talking about national unity without involving nationalism first. First we must have a feeling for nationalism before we talk about national unity.

Indian philosophers have said that one must use the right word in order to achieve the right goal. There is uncertainty in achieving goals if one uses wrong words. The use of both words mentioned above is causing damage. The word is equal to Brahma and its misuse is harmful. It is said in Titrioupnishda and explained by Maharshi Patanjli in these words, "If a word is used wrongly because of wrong case or tense, it will not convey the real meaning. This [wrong] word could be a weapon that could hurt the worshipper. Varitrasur was killed by Lord Inder because of the wrong word used." All supporters of the nation should think about using the right word in order to achieve the right goal. Otherwise, the results would be the same as what we are seeing now. The situation is getting worse as these wrong words are used.

The nation's safety will be certain only with the feelings of nationality. Our goal should be to increase the feeling of nationality. Those who spread bad feelings in the name of castes and factions and those who talk about a separate country are selfish people and enemies of nationalism. They should be taught about nationalism. Teaching lessons about secularism and national unity to the people of our country who grew up with the feelings of nationalism would be a waste of time. These leaders do not teach the lesson of nationalism to those who need it and are teaching nationalism to those who are full of nationalist feelings.

Every Indian regardless of his religious beliefs, believes in the culture that is pure Indian. Religion is a personal faith, and culture is a conventional concept. The great men of India are the foundation of this nation. Ram and Krishna who taught us lessons in humanism are the ancestors of every Indian. These great men were born and spread the message of sublime humanity thousands

of years before the Christian, Muslum, Buddhist, and Jain religions were born. We do not understand why some people are allergic to these great personages. We cannot expect health until India follows the path shown by these great men.

Secularism Viewed in National Context

93AS0330D Varanasi AJ in Hindi 18 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Dharmshil Chaturvedi: "Secularism: In Theory and in Practice"]

[Text] Everyone from the prime minister to the common man freely uses the expression "atheism," and unhesitatingly tenders instructions to apply it. It appears that the expression has an aura of widespread misconception that requires clarification. Extensive misuse of the expression is resulting in a diminished influence and an increased misunderstanding among the public.

The preface to the Indian Constitution includes the word secularism. In the absence of any authoritative commentary on the Constitution in Hindi, the expression "atheism" was commonly substituted for the word "secularism." The other languages like Urdu, Farsi, and Arabic prevalent in the country do not have an equivalent word in use. The English word "secularism" does not properly convey the same meaning for which it is commonly being used.

Webster's dictionary defines the words to mean the one who is against religious education in elementary school, one who refuses religion, the one who believes that the first duty of the man is to limit himself to worldly duties and problems. Therefore, the meaning of "atheism" was entered as the principles of atheist and its education.

Alienation from religion is also indicative of communalism. How can a person who believes in Sanatan Dharma (Hinduism), Islam, Christianity, or any other religion be called secular? If we analyze the word "atheism" as commonly used in India, then how can a person who has faith in any religion be called atheist? The Constitution does not expect such from any citizen.

The Indian Constitution has no such intentions. And this is because the Preface to the Constitution itself has a provision for religious freedom. Subsequently, Articles 25 through 30 contain specific clarifications. Article 25 provides for the freedom to choose, practice, and follow the religion of one's choice; Article 26 provides the freedom to perform religious rituals; Article 27 provides for the freedom to contribute for the enrichment of any religion; Article 28 bestows freedom of religious education and presence during prayers in schools. In addition, Articles 29 and 30 contain provisions for the protection of a minority culture and its education.

What significance does secularism or atheism, the way it is termed in India, carry for the common citizen? In fact secularism or atheism constitutes a part of the state policies. In India it provides a safeguard, in as much as the Center or the state governments may not declare a particular religion the state religion, like Pakistan and Bangladesh have accepted Islam as their state religions. Several other Muslim countries follow a similar practice. It also checks the state in providing assistance for the uplift, progress, or development of any religion. The constitutions of Britain, the United States, and some other countries have the same restrictions.

Any citizen can be secular. In India the communists can be secular, but accepting faith and sect is a matter of individual decision based on his interests and beliefs. Pressure or persuasion in any manner is not advisable. The Central Government should not even have any expectations in this regard. The president of India, the prime minister, or any other person is free to worship in any temple, mosque, gurudwara, church, or any other religious establishment of his choice. The basis of this concept is that secularism is the state policy and not the policy of an individual.

The president, prime minister, or any other official, on the basis of this principle, cannot even instruct any citizen to practice secularism or atheism, because such would be construed as the propagation of a particular religion or sect. However, such can be launched from a political platform. But this also cannot be justified.

Recently while talking to a foreign reporter Prime Minister Rao had a realization about this practice and also mentioned the policy on equal tolerance and goodwill for all religions. This can be propagated as an appropriate civic duty. It is expected of all citizens to have equal tolerance for all religions, and to respect all halls of worship, religious scripts and books, and their priests in the same manner they respect their own.

Goodwill and tolerance for all religions is different from the word "atheism," generally used as a translation for secularism and secularism itself. This is an ideal for both the state and its citizens. India is a country of many religions. The ideals of religion are far more sweeping then the narrow view of a secularist. The worries of man are not limited to this planet or the problems of this planet. Millions of people stay away from robbery, rape, and other crimes in the hope of a better life in the heavens. Today crime is also rampant because this fear has ceased to exist. What does the society stand to lose, in the happiness of a person, if he gets lost for a few moments in unison with God, in thoughts of the almighty who has given him birth and has built this universe?

After solving the worldly and daily problems, man has enough time left at his disposal. If he utilizes this time for elevating his life in the next world and for spiritual uplift, his soul is enhanced and his belief becomes stronger. Yoga and other spiritual exercises are religious activities. Modern medicine not only accepts their usefulness and beneficial effects but also recognizes them.

Other religions probably have similar processes to inspire mankind and to keep mankind healthy, sturdy, and clean.

Compared to these, the secularists appear to be incomplete. But this is also a belief wrapped in its own happiness. Such was the "Charvak" philosophy in India. He believed in atheism and the physical comforts. There are other lines of thought also limited to worldly considerations only.

In matters of religion, government actions should be restricted to legal aspects only. The right to provide religious resources belongs to the courts. The right to enforce its decisions are vested in the judiciary from earlier days. The information mechanism of the Central and state governments should also practice and pronounce secularism. It can be said that even today the attitude of the Doordarshan in regard to certain issues is partial and irresponsible, and it does not come clean on enforcing secularism.

In this context, religious tolerance is a better word. This presents an ideal for the citizens. All religious people should have equal tolerance in them for the religious faiths of other people. Effort should be made to restrain the prevalent flamboyant, rousing, and meaningless practices, and religious activities should be encouraged. There are no controls on the method of celebration of various festivals. Even religious controls are nonexistent. There is a need to bring in remedial measures. This is an area for the religious leaders to ponder. They should tighten their grip to facilitate religious prosperity in a democratic environment.

The Bharatiya Janata Party tried to cash in on the Hindu votes, the Marxist Communist Party in the name of the Mosque tried to attract the Muslim votes. No one per se is secular in this effort. Every political party was exposed in the process. Several IC [Indira Congress] leaders also publicly demonstrated religious partiality. This is something that the party in power should not overlook.

There is still time. The government should not let secularism melt away. On the contrary it should stay within its boundaries. The entire issue of Ayodhya was a judiciary problem. Except for the issue of law enforcement, everything was for the judiciary to decide. The enforcement action should be such that no one can point fingers. There should be no sign of partiality, and no one should get hurt.

The states should enforce and announce the constitutional provisions honestly and firmly. In addition, working within the bounds of the Constitution, the enforcement effort should be conducted irrespective of the obstacles. This represents the correct use of secularism. The governments can be spared from indulgence in debates and other complications, if secularism is practiced with honesty.

Secularism Said Increasingly Irrelevant

93AS0414B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 17 Dec 92 p 4

[Article by Amit Kumar Malla: "Why is Secularism Losing its Influence"]

[Text] Where does secularism end and communalism begin, or when does secularism transform into communalism? Learning about this difference is as difficult as knowing when competition changes into jealousy or love into eroticism. That is why the policies implemented in the name of secularism reek of communalism. That is why Aurangazeb is not considered a communalist even though he destroyed places of worship of non-Muslims and levied religious taxes (Middle Ages India by Satish Chander). Meanwhile, General Irshad is considered a communalist, even though he never took such actions.

What is secularism? If we look at it away from traditional definitions, we can say that, if a government does not discriminate against anyone because of religion, it is secular. If a government discriminates against people because of religion or makes other demands, it is factionalist. This is the simple and easy definition; however, when we try to implement it, we find that secularism has many faces because of various contingencies.

We saw one type of secularism in the Soviet Union, where religion was considered equal to heroin and was discouraged. In practice, it was limited to homes and the four walls of places of worship (that is how it was in Russia until recently). The other kind of secularism was found in countries like Mongolia and Romania. Religions were permitted there as long as they did not interfere in the political system. This policy can also be called traditional. The third kind of secularism is practiced in the United States, where it has been clearly delineated in the Constitution that religion will not interfere in politics; however, in practice the "pressure group" of Christian clerics influences U.S. politics. The fourth kind of secularism is practiced in the United Kingdom where the religion of the head of the kingdom is the main religion, but secularism like that in the United States is also practiced. The final secularism is the kind practiced in India. Secularism here means, as Radhakrishnan explained, same treatment to all religions—the government must treat each religion equally. Two things can happen in this system. In one, the government can be totally inactive in religion and treat all religions equally; this is not happening in India. In the second, which is practiced in India, the government plays an active and appropriate role in all religions so that it can help followers of all religions.

Under this belief of "equal treatment of all religions" the government has treated all religious practices as acceptable and has tried to put them together. Therefore, the government publicizes life stories of great persons from each religion and provides welfare amenities such as water, transportation, and medical care for all kinds of religious fairs (such as Kumbh or Urs fairs). It arranges

pilgrimages to Kailash or Haj at subsidized rates. This way, the Indian treasury spends money on religious activities and uses government resources to help organize them.

Actually this "equal treatment of all religions" is nothing but harmony among all religions. However, every student of religious philosophy knows that religious harmony cannot be successful whether the system is Freys' one-ruler system (as described in M.N.S. Frey's Reason in Religions) or Hawkin's monolithic system (W. Hawkins's Christianity and the Faith of the Coming Civilization, HERBERT JOURNAL, vol. 54.) or Bhagwandas's one-religion theory.

The fact is that equal treatment of all religions, or harmony among religions, does not work because secularism is not a game of facts or numbers. Religion is not a material issue; it is spiritual. Each religious person loves all elements of his religion equally, just like a mother loves all her children. We cannot use the formulas of averages, comparisons, placement, and quality here. All are equally dear, important, and useful. Therefore, it is fancy imagination to consider a Hindu looking at Christ with the same feelings as he looks at Ram (Maulana Akhlak Ahmad Kasimi, Secularism: Religious Khadari, 30 Jul 69). Yes, he can give proper reverence to Christ. Additionally, religions promote communalism, because religion is based on beliefs and functions. While religion unites some people because of the unity of faith and practices, it unknowingly also separates people from those who follow different practices. There is one more problem. The book-based religions (religions who believe that their religious book was written by God) strongly believe that their book is the copy of the original which God has in his possession. Therefore, no changes in this book can be made by a human, because it is complete in itself. In addition, each religious book does not say the same thing in the same language and style. That is why Emperor Ashoka's religion, which was an effort to bring harmony among various religions, failed (Romila Thapar, Indian History, pp 62-65) and the effort made by Emperor Akbar during the Middle Ages also ended without any success.

This is what we know about the ineffectiveness of the secularism that practices equal treatment of all religions. Now we will discuss some of the Indian government's secular policies that are not only ineffective but also result in increasing factionalism. As is made clear in the definition of secularism, what should happen is the government should make the same laws for all its citizens. In other words, all people should be considered equal in government policies. However, while practicing its special brand of secularism, India started differentiating over religion while passing "personal laws." The government allowed all religious groups, except one, to have their "private laws." This definitely is against secularism and is suicidal to the government's own sovereignty. However, the government had a reason for doing that. In a democracy, government means support by the majority, and in practice it means that the government is elected by the majority religious group. In this situation, to maintain real secularism, the government must assure the majority religious group that the minority religions will have their religious, social, and cultural identities protected. However, the minorities believe that they will have these rights only when they have some specific privileges. Otherwise, their specific religious or specific social identity will not stay against the strong majority group (chapter on secularism in Sayyed's Indian Political System). Therefore, the minorities have been granted specific privileges in the Indian Constitution. If we take a look at the three Articles together, it will be clear that minority organizations that depend on government grants can work for religious education. The privilege of the minority religious group is clear here. Government money is spent on their religious education and they are exempt from some of the government rules about education.

When the government adopted this policy, it hoped that, when the minorities developed trust in the majority group, after spread of education, they would request on their own an end to their "specific difference." However, this did not happen even after implementing this policy for over 40 years. Actually, the contradiction within the policy itself is the cause of its failure. Can we expect the people who are receiving special privileges for receiving religious education to be secular? How can the government expect these groups to become modernized after making them even more fundamentalist by providing them "private laws"? Some persons believe that minorities (especially the Muslims) are tied to their religious practices too closely. That is why they do not accept modernization as do the Hindus. Even when it is not true, it is not appropriate to expect them to follow 20th century practices after tying them with traditional beliefs in the name of protecting religious, social, and cultural traditions. That is why minority intellectuals who consider themselves liberal believe that the government should consult their religious scholars before making changes in their religious, social, and cultural laws (Mushirul Haq, Islam In Secular India, p 102). The truth is that the above-mentioned policies have helped make the minority groups backward and helpless. This backwardness is what makes the minorities (Muslims) afraid of the majority as mentioned by Jawahar Lal Nehru in his book, Discovery of India.

A government is elected by the majority in India because of the democratic system here, and many groups influence the majority government. The fact is that it is expected in a democracy that groups with similar interests will work as one group to pressure the government. However, in a developing nation moving toward capital economy, these pressure groups are based on language, caste, and religion, instead of on economic interests. This happens because polarization does not happen over equal benefits in an under-developed nation. Thus, these pressure groups become communal groups.

Every adult in India has the voting right, like in any democratic country, and they exercise it during the

general elections held regularly. The candidate focuses on the voters in his own constituency during the elections. Therefore, he deliberately raises emotional issues in order to influence the people in his region so that he can emotionally blackmail the public. These emotional issues also include religious issues, and the candidate purposely changes non-religious and secular issues into religious and factional issues to keep the people's emotions high until the elections. All these are abandoned after the elections; that is why secularism is hurt and communalism increased after each general elections.

It is possible that the above analysis and conclusion appear conservative and uninformed to some people. However, if communalism continues to increase, instead of decreasing, even after 40 years of tireless efforts, one thing is certain: The efforts of 40 years have been ineffective and useless. If that is true then, "the medicine is wrong for this sickness."

Secularism Said Facing 'Formidable Challenge'

93AS0437C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 18 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by B. K. Banerji: "A Secular Life: Search for True Religious Values"; italicized words as published]

[Text] Most intellectuals are insisting on the spread of secularism to stem the tide of religious fundamentalism, politicization of religion and communalism. With the demolition of the Babari Masjid and the communal holocaust that gripped most parts of the country, their call has naturally become more persistent. But it is necessary to study the problem in a larger perspective and at greater depth to judge whether this approach will yield the desired results or we need to explore alternatives.

There have broadly been three types of secularists in the country: the Communists and Left intellectuals who condemn religion as being the opium of the masses; politicians and other intellectuals, including the majority of media persons who consider religion to be a private affair; and politicians who profess secularism to gather the votes of minorities and rival castes of Hindus but lack the intellectual conviction of the first two.

Upsurge

The first category should know that, with the collapse of Communism in the former USSR, there has again been an upsurge of religion there, including several exotic varieties from the East. Even during the heyday of Communism, Stalin himself had revived the Russian myth of the Holy Mother to harness the religious fervour of the masses for the defence of the motherland against the invading Nazi hordes. Man's religious flame cannot be extinguished; it is part of his existence.

The second category of intellectuals has a point of imperative need. The turmoil in which politicians have involved the polity in the name of religion justifies the view that religion should be separated from Statecraft to undo this evil. But is it practicable? The two main minority communities, the Muslims and the Sikhs, will not be able to separate the two in the foreseeable future; and they will, from time to time, become a part of the power structure in the States. Hindu secularists in power may hold the Hindu fundamentalists at bay; but without any secular ethos among the main minorities, the powers that be will frequently be called upon to yield to the fundamentalist demands of the latter. The ascendancy of Hindu fundamentalism will then be a natural consequence. The third category of secularists will then exploit these escalating conflicts to their own advantage.

As for the political perspective, it would be a mistake to view the "Hindutva" wave, or, for that matter, Islamic fundamentalism to be no more than the work of politics for vote and power. One hundred million have now awakened to the call of "Hindutva," whatever may be its intrinsic religious worth. More than 200,000 kar sevaks gathered in Ayodhya from many distant parts of the country, despite the uncertainties of food and shelter and risk to their limbs and life.

The untold misery that the demolition of the mosque has brought in its wake, the damage done to the cause of "Hindutva" itself must not blind us to the fact that most of the kar sevaks were inspired by a cause—to them a good, if not noble, cause. The source of this inspiration, irrespective of its merit, was the collective Hindu psyche which no secularist appeal can reach, except for the highly rational intellectuals among them.

Why not then count the top "Hindutva" leadership among the exceptions and expect it to divert its following to secularist paths? The aggressive among the leaders have their own psychopathy to account for their fundamentalist approaches, whatever political reasons they may give to justify them. Second, with the denigration of higher ideologies—Socialism, Communism, even religion, the last due to the onslaughts of materialism, consumerism and secularism—they have to fall back upon darker emotional issues, such as fundamentalism, ethnicism, caste and communal loyalties to hold their flocks together.

If those intellectuals propagating secularism practise the "essential values of religion which are the same for all religions," the character of the fundamentalist and possessive religious urges will change, concludes the author after analysing the roots of religious fundamentalism and the nature of Indian secularism.

Feedback

Third, the reality of the global village, consequent on the revolution of information technology, has now penetrated mankind's collective unconscious also, by way of the feedback process from the conscious. This should explain why the phenomena of irrational and sectarian upsurges are worldwide. Fourth, if similar upsurges at home are part of this worldwide phenomena, secularism is confronted with a formidable challenge.

Secularism has worsened matters in our part of the world because the overwhelmingly religious minded masses take it to be a negation of religion and feel compelled to entrench themselves in greater dogmatism for the protection of their faith. Not only in India, but in many countries of the East, religion is a way of life. Dr. Bhagwan Das had said: "The personal, domestic and social life of the Hindu is largely governed by the rules of what he regards as his religion. So is that of the Musalman. So of the Confucian." All art is at root religious art unless it is a reflection of individual pathology of alienation from religion. The political ideals of equality, fraternity, liberty, justice, even the secular one of equal treatment to all religions, are rooted in the essential values of religion. The plight of our Statecraft, without these values, is there for all to see.

The economy and religion cannot also be separated. In most large-scale communal conflicts, born of religion, the clash of economic interests largely determines the pattern of violence. Even otherwise, the excessive accumulation of wealth and resultant consumerism, whatever justification they may have in the economy of free enterprise and rapid growth, is interpreted by the masses, often unconsciously, as unethical and hence irreligious conduct. Religious fundamentalism would be a natural reaction to this among the masses. It has been said again and again that poverty among Muslims is one of the causes of their religious fundamentalism.

The havoc that politicians have wrought in the name of religion has engendered a revulsion among the intellectual elite, not so much against politicians as against religion itself. Secularism is an intellectual outlet for this revulsion; it has no psychic roots in the country except in the plural reverence for other religions, embedded in the essential (Vedic) Hindu religion itself. Secularism in the West has historical roots; the psyche has imbibed its values. The dominant note of rationalism in the culture of the West helped it to keep religion and Statecraft separate.

We are trying to transplant the ideology here, only to combat the politicization of religion and its extreme manifestation—fundamentalism. It cannot shape our politics or culture except for the highly Westernized elite minority among the Hindus. Even in the West, as the rabid pursuit of materialism came up against a large number of social pathologies, there has been a resurgence of religion of a bizarre variety.

It is frequently said that Hindu fundamentalism is a reaction to Congress minorityism, that is, unsecular and disproportionate political concessions to the minorities. True enough. But once it has been awakened and has built up political and economic ramifications throughout the world, it cannot be put back to sleep by a domestic secular policy only.

Expediency

Partly, secularism here may also be a matter of subjective expediency. The unstable nature of our secularism may be illustrated by a hypothetical example: if there were two main political alternatives before us—the religious which supported the present economic order and the other, egalitarian Communist, which sought to upset it—many of the secular elite would have veered round to the religious. A count of the capitalists and traders who have not been essentially religious but have nevertheless joined the "Hindutva" formations, primarily due to their hostility to Communism, should make the point clear.

All this should support a possible remedy. If our intellectuals who have been propagating secularism instead practise the essential values of religion which are the same for all religions—altruism, egalitarianism, and simpler life-styles—values that have nothing to do with fundamentalism and yet have full scientific and ecological validity, the character of the fundamentalist, violent and possessive religious urges, now being aroused and preyed upon by politicians for power, would change. If the number of such people attains a critical mass, a viable segment of society would tend to imbibe those values in its culture.

As Seaborn Blair has said: "Everybody wants to change the world, but nobody wants to change his mind." It is no wonder that revolutions forced upon the world do not endure.

Secularism Termed "Farce"

93AS0473A Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 21 Dec 92 p 7

[Article by Florine Roche: "Who is Secular?"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] Ever since the Mandir-Masjid issue came to the fore eight years ago many governments have come and gone, innocent blood has been shed and politicians have sworn in the name of a single issue—Ayodhya. But nothing fruitful has come about. That we have failed to settle this dispute peacefully is in iteslf a reflection of using religion for political gains. The genesis of this whole controversy lies in that magic word 'secularism' we are so proud of. My interaction with Hindus has revealed that Hindus per se are not against secularism. What they are opposed to is the appeasement of a particular section of the minority by politicians for narrow political gains, at their cost. Successive governments have accused BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] of being intolerant and anti-secular but they themselves followed a policy of hobnobbing with the minorities.

This cannot be denied. The politicians were ably aided by the English press and the 'intellectual secularists' who have been vociferous in criticising the BJP for playing the Hindutva card and destroying the secular fabric of the country. In their anxiety to exhibit their 'pseudo-secularism' to put it in Advani's own words, they have been perpetuating minority fundamentalism. Hence we find many Hindus advising the BJP on what should or

rather should not be done. These intellectuals are unanimous in their decision that the court verdict must be respected come what may. But headlines such as 'law above religion' or 'secularism under threat' etc., were conspicuous by their absence when the Supreme Court verdict was nullified in the Shah Bano case by the Congress government in power then. And the same Congress leaders now swear by the Supreme Court verdict.

While talking about the rule of law, it is all the more necessary that all people irrespective of religion, caste and creed are guided by a uniform code of law, which is not the case with India. But neither the press nor the intellectuals thought it fit to ask for a uniform code of law for its citizens, for the fear of being dubbed as anti-minority. Recently a hue and cry was raised over the singing of 'Vande Matharam' in Parliament which was dubbed as anti-secular. 'Vande Matharam' which is our national song had inspired the nationalist feeling of Indians during their fight against British imperialism. But a communal colour was given to this song which went unnoticed to a large extent. Here again the minorities and their patrons had their way. The wearing of caps in a school in Kerala is snowballing into another major contentious issue as fundamentalists have made their foray even into schools. Moreover they justify wearing caps in schools by citing the example of Sikhs wearing turbans in Punjab schools.

The high birth rate among a particular minority community is dismissed as silly and it is argued that children per female rather than per male should be taken into consideration. Having more than one wife is given a legal sanction under the cloak of religion for some. This is the scenario in a country like India where secularism is the other name for religious equality. But the reality in our country is that some religions are more equal than others. All these examples are considered as minor or silly when compared to the Ayodhya tangle. But these minor issues themselves are likely to threaten our unity and integrity with the passage of time.

The Congress has been trying to gain maximum political mileage out of this vexatious problem. But public memory is not so short to forget that the Congress itself was responsible for opening the Pandora's box when it unlocked the locks of this disputed structure. It is now over-reacting by bombarding us with discussions on Doordarshan on the Ayodhya problem. Whether these discussions on Doordarshan on the Ayodhya problem. Whether these discussions without involving the main party involved are serving any purpose is debatable.

Here is an example of the secularism of Kushwant Singh, the well-known columnist-writer. An annoyed Kushwantji accused the BJP of playing the religious card on the temple issue during one such discussion. That was expected of him. What however baffled me was his suggestion during an earlier discussion that the Prime Minister should apologise to the Akalis for Operation Bluestar. This is inspite of the fact that the Golden Temple was used as haven for terrorists and arms smugglers. In other words, he is suggesting the government to toe the fundamentalists line in Punjab on one hand but take a stern action against the fundamentalist BJP as he put it, on the the other.

Thus secularism in today's India is a farce. If the same trend continues one shudders to think about India's future.

Secularism Called 'Religious Neutrality'

93AS0473B Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 23 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by R. L. Nigam: "Defining Secularism"; italicized words, quotation marks as published]

[Text]

Neither a Negative Concept Nor Anti-Religion

Secularism has a history of its own, spanning centuries in the course of which it acquired its contemporary universal meaning and definition. It cannot, therefore, be one thing here and quite another elsewhere. One may outright reject secularism, but it is not open to any individual or country to give it a meaning fundamentally different from basic positions of secularism acquired through an evolutionary process.

This process has both a Latin and a Greek connection. In its Latin strain, secularism is seen to come from the word *saeculum*, meaning a very long time or generation. Later, under the Christian influence it came to be used for this world as distinguished from some other world or the world hereafter. With the growing influence and ubiquity of the Church, the word secular began to be used to demarcate things that lay outside the jurisdiction of the Church, so much so that even the priests working outside the monastic order were called the "secular clergy." Then, as the 'civic rule' (State) began to be separated from the ecclesiastical control and jurisdiction, the process was designated as "secularisation" which has even been deplored by the faithful, many of whom trace the contemporary corruption and degeneration of society to this process. They recommend desecularisation as the remedy for the regeneration and reclamation of the "Waste Land" that contemporary society is supposed to be. Thus, separation of state from Church and acceptance of this-worldly view of life became basic to secularism.

From its Greek connection, secularism receives its stress on the values of equality and rationality. In the middle ages, according to authentic accounts, "secularist" was very much the opposite of "cleric." The latter was a privileged and therefore a powerful and high-status person. As such, he necessarily belonged to a privileged and powerful minority. The secularist, on the other hand, was one from among the mass of the people, the *demos* (from which the word 'democracy' is derived) who did not have any special rights, status or privileges.

They were all equal. The fountain-head of its other value, rationality, was, of course, Socratic rationalism which inspired the idea of rational morality. Secularism, first and last implies a philosophical or psychological revolution, a revolution in the minds of men as individuals. This revolution means a fundamental change in the outlook of men, in their outlook on life, society, history, in fact, on everything that concerns man's life here, in this world. This change, in the nature of things, has to begin with the emancipation of man and his affairs from the stranglehold of religion. This is the essence of secularism. It must, however, be made clear beyond doubt that secularism is not a negative concept. As such, it is not anti-religion. It does not sanction, much less enjoin, jehad or crusade against religion. As a secular society must necessarily be a free, democratic society, men in it have to be free to have whatever god or gods they would and also to have what relations they would like to have with their preferred deity; free to propitiate and worship in their own chosen way with only one proviso that its practice must not spill into the streets.

In India, secularism has had a different course. The architects of Independent India, particularly Nehru, adopted secularism without defining it. This was perhaps inevitable given the political history of the nationalist freedom movement and the trauma and aftermath of Partition. It was left to the philosopher President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, to conceptualise the so-called Indian secularism. He did it in his characteristic style thus: "It may appear somewhat strange that our government should be a secular one while our culture is rooted in spiritual values.

"Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on the universality of spiritual values which may be attained in a variety of ways." It would have been fairer to use the word 'religious' in place of 'spiritual' as it is more in consonance with the elaboration of his statement that immediately follows. There, he says that "differences of doctrines, dogma and ritual are just symbols contradicting essential unity of all religions" which, he says, "is a political reality." As if to clinch the issue, he declares: "This is the meaning of a secular conception of state though it is not generally understood." In this view of secularism, State cannot but be religion-oriented in which all religions will be equal but the dominant one more equal in a multi-religious society like India.

Elsewhere, Dr. Radhakrishnan describes Indian secularism as "religious neutrality" which has been translated as *dharma-nirpekshata* which is a negative concept implying indifferent to or unconcern for religion. By way of improvement, therefore, our discourse has adopted a positive concept, *sarva dharma samabhav*, (equal respect for all religions). This was supposed to have been dug out of our own heritage, without indicating the precise source, in order to emphasise that the word secularism may have been borrowed from the West, its content was our own, all home-grown. It is not realised that such an idea could arise only in a situation of many warring religions and that our predicament proves that it has not worked.

Equal respect or equal unconcern for all religions is possible only for one who professes no religion. For, what one prefers one is bound to regard as better than all the rest. Else, there would be no point in one's preference. And, one cannot be indifferent to or unconcerned with one's own chosen religion. So, one profession a religion cannot practise *dharma-nirpekshata* in any really contentious situation. Similarly, one may respect all religions, but not equally, for one is bound to be somewhat partial to one's own preferred religion where matters of the moment are involved. The failure of our secularism was therefore predetermined. It has remained with us as our major myth.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao seemed to awake to the real implications of secularism and surprised us by speaking in a meeting of editors (Dec. 10) of the need for a joint front "in favour of secularism, secular institutions and secular mode of thought and action." But, he either did not realise what he was saying or was instantly back to his mutton when he proudly explained his subsequent prostration before sadhus and sants as *rajshakti* bowing before *dharmashakti* (Dec. 20). Secularism indeed!

The real bad news now is that this brand of secularism has received authentic judicial support. The Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court has in an Ayodhya-related judgment the other day rejected the western concept of secularism with the observation that the Hindi version of secularism meant "Panth nirpekshata" or "non-sectarian and non-communal secularism" which by implication grants that they may be a sectarian and communal secularism! Wouldn't it be more honest to give up using the word 'secular' for one of our own coinage and content?

Secularism's Relationship To Democracy Analyzed

93AS0420B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 29 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Dr. Satish Kumar Ray: "Secularism Versus Democracy"]

[Text] Secularism is the foundation stone of our constitutional democracy. However, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] president has openly demanded in the party's recent convention that the Indian democracy be liberated from the chains of secularism. On the other side, the writers of our Constitution, the philosophical heritage of our national movement, and all non-BJP parties have the clear stand that no democracy can survive without secularism. The BJP has kicked out several concepts into the Indian political horizon. These include pseudo secularism, negative secularism, pacification, and positive secularism. The secular groups have proved to be weak in clearing this mist and offering a philosophical rebuttal. The truth is that they have not paid much attention to this issue and were busy in maintaining their

hold on power and have been avoiding agreement on this issue. The increasing apathy within the Congress Party over its philosophical heritage has helped increase the vagueness about the concept of secularism.

The writers of the Constitution have not used religious impartiality or secularism anywhere in their book. It was proposed twice in the Constitutional Assembly that this policy must be clearly defined. Perhaps, the writers of the Constitution such as Ambedkar and Nehru thought that, since freedoms of expression, thought, belief, faith, and worship were included, it was not necessary to mention equality and opportunity and the right for religious and cultural freedoms. All this clearly meant that India is a secular nation.

In the 42 amendments made to the Constitution, the word "secular" was added in the introductory section. At that time, they debated whether to include a clear definition of this term. However, this proposal was never passed. One suggested definition of secularism was that the state should not be without a religion. Instead, it means that all religions and faiths are equally respected, and our government is not especially supportive of one religion. Our Constitution, which supports equal protection of law and government, guarantees freedom of faith, beliefs, and worship to the citizens and does not differentiate between a believer and an atheist.

Secularism is mentioned in Section 25, Article 30 of the Constitution in the context of basic rights. The form of Indian secularism that is presented is influenced by the philosophy inherent in our national independence movement and is not aimed just against communalism but also presents a positive philosophy about our political-social life. It clearly means that our government should give equal treatment to everyone without any religious or cultural prejudice. All religions must be treated equally, no religion should be given preference by the government, the minority groups must have the guarantee of protection of their cultural identity, and there must be a clear policy about not using religious feeling in government business.

This point of view on secularism is according to Indian learning and philosophy. From ancient times in India there has been no doubt about the relationship between religion, citizens, and the government. The blend of government and religion has never been approved. There has been no tradition of contention between the two.

From the Indian Renaissance to the Gandhi era, the above view of secularism has been upheld. Tolerance has always been considered the main expression of internal strength in the Indian culture. Mr. Gandhi himself wrote in the 22 September 1946 issue of The HARIJAN, "If I were a ruler, I would keep religion and government totally separate. I am fully sworn to my religion, but this is my personal matter. The government has nothing to do with it." He later wrote in the 9 November 1947 issue, "I do not agree that the government should provide religious education. Any religion that wants to provide religious instruction should do so on its own and should remain within the limits of the laws, rules, and ethics. The government can only provide ethical education that is based on the basic beliefs of all religions." If we study Sections 25-30 of the Constitution, we will see the expression of Indian tradition and Gandhi's perspective.

Here this issue can be raised: Mr. Gandhi considered politics without religion a widow. In order to clarify this, we must look at his interpretation of religion. His statements cited above clearly echo his belief that he considered politics a widow without the ethical aspects of religion. The values of this ethical aspect are equal in all religions. If we clarify this viewpoint further, we can say that religion is of two kinds—ethical religion and conventional religion. All religions agree on the ethical part. No one religion in this world has the monopoly over such qualities as truth, honesty, empathy, mercy, and benevolence. Organized religions are based on faith, worship, good deeds, and religious property and create different factions. Factionalism is born when tolerance toward this difference is removed. Religious confrontation always occurs between organized religions and not over ethical issues.

We have already mentioned that Indian secularism is included in Section 25, which allows religions freedom. It has been tied with such basic rights as local administration, morality, and health. It clearly means that religious practice is a subject of personal beliefs, and the government can neither interfere in it nor will it allow religious groups to create a situation that hinders the government in carrying out its duties. If the actions of religious groups endanger the limitations listed above, the government cannot remain neutral and will actively participate to protect those limitations. It will use force as necessary to achieve it.

Article 26 of the Constitution allows religious practices within these limitations. Article 26 also frees people from paying taxes to help a specific religion. Article 27 forbids state-supported educational institutions from providing religious instruction. Articles 29 and 30 give the right to linguistic and cultural minorities of protection of their identities and give them the right to run educational institutions.

Those who invoke the Indian culture call the efforts to help protect the cultural identity of minorities as pacification and negative autonomy. They forget that the Indian culture has not only recognized this autonomy but also provided government protection for it. As for provision of equal rights, there is not much importance given to it in our nation of cultural diversity. Such provisions were seen in ancient India in the form of "daybhag" and "mistashra."

The Shah Bano case is presented mostly as an example of the departure from secularism and practice of pacification of minorities. In the Shah Bano case, the Supreme Court had to amend some criminal law codes that were in conflict with the Muslim Personal Laws. This was definitely a disputed issue. Its supporters said that the changes were made only where there was a question of conflict with the personal laws. It was also said that the minority groups received this change through their influence in the Parliament. At the same time, one can say that this change was against the basic tenets of the Indian Constitution and opposed to fairness in the criminal procedures.

We can call the hasty decision of the Parliament over the Shah Bano case disputable. However, still we cannot use it to validate negation of the concept of a secular government. National unity and democracy are important prerequisites in this country where we think about unity even in the midst of variations. Our policy of tolerance and secularism in embedded in our cultural heritage. The beliefs of the people who want to eradicate secularism are older than the Shah Bano case. Instead of following the philosophy of joining our nation's cultural differences through secularism, the efforts to force all cultural groups into the mainstream culture will not only endanger secularism but also democracy and, finally, our national unity.

Majority Favors Secularism

93AS0433A Jalandhar PUNJAB KESARI in Hindi 4 Jan 93 p 4

[From the Pen of M.J. Akbar: "India Was Secular, and Will Remain So, Because That Is What Majority of Hindus Want"]

[Text] This was the year of the false dawn. Only a while ago, it appeared that we were going to change the blood-stained action list of Shahabuddin Gauri and the Singhals by such actions as the Shah Bano case and the foundation- laying [of the temple]. The fact is that Manmohan Singh had made more headlines than did Lal Krishna Advani. On the new philosophical front, the main speaker was P. Chidambaram in his hand-spun Tamil shirt and lungi [loin cloth] instead of the deranged voice of Sadhavi Rithambara dressed in his saffron robe. Even the Muslims who have been constricted educationally, economically, and morally since the tragedy of this country's division, began to talk about a historical opportunity. A cover story in the INDIA TODAY, gave an annotated account of Muslim workers who want to live in a country that they consider their own despite all the problems. The face of Indian Muslims appears to be changing on the magazine cover. It did not have the hate-filled eyes of a Shahabuddin. It had the hopeful eyes of a youth recently graduated who had the whole world ahead of him, and not the history. [passage about incidents abroad omitted]

We have leaders who believe that smart politics allows one to play caste and religious fascism without feeling any repulsion. We have a government which allows worship [by Hindus at the mosque site] in the name of keeping peace and insists on secularism in the name of the nation. This is the India whose Muslim leaders are suffering from communalism or compromise. The leaders in the first category will do anything to protect their vote bank, and the leaders in the other category can do anything to protect their seat of power.

This is the India where factionalism is suddenly being welcomed in the living room just to get popular support. The newspapers (especially in Lucknow and also the so-called secular newspapers) celebrated the 6 December incident, calling it the first sign of a new Hindu almanac where agreements are made with the leaders of the new era.

This is the India where those who live in mansions and palaces want their children to line up for Green Cards, and expect patriotism from those who live in shanties! They want those youth, who were born in the dark on six square feet of land packed with garbage and know that their children will have even less land than that, to be patriots! What surprises you? Does the instantly erupting violence amaze you? Should you not be surprised that the disillusionment of the poor, whose religion is being poor, does not erupt more often? The shanties do not fit into the high-level philosophy.

The battle scene and the stage changed after 6 December. This war is not related to the future of a mosque, because the future of the mosque has already been decided. The controversy now is over the fate of the Indian Constitution. The main leaders of the "religious parliament" have finished their agenda related to the mosque successfully, and they are thanking the officials for their cooperation from dismantling the mosque to allowing worship.

This is the socialist and secular India! Socialism has died, secularism is being called "pseudo," and democracy perhaps will prove to be useful. Plans are being made to write the constitution of a Hindu India with provisions for protection of foreign minorities. (Foreigners are those whose religions were born outside of India!) The Indian government did not show its effectiveness when protecting the mosque. Can we believe that it will be able to show more courage when protecting the constitution? We have to accept that. Otherwise, we will also have to believe that it was not a false dawn that was covered by the clouds that have become an integral part of our lives.

In spite of the increasing adversity, we have to believe that the "religious parliament" is not the only parliament in this country. The minorities also have voices of sagacity, intelligence, and strong will. We have to believe that India will remain a secular nation. It will be secular, not because the Muslims and other minority religions want it to be secular, but because India's majority Hindus have always been secular, are secular, and want to remain secular!

Secularists Urged To Unite

93AS0433B Jalandhar PUNJAB KESARI in Hindi 9 Jan 93 p 4

[Puran Chand Sarin's Rendering of Khushwant Singh's: "Secularists Have To Mobilize Their Forces Now"]

[Excerpt] An Indian professor teaching at Oxford University was visiting Delhi during the last Christmas holidays. I asked him about his feelings on the Ayodhya incident. "I consider myself a worthless Indian and a Hindu (he is a Brahman). I cannot show my face to other University employees. We had so much to be proud of, and now we have so much to be embarrassed about."

"What do you think will happen now?" I asked him. He wrung his hands in disappointment and said, "Only God knows. I am mostly worried about the Muslim retaliation. They do not seem to be willing to accept the destruction of the mosque quietly. We will be in real trouble when all this begins."

"Do you think we are moving toward a civil war?"

He was quiet for a second before answering. "I do not think of it any worse than that dooms day. There has been a polarization of democratic and fundamentalist powers in such a way that there is very little possibility of

their living together peacefully. One of them will overpower the other. We have no alternative but to eradicate fundamentalism, even if we are destroyed in that effort."

A professor at the Delhi University (a Tamil Brahman lady) also expressed similar feelings. "I was educated in a foreign university and could have settled in the United Kingdom or the United States with a high position. However, I never even thought about living any place other than India. I would have been greatly hurt if my child had expressed a desire to live in another country two years ago. Now, I am not sure if a child growing in this country has any kind of future. Our life is so full of violence and vulgarity that any other place seems to be better than here." She paused, smiled, and said with a sigh, "However, this is the place where we belong, and this is the place where we will live, come what may."

I say, "Amen!" However, we should not remain inactive so that the situation overpowers us. Our civil war against fundamentalism should be fought with intelligent planning, in which the ballot box will make the decision. We have many options. No matter what their positions are, we have to pick either the Congress Party or any party among the left-wing parties, other than the Marxist parties. The first priority for the Congress Party should be to prove its secularism, and elect a new president who can fill the people with zeal for secularism. It is time for the prime minister to focus on government work and another person to pour new life in the party. We do not have many options here. I can think of only three candidates for this position—Arjun Singh, Sharad Pawar, and Madhav Rao Scindia—in this order. One of these should be given the position as soon as possible, and I believe that Arjun Singh would be the best for it. The fundamentalists have drawn their battle lines. The secularists must line up behind a new commander now!

Secularist Foundation Seen Under Assault

93AS0413A Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 15 Dec 92 p 4

[Excerpt from article by Abul Rashar: "What Will Result From This"]

[Text] Is the cruel religious fanaticism an irresistible, deep-rooted and imperishable power in India? To me, there is no difference between Hindu fundamentalism and Muslim fundamentalism. The evil power, which took the life of Dara Shuko in history, returned in a different form to kill Mahatma Gandhi. The ghost of the evil power in history that destroyed temples returned to destroy the Babri Mosque. I do not want to judge Hindu or Muslim fundamentalism separately.

The power of any kind of fundamentalism is as dangerous as an atom bomb. In fact, fundamentalism brings a violent cultural fascism in a country, and for that reason, it always tries to find a political basis. In the minds of God-fearing people, it slowly sows the seeds of its ideals. An ignorant, blind, and cruel power crucified Jesus. A similar power guided the "kar sevaks" in Uttar Pradesh.

Reading to this point, it may appear to many that perhaps I am trying to describe history with the help of my unrestricted power of imagination. Shame to my imagination that I consider the Hindus human beings, as I consider the Muslims, the Christians, the Buddhists, and the Jains human beings too. But I cannot imagine the killers of Jesus, Dara Shuko, and Mahatma Gandhi as human beings, not even in the form of Hindu, Christian, and Muslim.

Because I cannot do that, my imagination notices a historical continuity. The killings of Jesus, Dara, and Gandhi are not only tragedies of history, but through these, a continuous force can be traced from the very beginning of civilization. The demonstration of that fanatical power was seen in the killings of Indira and Rajiv.

The destruction of the Babri Mosque is, no doubt, a disgrace to Indian democracy and to the great religious and cultural heritage of India. Just as it is a shame for the Hindus, it is also disturbing for the religious existence of the Muslims.

The rise of cruel fanaticism is considered by conscientious people as the destructive of humanity. In today's world, if the democratic environment is not maintained in a country, it defeats the very cause of humanity. In fact, the democratic ideals were established in the society after great sacrifices of many people.

India developed democratic ideals in her own way. The ideas of secular democracy have great implications. But the fact should not be suppressed that we do not find the exhibition of those great democratic ideas in India.

English words such as secularism, democracy, and humanism were invented to keep the administration of the state free of the influence of religion. We translate the word secularism in Bengali as "Dharma-Nirapeksha," which means freedom from any bias for any religion. The exact translation of secularism in Bengali should be "Parthiba," meaning worldly. Whatever relates to this world is worldly. Secular thought is against any thought relating to spirituality or religion. So, a state in which the administration of the state is completely free of any religious influence or interest in religion should be called secular; otherwise it is anti-religion. That kind of state wants to consider religion strictly as a personal affair of the people.

According to this definition, India is not a secular state, rather, it can be called a multi-religious and half-democratic country. As a result, in its appeal for communal harmony, the Ministry of Information and Culture of the leftist government of this state writes in its advertisement—"We want equal rights for all the religions." In its attempt to protect equal rights for all the religions, if the state does not remain free of religious

influence, and instead the state ideas become linked with religion, then the declaration of the rights of religion remains only a declaration.

When the leader of the state is really secular, he or she has no need to appease either the Hindus or the Muslims. On the contrary, the leader makes the Hindu fundamentalists happy by appeasing the Hindus, and on the other hand, makes the Muslim fundamentalists happy by appeasing the Muslims. This policy cannot be regarded as a secular democratic policy.

To get votes in the election, when a leader goes to the Muslim imam [religious leader] and the Hindu mohanta [religious leader] at the same time, it becomes clear that there is something wrong in the person. It shows that the particular leader is not at all a religious-minded person and, in fact, he uses the force of religion in his own interest to get more votes in the election. Thus, in reality, that leader grossly insults religion. Many political leaders and ministers do the same thing. This practice is absolutely against democratic ideals.

Apparently, it is an effective method. But this kind of practice helps the religious organizations increase their strength. When the prime minister is visiting the religious gurus to get their blessings to win the election, the minister's liberalism, as well as his weakness, become clear. The minority Muslim community seeks the advice of the imam to know for whom to vote. It means that they let the religious leader identify the political party or the political leader as a real friend of the minority Muslim community.

In the political system of our country, there is a long tradition of utilizing the minority religious community and, if necessary, the religious sentiments of the majority community in the politics of election. Election politics have been active for a long time, slowly destroying the liberalism and the fraternalism we have in our religious tradition.

This kind of atmosphere is not at all healthy for democracy.

If the prime minister, political leaders, and workers can utilize religious sentiments to get more votes, can anyone expect that the religious organizations will remain idle?

No leftist leader or any democratic leader has ever said that electing a Muslim candidate in a Muslim majority area and a Hindu candidate in a Hindu majority area is nothing but a mockery of democracy and the whole parliamentary system. It is also a continuous strain on the tolerance of our ignorant motherland.

It is understood from the everyday activities of the so-called democratic and secular leaders that in this country there are Muslims and there are Hindus and that they all have separate places to live. They are all taken together at election time for casting of votes. They are brought together in the printed ballot papers which have no marks on it about religion, ethnic origin, or community. It appears that in this country only the ballots are really secular.

Secularism Said Still Alive?

93AS0409B Madras DINAMANI in Tamil 28 Dec 92 p 4

[Commentary by Kuldip Nayyar, translated by Pasumaikumar: "Will India's Secularism Last?"]

[Text] The British Broadcasting Corporation asked me a few days back if India can save its secularism. I was told that the Western countries which have always considered India a nation full of compassion, pity, and tolerance, have been shocked very much at the recent happenings in India.

This fear is justifiable indeed. It is because the Hindu fundamentalists stormed and demolished the controversial Babri Mosque in broad daylight, without any resistance. They broke their solemn pledge given to the Supreme Court that they would protect the building. Following the demolition so many disturbances erupted in different places, and the behavior of the security forces fueled the murderous passions of the Muslim agitators.

It is now confirmed that there were clashes between police and Muslims in Ahmedabad, Bhopal, and Bombay, according to independent observers who toured the disturbed areas. This reminds us of the disturbances in Jamshedpur, Bhagalpur, and Meerut, where police could not contain the violence and became an accomplice watching the happenings.

At that time, due to a kind of revengeful attitude, Hindu temples were erected within the police compounds. Most of them are Hanuman, the monkey God, who was chief lieutenant to the legendary King Ram. Religion is a personal matter of faith. The temples in the police compounds are just in utter violation of an order issued many years ago, which states that there cannot be any temple, mosque, church, or gurudwara (Sikh temple) within police compounds.

When the security force deviates from its impartiality, the secularism of the government becomes doubtful as a result. Yet this is not the whole picture by itself. The average Hindu is saddened at the demolition of the Mosque. He is not prepared to forgive those responsible for the destruction of the Mosque. He is fully aware of the fact that, after alienating 110 million Muslims in our country, we cannot nurture and protect the national unity and integrity in which he has profound faith. That is why he is very much upset and confused.

Hindus, who make up 82

of India's population, could have easily opted to make India a Hindu empire at the time of independence. However, the Hindus gave the first place of honor to

secularism, because that was the ideal set forth by our national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Hindu religion, which does not have a Pope and does not have a Holy council or a rigid and fast code of conduct, in fact nurtures the great ideal of religious tolerance. This one aspect alone makes it unique from other religions. India is the only country in the world where Jews were not subjected to any kind of religious persecution, and this was conveyed to me by the Jewish leaders.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and other political divisions known as Bharatiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, try to kidnap the noble ideal of Hinduism and they are indeed prepared to destroy it without any trace.

The Muslim fundamentalists have stepped in to give them help. In the State of Kashmir, a movement meant for demanding more democratic rights has been depicted as a Muslim challenge to New Delhi.

Bharatiya Janata Party leader Advani became a laughing stock by repeating again and again a claim (a blatantly false one) that in the Kashmir valley, 46 Hindu temples were demolished. (Many independent organizations, after carrying out a survey, have found the claim not to be true at all.)

The retaliatory violence that took place in Pakistan and Bangladesh also benefitted the BJP propaganda campaign. The reported attempt made by certain West Asian nations to stop oil supply to India will lend support to the pet slogan of the BJP that Hindus in India are under siege by hostile Muslim nations.

This wave of anti-Muslim rage is being exploited by the BJP. It is ready to inject poison into Hindus' emotions. The preponderant majority of Hindus are still in favor of secularism. Under the leadership of the ever-hesitating prime minister, a weak government under constant attack, and divisions among political parties other than BJP—all these factors will give only wrong signals. They will also further weaken our institutions.

Our Constitution has sanctified the rule of law. It has guaranteed that all are equal under the law. Religion cannot be allowed to play any part in the realm of politics. In India, we do not have any state religion, as they have in England, Italy, and Pakistan. But the BJP, though not by law, at least by practice, wants the Hindu religion to be a state religion.

If the BJP had placed its plan directly before the nation, it would have been a straight forward move. Instead, in the name of Ram, it aroused the passions among the Hindus, depicting the Muslims as if they were against the plan to build a temple in the name of a Hindu God, and thus, the BJP has been cheating and thereby it has gained much. The BJP's eight seats in Parliament grew to 118. Therefore, there is no point in deceiving ourselves. Now in India, the reality is we have a party determined to make India a Hindu state. In the last election it gained just 20

of the votes. It will certainly continue to adopt all kinds of ways and means, fair and foul, to generate hate just to achieve its goal.

Our mixed cultural fabric has been damaged, and the main challenge that our nation must face is how to set it right. Priority should be accorded to reform and reconstruction of the weak branches of the government. The Department of Justice has to be very effective and dynamic. Currently, there have been inordinate delays in the functioning of the courts.

The case relating to the foundation-laying for a temple on a controversial plot was put in cold storage for so many months. If a verdict had been given even five days earlier, the demolition of the Babri Mosque could have been averted. The Judges' taking so much time in coming out with a judgment has resulted in an enormous loss, far beyond comprehension.

Still more, is the delayed verdict in the case of determining the ownership of the Babri Masjid and the Ram Janamhoomi (Ram's birth place). This case has been in cold storage for the past 40 years. What have we to say about the political party that proclaims that religious beliefs are more important than respect for law, the party that disobeys the order of the Supreme Court.

The police department is another branch of the government with many flaws. In Bombay and a few other cities, a few policemen were killed. As a retaliatory measure, the police were shooting Muslims, and this has no justification whatsoever. It is bad to politicize the police. For the police to take on a communal nature is far worse. We should have a substantially mixed police force, and the nature of its training should also be reformed.

The most influential source is the newspapers that played an effective role this time. No paper ever dared to support the BJP Party. In 1990, to protect the controversial area, the police force was used, and this was reviewed by the papers at that time. One or two English dailies have changed their views. So also have a few Hindi publications. Maybe, they were coerced. But at the beginning they were also in the difficult position of choosing between two contradictory duties. On the whole, there was a widespread condemnation of the BJP politics. Even the few voices of support heard here and there did not come to any good.

Even if all these institutions are reformed and renewed, they may all become useless in the face of the wave of religious intolerance. I will never forget what Mahatma Gandhi advised a Punjabi Hindu who lost his 10-year-old boy during the 1947 disturbance and who was bent on taking revenge against the Muslim community. Gandhi approached the Hindu from Punjab and asked him to adopt a Muslim orphan boy and rear him

according to Muslim tradition and thereby make the Muslim community feel a sense of shame.

Hindus as well as the Muslims should consider adopting orphans from one another. By such steps, great timeless traditions of Indian values will be preserved. Compassion should come out freely and naturally pour out just as drizzles come down from the skies. If this could happen in reality, our qualities and also our image would be restored to their original statures. It is indeed a pity that Western nations make a mountain of our troubles and belittle our good efforts.

Rao Fears Absence of Secularism Means Disunity

93AS0422C Madras THE HINDU in English 17 Dec 92 p 1

[Text] New Delhi, Dec. 16—The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, today said that with the dismissal of the three Bharatiya Janata Party Governments last night many people were convinced that the Centre could take effective steps to tackle the Ayodhya issue.

Addressing representatives of the Delhi Grains Merchants Association at his residence here, Mr. Rao said that without dismissing the Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh Governments, the Centre could not have taken the desired steps to tackle the situation arising out of the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

The dismissal had "provided relief to the people" in those States. He said the people felt that the action was taken in an effective way and asserted the Centre's determination to bring the situation "fully under control."

Effective steps would be taken to restore normality in a matter of days.

Mr. Rao blamed a particular political party for "dividing the people for the last 40 years." He said his government would remove the "communal poison" from the minds of the people.

There might have been some unpreparedness on the part of the Centre which was taken advantage of. Mr. Rao assured the traders there would not be a situation now where the Centre would not be prepared.

The disturbed political situation would adversely affect the confidence of foreign investors. They might get a feeling their investment worth millions of dollars "could be destroyed in a matter of hours."

Foreign investment was important for the Indian economy but that would not be forthcoming until a conducive business environment was created. "Why should they invest their hard-earned money here," Mr. Rao asked. The foreign investors would instead go to Malaysia or Singapore, the Prime Minister regretted.

Mr. Rao said the 400-year-old monument was destroyed in a few hours. The Ayodhya issue could either have been resolved through negotiations or court. There could be no other way.

The Indian people had always remained secular. "I am convinced that in the absence of secularism, the country cannot remain united.—UNI

Joint Secular Front Envisioned

93AS0423A Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 24 Dec 92 p 10

[Quotation marks as published]

[Text] The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, wants a tie-up with secular parties but seems unclear about what the contours of the minimum programme for such cooperation would be. He appears to be so busy with his own survival that he does not seem to understand the implications of what he says even about communalism. Thus he urged the Congress Parliamentary Party on Tuesday that Congressmen should fight communal forces in the minds of the people "by clearing the misunderstanding that the party is opposed to the construction of a Ram temple." How on earth can Congressmen fight for secularism while harping on the theme that their party also wants to build a Ram temple? Surely, secularism is likely to be propagated more effectively by setting a distinctly secular agenda rather than modifying the agenda of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] or using religious imagery. Have not both the country and the Congress party suffered enough already because of such crass opportunism? If the Prime Minister keeps repeating such amibiguous statements, he is going to confound the confusion that already exists about his party's and his Government's secular credentials.

One reason why Mr. Rao is unable to specify the kind of 'adjustments' required with the other secular parties is that neither he nor the Congress is in any position to take the lead in defining the minimum programme of cooperation with them. Already a CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] spokesman has said that the recently formed 11-party National Campaign Committee to counter communal forces is yet to have discussions about having any truck with the Congress. In fact, he has gone a step further and said that no credibility can be attached to what the ruling party was saying. However, this can at best be interpreted as belligerent posturing because if the non-BJP parties have to combat the BJP then there is no option before them but to form a joint front of sorts to do that.

Campaign for Secular National Front Launched

93AS0423D Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 27 Dec 92 p 9

[Text] New Delhi, Dec 26 (PTI)—The national committee of 11 secular Opposition political parties christened as the Campaign for National Unity (CNU) today

endorsed the December 19 decision of a "secular Opposition front" against communal forces and chalked out the plans for a nationwide sustained mass campaign in different parts of the country. [excerpt on committee's plans omitted]

The respective political parties have already directed their cadre all over the country to coordinate with the parties concerned to give a broad-based sweep to the campaign against forces of communalism and restore amity and peace.

Commentary Acknowledges Resiliency of Secularism

93AS0423E Bangalore DECCAN HERALD (Supplement) in English 27 Dec 92 p 1

[Article by N.J. Nanporia]

[Text] There is something in the Indian political ambience that creates a bias in favour of the extravagant style. The carefully measured restrained statement fails to register and the message does not get through. There is a need for underlining, over-emphasis, full-blown rhetoric and the grand gesture to obtain the response the politician or the party wants L.K. Advani's first yatra, complete with motorised chariot and the other appurtenances appropriate to such occasions, was a bid to communicate on this large scale. Its purpose was twofold. First, to impress on the body politic the depth and intensity of the feeling for Hindutva. Second, to mobilise support for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by translating this feeling into votes. That was the basis on which the party established itself in four states.

Yet, the point about Hindutva is that the wave it creates is impossible to sustain at the required level. It is followed unavoidably by a deflation, a depressing sense of the morning after, and a yearning for the exhilaration that had preceded it. If the record of the BJP in the four states it ruled is looked at critically, there is in it nothing to distinguish the party in the national spectrum as an opposition with a difference. But this hallmark that differentiates it from the rest is what the BJP has always wanted. In the masjid-mandir affair, it found a dispute that enabled it to establish its identity and retain the support that would otherwise disappear. Hindutva could be spelled out in terms of its place in Indian nationalism and of the limitations, real or imagined, of secularism and minorityism. But the BJP soon discovered that only by reducing it to a mass popular movement could it generate the force necessary to carry it to power at the Centre.

It also discovered that this movement needed to be constantly fuelled to prevent it from petering out. Murli Manohar Joshi's Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir march was a bid to duplicate the Advani one and keep the political momentum on the go. This constant over-pitching and over-reaching was also reflected in the rabble-rousing language which the BJP has successfully patented as its own. Its references to the Congress, the other parties in opposition, and the minorities were often vitriolic. Partly, no doubt, this was due to inner conviction. But more than partly it was a way by individual BJP members to establish their credentials as committed advocates of the Hindutva cause.

Fundamentalism always obliges its followers to make repeated public avowals of their faith. Yatras, strong language and Ayodhya were, in this sense, one side of the BJP coin. But there is another side, less obtrusive and more calculating and in a quieter mode. This consists of the recognition that it cannot make it to the Centre with the Hindutva wave alone, unless it is moderated to make it acceptable within the framework of the Indian federal system. The badge of respectability it needed and wanted could be obtained by joining the political mainstream and by trying to discard its image as a bigoted, fundamentalist and malevolent force, wholly at odds with the moderation and rationalism of the modern world. Yet, to go too far in this direction was to forfeit its drive as a fundamentalist movement. So, a feature of the BJP style has been a constant to-and-fro swing between extravagance on the one side and careful restraint on the other.

We have had Advani speaking in the measured tones of a responsible leader and a potential prime minister. We have also had him in the role of a rabble-rouser. Sometimes, he compliments the Prime Minister. Sometimes, he rejects him as one of the most incompetent prime ministers the country has ever had. After creating the Hindutva wave, Advani tried to counteract some of its negative fallout by undertaking a mission to the United States and striking a note of moderation and restraint. But there has never been a successful reconciliation of one with the other, and the confusing mix of extragavance and restraint has forced the BJP leader into double-talk. Yet it would be facile to dismiss this, as is too easily done, as a deliberate intention to deceive. For the BJP is a party in a bind of its own creation, which is made all the more frustrating by the different constituents of the BJP combine striking the aggressive or moderate note without any co-ordination.

After the masjid demolition, the party seemed as stunned as the entire country, and in what seemed to be a swift act of contrition Advani resigned as leader of the opposition. At least one RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] group denounced it as incompatible with the "ethos of the sangh parivar," while before and after the demolition there were assurances of every respect for the law, the Constitution and the Supreme Court. It is in this context that the Vajpayee confessional must be calmly viewed. His description of the Ayodhya disaster as the "worst miscalculation" in the history of his party and his further admission that the "hardliners" had taken over can be seen as a duplicitious move to defuse the emotive build-up against his party. But it can also be seen, rather more plausibly, as reflecting an inbuilt dilemma from which the BJP has been unable to escape.

Despite the weight of apparent evidence in support of the first, the odds are in favour of the second. The BJP

leaders, and particularly Advani, flattered themselves as masters of crowd psychology. The surging masses that surrounded him in the course of his first yatra or converged on Ayodhya on the earlier occasion of the would-be kar seva seemed amenable to the sure touch of the leaders of the BJP combine. Crowds on the Indian political landscape are not usually a recipe for trouble, and if Advani and others addressed them in a rather inflammatory way, they did so in the belief that if necessary the brakes could be applied. Note that one of the more significant comments by Vajpayee was "we were considered to be a disciplined organisation, but today we are in a crisis." The particular anguish this reflects is a failure of control, the collapse of the assumption that there would always be a firm hand on the wheel.

If it is true that, according to Vajpayee, Advani was reduced to tears, the agony was due to a sense of personal inadequacy. So, there is an explanation of the apparent inconsistency between Vajpayee's claim that the senior BJP, RSS and VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] leaders tried to prevent the demolition and Sharad Pawar's claim that a video in his possession showed them egging on the demonstrators. The egging on took place precisely because of the self-regarding belief by the leaders that it could be halted at a precisely conceived moment. When this was proved false, a belated bid was possibly made to regain control. When this also failed, Advani and others can easily be pictured as sitting there impassively and giving the impression of not bothering to intervene. This sequence is perfectly in accord with the BJP style, as it came to be evolved since the initial Hindutva wave and the formation of the BJP government in four states.

But the thing about the extravagant style which spills over into an unintended crisis is that it invites retaliation in kind, which is equally conceived to impress and startle. There is a large element of melodrama in the banning of communal organisations, the arrests that followed, the commitment to rebuild the masjid, and the dismissal of the BJP governments. All these collectively seem to add up to a no-holds-barred war against the BJP combine. Yet they need to be taken with that pinch of salt, which also must be sprinkled on the BJP's more intemperate declarations. The ban, it is said, has been forced on the Prime Minister by the Congress hardliners, including Arjun Singh. But this is an admission that, in itself, it is entirely without any merit. Legal difficulties apart, how is it possible to repudiate communalism in a system one of which whose props is an appeal to the communal vote?

Calculations of party support are almost entirely based on communal and caste factors and have always been an inseparable part of the political process. Possibly a distinction is being attempted between communalism which oils the political machine, and communalism which is an incitement to violence and hostility among different communities. Yet, the latter is only an extravagant version of the former. A ban which excludes communalism as promoting hostility reduces itself to a law-and-order measure, while leaving untouched the virulent brand of politically-motivated communalism that is corroding the national fabric.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao obviously knows this. So does Arjun Singh, who has only pressed for it to register his presence as a factor to be reckoned with in the party, but has stopped short of going too far by declaring his loyalty to the Prime Minister. In the upshot, then, the ban is a grand gesture, a public relations exercise designed to match the Ayodhya tragedy at the psychological level. No organisation is formally dedicated to fostering communal hatred, though its individual members can, no doubt, be proceeded against in the courts. Much the same sense of futility is aroused by the dismissal of the BJP governments. Given the demands on Prime Minister Narasimha Rao created by the crisis, he found it expedient to do this, once again a melodramatic step which can be questioned on constitutional grounds, but which is valid at the psychological level.

There is no possibility of the BJP, a registered political party, being banned, which means that the removal of the BJP governments is as indefensible as the Governors' reports that have been contrived for this purpose. All that has been achieved is a temporary political vacuum which, in time, will again have to be filled. As for the arrests, people of the stature of Advani cannot be kept in detention for any length of time, and a variety of legal devices can be expected to bring about their early restoration to public life. But, as with the other gestures, the arrests were something Narasimha Rao could not hope to evade, for what is happening is an exchange between the BJP and others in the language of gestures. The commitment to rebuild the masjid, with no mention of a time limitation, is again not what it appears to be but a symbolic charade, almost a ritualistic act called for in the present context.

So, the overall effect of the government's countermeasures is illusionary. The assurance that the masjid will be rebuilt registers a good intention, rather than a guarantee that the structure will come up again. Making the assurance is what matters for the moment, the extreme gesture which alone can be expected to make the required impact. One consequence of all this is an over-heated atmosphere, in which a crisis seems to be more critical than it really is, and there is a bias in favour of expecting the worst. There are cries that Indian democracy has been shattered, that the political structure is in a shambles, that secularism is dead, that the nation was at the crossroads and has taken the wrong turning. The theme of the doomsters who have come crawling out of the woodwork is that all has been lost. But, of course, it hasn't. The picture needs to be reduced in scale, and the larger-than-life impression cut down to more modest proportions. Simultaneously, the temperature needs to be cut, so that there is a cooling off period.

That the BJP combine had the intelligence to understand this is borne out by the series of reactions marking each stage of the unfolding drama. First, shock and dismay. Second, in response to the ban, arrests and dismissals, a

harder stand. Third, in continuation of this line, a bid to paralyse both houses of Parliament. Fourth, with the return of political calculation, a decision to scale everything down. So, the phase of walkouts in Parliament, of strident protests, of demands for the release of the arrested leaders, is more or less over. As on many occasions in the past, there is a tacit sharing of the view that mid-term elections are not on, and that this is now a period for marking time. On the BJP side, there is an unspoken acknowledgement that it must regain lost ground. On the Congress side, the likes of Arjun Singh must realise that the ban, the arrests and the dismissals, by the fact of having been conceded, now rule out any legal banishment of the BJP party.

Additionally, the moral has presumably been driven home within the BJP combine that real political power cannot be gained by creating waves. These are no substitute for patiently building up an image of a balanced, responsible, centrist organisation, whose Hindutva doctine can make its way on the strength of its own intellectual force, and consistently, with genuine respect for the rights of the minorities. Some headway made in this direction was lost with the collapse of the masjid. So, an appropriate deflation of what is high-blown leaves us with the conclusion that all is back to square one, that for some time at least political passions have been spent. Note that the reaction overseas, including the Islamic bloc and potential aid givers and investors in the west, has not been particularly extreme. The Muslim states have gone through the motions of protest. But, overall, the view seems to be that India has not suffered an irrevocable structural damage, and that eruptions of communal feeling and its political fallout are a part of the national scene.

True, there are now more question marks over the country's political stability. But, contrary to the general view, a soft state, which India undoubtedly is, is not without a singular advantage. This is a resiliency that enables it to absorb some hard knocks without losing its essential shape. It is a sort of long-surviving obstinacy which nothing can shake.

Commentary Bases Secularism in Patriotism

93AS0423F Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 28 Dec 92 p 10

[Article by Mohan Dharia; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The demolition of Babri Masjid at Ayodyha has shaken the foundations of Indian secularism. After the partition of the country and assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, this has been the greatest tragedy in the history of secular India. Our secularism is based on the finest human values. Though the British rulers divided the country on religious grounds, free India never divorced itself from the commitment it made during the struggle for Independence to remain secular.

The seeds for the destruction of secularism, however, were sown during our struggle for Independence. The British wanted to divide and rule. They encouraged the partition of the country on religious basis. The Indian Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was given all possible support and they succeeded in partitioning the country. Even though Pakistan was formed on the basis of religion, the rest of India, which had a Hindu majority, resolved to remain a secular country. Unfortunately, most of the Muslims of that time in the country supported the Muslim League and demanded partition, without realising that majority of them will have to stay in Independent India. It would have helped, had the Muslim leadership openly accepted this reality and denounced its past action of supporting the Muslim League which was responsible for the division of the country.

Immediately after the division of the country, Pakistan committed naked aggression and occupied large chunks of territory in Jammu and Kashmir. Instead of repulsing the aggressor, Jawaharlal Nehru's government, without any reason whatsoever, took the issue to the United Nations, an organisation controlled by the Western powers. The result has been a festering sore and sustained permanent enmity between India and Pakistan and also between Hindus and Muslims in India. For several years after Independence, there were cordial relations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the border states. Infiltrators supported by Pakistan have destroyed that amicable relationship and have created permanent communal tensions.

Great national matryrs went to the gallows with smiles and 'Vande Mataram' on their lips. Even I, as a young boy of hardly 18, was beaten in jail for uttering Vande Mataram. Vande Mataram was our national anthem during the freedom struggle. There was no need to change it and substitute it by the "Jana Gana Mana." When one sees some people opposing Vande Mataram, one feels that they are trying to belittle the struggle for Independence and ignoring the supreme sacrifice made by our stalwarts. Those who are opposing Vande Mataram, should not forget that they are supporting the fundamentalists from the other side at their own cost and also at the cost of the secular philosophy and India's national integrity.

We have accepted a secular Constitution and have guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, religion and sex. There used to be a custom of polygamous marriages before Independence. Instead of totally banning the custom and having a common civil code, the then political leadership framed legislation banning such marriages among Hindus only. Muslim women were previously entitled to maintenance allowance under the Criminal Procedure Code. This provision was upheld by the Supreme Court. Instead of accepting the verdict of the highest judicial authority, the very people who are now claiming to respect the judiciary, came on the streets to oppose the verdict and the then ruling party went to the extent of taking away this

right of Muslim women through a statutory amendment. Muslim opposition moves to end polygamy among them and to uphold the right of Muslim women for maintenance, to family planning, or to Vande Mataram, has helped in strengthening the hands of Hindu fundamentalists.

If the existing explosive growth rate of population is not immediately halted, it will never be possible for any government to render social and economic justice to millions of our masses, including Muslims. Unfortunately, a majority of the Muslims, Christians and now certain sections of the Hindu community, also oppose any curbs on population growth.

Several Muslim countries have accepted family planning and countries like Malaysia have put several restrictions in this regard. How can any religion go against this national programme? How it can be an interference if stringent measures to curb population are made applicable to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed and religion?

Religious fanatics and extreme fundamentalists have done great harm not only to India's secular philosophy but to its unity and integrity. Only secularism can preserve the integrity of our country. Those who are advocating a Hindu Rashtra should not forget that their demand is an open invitation to disintegration of the country. Kashmir, Punjab, Sikkim, northeastern states having majority of Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists or Christians would then prefer to have their separate states on the basis of religion. Tamil Nadu, having faith in Dravidian culture and Kerala having majority of Muslims and Christians may also tread the same path. There is a sinister design to establish a Hindu Rashtra and all-out efforts are needed to defeat such a dangerous design.

What happened at Babri Masjid is perhaps the culmination of several events since Independence. But it should be made clear that India is a country where Ram, Rahim and all religions will stay together in peace and harmony. Our secular philosophy refuses to accept any discrimination between man and man on the basis of religion, caste or creed. Now the government is saying it will reconstruct the Babri Masjid. Before constructing the Masjid at the same site it is necessary to excavate the area with the help of eminent archaeologists to find out whether Babri Masjid was constructed on any temple there.

Efforts should be made to find a permanent way out of the present situation. All political parties—Congress, Janata, Janata Dal and the two Communist outfits—on some occasion or other, have indulged communal forces to retain power. This power-oriented approach has been the major cause of the rise of communal and casteist forces in the country. Continuance of Benares Hindu University or Aligarh Muslim University with religious names or insistence to maintain special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, are the result of the same process. It was important to change the textbooks containing lesson from history with the message of enmity between castes or religions immediately after Independence. We should, instead, have inculcated feelings of patriotism and secular philosophy right from childhood all over the country.

It is impossible to preserve secularism and provide any permanent solution by banning certain organisations or dismissing some governments which may perhaps aggravate the situation. Besides, these are simply half-hearted illogical actions. If communal organisations are to be banned, how come Shiv Sena, Muslim League, or Bharatiya Janata Party and other organs of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] drafting their full-timers and inspiration from the parent body, are exempted? It would be more advisable to apply our mind and find out why thousands of youngsters fall prey to such fundamentalist forces. The real need is to accept judicious patriotic approach, render socio-economic justice without delay and to evolve a new culture for modern secular India!

Rao Upholds Secularism, Solicits Unity

93AS0423G Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 28 Dec 92 p 16

[Text] New Delhi, Dec. 30 (PTI)—The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, on Wednesday said the country would overcome the "storm" which has struck the nation in the wake of the demolition of the Babri masjid and called for collective efforts to uphold secularism.

Inaugurating the golden jubilee celebrations of a Hindi daily, THE JAGRAN, he said recent incidents had sullied the image of the country and made "hazy" the concept of secularism.

"The country has passed through a number of crises like this and it has overcome them and not surrendered. I have no doubt in my mind that we shall overcome this storm," Mr. Rao asserted.

He said the press, which has a vital role to play in moulding public opinion, should contribute in this endeavour.

This was necessary because the country was faced with a serious challenge when questions are being raised about the relevance of the Constitution with demands of fundamental changes in it, he said.

Mr. Rao said the ideals and ideology of the country were on test and "we have to ensure that we get over this challenge."

Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, Human Resources Development Minister Arjun Singh, senior BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee and editor of the newspaper, Narendra Mohan, spoke at the function.

Unity of Secularists Advocated in Interest of Nation

93AS0429F Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 12 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Sisir Kumar Bose: "Get Together Party"]

[Text] We must not surrender our judgment, lose our bearings and indulge in sterile mutual recrimination in the shadow of the grave national tragedy at Ayodhya. This is the time for searching self-criticism and introspection. India—as also Pakistan and Bangladesh—must seize this opportunity to restructure and refashion the polity to alleviate the suffering of the millions in the subcontinent, and justify the sacrifice made by those who victoriously struggled against foreign rule.

It has been said Mahatma Gandhi has been assassinated a second time at Ayodhya. This is wrong. He was assassinated for the first time on August 15, 1947. That was when his immediate followers deserted him by abandoning the cardinal tenets of our political ideology and acquiesced to partitioning the nation along communal lines. We can ignore this original sin only at our peril. Leaders who presided over the transfer of power in 1947, whether of the Congress or the Muslim League, were all guilty of downright hypocrisy and bluffing the nation. Today we are paying for their sins.

At this dark hour I am painfully reminded of the conversation my father, Sarat Chandra Bose, had with Gandhiji in May 1947 at Beliaghata on the eve of the announcement of the Mountbatten plan of Partition. Even at the risk of hurting the feelings of some of my countrymen, I owe it to the present generation to give a candid account.

My father told me the same evening he had implored Gandhiji to raise just his little finger against the impending division of the country. He felt since Congress leaders were the Mahatma's disciples, they were bound to abide by his directive. But Gandhiji said my father was wrong: "The Sardar used to be my yes man, now he is my no man. Rajendrababu has kicked the ladder all right. And as to Jawaharlal, the less said the better."

Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad must take equal responsibility with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaqat Ali and S. Suhrawardy for all that has happened to India since that fateful night of August 14-15, 1947.

We built our polity on hypocrisy and bluff handed down by our leaders who succumbed to the temptation of easy accession to power. We worshipped as great "secularists" leaders, who were in fact and by historical evidence rank communalists. It is historically significant Jawaharlal Nehru made C. Rajagopalachari the first Indian governor general of the Dominion of India. He had authored the "Rajaji Formula" of India's partition along communal lines in 1942. That had been supported only by the communists and the rightwing reactionaries and he had been expelled from the Congress. Today's Congressmen must learn the true history of the party and its vicissitudes to be able to take right decisions at this critical time.

Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose never had the occasion to use the expression "secularism" during their political campaigns. Their ideology by its very nature sublimated communal antagonisms to the commonality of national interests. Since independence both Congress and many non-Congress parties have been flaunting the "secular" flag from every conceivable platform. But they have continued to use religious and other sectarian issues to garner votes and serve their narrow partisan ends. Why on earth have presidents and prime ministers run down to Tirupati to make public exhibitions of their "Hindutva?" Why do godmen and soothsayers enjoy tremendous clout in the highest political circles?

In contrast, when Netaji was organising and unifying the diverse Indian community in east Asia for the liberation war, he declined an invitation of the high priest to visit a Chettiar temple during Dussera, even if he ran the risk of losing a handsome donation for his war fund. He said: "What, come to your temple where Hindus of other castes are not permitted entry, not to speak of other communities who are equally near and dear to me. No, sir, definitely not." Finally the Chettiars opened their temple to all communities and sects. Netaji marched into it in full uniform, flanked by his senior officers, mostly Muslims.

Here, in free India, we have the sombre ritual of all-faith prayer meetings on every conceivable occasion under official patronage, mixing politics with religion. On the other hand, Netaji's followers composed a "common" prayer during the early days of the Azad Hind movement. They coined a common appellation for the almighty—Malik—hoping this would unite all religious groups. But far from being pleased, Netaji rejected the idea. It was his belief once there is an attempt to unite diverse religious groups on the basis of religion, there is always the danger of the tables turning and leading to a greater division along religious lines.

Public prayer meetings have been used during and after the freedom struggle to serve political ends. They have not helped to unite the people. Netaji was firmly of the view prayers are to be offered in the sanctity of one's home or in the hallowed precincts of a temple, mosque, church, gurdwara, synagogue and so on. Congress leaders, both before and after independence, have defied this principle in practice. Other parties have only improved on their example.

In June 1947, Sarat Chandra Bose had said: "Acceptance of the plan (Partition) by Congress means surrender of all that Congress stood for and fought for since 1928... Congress will rue the day when it accepted Dominion

Status, conceded Pakistan and demanded partition of provinces." The rueful day of reckoning has, alas, arrived.

It is universally agreed there has been a failure of leadership at all levels and in all parties. As a result the very existence of India as a unified, democratic, organised state is threatened. We are fast heading towards a situation when constitutional governance will become impossible. There is no room now for mutual recrimination among forces and parties wedded to the tradition, ideals and goals of our freedom struggle. Fresh alignment and coalition of such forces brooks no delay. Differences and animosities from the immediate past must give way to the appreciation of the critical political situation at present.

The immediate tasks are to restore goodwill among all communities and instil a new confidence in constitutional governance. The Congress, being the major national party, must take the lead. Only if a coalition of parties, groups and non-party individuals of talent and unblemished public service records take over the government will this goodwill and confidence be restored.

Let a patriotic front be set up without delay with an agreed short term minimum programme of action. This should include the Congress, National Front, the left and all such regional parties who subscribe unreservedly to the basic tenets of the ideology of the freedom struggle, to provide political, economic and social freedom to all sections of the Indian people, welding them into a democratic union.

The principal function of the patriotic front would be to create a political climate that allows for the smooth functioning of a democratic and constitutional government. It should be possible to set up a broadbased government at the Centre with the present prime minister, or a new incumbent, enjoying the confidence and support of all the front partners.

The government will then have to take resolute steps, constitutional or otherwise, to prevent and eliminate politicisation of religious and sectarian questions. It will also have to reopen the Kashmir and Punjab issues regardless of past blunders and failures. This government will have to review the economic reforms as well and lighten the burden of the common man. Determined steps must be taken to root out corruption from every strata of the body politik.

Last, but not the least, India must reopen the dialogue with Pakistan and Bangladesh on entirely new grounds. The base must be the understanding that national freedom can be secured ultimately by a voluntary pooling of sovereignties first in a regional and then in a world context. The three countries must first accept "democratic principle" in internal and external affairs. Then they must advance together towards a subcontinental coalition that reflects the compelling need for a common market, defence and foreign policy rooted in the common heritage. A successful subcontinental coalition could then invite Sri Lanka, Nepal and even Burma to come together for the evolution of a South Asian Maastricht.

This new alignment in Indian politics in the shape of the patriotic front will, it can be hoped, encourage the liberal and democratic forces in the Bharatiya Janata Party to bring it back to its natural role in parliamentary democracy. It can then again become the constitutional Opposition.

Darkness now envelops the political firmament. But if Indian leaders respond to the demands of the moment, the dawn of a new era will not be far behind.

Communists, Congress (I) Urged To Unite Against 'Communalism'

93AS0430A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 24 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Mohit Sen: "Together on the War Front"]

[Text] The demolition of the Babri Masjid is too heavy a price to pay for anything that might happen afterwards. Still, the nation and all of us who constitute it can be compensated only by the positive development of national unity for combating communalism. Such a development seems to be a distinct possibility.

The passing of the resolution in Parliament calling for a united struggle against communalism has few precedents in India's history as a free nation. It can only be compared to the expression of the nation's resolve—through Parliament—to stand up to the Chinese aggression in 1962.

One could not have expected this silver lining to the dark and darkening cloud that came as the debris settled where the mosque had stood. So many prejudices had to be overcome and electoral considerations assigned a second place. Pride and prejudice had to be swallowed and eschewed.

The Congress leadership, with Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao as its head and representative, was clear in its mind that such unity was indispensable and possible. It is to the party's credit that it also took the initiative in the matter despite the disruptive and provocative demand for the resignation of the prime minister. The demand had first been made by the Janata Dal and later picked up by the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist]. It required deep commitment to the nation to have relegated this provocation to the background and stretched out a hand of cooperation to the very people who had made the demand.

It is necessary to state the above to put the record straight on how the resolution placed in Parliament came to be drafted and passed.

The CPI(M), particularly Mr. Harkishen Singh Surjeet who rushed back from London on December 8, had the

good sense to realise communalism was on the offensive to destabilise all secular governments, as events in Calcutta demonstrated. Mr. Surjeet also had the sense to realise such an offensive could not be fought without cooperating with the Congress or, at least, without placing party rivalry in a secondary position. It was the mature, senior leaders who secured the withdrawal of the demand for the prime minister's resignation as the precondition for unity against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-Bharatiya Janata Party-Vishwa Hindu Parishad combine [RSS-BJP-VHP].

Nevertheless, they had to pay a price to their younger colleagues in the Stalinist mould which they themselves had built and from which they are yet to extricate themselves. The price was postponing a joint campaign with the Congrerss till the latter had "proved" itself. In the meantime, independent and convergent campaigning was to be the order of the day.

This separation from the Congress in a battle in which both agree they have a common enemy will not be easy to maintain as the combat proceeds. The left could either make the Congress its target together with the RSS-BJP-VHP combine or consider it an ally despite many and serious differences and the fact the Congress has traditionally been the CPI(M)'s main enemy.

It cannot be forgotten Mr. Surjeet, at the forefront of today's battle against communal forces, publicly appealed to the BJP to support the National Front government as recently as 1990. Both he and the CPI's present general secretary, Mr. Indrajit Gupta, praised the BJP's "principled" positions in contrast with the immortal inconsistencies of the Congress.

It would be unthinkable for these two parties to adopt the same stand vis-a-vis the Congress. So when these two leaders proclaim they will now follow a strategy of equidistance it means, in fact, the opposite of the previous "equidistance." This time the position towards the BJP would be based on the theory of principal contradiction, to use phraseology which the CPI(M) leadership is accustomed to.

This leadership also counts on the fact the Congress cannot stay united for long. It feels that there will be some break, or, at least, a crack. If such a thing happens, secular unity could itself become a form of transition to the left-democratic unity of the Ajoy Mukherjee Bangla Congress type. More sober estimates of some senior leaders, however, are that without curbing, if not eliminating, the Sangh parivar, no progressive revolution can hope to survive in our country.

Whatever the motivations and calculations, the CPI(M) has committed itself to a fullscale combat against the RSS-BJP-VHP combine. This has to be welcomed and acted upon. Even if its cooperation with the Congress is conditional, the latter should not follow a tit-for-tat policy. There should be only a healthy competition on who fights communalism more effectively.

It has been correctly stated politics and religion are to be separated. The old Biblical injunction—render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto god that which is god's—applies even today.

But there is another, more important, separation that is required in the nation's interest—the separation of religion from communalism. The latter draws its strength only by being identified with the former. Everybody speaks and writes about Hindu communalism and Muslim communalism and Sikh communalism. In fact, communalism cannot be Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. It is the perversion of and antithesis of all religions. It is essential for those campaigning against communalism to bear this in mind, unless they want to add grist to the mill of the communalists.

Further, the RSS-BJP-VHP challenge is not confined to attacking secularism. Its chief preoccupation now is nationalism. It opposes not only pseudo-secularists but also pseudo-nationalism. Its contends there can be only Hindu nationalism and not a composite Indian nationalism.

Mr. L.K. Advani has repeatedly asked Christians to accept the Ramayana as part of their culture. This is sound advice. But he has refused to answer the repeated queries of this author whether there is such a thing as Indian culture to which non-Hindus, including the Muslims, atheists, even communists, had not contributed. He refused to accept that the identity of India transcends all religions and ideologies without negating any. His nationalism wrongly refuses to accept the real nature of the entity called India. He remains stuck in the prenationalist era of this country.

It is only the nationalist plane, by arousing people's sense of Indianness, that communalism can be effectively combated.

It should also be made clear the campaign is against communalism of all types, not only against the Sangh parivar. Nor is the Sangh parivar to be fought with the aid of communal or casteist forces. It is to be combated by invoking the sense of nationalism inextricably linked with secularism.

The banning of organisations and the dismissal of governments can only be effective if the administration is backed by the sustained ideological and political enlightening of all sections of society.

Even this is not enough. The government must go about its business of governance, especially in the crucial area of economic reforms. We are by no means out of the woods. Our economy is still precariously poised. We cannot afford to slacken the pace of reforms, much less abandon them mid-stream. It is not going to be easy to proceed on the new economic course in these unsettled conditions and faced with shifting political alignments. But if we give up that course there will be no India left to save from communalism.

Hindu Based Politics Seen Contrary to Cultural Heritage

93AS0430B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 23 Dec 92 p 9

[Article by Suranjan Das: "Many Splendoured Heritage"; figures as published]

[Text] December 6, 1992, was not, as it has been called, a decisive rupture with the Nehruvian consensus. The premise of the argument there is a contradiction between Jawaharlal Nehru's consensual politics and Hinduism is false. Pristine Hinduism is an assimilation of heterogeneous practices and cults. Unlike Semitic religions, Hinduism is neither rigidly structured nor based on a single text or represented by an organised church.

That, for instance, Durga is represented and worshipped in diverse ways is characteristic of the religion. In some parts of the country, the goddess, with a blood coloured complexion, is worshipped according to the Devi Purana, in others the blue complexioned deity is worshipped according to the Kalika Purana.

In Indo-Islamic art, temple architecture imbibed many Islamic features. Hindu and Muslim villagers worship the same deities for good harvests or to fight natural calamities and epidemics. In parts of northwest India, Hindus still recite the Gita in Urdu.

What happened on December 6 is therefore an assault on this liberal and eclectic nature of Hinduism. Mr. Swapan Dasgupta's article, "Hindu, and still proud to be" (THE TELEGRAPH, Dec. 15), is an ahistorical and provocative defence of the Bharatiya Janata Party's [BJP] attack on India's integrity.

The writer, unfortunately, mistakes the belligerent kar sevak as representative of the nation's Hindu population. The BJP-Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] combine could not secure more than one-third the votes in the 1991 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. Yet its leaders are projected as the sole spokespersons of the supposedly homogenous Hindu mind. The majority of Hindus was shocked at the destruction of the Babri Masjid. Some Hindu religious leaders do not approve of the current religious fanaticism. Only those mahants with political ambitions of the Avaidyanath variety are riding the BJP-VHP-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] horse.

If Hindus did unitedly rally behind VHP-RSS ideology, we would certainly have witnessed a belligerent retaliation to the dismissal of the three BJP governments in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The demolition of the mosque is said to indicate a Hindu renaissance. It actually represents the mobilisation of destructive elements in Hindu ranks for electoral gains.

Hinduism has been inaccurately portrayed as the persistent target of religious violence. After the 5th century, militant Hindus desecrated Buddhist viharas and monasteries in north and northwestern India. Sasanka, king of Bengal, is supposed to have thrown a sacred stone bearing Buddha's footprint into the Ganges. A Paramara king defiled the Jaina temples of Cambay in the 12th century. The Sunga monarch, Pushyamitra, cruelly suppressed a Buddhist uprising.

Nehruvian secularism has been held responsible for thwarting Hindu cultural expression. The truth is the opposite. The failure of the Indian state rests on its reluctance to bridge the yawning gap between the theory and practice of secularism. While Muslims continue to be economically backward, Hindu rituals and practices have consciously or unconsciously crept into official functions and ceremonies.

Nehru himself was a hesitant secular practitioner. He did not ban communal organisations on legal pretexts. He was opposed to the prohibition of cow slaughter but included it in the Constitution as a directive principle. He claimed to support equality before the law but left Muslim women outside the ambit of a common civil code. If secularism had really triumphed in India the BJP's brand of politics could not have made any headway.

The BJP seems to view appeasement of Muslims as the only face of Indian secularism. Such a perspective fails to distinguish between protection and pampering. Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee supports the logic of affirmative action, but is clearly uneasy when this is equated with promoting the interests of backward Indian Muslims. Minority economic rights are sancrosanct in any genuine democracy.

Rajiv Gandhi's volte face in the Shah Bano case was not, however, motivated by the desire to protect Muslim interests. It represented a submission to Islamic fundamentalism and pressures from the Muslim elite in order to preserve the Congress's Muslim vote bank. But such actions are aberrations in the practice of secularism and should not be confused with a general state policy of appeasement. Communalism of any kind, Hindu or Muslim, is anti-democratic. But majority communalism is more dangerous because it has greater chances of being transmuted [as printed] into fascism.

Those denying the destruction of the Babri Masjid was premeditated leave some questions unanswered. There was no reason for the saffron brigade to be armed with axes, picks, shovels and iron rods when Mr. L.K. Advani had given assurances the kar seva would be disciplined and peaceful. It is also curious the BJP chief minister, Mr. Kalyan Singh, deployed only a small police force, that too the discredited Provincial Armed Constabulatory, between the barricade that was easy to climb and the mosque. Why Mr. Advani asked the public to intercept the Central forces when Ms. Uma Bharati was shouting, "Give it one more push," is another question. It is absurd to expect anyone to believe a leaderless frenzied mob could clear the debris and construct a flight of steps to the planned temple structure overnight.

Commentators like Mr. Dasgupta cannot deny reports of kar sevaks undergoing training for the demolition in Gujarat.

These questions provide good reason to believe demolition was planned by the BJP and its allies to forcefully convert Ayodhya into the Vatican of India. But by engineering the destruction of the Babri Masjid, openly flouting the Supreme Court's directives on the kar seva and mixing religion with politics, the BJP-VHP-RSS combine has forfeited its moral right to participate in India's political process.

The fact the disputed structure functioned as a temple for the last 44 years on the basis of a deceitful and covert action is ignored. It was only in the 19th century British rulers—eager to define Indian society as a cauldron of conflicting religious communities—gave an official stamp on the story a mosque had been built in Ayodhya on the ruins of a temple. Yet the controversial structure did not inflame communal passions till December, 1949, when some images of deities were surreptitiously smuggled into the mosque. Inept handling of the situation let the culprits go scotfree, thereby delivering the monument to future Hindu fundamentalist politics.

Mr. Dasgupta makes inappropriate use of categories in speaking of "the racial memory of Hindus" and of a specifically Hindu nationalism. Hinduism does not encompass a single race. It represents a racial mixture comprising the Australoids, Mediterraneans, Alpinoids, Nordics and Armenoids. Again, Indian nationalism has always cut across caste and communal lines. Hindu nationalism is actually Hindu sectarianism, just as the Muslim breakaway group before partition was actually formed by Muslim separatists who aided in the creation of Pakistan.

Nehruvian consensus is more a myth than a reality. Undemocratic features like political centralism, intolerance of recalcitrant opposition-led provincial governments and dynamic rule can be traced back to Nehru's premiership.

Hindutva, as conceived by Hindu ideologues, goes against the powerful syncretic trend in the Indian cultural tradition. Indian civilisation, as we know it today, is an amalgam of several strands—Persian, Greek, Roman, Parthian, Hindu, Islamic, Christian and Zoroastrian.

Communalism in India, whether Hindu or Muslim, has never been a static phenomenon. The Indian peasant or city dweller is hardly motivated by hostility towards his Hindu or Muslim brethren except during periods of communal violence. A community of people cannot be regarded as an organic entity to which class interests and disunity are alien. Its members need not share the same values or goals over a specific period of time. An Indian has multiple identities. At a particular historical juncture, one gains precedence over another.

The assertion of militant Hindu identity by more than 1,50,000 kar sevaks in Ayodhya does not necessarily imply a "Hinduised polity" is inevitable. Indian politics has always oscillated between class, nationalist and separatist interests. The imbalance created by the Ayodhya a crisis will be corrected in due course.

Communal amity cannot be maintained at gunpoint. What India needs is the strengthening of civil society in which law binds both the state and the citizen. The essential cultural unity of India has to be highlighted at the grassroots level. India does not represent what in traditional terms is called unity in diversity, but diversity in unity. The future will not bring a Hinduised India, but a left-democratic-secular India relying as heavily as possible on political and cultural pluralism.

BJP Seen Acting Contrary to Syncretic Heritage

93AS0430C Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 12 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Rajat Kanta Ray: "Long Night of Mother India"]

[Text] Mr. Lal Krishna Advani stands arraigned before the lord of the hearts of the people (jana gana mana adhinayaka), the arbiter of India's destiny (Bharat bhagya vidhata). That is why he was impelled to make the plea he did in the form of an article ("Agony and opportunity," Jan. 4).

It remains for the insulted and the injured to record their response for posterity, which will surely pronounce judgment on what Mr. Advani did to the people of India on December 6, 1992. I do not allege he plotted the destruction of the Babri Masjid. I believe him when he says he felt "dejected and downcast."

But "most others" in Ayodhya, as he puts it, "were ecstatic with joy." And Mr. Advani was their leader. It was in his presence that Ms. Uma Bharati danced and cried, "Aur dhakka ek, do, Babri Masjid tod do." For what has been done to the Indian union, Mr. Advani, and not the kar sevaks, must bear ultimate responsibility.

I remember that black Sunday well. In the evening, the British Broadcasting Corporation bulletin informed me the three domes of the Babri Masjid had collapsed under the hate inspired blows of the kar sevaks. I went to sleep with a faint glimmer of hope. The three domes would perhaps be put up again somehow.

In the morning, I learnt the true facts. The whole structure had been razed to the ground. There was no hope of putting the Babri Masjid back together again.

The deed had been done to the accompaniment of the slogan, "Ram nam satya hai, Babri Masjid dhvasi hai." It had been done in the name a person who is the very archetype of moral virtue. It is that same person who

wrung out from the heart of India the cry, "Ishwar, Allah tere nam, sab ko sammati de Bhagwan."

Mr. Advani has named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the Ram dhun in his plea. The Ram dhun as sung by Gandhi invariably ended with those immortal words of Tulsidas, where has that sumati (pronounced "sammati" and meaning the good counsel embedded in every heart) gone?

It was not love of Ram that inspired the kar sevaks at Ayodhya. It was hate for their brothers, the Muslims, that impelled them to do the deed. If Mr. Advani had been a true follower of Ram, he and his followers would have heard Ram's agonised call and purged their hearts of hatred.

Look at what Mr. Advani has done to the people of India. On the day his plea was published in THE TELEGRAPH, the same newspaper published two photographs. One depicted the thousands of fundamentalists of Bangladesh who marched demanding the reconstruction of the Babri Masjid. The fanaticism, the glee and the ferocity on their faces was unmistakable.

The other picture was of "sadhus" and "devotees" marching for darshan of the Ram Lalla idols in the makeshift temple erected on the site of the Babri Masjid. On their faces could be seen fanaticism, glee and the ferocity. I ask if anyone can honestly see any difference. How has Mr. Advani succeeded in remoulding his followers in the image of fanatics from across the border? Is there any difference between their Islami riyasat and Mr. Advani's Hindu rashtra?

The "old structure" which Mr. Advani identifies as a "de facto temple" and which he refuses to call a mosque was not abandoned by Muslims in 1936. Nor did it become a temple in 1949. On the contrary, the local Muslims, threatened by militant Hindus, asked the district magistrate in December 1949 to provide them with protection during Friday prayers at the Babri Masjid.

A week after this, on December 23, the magistrate wired a message to the chief minister saying, "A few Hindus entered the Babri Masjid and installed a deity there." Flouting all rules of fair play, the same official, K.K. Nayar, allowed pujaris to perform aarti every evening. He also turned the imam of the Babri Masjid out of his precincts. The Muslims were deprived of their mosque by force. The Hindus installed their idols by fraud.

Mr. Advani asserts the demolition of the Babri Masjid was not an assault on secularism. The assertion flies in the face of human reason. The issue is sought to be confused by a strained and raucous distinction between "secularism" and "pseudo-secularism." But no amount of sophistry will convince anyone that the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] or the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] or the VHP [Vashwa Hindu Parishad] represent anything except communalism. When Mr. Advani claims to be secular the note sounds false to every ear.

The set aim of communalists like Mr. Advani is to overthrow the enlightened secularism of the Indian Constitution. It is to tear apart the syncretic cultural tradition of Indian civilisation. Secularism is not very old in India. It is still vulnerable to mass fanaticism.

Syncretism, on the other hand, goes much further back. It forms the very essence of India's culture and civilisation. It was disseminated through the centuries by the dargahs of Nizammudin and Ajmer Sharif, the akhras of Ramanand and Kabir and later by the bauls of Bengal.

This tradition, which may be traced back to the 14th century or even earlier, has seeped deep into the consciousness of the masses. It is facing the menacing threat of the sangh parivar's propaganda.

Mr. Advani seems anxious to reaffirm the nation's "cultural heritage." This reaffirmation alone, he claims, will provide a basis for the nation's unity. But how can he restore India's unity by imposing Hindutva on Muslims? This nation's heritage is not cultural uniformity, it is cultural syncretism.

According to Mr. Advani, the BJP state governments' track record in maintaining communal peace has raised the party's credibility. Facts suggest otherwise.

I am sure Mr. Advani knows the difference between a riot and a pogrom. A riot takes place between two communities, with the state either intervening to stop it or maintaining a dishonourable neutrality. A pogrom, on the other hand, is a one sided attack on the minority by the majority. The forces of the state often joining the attackers.

In the non-BJP ruled states, fearful riots took place in the aftermath of December 6. There was carnage in Surat, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Hyderabad. But the spectre that haunted Ayodhya, Faizabad and Bhopal was more frightening. In these BJP ruled areas, the massacre of Muslims was the work of both the crowd and the police.

The report of the governor of Madhya Pradesh, hints that what occurred before him was not a riot but a pogrom. Journalists confirm small deliberate pogroms were carried out in Ayodhya and Faizabad on that black Sunday, while the BJP was still in power.

Like Mr. Advani, I too feel the Congress is in "the grip of a lemming complex." My reasons, however, are not the same as his. After Mr. Advani betrayed India on December 6—the day Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao began to say plaintively that he had been betrayed—the country's prime minister contributed his own bit.

Mr. Rao damaged the prospects of his party and the country by allowing worship of the idols reinstated on the site of the destroyed mosque. He also prevented Muslims from offering prayers there. It was a replay of K.K. Nayar's action and a blatant violation of the rules of fair play.

The Congress has lost, in electoral parlance, the Muslim vote. It will not gain the Hindu vote for which Mr. Rao made a desperate and unprincipled attempt. More than ever, the country needed the Congress in order to save it from the danger posed by the BJP. By his twin acts, Mr. Rao has demolished the Congress's electoral base.

Mr. Rao seems to have done his best to deliver the country into the BJP's hands. Mr. Advani certainly does have a point when he prognosticates with such pleasure that the events of the past month have boosted the BJP's poll prospects no end.

There is food for thought here. This country has the world's second largest Muslim population, that of 180 million [as published] people. Mr. Advani's followers are known to chillingly call out, "Musal-mano ke do sthan, Pakistan aur kabristan."

Those who chant this rhyme are incapable of reflecting that Pakistan, if threatened with the sudden and catastrophic doubling of its population, will surely close its doors to India's hapless Muslims. Further it is quite impossible to literally send 180 million people to the grave.

There will be strife. Muslims will resist being massacred. BJP backed pogroms will be carried out against them. In the process, the state will brutalise itself. Mr. Advani would do well to remember that though it was the Jews who were massacred under Nazi rule, other Germans too experienced untold suffering.

At the end of his article Mr. Advani has implied all that has taken place has done so by Ram's will. This is not so. Lord Ram will not reside in the makeshift temple erected by force and fraud. He will reside only in a shrine, on the same site, dedicated to the unity of the people of India.

Restore the mosque which is the temple, build the temple which is the mosque, make India one again by reviving the Ram-Rahim sthan. In the meantime, let Hindus worship Ram and let Muslims pray to Rahim on the plinth of the destroyed shrine.

Fighting shoulder to shoulder against the British in 1857 Indians had cried out together, "Ram, Rahim ek; Hindu. Musalman ek; Srikrishna, Allah ek." Let a new Ram-Rahim shrine arise at the site in Ayodhya.

This is of course a fond dream. I am aware how far and how fast it recedes every day. The lights are going out all over the subcontinent. We are not likely to see them lit again, not in our generation. But we will remember the words of Rabindranath Tagore, pronounced on the perspective of the ages: "Nai nai bhoy, habe habe joy, khule jabe ei dvae."

The long night has descended across India. Perhaps our children or our children's children will live to see the lights again. As the poet pronounced in another line of the same song, Mother India goes into the sleep of self oblivion from time to time—"Kshane kshane tui haraye apana, supti nishith karis japana."

Mr. Lal Krishna Advani should know this for certain. Before going into her night of oblivion, Mother India did not pronounce her benediction upon you.

Hindu Nationalism Seen Threat to Secularist Foundation

93AS0431B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 12 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by R.C. Dutt: "One India: No Place for Hindutva Doctrine"]

[Text] THE STATESMAN deserves to be congratulated on the front-page articles by the Editor-in-Chief it has been publishing since the Ayodhya outrage, and in particular for the Letter to the Editor it published, again on the front page, on December 13-14. This letter, as the Editor-in-Chief puts it, is a cry from the hearts of the two signatories. It is an impassioned appeal based on the fundamentals of Indian culture and the Indian polity which should put to shame not only the fanatics who committed the outrage, but even more so the politicians of the so-called Sangh Parivar who, by perverting facts and spreading disinformation, created the psychological atmosphere that made the outrage possible.

Incarnation

This perversion of facts has been spread so assiduously that large sections of even intelligent and educated people have come to believe in them. The concept of secularism has itself been limited to mean "Sarva Dharma Samabhava," or the same feeling towards all religions. It is on this basis that religiosity has been promoted and is being demonstrably indulged in, forgetting that one needs to be an atheist or an agnostic to have the same feeling towards all religions. On the other hand, a man who, for instance, firmly believes that Ram is an incarnation of God cannot have the same feeling towards another religion which does not accept this belief. He is bound to hold that his religion is right, and the other religions are wrong.

True, passages can be quoted from Hindu religious texts to say that the essence of Dharma lies concealed in caves, and that the only course is to follow the paths shown by great men. Presumably, this would not exclude even great atheists and agnostics, who can therefore also claim to be Hindus. It is not inappropriate from this point of view to argue that one should have the same feeling for all religions, but for millions upon millions of devout Hindus who believe in mythologies and rituals, as for devout followers of other religions, Sarva Dhama Samabhava is not a practical injunction.

The only true definition of secularism is to separate religion from politics, from the State. This need not, and in fact, does not mean any disrespect for religion. Religion which governs the relationship of the individual with the Divine can have an important, even respected, place in the life of the individual, depending of course on

his beliefs. But it should not intrude into politics or public affairs with which it has nothing to do.

This is how the concept of secularism came to the world. It came first to the Western world in the form of separation of the church from the state, because the church was at that time an influential institution in the West. The essence of the concept, however, was that religion should be separated from politics, and it is in this form that the concept has to be established in a country like India where, except for the Christians, there is no established church. It is a pernicious argument to differentiate between Western and Eastern secularism, and to hold that just because the major Indian religions have no established church, the Western view of secularism does not apply to India.

The concept of "minorityism" propagated by the Sangh Parivar is equally false. If the term means showing special favours to the religious minorities, there is little evidence of it, specially as far as the Muslims are concerned. Their representation in the Services of the state, or in senior positions of private employment, or even in the higher professions, remains well below their proportion to the population. Economically and socially, they remain backward, and the state has done little about it. Indeed, it is the fact of their backwardness that is taken advantage of by the politicians who seek to garner their votes by playing to their prejudices.

Prejudices

The Shah Bano case, which is often cited as a case of "minorityism," is a typical instance in point. It was no favour to the Muslims whose women were denied the benefits available to women of all other communities. It was merely catering to the prejudices of the ignorant Muslim masses in order to attract their votes. Indeed, the measure was strongly opposed by enlightened Muslims and a Muslim member of the then Council of Ministers resigned on this issue.

The absence of a common civil code is held as another instance of "minorityism." Here again, there is no question of the Muslim community being favoured on this account. It is only the Hindu fundamentalists, who consider that the Hindu Code is a hardship imposed on the Hindus, who can argue that the Muslims have been spared this hardship. The fact, on the other hand, is that the Muslims, especially the Muslim women, have been denied the benefits of a modern Civil Code. This happened because the Muslim community was socially more backward, and did not have the benefit of a succession of social reformers, as the Hindu community had, to create a modern consciousness among them. There was opposition to the Hindu Code from orthodox Hindus which could be overcome, but the opposition from devout Muslims would have been far more intense.

The reality is that, politics having lost its value system in the name of pragmatism, after the Gandhi-Nehru era pursuit of power became more important than social good. The same Prime Minister who catered to Muslim fundamentalists in the Shah Bano case went to the other extreme to please the devout Hindus, by his Shilanyas on the disputed land. In fact, it was in the regime of the same Prime Minister that Babari Masjid, which had been locked up under court orders, was unlocked with the consent of the State Government to allow the Hindus to worship the images that had been surreptitiously sneaked in earlier against the spirit of Hinduism itself.

Vandalism

Another argument put forward to justify Hindu militancy, and even vandalism, is that similar things are happening in Pakistan. It is amazing that an argument of this nature could be advanced at all. We have always opposed the two-nation theory of Mohamed Ali Jinnah, and have deplored state formation on the basis of religion. The partition was accepted as a necessary evil only when it was imposed on us by the machinations of the then imperial ruling power. Should we now reverse history, go back on our values and start imitating Pakistan?

The present situation is fraught with grave danger to the integrity of this country. India, unlike any other country with the exception of the erstwhile Soviet Union, is a country of subcontinential size with a plurality of religions, languages and cultures. It cannot exist as a country if the primordial instincts of religious fundamentalism and linguistic, cultural chauvinism are let loose and this plurality is denied. Even a much smaller country like Yugoslavia has broken up with the exuberance of these primordial instincts, and several of the autonomous republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union are being torn asunder by strife. Even India has paid a heavy price, and three independent states now exist in place of the united India dreamt of by the freedom-fighters.

Pakistan, formed on the basis of religion, is also paying a heavy penalty for it. The people of Pakistan have lost their right to democracy, and are facing a serious threat to the country's integrity posed by ethnic and linguistic forces. Does Pakistan hold enviable prospects for India to emulate?

The Hindutva doctrine today is as pernicious as the two-nation theory of Jinnah. The Ayodhya incident has made even the non-Muslim minorities feel insecure. If unchecked, it will not only demolish all hopes of economic development but will break up the country into many more fragments than the two-nation theory did. That is the real message of the ugly happenings at Ayodhya on December 6.

Secularism Seen Essential to Nation's Survival

93AS0431D Madras THE HINDU in English 12 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by M.S. Prabhakara: "A Poser To Hindutva Votaries"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] A most disingenuous argument offered by the Hindutva votaries on the issue of India's formal commitment to secularism is that it is only because of its Hindu majority that the country has been able to formally adopt secularism as a matter of State policy. In other words, only the inherent liberalism of the Hindus and the eclecticism of Hinduism has made possible this formal commitment to secularism as a guiding principle, now also enshrined in the Constitution. In the argument of the Hindutva votaries, there cannot be any contradiction between what they want India to become, a Hindu Rashtra, and secularism because only a Hindu Rashtra can be truly secular.

Leaving unconsidered for the purposes of this essay the blatant iniquities and horrors that too have, apart from liberalism and eclecticism, Hindu scriptural and sacerdotal sanction, it is true that Hinduism being neither a monotheistic nor a revelatory faith does not have a single God, or an only book, or a supreme church or a supreme Prophet; much less does it allow for the finality of Prophethood, as in the case of Islam. But these are some of the benevolent aspects of Hinduism in practice for which the votaries of Hindutva cannot claim credit, especially since the whole thrust of their movement is to undo these liberal features and mould Hinduism in the shape of other monoetheistic and revelatory religions, straitjacketing the healthy and vigorous polytheistic pluralism and eclecticism of Hinduism in practice along rigidly structured lines. However, the ironies of trying to replicate the rigidities of the Semitic faiths even spreading hatred against the followers of such faiths within the country are entirely lost on the leaders of the votaries of Hindutva.

The crude and aggressive politicisation of Hinduism represented by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and numerous other organisations these have spawned represent only part of these structural changes, and the accompanying new rigidities and cruelties far transcending the inherent cruelty and rigidity of the caste system that the votaries of Hindutva have been ceaselessly striving after.

However, secularism in India is not a product of any inherent liberalism of the majority community towards the minorities as such; indeed, even if there were no non-Hindu minorities at all in India, the Indian State would still have to be secular if only because Hinduism in practice itself admits people of various persuasion not strictly adhering to the 'prescribed code', so-called because there is in fact (and fortunately) no rigidly prescribed and defining code by which one can identify a Hindu. The rites of passage, food habits, modes of worship, one's chosen gods and ancestral gods (and no God with a capital G), ritual practices—every one of outward or internalised manifestations of Hinduism in practice admit one thousand and one variations.

It is necessary to stress this obvious plurality of Hinduism in practice because Hinduism, elevated into an aggressive and unilaterally conceived Hindutva, is being hijacked by its self-appointed votaries who have very little knowledge of the reality on the ground insofar as the way ordinary people in millions of homes believe and practise Hinduism. For instance, many orthodox and conventional Hindus in South India, would find it hard to stomach the food habits and, in some cases, even the modes of worship of their equally orthodox and conventional counterparts in the North and East of the country cannot conceive of good Hindus in the South choosing to be buried after death. And yet, it is this plurality that has made Hinduism in practice one of the richest, most diverse and vibrant faiths admitting an infinite variety of loyalty and commitment, from rank atheism to the most profoundly mystical communion with one's god.

The other side of this plurality is the resilience of Hinduism, what makes it a perennial faith and a perennial philosophy, a Sanatana Dharma—again leaving aside for the present its noisome underbelly.

Such being the reality of Hinduism in practice (including the creeping horrors of the underside), secularism is not merely a sufficient but a necessary condition for the very survival of the Indians as a people, indeed of the Hindus as a people; for only secularism, and hard secularism at that and not the opportunist and fraudulent kind of secularism as represented by the Congress party (a most shameless example of which has been the amnesia of the Congress leaders about their own party's role in the three major attacks on the Babri Masjid that preceded its demolition on December 6, to wit, the desecration on the night of December 22-23, 1949, the opening of the locks on the gate on February 1, 1986, and the shilanyas on November 9, 1989, at every point of which calendar of infamy the Congress was in power both in Delhi and Lucknow) can make possible this rich diversity and plurality in the practice of Hinduism, as also provide a framework for the necessary reforms to correct the iniquities of Hinduism.

A correspondent in these columns recently observed that only a paper calling itself THE HINDU could take the kind of stand it has taken editorially on the demolition of the Babri Masjid; and the overwhelming majority of the Letters to the Editor have been highly critical of the editorial stand on the issue. Indeed, stationed in Guwahati where the paper is not widely read, one has had to cope repeatedly with the cloying approaches by the votaries of Hindutva seeking to claim and establish a 'special' relationship with the paper and its correspondent. The perceptions underlying such wistful and self-congratulatory regrets, or anger, or 'special' claims are just another indication of how the very term, Hindu, is being hijacked by those whose crudities and hate-filled passions have little to do with Hinduism in its pristine form, or even its repelling underbelly.

If the votaries of Hindutva now appear to have acquired such legitimacy, marginalising or simply drowning in their noisy obstreperousness the democratic sentiments of the vast majority of the people, including the majority of the Hindus, the responsibility for such a state of

affairs has to be laid principally at the door of the Congress Party. Indeed, during recent travels in some riot-affected areas in Assam in the wake of the demolition (in which, because of some factors unique to the affected areas, the victims werre overwhelmingly Bengali Hindus and the attackers Bengali Muslims, both of East Bengal origin domiciled in Assam), almost every Muslim (and Hindu) this correspondent talked to simply took it for granted that the Congress and the votaries of Hindutva were working in tandem, the objective of both being the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the erection on the site of the masjid a temple for Lord Rama.

On the one hand, there is an appearance of pathetic paralysis, unable to go beyond ad hoc measures of crisis management and damage control, even while a congenially conspiratorial and amoral leadership manipulates the grave national crisis as yet another opportunity to make factional gains in the ongoing struggle for the leadership of the Congress Parliamentary Party. On the other hand is the increasing reality, insofar as the situation on the ground goes, of repeated surrenders to every offensive by the Hindutva votaries even as ringing statements of commitment to secularism and national unity are issued.

Indeed, even other, time-honoured initiatives and opportunities for settling scores with the allies in the great battle against Hindutva votaries are not being overlooked. The Prime Minister wants Article 356 to be amended to enable the Union Government to intervene in a State when there is a mere (no doubt subjectively perceived) apprehension of a breakdown of the constitutional arrangement. The Tamil Nadu Government is being disciplined; and no doubt, when the time is considered ripe, it will be the turn of the West Bengal Government as well.

Meanwhile, the votaries of Hindutva are singlemindedly and according to a plan managing the whole show—some taking the high road of handwringing over the demolition while others taking the low road of bombast and rejection of all civil authority. No doubt these deserve the sharpest condemnation. But then, such condemnation which also assuages one's democratic and liberal conscience is the easiest option that one can exercise, and takes one nowhere. While the Hindutva brigade is consolidating with fearsome manner, the democratic challenge to Hindutva, flawed by the presence of forces which have repeatedly compromised with the very ideology they are apparently pitted against, remains confined to issuing statements—or writing articles.

Muslim Future Seen More Secure in Secularist State

93AS0431I Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 8 Jan 93 pp 29-32

[Interview with Salman Khurshid by Shastri Ramachandran, date and place not given: "Us and Them"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] Salman Khurshid, the young and personable Union deputy minister for commerce is, as a junior minister, a political lightweight. Yet his social profile in the capital is much larger than that of other 'senior' Muslim members of the union council of ministers. After the cataclysmic event at Ayodhya on December 6, when several Muslim Congress leaders contemplated quitting their posts in government and the party, it was Khurshid who sought to mobilise opinion against such an extreme move. It was Khurshid who went on the air and appealed to the outraged community to remain calm.

This first-term member of the Lok Sabha from Farrukabad taught Law at Trinity College, Oxford, for three years from 1978 to 1980. He then did a stint as officer on special duty with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) soon after Mrs. Gandhi was re-elected in 1980, before taking up practice in the Supreme Court. His first attempt to enter the Lok Sabha, in 1989, was thwarted when he lost the election to the Janata Dal nominee.

December 6 marks a new phase in politics. The Muslim leadership has been forced to change some of its perceptions and assumptions. Khurshid's responses reflect the ferment in the minds of a new generation of Muslims who aspire to provide leadership to a community they believe has been betrayed.

Salman Khurshid's dilemma is that of the urbane, educated Muslim trapped between the majority.

Excerpts:

[Ramachandaran] What was your role in the December 6 crisis?

[Khurshid] In the system of government that we have, a junior minister can be virtually irrelevant. But you can be relevant if you have good relations with senior ministers or special access to the head of government. As a junior Muslim minister, I think I am at a tremendous disadvantage, in the sense that I might not be seen to represent any constituency as such. The only advantage is that I can move around freely and get through to people since there aren't that many Muslim ministers. This way I can get my point of view across.

In the build-up to December 6, I played a very minor role in the negotiations between the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). My role really was to get the Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee (BMMCC), headed by Shahabuddin, to come to the government, to the prime minister, on the single issue: would they agree to a one-point reference to the Supreme Court on whether there was a standing Ram temple at this spot, which was demolished in order to build a mosque in 1528. It has nothing to do with legal issues as they pertain to the cases now in court. It was an attempt to solve what was beginning to become a cancer in our society, an attempt to overcome that cancer by a certain degree of magnanimity on the part of Muslims to give up their legal rights, if it was established that historically a

wrong had been done. We were successful. It took time, but we were able to persuade them to accept this. They came to the prime minister and gave their commitment, despite their reservations about it. It had first been suggested during Rajiv Gandhi's time. But they finally did accept. We hoped this would be a major breakthrough except that the VHP obviously had different ideas. They were in no mood for any kind of adjudication. Therefore, they took everything into their own hands and took to a course which has finally brought us to the situation we are in today.

What I did can't be identified as work that I did as a Muslim minister or a Muslim leader. It is something I would have done simply by virtue of being one who supports the prime minister, one who had been given responsibility by the prime minister in government. It was something to do with my government and, therefore, I did it.

[Ramachandaran] Why do you think the VHP rejected this proposition?

[Khurshid] The VHP, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and Bajrang Dal have no consistent position. They shift from one position to another, from the position of the title suit to the position of a destroyed temple, and then to a position irrespective of these—to a matter of astha (faith) and the belief that this is Ram Janam Bhoomi. There are three different positions they hold. Within the kind of governance and the system of adjudication available, you have to take something plausably acceptable as the basis of adjudication. There cannot be an adjudication on whether this is Ram Janambhoomi or not. There is no logical system known to modern Indian thought that can allow for adjudication on this question. That is in the realm of belief and can only be settled through a different medium, a political medium, not through adjudication.

The question of deciding the title suit is one thing. If it is a question of whether a temple had been destroyed to build a mosque in 1528, then that is another issue altogether. To say that it's religious belief that this is Ram Janambhoomi is a third thing. Either of the first two positions can be adjudicated upon. The first one, under ordinary law of the land. The process has to be quickened. It has taken so long in the ordinary course. A special bench of the high court is hearing it. This is the last phase now.

The other reference, the one-point reference to the Supreme Court, could have been done. The only problem was that there was no point making a reference that would be binding only on the side. We wanted a reference under Article 138 which would be by consent and agreement of the central government and the state government, where jurisdiction would be given to the Supreme Court by Parliament for a decision binding on all sides. We wanted this to be accepted by the Muslims and Hindus. Muslims accepted it. Shahabuddin accepted it. The AIBMAC implicitly accepted it. Their position was very clear and publicly stated: if there was a temple here, which was destroyed to build this mosque, we will not insist on our legal rights. This was their final position. What more can you ask for from people who believe that in the national interest, they ought to give up their legal rights? The problem with the VHP was that they just didn't have the confidence that they could prove a case. Therefore, it was imperative for them that whatever evidence was available within the structure of the Babri Masjid should be destroyed, removed, tampered with, and fresh evidence created under conditions of their control to create doubt in the public minds; not just doubt, but also an atmosphere of hostility between the communities so that adjudication on evidence should no longer remain an answer. This is what they wanted to do. That is the reason why they betrayed the prime minister.

[Ramachandaran] Why was this political need of the VHP and the BJP not taken into account?

[Khurshid] We did take it into account. Over the last two to three years, and certainly the last two elections, we were very conscious of this fact. We have constantly said in our political forums and speeches that they are not interested in a mandir. They are interested in the symbol they can utilise endlessly in election campaigns, to increase their strength and come to power at the Centre. Our perception, and it was not incorrect, was that they would not precipitate anything. They want things to remain on the boil, simmering, so that they can increase the heat every time we get close to an electoral battle. They started with 1989, improved upon their performance in 1991 and they really want to get into the seat of power at the Centre. For that purpose, it was necessary for them to keep this symbol alive.

Our perception, and also that of others, was that they would go to the brink and withdraw. Indrajit Gupta of the CPI [Communist Party of India] called it "brinkmanship." Our strategy had to be to stop them just short of the brink. We knew they would stop, in order to show to the country that they didn't really mean to build any temple. For them, this was just a political strategy. Just to debunk them, to expose them, it was important that each time they set a date we were able to frustrate their plans, whether by an offer of continuing talks or by attempting to persuade Muslims to be more reasonable. Each time, the attempt was to show that what they are trying to do is fanatical, unreasonable, illogical, but that there is a logical answer to it. That is the best way one could have fought their irrationality. Therefore, our reading of this situation plus the assurances they gave in Parliament, to the Dharam Sansad, the National Integration Council, to the courts, all taken together was the basis on which the prime minister concluded that on December 6 they might create trouble and they might even try to damage the Babri Masjid structure. But the intention would not be to go beyond that. We had sufficient force to deal with such an eventuality.

[Ramachandaran] Didn't this assumption prove to be wrong or naive?

[Khurshid] The assessment was not naive. It is not simply refusing to see the worst that can happen. It was on a balance of constitutional propriety, of the practical ground situation and the fact that there was a BJP government in UP [Uttar Pradesh]. Also, the consideration of the fall-out of dismissing the BJP ministry before they did anything extraordinarily unconstitutional. To have dismissed them, merely on a projection of their intention, might itself have given them an opportunity to claim that they were dismissed without cause. When we dismissed three governments, after all that has happened, the people are yelling at us. If we had dismissed the BJP government on December 4 or 5, nobody would have believed that they were going to break the masjid. It is all very well to say with hindsight that you should have dismissed them. Taking the totality of the circumstances, it was certainly not naive. It was, I think, on hindsight, an error of judgment. Again, it was not simply an error of judgment. There is something more to it. Look at the confusing statements that we are getting from day one from the BJP. S.S. Bhandari saying from Punjab that we didn't do it, the Shiv Sena did it; the Shiv Sena saying we didn't do it but if they believe we did, then we are really very happy; Advani resigning in remorse; Kalyan Singh resigning, ostensibly taking moral responsibility; Vajpayee saying that this is a terrible thing, yet threatening "if you try to rebuild it, we will resist"; saying that all the sants, the leaders who were there were trying to prevent the damage from taking place. I have seen the film showing speeches in which they said "we will obey the law, we will not do anything wrong, anything unconstitutional." But, at the same time, there were speeches claiming that "this time, we will destroy the structure." Certainly, when the final assault came, there was no evidence of any leader standing up to say "don't do it." If they had, the crowd would have stopped even then. The assault was by a group of people who were even identified by their yellow-coloured pattas, as opposed to the saffron-coloured armbands which all the other kar sevaks had on. They actually removed all the saffron bands from the area. Murli Manohar Joshi was there himself. So was Ashok Singhal. They removed anyone who they thought was not a trained kar sevak and then let the yellow-patta people go in and destroy the place. The armed forces just stood there. In fact, they did not even stand, but just left the ground for these people. So there is some very deep-seated conspiracy. I think the charade that was perpetruated on the 6th is continuing even now. They are scared. They are also worried. They think that the entire majority population of Hindus in India is not with them on what they have done. And they want to play it soft. Now what they want to do is to reach out to the masses saying, "Look what wonderful people we are, we said that this is wrong. We have apologised. We have expressed our regret. But let us not go back and create that bone of contention (the Babri masjid) once again." The charade, the fraud is still going on.

[Ramachandaran] How would you describe the situation of the Indian Muslim in the aftermath of December 6?

[Khurshid] What the BJP and the Bajrang Dal have done to the Indian Muslims doesn't worry me at all. They are very clearly identified to the average Indian as a fascist force, trying to get succour out of an anti-minority ideology. That doesn't worry us. It is easier to fight an enemy.

The problem today is the vast secular body politic—the institutions, groups, constituencies, political parties, the different levels of government, bureaucracy and the political hand of government. What kind of strength can all these together garner to face up to the assault of the BJP. That is what the Muslim ought to be concerned about. He should not be concerned about what the BJP has done. His concern should be: can the secular forces in this country garner enough support, conviction and courage to stand up for the secular structure, for the secular ideology. It is no longer a fight of the Muslim. If the Muslim is vanquished in this struggle against the BJP, he would not be the only one. The entire secular forces of the country would be vanquished. Perhaps up to December 6, it was his fight. I maintained, even then, that it was not entirely his fight, because people in the secular spectrum were prepared to stand up and speak for him. This is the important thing that happened on the 6th. Up to that day they were speaking only for the Muslims. Today, they are speaking for themselves. They knew that once the Babri Masjid collapsed in a heap of dust, they—the secular spectrum—were the next target. Muslims should become a part of the secular spectrum. They should not speak as a separate voice anymore. They don't need to because now the line is no longer fudged. It is them against us. They are part of the secular spectrum today.

[Ramachandaran] When you speak of the secular spectrum, do you not take into account large sections of the bureaucracy, police and the security forces which have a saffron mentality. This was seen in the attacks on the Muslim community after December 6. What followed the demolition was not "communal violence" in the conventional sense.

[Khurshid] I agree. I agree. We need to take a very close look at what happened. Prima facie, it is very clear, that there is a saffron mentality even in the forces. But that may not be the entire story. It is too pessimistic to say that every policeman who fired at Muslim youth in the last two weeks was firing as a Hindu. I am unable to persuade myself that it's gone as far as that. There has been a hardening of attitudes, a kind of insensitivity that has grown in our police forces, it may be because of the conditions in which they live. It may be the fact that they are being used more than a human body can tolerate. Maybe their training has dissipated. It may be that we have played around with the leadership of the police force too much. It may be that the leadership has been infiltrated by the saffron brigade. Or that their composition is wrong. It may be a lot of these things. But I don't

think it was just an outright communal attack by people in uniform on Muslim youth. The fact is that Muslims' youth died. The fact is that their houses were burnt. But why did the people do it? This needs to be looked at very closely. Local political rivalries, local economic battles, local slumlords trying to muscle in, all kinds of things were happening. In some places, the fact that the BJP was in power contributed tremendously. And I don't think it's an answer to say, "Well, if people died in Bombay in larger numbers than they died in Bhopal, then that goes to show that the Bajrang Dal had no role to play in Bhopal." More people may have died in Bombay. The reasons for the deaths in Bombay may have been different from the reasons that were ostensible and available to the ordinary eye, in Bhopal. In Bhopal, it was state collaboration and support for the Bajrang Dal, and the hoodlums who pass off as the saffron brigade, led these assaults. In Bombay, it could have been a different thing. So I wouldn't say it's an attack of a Hindu communal force on Muslims. But I will say, yes, it was an attack on Muslims and we need to look at why it happened.

[Ramachandaran] My question was how would you describe the situation of the Indian Muslim today? What kind of a situation is he caught in?

[Khurshid] There are lots of dimensions and issues which together define the mentality and the condition of the Indian Muslim today. We have to know what it was like prior to December 6, to be able to write the clause of December 6 on it. The Muslims in this country have never really perceived themselves to be politically separate, though they have perceived themselves to be politically significant. Wherever they live, they have been able to influence culture, language, politics. But I don't think that Muslims in India have ever thought in terms of Muslim or Hindu leaders. If you look at the people that the average Muslim has accepted as a leader, his leader on the national level, they include the likes of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. They have accepted people like H.N. Bahuguna, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Laloo Yadav genuinely as national leaders. In fact, they have probably never supported any Muslim to the same extent. I don't think the Muslims of India treated Maulana Azad as a national leader. Maulana Azad was accepted by them because he was thought of as important and essential by the national leadership of the time. They didn't create in Maulana Azad a larger-than-life leader of Muslims. And after Kidwai, who else has come? They have accepted others because those people were ministers, or had been given important roles by the leaders of the day. When Sanjay Gandhi decided that a Muslim lady, Ruksana Sultana, should look after the Jama masjid area, they accepted her. While they were on this track, people who were being picked up from time to time to fill the Muslim positions in government or in the party somehow felt that once they were picked to fill those positions, they didn't have to do any more. They didn't try to reach out and take over the leadership of the Muslims, either. They just did a job, a nine-to-five job, and went home. They made the right noises required of them from time to time and they went home. They could have developed themselves, but they didn't. And there came a time when some people felt the need to articulate certain positions which would not otherwise have been articulated. The Babri masjid issue, for instance. It had to be articulated by somebody. So who ends up doing it? Some people who had come out of Aligarh, who weren't successful in their law practice. They got together with four or five maulvis and said, "Look, the time has come for us to speak," and they form the Babri masjid action committee. These kind of groups emerged all over. These are not people who have fought elections, who have popular support. These people have no place in Muslim elite society. Despite all their enterprise and struggle for the Babri masjid, even today they have no standing in the Muslim community. Yet there was a vacuum that they could fill and they filled it. They developed tremendous nuisance value. And all that the world saw, all that India saw, were these people in sherwanis who represented the Muslim point of view. And they said: "This is it. Here are the maulvis. Here are the mullahs taking over. There were lots of ordinary Muslims who were ordinary Indians, who didn't have this opportunity. They didn't want to articulate, they didn't have the opportunity and they became irrelevant. So, when you come to sixth of December, there is nobody to speak, except the same bunch of people. And after the sixth, too, there is nobody to speak out except the same people.

[Ramachandaran] Do you think this leadership has been even more discredited and rendered further irrelevant after December 6?

[Khurshid] They were irrelevant before December 6. They are irrelevant after December 6. They only had nuisance value. All that they could do was to obstruct the continued presence of ordinary Muslim leaders in Parliament or government by ensuring that they lost their elections. That is all. That is the sum total of the contribution they have made, and the sum total of the contribution they could have made.

[Ramachandaran] When you speak of a "secular spectrum," isn't there a complete break with that phase of politics where one could talk in terms of a secular spectrum as distinct from communal forces. Aren't the terms of the discourse different today?

[Khurshid] We have had so much confusion on 'secularism'. In our constitution and political vocabulary, everyone assumed they knew what 'secular' and 'communal' meant. In the last five to 10 years, the BJP and its ilk—the Hindu revivalist groups—have suddenly started demanding that "we want secularism redefined, we want communalism redefined. Appeasement of minorities is worse than communalism." They say secularism could be any pseudo secularism. Real secularism is that the majority point of view ought to prevail. They are now theorising about the psychological minority of Hindus in

this country, as against the physical minority of Muslims. M.V. Kamath says that the psychological minority has to be protected against the onslaught of the physical minority. Former foreign secretary A.P. Venkateswaran once wrote that Muslims ought to be grateful that we have given them equal rights in this country. It is a complete perversion of our understanding of democracy when somebody says that Muslims ought to be grateful we have given them equal rights. The majority has not given rights to the minority. Democracy makes majority and minority equal. It's only when you don't have democracy that there is an issue of minority and majority. In the secular spectrum, there are people like M.J. Akbar, Seema Mustafa and Vasant Sathe suddenly questioning this whole idea of a minority. In India, where everyone is equal, why should you have a minority, they ask turning the whole idea upside down. Instead of saying a minority and majority become equal when you equalise their presence by giving constitutional rights when everyone is equal. A total and utter perversion of the idea of secularism and democracy. The fault lies in our concentrating too much on this word 'secular'. What we have to concentrate on is the word 'liberal'.

Secularism is only one aspect of liberal thought. Here, secularism has become totally anti-liberal. In this, I agree with the BJP when it says that secularism should not mean that you destroy religion. Secularism should not mean a negation of religion. Religion is important. What has happened here is that in the name of secularism, you have suddenly turned around to say that Muslims have no business to have their personal law, to learn Urdu and to say they want, to live their life the way they do. This has caused a complete perversion of the idea of secularism. And then the Babri masjid is destroyed. But the bricks of the Babri masjid, its foundation, was made hollow by a lot of people who claim to be secular.

[Ramachandaran] Your secular spectrum includes structures of government. Can these agencies be trusted in the task set for them after their track record in Punjab and Kashmir? How much would it take for them to unleash their brutality against a Muslim, and then justify it by simply saying that he belonged to the Jamaat?

[Khurshid] I agree, I agree. The point is a Muslim is less likely to make a claim like that about another Muslim. A non-Muslim is more likely to say this. That is an incontrovertible proposition. Therefore, if there are more non-Muslims dealing with more Muslims, more non-Muslims in uniform dealing with more Muslims in civilian clothes, the likelihood of this would undoubtedly be there. Specially if they are not trained, educated and organised in such a manner that these tendencies do not get the better of them. This problem does exist. But, as I said earlier, it is not simply a non-Muslim soldier or a non-Muslim policeman hammering a Muslim citizen. I think it is a case of a policeman hammering a citizen. Our police force has become brutal. Our administration is insensitive. We should examine whether we have done enough to ensure that police when it comes in conflict with citizens does not use more force than is necessary.

Arjun Singh Interviewed on Communal Problems

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[Interview of Arjun Singh by Malini Parthasarathy, date and place nor given: "We Should Be Firm in Dealing With Communal Elements: Arjun Singh"; italicized, boldface words as published]

[Text] *The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Mr. Arjun Singh has been at the forefront of those within the Government arguing for a sharper and more confrontational line against the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and other communal forces. In a letter to the Prime Minister's Political Secretary last July which had sparked some political controversy at that time, Mr. Arjun Singh had questioned why the ruling party had not begun a political campaign against the BJP, implying the need for stronger actin by the party.*

In the context of the recent tragedy in Ayodhya, Mr. Arjun Singh's political line has acquired fresh significance. In a conversation with Malini Parthasarathy, Mr. Arjun Singh discusses the implications of the Ayodhya tragedy and how his party would respond to these developments. Excerpts from the interview:

Question: Would you think that your political line as reflected in your letter to the Prime Minister's Political Secretary in July, calling for a stronger, more assertive and confrontational approach to the communal forces is vindicated in the light of the tragedy that has occurred in Ayodhya?

Mr. Arjun Singh: Well, I don't look at the whole issue as a vindication or non-vindication of any line. The point is that the nation has been confronted by such forces in the past also and the reaction in those circumstances has also been clearly laid down, whether it was 1948 or 1975. The simple point is that I believe, and I continue to believe, that this section of the political segment of this country, by whatever name it may go, has always put its own interests, political or otherwise, above the interests of other people, and even above the interests of the country. Time and again they have proved it and this is the background in which I had written that letter. Now you may ask, that after having written that letter why did I not follow it up consistently day by day. The answer is very simple. That I agreed with the Prime Minister's initiative to solve this matter amicably, because in a democratic set-up, it is absolutely correct to follow a line which takes the country to the solution of a vexed problem in an amicable manner. No one can find fault with that. The sincerity of purpose, no one should doubt. Now it was obvious that this was not the intention of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] or the BJP. They took this effort by him in the same attitude of insincerity which they have always done. This today has led the Prime Minister to go

on record and say that they have betrayed him and they have betrayed the nation. I stop at this stage so far as this is concerned. Now having learnt this lesson, not only at the cost of a political party but at the enormous cost of the country, we have to be very firm in dealing with these elements; of course, within the laws of the land. The democratic and secular polity of the country has to deal with it ruthlessly.

How far do you think is the Government responsible for what happened in Ayodhya?

Well, any Government which is in power has to own up responsibility for whatever happens. We take credit for a lot of things and when something goes wrong then we have to take the blame for it also. But you know the circumstances under which all of this has occurred have also to be kept in mind.

In this case a certain political strategy was adopted by the Government which involved more of a conciliatory element than might have been realistic in dealing with these communal forces. Do you think at least now it is time for the Government to publicly repudiate such a line?

Well, after taking a firm line and the broadcast of the Prime Minister and his statement which could not be given but was published nevertheless, there is no doubt of any reservation in the mind of the Government that now we have to take a very consistently strong attitude against the communal forces.

Could you spell out now what the strong policy would consist of, on the ground?

It has been announced that clearly identified communal bodies and elements, they will be banned. Now this is a legal action which will be taken within the framework and I don't think it will be delayed any further. I mean it cannot be delayed any further and the second thing is at the political level the party will have to come out and clearly reiterate its commitment and adherence to the principles of secularism and democratic functioning and this will be a campaign which the party will have to carry throughout the length and breadth of the country which will underline the fact that these elements by demolishing the mosque have shown unmistakably that they will stop at nothing to destabilise the country, create any kind of unrest so long as it helps them. So our response has to be much more strongly put across that this is what we and the Congress(I) will not and cannot allow to happen. In the process we should and we are actually trying to create a much more politically broadbased approach so that the Left and other secular parties at least on this issue can work together.

The Prime Minister had announced yesterday in his meeting with journalists that the Congress(I) is going to have a joint front with the Left on this. What would it imply, would it mean a joint strategy in Parliament or a joint strategy outside as well?

Well, I think I should not and I am not able at the moment actually to spell out the details of all this. That is what we will have to work, not only in a long-term point of view but also immediately because the challenge is here and now.

The Congress(I) has forfeited the minority vote. Since 1989, the Congress(I) has lost in the North because its image as a secular party has been damaged. How will Congress(I) win the minority back?

Well, we cannot afford to overlook this factor and it is a fact that over the last two years, though the reasons were not correct, these were the perceptions that were allowed to grow, and which influenced the minds of the minority—that perhaps the Congress(I) is waffling in its stand but it was wrong then that we were waffling and it is wrong today but now having the experience of the last three, four years the party will have to come out much more clearly and categorically about our stand and I must also say that this stand cannot be purely one of going along with the minorities and giving the impression that we do not care for anybody else. Secularism does not imply dividing the country in various sections, that there is a Muslim thought, that there is a Christian thought and then there is a Sikh thought. The Congress(I)'s approach has always been one of harmony among all these. We will have to stick to this path that unless India is able to think in terms of India and not in terms of caste and communities, India cannot exist as it does today. The real threat is that and that is the threat which the Congress(I) and all the secular parties will have to face with a totally single minded sense of purpose.

Even accepting the point of view that secularism means not going along with the minorities alone, the pendulum would seem to have swung to one extreme in a very dramatic and brutal way. So would redressal not have to be of a broadbased nature?

It has to be a broadbased nature. If the pendulum has swung tragically as you have said to the one extreme, I don't think a tragic swing to the other extreme is the answer, and that only underlines the fact that not mere words but all efforts will have to be put in to make people believe that we have certain basic faith and that faith will have to be stuck to... in that secular, cosmopolitan approach and thinking.

So when you talk of rebuilding the mosque.....

Well, that is our commitment which has been made and we have every intention of carrying it out.

No, but is it not important not to allow the campaign of the BJP not to rebuild the mosque to gather momentum?

You see this is a democratic country and all these things basically will have to be decided in the hearts and minds of the people. By a fiat you cannot do something and that is where the political programme has certain importance and we have to go out and explain to the people as to what the issues are, and how these people not only

betrayed the Prime Minister but they have actually betrayed the nation. That is the central theme and the plank on which what we want to project will have to be projected.

As for the three State Governments, do you think there is a case warranting their dismissal for the BJP's disinclination to respect the Constitution?

You see coming to the point of dismissal of State Governments, I think the constitutional proprieties and the procedures involved should not be short-circuited and all the basic requirements of actin in a certain situation must be very carefully read and if that kind of action is called for under the circumstance, I am sure we are not going to shirk that.

In M.P. you talked about the Army being called. Does it imply that you are hinting at President's Rule?

No, I am not hinting at anything. I went there to see for myself as desired by the Prime Minister how the situation existed on the ground and what I saw on the ground was that the people's faith in the impartiality of the civil administration had been greatly eroded. Now I am not going into what was right and what was wrong but at this moment of time, our first priority is to save life and property and in that context I came to the conclusion that perhaps in the circumstances prevailing only an effective intervention by the Army could help them and that was why I made the suggestion. I put it to the Chief Minister also. It was not as if I made this suggestion behind his back. I met him and told him "What your are responsible to achieve can be better achieved by this."

Coming back to the Central Government don't you think the credibility of the Government has been undermined given that the Government did not anticipate in its strategy the mosque's demolition?

Well, I will not say that the eventuality of the demolition of the mosque was never conceived of. That is not correct. Yes, I am telling you. I should not be hiding behind something and that is where the act of the betrayal comes out much more loudly. It is not only the Prime Minister who was assured but the highest court of the country, time and again, through sworn affidavits on oath, was given to understand what the U.P. Government was saying and maintaining. That behind this oath and commitment they were working for something else is the gravity of the charge.

But you say that this eventuality was conceived of. Which means you did anticipate the possibility of demolition?

Well, the situation would not rule out such a possibility. The person or the authority which has the basic responsibility to ensure it, they go on saying, even one day before the event and then suddenly change their attitude and their actions overnight. So that is how it happened.

No, but there is another point that has been made as far as the disputed mosque is concerned. The Centre, including the Prime Minister, has been saying that it is primarily the duty of the State Government to ensure the safety of the mosque but if you look at it in another way it has become a contentious question threatening the very Constitution itself. Given that, should the Government not have been far more conscious of its responsibility to protect the mosque?

Well now you can analyse an event as much as you like. The facts are what I have told you. I have given you the sequence of events.

Is your political programme being worked out? What can one expect immediately?

Yes, it is being worked out. One is this united approach which is already under discussion between the Prime Minister and other parties. What the Congress(I) will do on its own in conformity with this and also independently is being drawn up by the AICC(I) [All India Congress Committee-I]. There was an informal meeting of the Working Committee last night and certain guidelines have been formulated. On the basis of those guidelines, the actual programme will emerge in the next couple of days and from that time you take on and involve the States where the communal forces have some sway and strength. They will have to be our first priority and those tending the secular ethos all over the country are important but the priority has to be in these States.

Has the incident in Ayodhya at least convinced your party that there is need for a much more assertive and confrontational line against the communal elements as compared to July?

Well, the Congress(I), if I can understand this party, having been with it for 35 years, the heart and mind of the party on this issue has always been clear and is clear, that the Congress(I) can never think of any other situation where we compromise with these values. That is absolutely out of the question. Now when such a vexed issue came up where passions have been roused and deep divisions have been made, the Congress(I) as a mature and responsible organisation tried to explore a route where perhaps without making these divisions more deep and sharp, we could have arrived at an amicable solution. Now because of the perfidy and the tragedy this has again proved that our evaluation of Ayodhya is correct and this we have been doing time and again and I think the manner in which they have done this now, I think it has reinforced the party's resolve to give them no quarter politically at all.

Is it correct to say that after July, your subsequent support to the Prime Minister's Initiative to find an amicable settlement was giving a chance of an alternative route?

I am nobody to give somebody any chance. You see as a member of the party, and the democratic functioning of the party being as it is, I saw my duty at that time to express my views on the matter. It was not expressed against anyone and as I said, as the party in Government, as a mature party, if there is a route available to end the divisions, and to come to a solution about an

issue, I see no reason why that should not have been felt. That does not mean the effort to go that route was itself basically wrong.

Some sort of an insidious argument is being made today that if strong action is taken against the BJP it may give some room for a backlash and some political mobilisation on their part. Is there any reason to delay strong action against them?

You see if you are convinced that the communal forces have done something which they should not have done, and it is because of that a strong line is being taken, then the very natural corollary is that you cannot stop half way just because there is a backlash from their side. A backlash should have been and has been taken into account in the very first instance when the action was contemplated and announced. I don't think that the Government can afford now, in any way to soft-pedal this action and the Government, the country and the party will have to take that on. After all the communal forces are not the final arbiters of public opinion.

Secularism Said 'Deeply Rooted' in Indigenous Culture

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[Article by Prem Shankar Jha: "Make or Break for Congress"]

[Text] There is a political precedent, call it a parable if you like, that should be of special interest to Indians struggling desperately to understand what is happening to their country today. The parable comes from Germany in the years 1930 and 1931. In 1930, the Nazis did well in the Reichstag elections for the first time, gaining a little under 40 percent of the vote. But in Prussia, Germany's central State, which comprised two-thirds of the country, the Social Democratic party was firmly in power. The Nazis decided to force the Prussian Government to dissolve the Assembly.

Under the Weimar Constitution it could do this by means of a referendum. Its demand for the referendum would have been defeated easily but for the fact that the Communist party decided to support it in the hope that when the SPD [Social Democratic Party] lost the referendum it would disintegrate and its supporters would have nowhere to go but into the arms of the communists. The 12-month campaign for the referendum was extremely bitter, and on the part of the Nazis, violent. In the end, the SPD won the referendum, but the passions that were released by the campaign persuaded the centrist voters that their future was safer in the hands of a muscular, youthful and vigorous party that seemed to have a millenial vision of the German destiny than with old and effete centrist parties that did not know where to go or how to get there. Two years later the Nazis were in power in Berlin.

A similar disintegration of the political centre, which means, especially the Congress party, is not very far in the offing. For more than four weeks, Indians have watched aghast, as the India they grew up in and the values and principles that they thought defined their nation, have been swept away. Day after day, they have looked for some lead from the Government and their Prime Minister, some reason to believe that it is in control and knows what it is doing, and some hope that the nightmare will end. And day after day, the Government and the Prime Minister have disappointed them.

For four weeks the Congress Government has been paralysed by its internal differences. The Faizabad administration allows darshan of the idols before the U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] High Court pronounces on its legitimacy, but no one is even suspended let alone punished for taking the law into his own hands. The Naib Imam of Jama Masjid leads a counter-march to Ayodhya and again the Constitution is invoked to justify doing nothing and permitting a potentially explosive situation to develop. The Civil Aviation Minister and his family are very nearly killed or worse by fascist goons who would have looked marvelous in brown shirts and is saved not by any member of India's one-and-a-half million strong security forces, but by his own son. Can anyone then blame 35,000 Muslims from Bangladesh for believing that they too can march into India with impunity?

For just an instant last week the people had begun to hope that the Congress had finally got over its paralysis and begun to take charge of the nation's destiny: that the eternal search for a consensus on an issue that brooked no compromise, and of appealing to the most reactionary elements among the Muslims and and Hindus, thereby delivering both communities into their hands, had been given up.

That hope has been all but dashed. More than a week has passed since it announced that it intended to make a one-point reference to the Supreme Court to determine whether there was a temple beneath the ruins of the mosque, to issue an ordinance acquiring all the disputed land, and to set up two trusts for building a temple and a mosque respectively.

Elements in the Congress party, the Janata Dal and even the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] have begun to wonder whether the time has not come to form a right-wing democratic party, that is free of the taint of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and the VHP [Vashwa Hindu Parishad], but which implicitly accepts some of the most persuasive and least controversial of the arguments that the BJP moderates have been putting forward. By doing this they hope to be able to present an alternative to the BJP, which accepts the Hindu reality of India, comes to terms with the impact that urbanisation and industrialisation have had on the new middle class definition of itself, but remains determinedly within the four corners of the Constitution.

Such a party would be secular and democratic, but its secularism would be tinged with saffron and its democracy far more centrist and less federalist than what we have known in the past 45 years. Proof of this is the fact that such a grouping or party would probably endorse a uniform civil code and might even ask for the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution which accords a special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

It is too soon to say whether this move will gather sufficient momentum to cut slices off the Congress, the Janata Dal and the BJP. But it is not too soon to assert that the Congress will be pulled apart and will cease to exist, if it does not discover some unity of purpose and some moral courage today.

Nowhere is courage needed more desperately than in tackling the aftermath of Ayodhya. There could not be a more opportune moment for doing so than now. No amount of bluster can conceal the profound uneasiness that the demolition of the mosque has created not only in most average Hindus, but even within the ranks of the BJP. Try as they might, the leaders of the BJP cannot hide from themselves that what happened on December 6 destroyed 27 years of patient effort to convince the public that it is not a communal party, but a responsible, secular and democratic, albeit right-wing alternative to the Congress. This happened when the mantle of the official opposition to the Congress had fallen on its shoulders and the party's leaders could almost taste the power that would one day be theirs.

No matter what they say in public, there is an abundance of evidence that the leaders of the party and, for that matter, those of the RSS, would do almost anything to recover their respectability and their image as responsible people committed to India's progress. They know that with each extra day of curfew, with each unnecessary death, and with each cancelled foreign investment, trade or tourism contract, their credentials for leading the country are being eroded more and more deeply.

The change taking place among the Muslims is even more dramatic. For perhaps the first time after Independence and the shock of Partition, the Muslim intelligentsia is up in arms against its own self-styled leaders. Students of the Aligarh Muslim University demonstrated against the Babri Masjid Action Committee when it was actually holding a meeting. Muslim intellectuals and professionals have been holding meetings all over the country, and no matter what their other differences, there is a near-unanimity that they must take a far more direct responsibility for the fate of their community in the future.

The rethinking is far more profound among the Muslims tham among their Hindu counterparts. Eminent men such as Dr. Syed Hamid, the former Vice-Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University, who braved the wrath of highly politicised students and faculty members in 1980 and 1981 single-handedly to restore academic credibility to the university, have written in the Urdu newspapers opposing the demand that a mosque must be rebuilt on the precise spot where the Babri Masjid had stood even going so far as to remind the Muslims that while the spot has no special importance to Islam, it holds religious significance for the Hindus. And who would have expected Syed Shahabuddin to endorse the possibility of finding an alternative site for the mosque even two weeks ago?

The backtracking in the major segment of the BJP and the rethinking among the Muslims are the best testimony to the deep roots that secularism has taken in the Indian psyche. In the final analysis it is not the demolition of the Babri Masjid that matters, but the way in which the community reacts to it and the speed with which it acts to heal the wounds. The past two weeks in particular have shown that the responses of the majority of the people are far more healthy and positive than those of their leaders.

Mr. Narasimha Rao will do well to read the portents correctly. History will judge him by his ability to provide the leadership that the country is trying out for and his courage in putting means before ends in taking his decisions.

Politics of Nation Seen Increasingly 'Communally' Based

93AS0430D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 3 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by M.J. Akbar: "Parliament of Faith"]

[Text] It was the year of the false dawn. For just a little while in the beginning it seemed as if we were finally changing the gory agenda set for India by the Shahabuddins and the Singhals through Shah Bano and shilanyas. Mr. Manmohan Singh actually appeared more often in the headlines than Mr. L.K. Advani. The leading orator on the new ideological frontier was the crisp man in well creased khadi Tamil shirt and lungi, Mr. P. Chidambaram, rather than a hysterical voice ranting through folds of saffron urging death to Muslims with the daggers that she doled out, Sadhvi Rithambara.

Even the Muslims, confined since the horrendous tragedy of Partition into an intellectual, economic and even mora ghetto, seemed to be responding to a historic opportunity: it was an emerging mood brilliantly capsuled by an INDIA TODAY cover story on young Muslim entrepreneurs willing to take on the odds and construct a future in a country they were proud to call their own. The face of the Indian Muslim on the cover was changing: changing from the poisonous hatred in a Shahabuddin's eyes to a glimmer of hope on the visage of a fresh graduate with a world ahead of him rather than a history behind him.

There was a tremor of excitement, a hint of a feeling that after the churning, violent turmoil of governments rising and crashing, after the shattering assassination of a young man who had once radiated so much hope, India

was at last starting to come to terms with a century that had almost passed it by. The world—reluctantly, grudgingly but inevitably—did take notice. The financial institutions of the global economy, which once answered India's suspicions with the most cruel response of all, indifference, began to issue encouraging bulletins on India's economic health.

The West had witnessed the miracle of China digesting her ideology and placating her party-bureaucracy-military complex in order to lead a capitalist revival in communist drag. Would the other Asian giant be able to break free from its manic-depressive suicidal tendencies, control its religious-inquisitorial fringe, turn its overwhelming bureaucracy into a neutral if not a participatory force, and launch a momentum that would lift a subcontinent of poverty, illiteracy and prejudice into a modern nation? The news was not that this would inevitably happen, but that at least there seemed some chance of a possibility. Even hope in India makes news.

There was hope even in the scam. Ask yourself: which problem would you prefer? Mr. Harshad Mehta on a rampage or Mr. L.K. Advani on a rath? Where would you rather see activity beyond your control: in the Bombay stock exchange or in a dharam sansad? A scam is only the froth and scum of an economic boom; a religious war is the ash of a national bust. Give me corruption any day; at least I will survive it. Give me communalism and the only end is death.

China has had, and continues to experience, corruption. Even as I write, the British Broadcasting Corporation world review on STAR TV informs me that China has achieved a 12 percent growth rate in her economy, higher than Taiwan or Hong Kong or Korea. What has India achieved? A 12 percent death rate. That was not a term the BBC used as it reeled off clips of mayhem in Kashmir, mass murder in Punjab and the volcanic eruption in Ayodhya, but it might as well have.

No: it does not matter all that much to me—comparatively speaking—what the world thinks of us, though anyone who believes he can survive outside the world's attention must be either mad or stupid. National boundaries have been weakened not only by the entertainment information mix bouncing off dish antennae, but also by the new culture of political internationalisation that not merely permits but positively encourages intervention in the name of a higher cause. [passage omitted] So what the world thinks of India is important. But it is not half as important to me as what Indians think of India. What is the image that we want to see when we look at ourselves in the mirror? A face lined with the blood of a hundred civil wars, haunted by the guilt of horror—the horror of women raped on the streets of Surat, and the rape being videotaped for gleeful display on local cable television? Is that the India we want to see? Is that the India we want to be proud of?

A nation without accountability, where no one in power is considered responsible no matter what the degree of crime. A nation where judgment is the sole prerogative of scapegoats—and then, since this is all a cosy, club arrangement in any case, the scapegoats get media punishment only. Hype instead of rigour. A leadership which convinces itself that cleverness-chaturai—is a substitute for ideology, that religious-ethnic fascism is a game which can be played without corroding the soul; a government which announces darshan in the name of peace and insists on secularism in the name of the nation.

It is an India whose Muslim leaders are contaminated by either communalism or compromise. The first lot will do anything to preserve their cash rich vote banks; the second, anything to protect their kursis. Their world ranges from venom to lies, connected by the common threat of pure self interest. Is it any wonder that the Muslim youth have lost all faith in the whole breed?

It is an India where suddenly communalism has become respectable in the drawing rooms of opinion makers; where newspapers (in Lucknow, certainly, but also in allegedly more secular quarters), celebrate the events of December 6 as the first sign of a new Hindu political calendar; where adjustments are being made with the rulers of the next age.

It is an India where these residents of mansions and palaces place their own children in the queue for green cards but demand patriotism and nationalism from slums; from teenagers who have been born in the darkness of six square feet salvaged from the garbage dumps of prosperous city centres and who know that their children will probably have to make do with even less. What are you surprised by? The violence that suddenly bubbles to the top on the momentum of an excuse? Should you not be surprised instead by the fact that the frustration of the poor—and the principal religion of the poor is poverty—does not explode more often? The slum does not sit well with high philosophy.

Does India sit well with its modern ideological genesis anymore? The stage and scene of battle have shifted, not too subtly, to a different level after December 6. It is not just the future of a mosque that is the issue: in fact, the future of the mosque has now been settled. It is the future of the Indian Constitution that is now the theme of battle. The chief ideologues of the dharam sansad (parliament of faith), who implemented their mosque agenda successfully enough, and have duly extended their thanks to the authorities for their cooperation from demolition to darshan, have now found the courage to dismiss with public contempt the basic tenets of the Constitution of India. That is, socialist, secular and democratic India.

Socialism is dead in any case; secularism is pseudo and democracy may finally be getting useful. The Constitution of Hindu India is already being drafted, with, doubtless, proper clauses defining the "safeguards" for the "foreign" minorities (that is, those whose religions originated on non-Indian soil). When push came to

shove, the Establishment of India showed no great ability to protect a mosque. Should we assume that it will show more courage when the time comes to protect the Constitution? Actually we have to assume that. If not...

We have to believe that the dawn was not false, that it was only curtained from us by one of those cloud covers that have become an endemic part of our lives. We have to believe even against the growing evidence, we have to believe that the dharam sansad is not the only parliament of faith in the nation; that there are voices of sense, understanding and conviction among the minorities. And we have to believe that India will remain a secular nation not because the Muslims or any other minority wants India to be secular but because India's majority, India's Hindu was secular, is secular, and wants to remain secular.

New Leftist Response to Nationalism Seen Essential

93AS0510A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 29 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Ranabir Samaddar: "The New Right: "What Should Be the Left's Reply?"]

[Text] The official Left and the secularists stopped the clock on December 6, 1992. That year was no doubt a pretty good year for the New Right in India. With all the evangelical training of doomsday and the apocalypse now, beyond December 6 there was only abyss in the eyes of the Left. Commonsense and political sagacity deserted them. Now, when even the official Left is realizing that after all the clock had not stopped after that Sunday, their rash, ad hoc and panic-stricken decisions and utterances have made the assault of the New Right even more successful. The inadequacy of the official Left movement in India under the new circumstances has never been so glaring.

Even a Left radical group expressed its bewilderment while discussing the non-action on a directly political plane in Bihar against the New Right by arguing that such a confrontationist step against Mr. Advani's Rathyatra would have been adventurist. Thus we have today the bizarre spectacle of evasive token actions, the side attempts to skirt the crucial ideological-political problem, the succession of confusing, ad tempore declarations of intent and steps.

Quasi Fascist

Meanwhile, the New Right grows. Its debacle at Ayodhya has turned into a swift victory. Cutting across party and class boundaries, a quasi-fascist wind is blowing. The caste Hindu middle-class has started viewing the politics of the nation in terms of 80:20. All the parties of order and constitutional politics have been deliberately or unwittingly aiding and abetting such a view. Finally, the IMF regime has somehow vanished from the agenda. Briefly, the New Right remains uncomprehended, hence uncombated, unexposed.

What is so specific about this New Right in Indian politics? In the first place, the New Right talks of liberalization. It argues for a massive reduction in the emphasis on social welfare. It calls for a further centralization of the polity. It demands the application of ruthless force to stamp out the insurgent's movements on the country's borders. It incorporates a little of economic swadeshi also. In the name of curbing inflation it is prepared to hold down the wage-level and restrict job opportunities. This New Right incorporates the crucial factor of bureaucracy in its politics. Bureaucracy is encouraged to play the role of a broker between the IMF, transnationals and NRIs, on the one hand, and the desi industrialists on the other.

But the more specific aspect of the New Right is its ideology and politics. Precariously perched on the tree of economic reforms, it knows that without concomitant political change its strategy cannot succeed. Not without reason, then, has the New Right included the question of nation-building in the political agenda of the country.

This nation-building effort rests on the 80:20 formula: the mainland counterpoised to the frontier, the Hindu opposed to the Communists, the caste gentry ranged against the "casteist" OBCs [Other Backward Classes] and dalits, the traditionalized politician opposed to the "modernist," the "desi" opposed to the "angrezi" and, finally, a morally confident, dynamic swadeshi leadership ready to face and collaborate with the worldwide Washington-consensus regime, a leadership characterized by people like Mr. Advani, Mr. Arun Jaitley, Mr. Govindacharya, as opposed to the social-welfarist State-sector-wallas, corrupt bureaucrats, amoral politicians, and compromising and vacillating leaders.

No doubt the 100-million-strong caste Hindu middle-class and the better-off among farmers and the technocracy form the social base of this resurgent New Right today. They personify and echo this redefined nationhood. This middle-class is literate, economically confident, conceptualizes the entire country as one nation, and is half-educated enough to call into question the distortions of past history to buttress its claims to a resurgent nationhood. But the rhetoric of Ram Janambhoomi would not have been so powerful as to destroy the mosque without a strong ideological component that spread its influence beyond the class boundaries of the traders, the middle-classes, the upper castes and the prosperous farmers.

Surprisingly, the Left has forgotten that this bifurcated country was a product of the post-War times when the Cold War was just beginning. This fact left its stamp on the "solutions" imposed on many problems of the day. With the Cold War era now receding into history, the old arrangements are being dismantled everywhere and the associated infrastructure being brought down. If the Left has not taken the initiative to undo the abortive solutions of the problems emanating from the imposition of liberal democracy on the multicommunity polity that is

India, it is only natural that a populist party would rake up the issue and seize the initiative before long.

New Compulsion

The Cold War international compulsions are no more. Partition will soon be challenged. The imperatives of liberal democracy are less today. In a neofordist, neoliberal world of IMF-Washington-led consensus, the order in South Asia is for a different kind of politics. It is another matter that the makers of public opinion in India still think that the political ideology of a resurgent Hindu nation is not the appropriate answer to the demand for political reforms apropros the new economic policy.

But the problem of discovering one's nationhood is not simply this. Modern Hindus from Bankim onwards have tried to evolve an appropriate power perception and have repeatedly emphasized the need for qualities like hard work, valour, scientific training, material strength, courage and modern knowledge for standing India on her feet. It is not surprising that, to a large number of people, a quasi-fascist party in India represents these qualities.

These people are today exercised by a problem which the Hindu nationalists grappled with decades ago. That problem simply is this: how should the Hindus re-establish a centralized hold over the country "interrupted for almost 100 years by Pathan, Mughal and the English rulers?" How can India be merged with "Bharat" and "Bharat" with the Hindu?

So, then, the emphasis on secularism, however much couched in Left phraseology, is not going to stand up to the populist and fascist agenda of nationhood. The Left has now decided to appeal to Bankim, Vivekananda and others without considering the possibility that these may be a greater weapon in the hands of the New Right. Why has the Left not searched for alternative democratic traditions within the Hindu religion—for the Bhakti and Saiva cults which have argued for a total decentralization of the polity by granting autonomy to the freedom-seeking segments, or for the emergence of the dalits, backwards and the other marginalized groups—to counter this monolithic perception of Hindu power?

New Left

However much the Left may try to counter this demon with administrative measures, and with a policy of coaxing and cajoling the State and the party of order and governance into adopting firm measures against the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], it will fail. Secularism has never been an answer to the fascist version of communalism—an ideology that assures the "nation" of doing away with what Myron Weiner had called long ago the politics of "India's emerging majorities and minorities."

The New Right has won this round. The minorities have been silenced. The middle classes have been largely won over to its economics and politics. The Right gained from the Cold War. The New Right is gaining from the end of the Cold War today. Sadly, the Left still thinks that without fighting the new economics, it can fight the national agenda of the New Right. It is still dismissive of an alternative vision of nationhood.

The call for a new nation with a new Constitution will involve such far-reaching changes in the distribution of power in the State and status in society that it will become the first round of a direct assault on the entire structure of privilege and political accommodation first put in place during the colonial period. Such a call has to be the Left's agenda today. The New Right is a response to the crisis of liberalism in a post-colonial society. Only a New Left can be the answer to the New Right in India.

Nationalists Threatening Secularism

93AS0412A Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 19 Dec 92 p 4

[Article by Goutam Roy: "It Is In Our Interests for Religious Fundamentalists Not To Guide This Modern Secular State"]

[Text] The situation of the Mahabharata came after that of the Ramayana. After the destructive activities in Ayodhya by the followers of Hanuman, the hero in the epic of the Ramayana, the whole of India, from the mountain to the ocean, was thrown into a total anarchy as happened in a particular stage in the epic of the Mahabharata, where unrestricted killings, bloodshed, looting and arson went on. If there was a coolheaded plan behind the destruction, then immediate reaction could be found in the tears and bloodshed. There is a demand to ban the parties and the organizations which were involved in this destruction. Obeying the demand of the people, the government can at any moment ban those parties and organizations. The names of some organizations, such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Adam Sena, and Islami Sevak Sangh, are heard to be on that list. Some are demanding that the same principle be followed against the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and the Muslim League. But the main question is whether it is possible to ruin completely the destructive power of a party or an organization by banning it?

It is not easy to answer the question with a single word. Apparently or abstractly, the answer should be "no," if it is judged in a pure theoretical way. Only those parties or organizations that are already in the process of decay could be ruined by banning. The governmental regulations and suppressions can only hasten that process. But the result of banning might be different for those parties or organizations that are still powerful. Especially, if those parties and organizations are in disarray, then the government ban will appear to them as a blessing in disguise. The government ban forces them to go underground away from the limelight of public life. There they start to take a long sleep like reptiles sleep in the cold season. During this period, they have time to reorganize

their party. After that they emerge more organized and more powerful, like a hungry venomous snake.

There is no dearth of examples of this in history. In the colonial period, the policy of suppression and banning of the foreign rulers could neither wipe out the desire for independence nor could they break the backbone of the nationalist organizations. In independent India, the ruling Congress Party could not uproot the Communist Party by banning it. On the other hand, the communists utilized that period to become more organized and powerful and later came to power in some state governments. Today, ironically, the Congress Party has to fight against the fundamentalists and the communal forces with the help of the communists. It is, therefore, not true that banishment of any political party or organization will necessarily weaken or ruin it.

From a pure academic standpoint, the question may be asked about the morality and justification of this kind of ban in a democratic system. The fundamentalists and their associate intellectuals will definitely raise such questions. Democracy means a free state and an open society where there are many different political opinions that can compete for popular support. Just as a person has the right to choose a fragrant flower from the bush of a poisonous weed, the people have the right to select a particular political ideology that seems to be the right one and to reject others.

So, in a democratic system, if any particular ideology or any party is banned by the state, it could be denounced as an undesired interference in the democratic rights of the people on the part of the government.

But what should the state do if a party or organization does not believe in diversity of opinions or ideals? A democratic state is committed to maintain and preserve democracy in the country. But fundamentalism is not a democratic ideal. The fundamentalists are also not democratic. They believe India is the land for a particular community and consider the minorities as foreigners and attackers who remain in a second-grade citizenship in the Hindu state. If those people are allowed to carry on their activities in the name of diversity and democratic heritage, the very foundation of that spirit of diversity and democracy becomes weak and unstable. Are the recent incidents not sufficient proof of that? Abusing the privileges of democracy, they confused and cheated the legislature and the court, the government administration and the Constitution. They destroyed the religious shrine of a minority community, to which the whole nation has reacted and was put through a phase of destruction and death that took the country 50 years back to the battlefield of hatred, animosity, and killing. The democracy that indulges these fundamentalists is the forerunner of autocracy, and thus, it refutes its own legality.

The fundamentalists are, of course, in all the communities. Among them the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] could be taken separately. One day, men belonging to this organization assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, the national symbol of India's secularism. Today, we again see the imprint of their dark hands behind the destruction of the Babri Mosque. In the meantime, the aggressive Hindu fundamentalism gave birth to two other organizations. One is the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, which is dreaming of becoming an international organization similar to the Vatican. The other is the Bajrang Dal, the members of which are so devoted to God Ram that they feel proud to think of themselves as "Hanuman" or monkey-God, the greatest devotee of God Ram. The Shivsenas are the latest inclusion in this group who claim to be the flag bearers of the unfulfilled promise of Shivaji, who once said, "I will tie the whole of India by the string of the idea of a Hindu religious state." The Shivsenas under the leadership of Bal Thakre, who have already had experience by killing many oppressed low caste Hindus, have started to claim the lion's share of the credit for starting the destruction of the mosque. All these are religious organizations which, on the eve of the 21st century, want to prove the greatness of their own religion by uprooting the followers of the other religions. To allow these organizations to carry on their activities in a democratic state would mean the denial of the right to follow a religious ritual and keeping separate the followers of other religions, and putting them in a risky situation that could cause them to be driven out, banished, oppressed, killed, raped, and looted. It would be that kind of democracy.

The BJP has emerged as a powerful political party in Indian politics banking upon these fundamentalist organizations. Because the BJP is a political party, it would have been better to confront it politically. But when a political party's agenda includes a program to build a prayer house for a particular community by destroying the shrine of another community, and after coming to power, engages the governmental administration to fulfill that goal, is there any justification in considering it separately because of its political status from other fundamental religious organizations? Furthermore, it is a basic condition in a parliamentary democracy to pledge loyalty to the constitutional ideal of secularism before contesting a popular election. The BJP has repeatedly violated that basic condition. Why then will the right to contest an election not be taken away from the BJP?

There are also fundamentalist religious organization within the minority community that should be banned. The names of two organizations must be mentioned. One is Islami Sevak Sangh and the other is Adam Sena. These organizations are very active in continuously exciting the communal sentiments of the minority community. But it must be remembered why they are successful in their efforts. It must be kept in mind that the aggressive fundamentalism of the majority community prepares the field for the emergence of a powerful and defensive fundamentalism of the minority community, which can also be called a product of reaction. It must also be remembered that, in spite of the existence of two Islamic states on two sides of India, the majority Muslims of this subcontinent consider India their home, and

those 1.5 million Muslims decided to live in their homes in secular India, ignoring the call to live in an Islamic country. It is time to banish from the stage of Indian secular politics those fanatics who cannot realize this fact.

Secularism Seen Threatened by Rising Fundamentalism

93AS0432D New Delhi PATRIOT in English 10 Jan 93 p 5

[Excerpts from article by P.N. Haksar: "Fundamentalism and Secularism"; quotation marks as published]

[Excerpts] In the charmed world of Alice in Wonderland, words can be made to mean anything. Regrettably, outside that Wonderland, words have to be used with utmost care. The context in which a word arises must be understood if we are to avoid unnecessary sorrow and suffering. Ever since human beings began expressing themselves through words and then language, a measure of sacredness has been attached to a "word." According to our own tradition, in the beginning there was "Word" and that word was Om. Great care was taken in articulating the vibrant resonance of Om. Similar sanctity attaches to a Muezzin's call: "Allah-O Akbar." In the Christian system of faith and belief, the second person in the Trinity is "Word." When a person makes a statement or promise to do something "upon my word," sanctity attaches to that statement.

We have said enough to make the sample point that "words" have to be used with utmost care. In order to do so, we must understand the context in which each word arose and the shades of meaning which it acquires through the passage of time. All this might sound somewhat pedantic, but the Information Revolution, which is shaking the world, makes it necessary to point out the dangers involved in our failure to be meticulous, even fussy, about the use of words. In these notes, we are particularly concerned about two words, namely, "Fundamentalism" and "Secularism." [passage omitted]

Challenge To Replace Fear

Our own social, political, economic, cultural and moral order is gripped with crisis. The centuries-old tradition, reinforced by a variety of oral traditions, helps our people in maintaining some sort of faith in their future. But this must not be over-estimated. Fear and uncertainty is seeping through millions upon millions of people. Our political leadership faces a great challenge to replace fear with hope and this can only be done by combining together the moral, spiritual, rational and scientific universe with which the names of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are associated.

At this stage one must consider the meaning of the word "Secularism." Both fundamentalism and secularism are interacting attitudes of mind in human societies bounded by specificities of their own respective cultures and civilisations. They are not independent variables. In the English language, the word "secular" means "concerned with the affairs of this world, not spiritual or sacred" and "secularism" means: "the belief that morality or education should not be based on religion."

Both the words secular and secularism arose as a result of the operation of a universal process which has been in operation in all societies from the dawn of human consciousness. By this process, the human mind is able to discern what constitutes the affairs of this world, as distinct from spiritual or sacred. Naturally, the outward expression of the operation of this process of secularisation of the human mind takes a variety of shapes and forms depending upon the cultural specificities of each society. The human-kind began this process of secularisation from the very moment they began asking questions like How and Why instead of Who.

In the history of our own civilization we began drawing a distinction between matters' relating to Ih-lok [worldly affairs] as distinct from Parlok [heavenly abode].

There is a similar distinction between matters relating to Deen and Duniya [religion and the world]. The process of secularization is fed by the search for knowledge which grows into science-based knowledge. By this process, human beings endeavour, on the basis of knowledge, to grapple with the problems of political, economic, social and cultural structuring of societies. In Europe, the secularization process produced in time Renaissance, Enlightenment and Juristic humanitarian universalism. We can easily discern similar process at work in the story of our own civilization.

State for Totality of National Interest

It is important to remember that the process of secularization was powerfully helped by the elaboration of natural laws instead of laws derived from sanctity of religion. When, in the midst of this process, there emerged the Modern Nation State, the question arose, and certainly arises in our country with a particular sense of legitimacy, about the nature and character of our State: Is State an instrument for enforcing divine laws? Alternatively, is State an instrument for the enlargement and protection of the totality of national interest transcending religious or denominational divisions? It is from these considerations that there arose the need for the State confining itself to the affairs of this world, and thus being secular rather than being an instrument of any particular faith or dogma.

It may be noted that the process of secularization is accelerated in the measure that a State, citizens and society are governed by laws enacted through the democratic processes. There then emerges a "law-governing State" and "law-abiding citizens." In our country, we have laws and procedures relating to crime; we have laws relating to evidence; we have laws governing transfer of property and about taxation. All these are secular laws concerning the affairs of our world in India. In this view of the matter, it is normal and natural to have uniform laws governing all the citizens of the Republic of India.

If the words secular, secularism and secularization are to be understood as part and parcel of a universal process of secularization of the human mind, then we have inflicted enormous damage on the nation-building process in India, by a totally unacceptable and false translation of the words secular and secularism by equating them to the doctrine of religious tolerance expressed in the words like Dharmanirpkshta and Sarva Dharma Sambhava. These translations have produced great schizophrenia in our politics which, in time, has produced the situation with which we are now actually confronted in Punjab and Kashmir. And not merely in Punjab and Kashmir, but elsewhere too, when our politicians of all political parties make their electoral calculations in terms of 'Hindu', 'Muslim', 'Sikh', 'Christian', etc.

There is one more question which needs to be answered: What is the relationship between religion, howsoever defined, and processes of secularization? Is this relationship inherently antagonistic? The answer is no. The process of secularization merely leads to finding the domain of each, both at the level of individual and society and State.

That is why the word 'Secular' as we have stated means "concerned with the affairs of this world, not spiritual or sacred." It is to be hoped that if the Republic of India is not to degenerate into a state of anarchy, the time has come to come to grips with the real meaning of such words as 'secularism' and 'fundamentalism'.

Reality of Religion Stressed

93AS0411A Bombay NAVBHARAT TIMES in Hindi 23 Dec 92 p 4

[Commentary by Arun Tiwari: "Politics of Religion and Religion of Politics"]

[Text] While passing through Ayodhya last October, I felt very lonely in a specific desolate place. A famous quote from the Ramcharitmanas was inscripted here: "There is no greater religion than helping others.... There is no sin worse then hurting others." These lines were replaced by: "My birth place is a beautiful place, in its north is the Sarju river." This is a clear indication of the changing meaning of religion and our priorities. We do not mean to say that the Hindu religion has always practiced charity and goodwill. It has, however, shown special value of these qualities. All philosophical statements are defined by the intellectuals before they are spread among the people. The 6 December occurrence in Ayodhya was no exception. The tolerance and broadmindedness of the Hindu society had thinned considerably during the last eight to ten years. Its philosophers were ignoring the finer definitions of the religion and were busy in defining the cruder aspects.

Thus, the people who believed in the U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] government's pledge about kar seva on 6 December, were either naive or were misled by the hypothetical Congress-BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] compromise. A Hindi daily reporter at the capital had expressed concern six months earlier that this structure could be torn down any time. Perhaps, he had correctly read this change in the Hindu thinking. However, our respected prime minister was contented with his belief in Hindu tolerance. The left-wing parties consider religion a personal issue, and could not clearly see the change that had transpired in religious politics and the resulting socio-political mutations. Even though Jyoti Basu had expressed his fears and had recommended that the U.P. government be dismissed, some leaders did not even believe that people would turn up in such a large number in Ayodhya.

The left-wing and secular groups wanted to build a national monument at that site. Later, they accepted the idea of building a temple next to it. Much later, they began to say that everyone wants Ram's temple in Ayodhya, but they did not want to do that by tearing down the mosque. Later, when the mosque was torn down, they began to talk about building the mosque again. We do not question their good intentions, patriotism, or secularism. However, we do question their common sense. First, they either protected the minority religious groups or ignored them. Later, when Hindu violence increased, they ignored it, considering it mythical. They retreated a few steps when the pressure continued to increase. Now that this pressure is strangling secularism, they are preparing to attack communalism.

Secularism can be many things. Some people are hurt by what happened on 7 December in Ayodhya, but are not reacting in anger. For some people, this is a cause for "national embarrassment" or is the "Black Sunday" or "the Great Betrayal." They consider it the most important occurrence after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Some are even raising slogans like, "Declare with shame that we are Hindus!" The people cannot see some of the colors in the secular spectrum because of the infrared rays and are not willing to consider some segments part of the greater society. Therefore, we need a mainstream and practical secularism—a secularism that is understood by the religious society even when we have to change the word "secular" itself. We cannot explain all this to the Muslims acting under the leadership of Professor Susheel Hasan, nor can we talk with the Hindus who say, "Declare with shame that we are Hindus." We also have to protect their freedom of expression. The social reformer of any society must be closely associated with it. Any reform imposed by an outside group on a society without thorough thinking can cause a situation similar to the one created in Iran. A leadership that is distant from the people either opens way to fundamentalism, as in the case of the Shah of Iran, or become a subject of ridicule, like Arif Mohammad Khan and Ghulam Abbas Naqvi.

The slogans for keeping religion separate from politics were raised even during the struggle for independence, even though Mahatma Gandhi had never insisted on it. As a result, the majority Hindu society mixed religion with politics minimally. However, the politics of minority religious groups could not leave religion alone. Now, the politics of the majority religious group is also drowned in religion. Hindu gurus, saints, and Shankaracharyas have started to give directions just like imams and granthis [Sikh religious scholars] did to the minority religious groups.

Efforts to keep secularism on its feet were made with the help of such slogans as "Keep religion out of politics," "Religion is like opium to the people," and "Religion is a personal issue." We agree that religion is an old concept, and it has no room in modern political theories. However, will these political theories be able to get the human society out of the "dark cell" of religion? No. Instead, they have built a political "dark tunnel" next to the religious "dark cell!"

The present political system is ignoring religion religion's most revered values. However, it has demonstrated worse values than religion in this process. We do not understand how a corrupt, deceptive, and communal party can be secular. It is clear that it calls itself secular just to accommodate itself and not because of its beliefs. At this point the belief that a pure religious person like Mahatma Gandhi is secular becomes relevant. However, in this era of corruption and double standards, pure politician and pure religious person have become marginal.

Another mistake appears to be important in this context. We considered politics so powerful that we tried to use it to push our society's religious, economic, and cultural aspects through it. We went so far as to consider the whole society to be working for politics. We made the issues that called for unbiased social action a subject of politics of votes. Breaking up the caste system or building a temple or mosque are purely social or religious issues. However, their goals are not social justice or communal goodwill; these are to augment their vote bank or win the throne in Delhi.

The unique example of social, religious, and spiritual unity that was found during the Bhagti Period, was missing during the independence struggle and now in independent India. We can say that the after-effect of that period is still visible in the form of some unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. The politics had all but obliterated it through Aurangazeb and the partition of India. All this was possible because the holy men at that time did not deal with Sikri.

We need the liberal Hindu and sufi holy men of the Bhagti Period. It would be better if they emerge by themselves after breaking their ties with political parties. Only then the unity of Indian society will be salvaged. It would be a delusion to expect social unity from political parties.

The BJP has forced the whole nation to regress to the 1947 situation. The Congress Party of today is not the one we had 45 years ago. It is like Ayodhya full of ancient dilapidated buildings which can be taken over by anyone. This Congress lacks the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, the same way Ayodhya lacks the ideals of Ram and Tulsi Das.

Perhaps, the Indian society does not believe that Ram is in Ayodhya. It is possible that not all people are hurt by the destruction in Ayodhya. However, those who are hurt must find an alternative to this politics of destruction.

Neither capitalism nor communism could stop religion. We have to live with religion and must try to give it a better image. The politics that consider religion to be the philosophy of a backward society have to prove that politics itself is a more advanced philosophy than religion. Otherwise, we will continue to impose restrictions on religion and religion in turn will continue to break the restrictions of the society and interfere in politics.

Controversy Rages Over National Song

93AS0320A Calcutta SUNDAY in English 12 Dec 92 pp 8-9

[Article by Swapan Dasgupta: "Nothing Is Sacred"; italicized words as published]

[Text] There is a time for apathy and a time for unconcern. There is also a time for anger and profound disgust. The worst, I suppose, is when blind fury combines with pathetic helplessness. No, it is not merely the prospect of needless confrontation in Ayodhya which has occasioned such strong feelings. It is the dismal spectacle of the Parliament of independent India turning its back on one of the foremost symbols of nationhood—the national song. *Vande Mataram*—which prompts the question: is nothing sacred? Not even India?

The facts are straightforward. Earlier this year, the general purposes committee of Parliament had readily agreed to the suggestion by Ram Naik, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) parliamentarian from Bombay, that each session of Parliament begins and ends with the national song and the national anthem, respectively. The move was purely symbolic, non-contentious and hardly unprecedented. Even to this day, there are many stations of All India Radio which begin the day with *Vande Mataram* and conclude with *Jana Gana Mana.*

The matter would have ended there had it not occurred to the Muslim League MP [member of Parliament], Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, to voice his objection to *Vande Mataram.* The battle was quickly joined by that other apostle of separatism, Syed Shahabuddin. And before you could say Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the powers that be in Parliament decided to substitute *Vande Mataram* for *Jana Gana Mana.*

The apparent compromise was that the winter session would begin with the national anthem and conclude with *Vande Mataram.* Ram Vilas Paswan, the doughty crusader for lost causes, even suggested this move would establish the precedence of the national anthem over the national song. Of course, the controversy did not end here since the chairman of the Rajya Sabha announced the very next day that the subject was still wide open and it seems that Ram Naik and his associates will have an uphill task to ensure that *Vande Mataram* is at all sung (or played) in Parliament. In effect, the present political establishment appears to have turned its back on a song which epitomised the freedom struggle.

This proposed act of censorship is absolutely incredible. Sulaiman Sait with his impeccable Muslim League background and Syed Shahabuddin with his communist pedigree may be unfamiliar with the emotive implications of *Vande Mataram,* seeing it merely as a slogan that adorned the vehicle of Murli Manohar Joshi's Ekta Yatra.

To nationalists of all political hues, however, *Vande Mataram* is not merely representative of the freedom movement, it encapsulates the deification of the motherland. Notwithstanding the fictional and allegorical context of Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math, Vande Mataram* marks a decisive step in the elevation of Indian nationalism to its devotional basis.

With *Vande Mataram* and the projection of the Mother Goddess, India ceased to be merely a geographical entity, it became a divine personification. More than anything else, Bankim Chandra's verse effected the decisive conceptual leap from nebulous nationhood to modern

nationalism and with it, the nation state. In Marxist parlance, it was instrumental in creating the "imagined community" called India.

Little wonder that one of the earliest designs of the national flag by Madam Cama contained the inscription *Vande Mataram.* Little wonder that all sessions of the Indian National Congress began with the song. And little wonder that one P.V. Narasimha Rao began his political career through participation in the *Vande Mataram* movement in the Nizam's Hyderabad.

Nor did it end with 1947. Although some overzealous patriots have coined the slogan, *"Hindustan mein rehna hoga, Vande Mataram kehna hoga," Vande Mataram* is still, by and large, associated with the Congress. It was the slogan of Congressmen in the Sixties and early Seventies, who pitted themselves against the Marxist-Naxalite vandals in West Bengal, and it was also the dominant chant at last week's mammoth anti-CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] rally in Calcutta organised by Mamata Banerjee. Even the venerable *Ananda Bazar Patrika,* with impeccable anti-BJP credentials, flags off its editorial page with the inscription, *Vande Mataram.*

So who are the dissenters? First, the communists who are loath to come to terms with Indian nationalism, viewing the country as a multinational construct bereft of any elevated sanction. For the sake of expediency, today's CPI(M) feigns nationalism and brandishes its patriotic credentials by invoking Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda and Bhagat Singh, but Marxist theoreticians are yet to accept this version of politics.

Second, the opposition of Sulaiman Sait and other Muslim separatists is not incidental. It dates back to the Muslim League resolution at its 1937 session in Lucknow. There, *Vande Mataram* was denounced as "not merely positively anti-Islamic and idolatorous in its inspiration and ideas, but definitely subversive of the growth of genuine nationalisim in India." The mere suggestion of an organisation which crafted the division of India preaching the virtues of "genuine nationalism" may appear bizarre, but not as bizarre as the fact that today's secularists have accepted this contention in toto.

Religious tolerance obviously implies giving no quarter to idolators and those who fought so hard to confer upon India a degree of pride and self-esteem. In 1937, the Congress ministry in the United Provinces established the practice of singing *Vande Mataram* in schools; today, the same organisation cries foul when a BJP government in Lucknow prefaces school textbooks with the words of *Vande Mataram.* And, even succumbs to the blackmail of Sulaiman Sait and Shahabuddin.

In the face of such perversity and sacrilege, it is perhaps best to turn to Mahatma Gandhi for comfort. Responding to criticisms of *Vande Mataram* by the Muslim League, he wrote in the *Harijan* of 1 July, 1939: "As a lad when I knew nothing of *Ananda Math* or even Bankim, *Vande Mataram* had gripped me, and when I first heard it sung, it enthralled me, I associated the purest national spirit with it. It never occurred to me it was a Hindu song or meant only for Hindus. Unfortunately, now we have fallen on evil days. All that was pure gold before has become base metal today."

The contemporary relevance of the Mahatma's lament should not be lost sight of. Faced with the concerted move to denigrate *Vande Mataram* and the "purest national spirit," our secularist guardians have responded with customary cowardice. First, they bowdlerised the song, deleting the entire "idolatrous" second verse. Second, using specious technical arguments, they relegated it to a subordinate status. Now, they seem intent on discarding it altogether.

For India's sake, it is to be hoped the attempt fails. But if the winter session of Parliament ends without the honourable MPs [member of Parliament] standing to *Vande Mataram,* the chant, *"Hindustan mein rehna hoga..."* could end up having a direct, contemporary relevance.

Parliament Divided Over National Song

93AS0320B Calcutta SUNDAY in English 12 Dec 92 pp 67-69

[Article by Ketan Narottam Tanna: "Out of Tune"]

[Text] It's a controversy that would have cheered the hearts of the country's erstwhile British rulers. Once a powerful weapon against colonial exploitation, the national song, *Vande Mataram* (salutation to the Mother), has ironically begun to divide religious communities in free India. And only a few seem happy about it.

Last fortnight, the patriotic song composed by the 19th century Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay became the subject of yet another unseemly debate when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) insisted that the current parliamentary session begin with the recital of *Vande Mataram.* (At present, Parliament meets to the tune of the national anthem, *Jana Gana Mana.*). The demand sparked off a row in the House, with some members opposing the move.

On the face of it, of course, the BJP had only demanded that Parliament implement a decision taken by one of its own committees—that parliamentary sessions should begin with a recital of the national song and end with Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana,* the national anthem. This would be in keeping with what had been agreed upon by all the parties in the general purpose committee, the BJP argued. But other MPs [member of Parliament] couldn't help seeing it in the light of the climactic developments on Ayodhya: the song would only provide the BJP with yet another opportunity to play its divisive tune.

As a matter of fact, the Janata Dal and the left parties had no objection to the recital of the national song, but they argued that the national anthem should not lose its

pride of place. The Congress(I) remained willy-nilly in the debate. And some Muslim MPs, including the Independent member, Syed Shahabuddin, and Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait of the Muslim League objected to *Vande Mataram* being sung at all. As a result, the current Parliament session started with the national anthem and the decision on *Vande Mataram* had to be postponed.

Annoyed by this, the BJP leader, L.K. Advani, accused his adversaries of indulging in pseudo-secularism for political gains. The BJP president, Murli Manohar Joshi, went further: he alleged that those who were opposed to the singing of *Vande Mataram* were "encouraging secessionism and separatism."

But why were some members opposed to *Vande Mataram*? Many Muslim MPs repeated the old objection to the national song voiced by the Muslim League in pre-Partition days. The singing of *Vande Mataram* was one of the instances cited by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, to prove the Congress' Hindu bias. Jinnah based his accusation on the fact that the song had references to Durga and other Hindu deities in the fourth and fifth stanzas.

But this is not the first time that *Vande Mataram* has aroused fire and passion for more reasons than one. In 1935, Muslim League members made a bonfire of *Ananda Math* (the song appears in this novel) in Calcutta. And in 1937, the Muslim League had in a resolution described the song as "idolatrous." In 1938, Jinnah once again demanded that Congress members stop singing the song. In fact, it was mainly because of Muslim opposition to *Vande Mataram* that the Indian National Congress set up a committee to review all national songs and to seek the advice of Rabindranath Tagore in selecting one that could be the national anthem. The committee members included such Congress stalwarts as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and Acharya Narendra Dev.

A resolution was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru. It noted the innumerable instances of sacrifice and suffering associated with *Vande Mataram*. Men and women, it argued, did not hesitate to face death with the words *Vande Mataram* on their lips. It went on to suggest that it was actually the first two stanzas of *Vande Mataram* only which had become the song of struggle. He said that since these first two stanzas described in tender language the beauty of the motherland, there was nothing objectionable in them from religious or any other point of view.

Nehru later accepted the opinion of Rabindranath Tagore to whom the committee had referred the matter. Tagore wrote in a note to Nehru: "To me the spirit of tenderness and devotion expressed in its (the song's) first portion, the emphasis it gave to the beautiful and beneficent aspects of our motherland made special so much so that I found no difficulty in disassociating it from the rest of the poem, and from those portions of the book of which it is a part."

The CWC [Congress Working Committee] then recommended that the first two stanzas of the song be accepted as the national anthem. It was another matter that 13 years later, when the Constituent Assembly met on 24 January 1950, and decided to adopt *Jana Gana Mana* as the national anthem and *Vande Mataram* as the national song. Rajendra Prasad, the then President, noted in his address to the Assembly: "...the song *Vande Mataram*, which played a historic part in the struggle for India's freedom, shall be honoured equally with *Jana Gana Mana* and shall have equal status with it."

But there were reasons for discontent among the minorities over the song. Ever since it was written, many have regarded *Vange Mataram* as a song of Hindu revivalism. Such a view derives from the fact that its author, Bankim Chandra, created several Muslim characters in his novels, whom he presented as inferior to the Hindus; he condemned Aurangzeb as "cruel, crafty, proud and selfish"; he criticised the Muslim administration in the 18th century Bengal; he used pejorative terms against the Muslims in his novel *Ananda Math*; and in one of his novels, *Sitaram*, he dreamt of the revival of a Hindu empire.

This prompted a Muslim by the name of Idris Ali in the 1930s to write a book called *Bankim Duhita* (The Daughters of Bankim), criticising his attitude towards Muslims. Similarly, Sayyid Abu-al-Hussain, a homeopathic practitioner, wrote at least four books which ridiculed Bankim Chandra's novels.

But modern-day historians would like to contest the claim that Bankim Chandra was a Muslim hater. The eminent historian, Sishir Kumar Das, professor of Bengali literature at the Delhi University and author of a book on Bankim Chandra, firmly denies such a charge: "While one has to concede that Bankim's writings may have hurt Muslim susceptibilities, it will be wrong to say that Bankim Chandra was in any way a Muslim-baiter. His writings were often judged, not by literary standards, but by ethical norms. If a bad character in his novel happened to be a Muslim, it was interpreted as an attempt to vilify Muslims. Similarly, his comments about the Muslim rule in 18th century Bengal were harsh, but it was not examined whether it was true or not." Professor Das added: "This is not to say that Bankim's comments on the Muslims were always just and fair. But one must examine all evidence before giving him the verdict of guilty."

It all boils down to the question of interpretation, says Bhagwan Singh Josh, professor of modern history at Jawaharlal Nehru University. "As for the reference to Goddess Durga in the fifth stanza of the song, the parallel that comes to mind is the breaking of a coconut on an auspicious occasion. Will you call that a Hindu

tradition? And what if the Muslims object? Will the ceremony, which is carried out by all the leading political personalities, stop?"

But not all are convinced by these arguments. Raising the issue of the song at this juncture is politically irresponsible, even provocative, many say. Charged Chitta Basu of the Forward Bloc: "If they are so concerned about the song, what were BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leaders doing for the last 40 years? We are not against the singing of *Vande Mataram* provided it comes after the national anthem." What he suspects are the BJP's real intentions. Counters K.R. Malkani, the BJP's eloquent vice-president: "We could not raise it earlier because our strength in Parliament was inadequate. Now we have a strong voice."

But even if it now has a voice firm and loud enough to sing the *Vande Mataram,* the BJP will have to remain content hearing the national anthem in Parliament till the controversy is laid to rest.

Rajendra Prasad

The former President said: "The song, Vande Mataram, which played a historic part in the struggle for India's freedom, shall be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana and shall have equal status with it."

Jawaharlal Nehru

The former Prime Minister felt that the first two stanzas described in tender language the beauty of the motherland and there was nothing objectionable in them from religious or any other point of view.

Murli Manohar Joshi

The present BJP president accused those who were opposed to the singing of Vande Mataram in Parliament of "encouraging secessionism and separatism."

Mohammad Ali Jinnah

The Muslim League leader and founder of Pakistan bitterly opposed Vande Mataram because the song contained references to Durga and other Hindu dieties in the fourth and fifth stanzas.

L. K. Advani

The moderate BJP leader alleged that his adversaries were indulging in pseudo-secularism for political gains. He felt that the Congress was appeasing Muslims yet again.

Chitta Basu

The Forward Bloc Member of Parliament said: "If they (BJP) are so concerned about the song, what were they doing for the last 40 years? We are not against the singing of Vande Mataram provided it comes after the Jana Gana Mana.

Hindus Termed 'Psychological Minority' of Nation

93AS0318A Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 18 Dec 92 pp 10, 12

[Article by M.V. Kamath: "Start of a New Beginning?"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] If our Leftist intellectuals and secular editors stop screaming all the time about secularism, fundamentalism, "trishul-wielding sants" and fascist Hindus and their ilk and try to understand the nature of our society, we might still come to terms with our past. There are many ways to understand the Ayodhya issue, but showering choice abuse at the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] or the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] or the Kalyan Singh government (or ex-government) is not one of them.

There are Hindus and Hindus. The President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, happens to be a Hindu and a brahmin. So for that matter is the prime minister of India, P.V. Narasimha Rao. Both have strongly condemned the sheer vandalism indulged in by some people against the Babri Masjid and no doubt it will be rebuilt, this time by Hindus themselves.

So what happened in Ayodhya is not a Muslim versus Hindu affair. Millions of Hindus probably couldn't care less about the whole controversy. Surely many wouldn't even have heard of it a couple of decades ago. If a random poll is taken among Hindus south of the Vindhyas, in small towns and villages and even in poor localities in the cities today, the indifference of the people may come as a surprise to all concerned. In a sense Ayodhya is a local issue; from the very beginning it should have been handled as such, as something concerning the local administration. A local issue was first turned into a state issue and then a national issue, now there is the possibility of its being internationalised.

Now in understanding Ayodhya one must look at it in the historical perspective. Some of our intellectuals tell us, "But don't bring history in. History is dead. Look to the future." The trouble is that like Banquo's ghost, it is ever present in our life. It can't be wished away. One can rewrite it, one can reinterpret it, but it is there. And for many Hindus it is painful. A Muslim intellectual, Iqbal A Ansari, writing in THE ISLAMIC TIMES INTERNATIONAL (July-September 1992) got it right when he said "communal readings of the 700 years of medieval folks history has passed into the collective Hindu psyche (which) suffers from a sense of hurt and humiliation." Obviously the millions of poor Indians who have never gone to school, who cannot read and write, who have never heard of Ghazni or Ghouri Mohammads, of Somnath, of the Jazia attacks on non-Muslims, of Aurangzeb, etc., haven't the foggiest idea of history to take a "historical" view of Islam. But somewhere in the subconscious even among the illiterate Hindus there are "communal readings" (to put it mildly) of Muslim intolerance, of conversions under threat, etc. etc. Sikhism would not have been born were it not for

Muslim intolerance. The argument that the Quran says something about to each his own religion, does not wash. If that was so, there would have been no conversions to the Islamic faith and hardly any Muslims in India.

But, there are Muslims in India and many Hindus feel that they betrayed their country in demanding Pakistan—and getting it. The argument could be made that not all Muslims wanted Pakistan. Then who wanted it? Not the Congress, the dominant secular, political party in India. It was the Muslim League which swept the Muslim votes in the 1946 elections, the league secured as many as 75 to 95 per cent of the Muslim votes on the cry for a separate Muslim state. The implication was that once Pakistan was obtained all those who voted for Pakistan would go there. That, of course, never happened. Only a small percentage left; the poor had to stay behind, cowering, not realising—or, perhaps, realising too well—the nature of their folly. And now I quote Ansari again: "Hindus perceive Muslims as inherently incapable of wholly belonging to India and being loyal to it, of keeping Indian nationhood above religion; the perennial question of Indian first or Muslim first." Distrust piled on distrust.

The Pakistanis fuelled anti-Islamic sentiment in India by their crass insistence that Kashmir belonged to them because a majority of Kashmiris (forgetting those in Jammu and Ladakh) were Muslims. Had Pakistan left India alone, distrust of Muslims would have died a natural death. But that was not to be. And Muslims in India have not told their co-religionists in Pakistan to shut up. At least not loudly and not insistently. A fear has always persisted in Hindu minds that Muslims are not reliable. This has been another factor governing Hindu-Muslim relations in India.

Now the Congress has always insisted that it is secular. After Partition on non-secular lines it could not possibly behave as if it was a Hindu party. It had to prove to itself and to others that it was indeed secular, even if it hurt itself in the process. Nehru therefore succumbed to pressure not to have Vande Mataram as the national anthem. When, on December 22, 1949 the idols of Sri Ram, Laxman and Sita were smuggled inside the Babri Masjid, the place was ordered closed by the district magistrate of Faizabad under instructions from the UP government headed by another brahmin, Govind Vallabh Pant. Of course it infuriated many, but it was a Congress government and right or wrong, the Congress had to show that it was secular and never mind if the Ayodhya dispute was over a century old and Hindus had an emotional link with the site.

In the last 40 years, rightly or wrongly, the feeling has grown that the Congress would do anything to please the Muslims in order to get their votes. (The Muslims, its only fair to say, have been saying that they have not received anything, not even crumbs from the government and can rightfully point out to the miniscule number of Muslims in the various number of services and in the police.) The Shah Bano case only strengthened that feeling. In Kerala, the communist regime went to the extent of carving out a separate Muslim majority district, Malapuram, adding to the feeling that Muslims will never live peacefully side by side with Hindus. A similar district has been carved out in Tamil Nadu.

So much for the historic background and now for the emotional background. There has been a persistent attempt, specially by the Jawaharlal Nehru University "intellectuals" to show that if Ram ever existed, he was the king of a minor principality and hardly a god, that if he was born in Ayodhya, that Ayodhya lay somewhere near the border of Nepal and not in present-day Uttar Pradesh, that if indeed he was born in present-day Ayodhya there is nothing to prove that he was born at the site where the Babri Masjid now exists, that if indeed he was born where it is claimed he was, the temple to him was built on the foundations of a Buddhist vihara and so on. Not the slightest concession is given to deeply held emotional feelings. The worst instigators of communalism, to my mind are the Hindu "secular" intellectuals whose arrogance is matched only by their insensitivity. Every religion has its myths. A Catholic will feel insulted if one were to question either virgin birth or resurrection—and rightly so. And it takes considerable stretching of one's imagination to believe that the prophet came riding on a winged horse and landed at the site in Jerusalem where, it is believed, a footprint of his can even now be seen. If one can accept these pleasant myths surely one can accept the belief that Sri Ram was born at the Babri Masjid site?

What a fine gesture it would have been if Muslim leadership at the very early stages, had graciously conceded the right of Hindus to build a temple at the site and even helped them to do so? What enormous goodwill would have accrued to the Muslim community by that one single act of grace that would have cost them nothing, but would have wiped out the many angers of the past? There was even some talk that the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] would rebuild the Babri Masjid at another site, stone by ancient stone at its own cost. The wounded Hindus psyche would then have been healed. We would have gone a long way towards national integration. But the Syed Shahabuddins had to take a confrontationist stand. They would not accept a belief (let us concede that it is a myth) that would have cost them nothing but won them only goodwill. The demand was that the VHP should 'prove' that the masjid was built on the temple site.

Let it be presumed that no temple ever existed, that even no Sri Ram ever existed and that everything is a myth. Would it have damaged Islam or the Muslims if the latter were to have the grace to concede something over which Hindus have been straining for decades? The argument is made that if one site was conceded the VHP might have asked for three more and then 300 more and then where would it all stop? Shouldn't one take a firm stand from the very start and decline to oblige? And thus the argument has run. But this was a matter for negotiation

and to the best of my information this matter was never ever brought to the negotiating table.

The truth of the matter seems to be that the Muslim leadership was afraid to concede anything. This has led to 'minorityism'—the minorities' perennial fear that if one concedes a point to the majority, the matter will not stop there.

The irony is that it is not the Muslim who is afraid, but the Hindu with all the accumulated fears of the past. Banquo's ghost just will not disappear. The Hindu psyche demands that some restitution be done to it, though it is not expressed quite that way. It is not quite revanchist. To believe so would be a wrong reading of the situation. There is such a thing as a "psychological" minority—the existence of which is seldom recognised because one wants to face facts, besides which, it would be embarrassing to admit that one is afraid. But the fact remains that both the numerical minority and the psychological minority live in fear of each other. Every time there is a report of conversion to Islam it touches a raw nerve.

Many further believe that the Muslim attitude is one of: "what we have is ours, what you have is also ours." The Muslims voted solidly for the Muslim League and for Pakistan. Today's generation says that it cannot be made to pay for what their fathers did. But surely those fathers are still around who should have known better? The Shahi Imam says that he wants India to be "secular." Were those mullahs who coughed fire and brimstone in 1946 secular?

Then there are other questions asked: if the situation had been reversed, say in Pakistan or any Muslim country would a temple have been safe? How many temples have been destroyed in Pakistan? In Bangladesh? Even in Kashmir?

The secularists argument is that Indians should be different from the fundamentalist Muslims. They should be, but alas, they aren't. One wished that there never was a Ghazni or a Ghouri or an Aurangzeb or a Jinnah to haunt our dreams. What is significant is that there are many who argue that Hindu rulers also have ransacked temples; that Ghazni only wanted the wealth of Somnath and was unconcerned with the idolatrous Hindus, etc., etc. It has also been argued that Hindus have not been less vicious and that they have had gory fights with Buddhists and Jains, so what is wrong with Muslims killing Hindus?

It is easy for our secularists to point an accusing finger at the VHP, the BJP or its leaders like L K Advani. But are Congress, Janata Dal, Janata Party and the leftist leaders any the less guilty? All of them were playing games. The Congress wanted to take shelter behind the judiciary; it was an excellent example of passing the buck. Narasimha Rao could say sanctimoniously that the BJP was not upholding the constitution while what seems clear is that more than the BJP it was the non-BJP coterie that is responsible for what happened. The BJP was not in need of the Muslim vote. The Congress is; so is the Janata Dal. The BJP may or may not be right. But the Congress party is frankly dishonest. Everyone has been playing politics, as the saying goes. Nobody has any clean hands.

Effects of Recent Events on Secularism Viewed

93AS0333A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 19 Dec 92 p 4

[Article by Sudhish Pachauri: "The Tragedy of Modern Secularism"]

[Text] In Sunderkand of the Ramayana, a depressed Sita was sitting in Ashoka Vatika. Ravana had just left after threatening her, "If you do not agree to what I have told you within a month, then I will unsheathe my sword and kill you." Above her in the branches of a tree sat Hanuman in a miniature form. Ravana was insulting her. Hanuman could not tolerate her being insulted. She prayed to the tree to take away her sorrows. When Hanuman saw the right time, he dropped Ram's ring to the ground. Sita recognized the ring at once. Hanuman began to praise Lord Ram. Sita began to listen to him and said that the person who related this nectar-like story should appear in front of her in person. Hanuman appears and tells her the whole story. Sita is reassured now. They exchange questions and answers. Hanuman says, "Be patient, mother; give up your fears. These demons are like moths in front of Ram's arrow-fire."

Sita, on seeing Hanuman in this smaller form, says, "All these demons are scary and very strong. Your army of monkeys is nothing compared to them. I have doubts about your victory. In response, Hanuman shows her his real physique. He appears huge and his body looks like "golden earth-carrier," which is very powerful in war. Sita is reassured now. Now Hanuman suddenly says, "Mother, seeing those beautiful fruits in this garden, I have become very hungry." Sita says, "This garden is guarded by huge monster." Fearless Hanuman says, "If you do not mind, I will tell you that I am not afraid of them at all." Sita responds, "OK, bear the feet of God in your heart son, and enjoy the sweet fruit."

The reader of the Ramayana knows the rest of the story. The Ashoka Vatika is totally destroyed, and Hanuman is later brought to the demons' meeting. He sits fearless like Garuda sits in the middle of snakes. Ravana laughs, "Have you not heard my name, that you destroyed the garden?" Hanuman replies, "You are stupid. I am the messenger of almighty Ram, who controls the whole world and whose wife you have stolen."

In conversation with Ravana, Hanuman says, "Whoever turns away from Ram does not live, be it Shankar or Vishnu." However, the vain Ravana does not listen to him. In his anger, he orders the breaking up of Hanuman's body parts and the burning of his tail. By the grace of god, 49 different strong winds began to blow and Lanka began to burn. Hanuman burned all of Lanka, leaving only one house unburned.

If we wish, we can compare this incident with the incidents of 6 December. The bizarre thing is that this time around, Ram has a feeling of some guilt. Tulsi's Ram and Hanuman were not blamed for anything. These feelings of guilt are borne out of worship of Ram and the hypocritical modern feelings of guilt that are outside of Tulsi's devotion. The truth is that, just like Hanuman, the new devotees of Ram are not suffering from any guilt. We see a silent joy on their faces. Tulsi's Hanuman was satisfied because he had accomplished a job for Ram. This silent joy was attained by accomplishing a project for the modern God. At this point, Tulsi's Hanuman is separated from the new Hanuman. Tulsi's Hanuman is devoured by modernism, and this is a very strange truth. Such abuse of symbolism and re-creation is an unprecedented development in India's history. Without that original Hanuman, these new Hanumans would not have been possible.

Tulsi Das, in his Ramayana, provided hints and opportunities to enter the secret of Ram's devotee, Hanuman. In Tulsi's book, the reader does not only understand Ram and his devotees, but also earns the right to be a devotee himself. In northern India, Hanuman's reality is not understood without the presence of various symbols in the Ramayana. Saying "lumpan" will not help here.

One reason for starting this discussion could be to enter into the minds of these new Hanumans and to understand their character. A fundamental and historical flaw of secularism is that it does not enter the darker and lighter sides of a Hindu mind. We create an easy environment with the word "lumpen" which only chastises us and then disappears. This tells us why the modern and secular thought is tired.

At present, from among the available analyses, many secular myths seem to be weak. The prevalent myth about Hindus and Muslims is the result of the tired and modern thought. Present-day Hindus are repeating these myths while explaining the shock. Perhaps that is why they cannot establish a dialogue with the Hindu society. If most of the analyses give an impression of surprise, embarrassment, and a feeling of being cheated, as well as a touch of conspiracy, it is because all these analyses are provided by the forces outside of Hinduism. The word "Hindu" was given by someone else (the Turks). There is a contradictory relationship between the identification and egotism. However, image of self cannot be complete without others perception. Other religions (Islam and Christianity) are basically modern centralist religions and are based on a book and specific rules. They are not bothered by their image in other people's minds; however, for those who follow the Hindu religion the image of self is determined by the image perceived by the others. In the thinking of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], this self-image is present because of the perception of others. The tragedy of secularism is that no group within the Hindu religion has the desire to identify the Hindu self-image and the Hindu ego so that we can call it different than that of the RSS and as having a different set of questions.

Within the framework of our social knowledge, the backward Hindu, the fundamentalist Hindu, the factionalist Hindu, and the extremist Hindu are all dismissed from the area of our knowledge of Hindu reality. Some portions of the middle-class Hindus, who breathe in the energy and tolerance of the present government, do not question the egotism of the Hindu religion, because they look at the two myths: they are very tolerant, and they are the majority. Our democracy, with the majority and with modernism on its side, is tolerant and hopes that it will also be able to bear the burden of other factions' extreme actions. It is very tolerant, and of course, it is the majority. This is the dangerous contradiction of our reality.

The myth that Hinduism is very broad-minded is very attractively popularized among those who live within the Hindu religion. This value belongs to the "capitalist poetic" groups in this modern era of competition. These groups have no room in this early era of capitalism. In this era, broad-mindedness means cowardliness or helplessness. In the RSS mind, there is no concept of the broad-minded Hindu that goes with its image of Hinduism.

Our secular historians do not accept this uncertainty of the Hindu mind. They want to believe that Hindu fascism has carried away the tolerant Hindu. It is obvious from many surprising analyses. The Hindu society was kidnapped by "lumpen." By saying this they show that they are charmed by the originality of a lifeless source, because they consider it the real analysis of the truth. They ask the lumpen to deal with the legal system strictly. Our modern organizations, the legislative, the executive, and the legal branches, as well as the political parties that stay out of religions, believe that the problems of factionalism are either of a legal nature or simply political accidents. They do not consider the present communal problems as examples of the new identification and changes within the society. After obtaining independence, writing a weighty constitution, establishing a welfare state, and the birth of parties and institutions that steer these all, can the lower social groups not organize and reorganize around these institutions? This question is not possible in the views of the people who call themselves modern. Therefore, the desires of the Hindu mind to deviate, disintegrate, or reorganize do not even become bitter truths for us.

Before 6 December, the Central Government and all non-BJP parties ignored this bitter truth. The court also ignored it. We cannot even talk about the stupidity of the bureaucracy. For the bureaucracy, all worldly problems belong to order and bureaucracy. If, in the mind of someone, there was not the hatred of being a Hindu, or a sneaking pride in being one, then the whole scenario could have been understood, even during the first phase. However, this game of hide-and-seek with the greater Hindu society has become so easy that people cannot even understand the new language of the Hindu mind in their vanity about their knowledge.

Just as Hindus have 330 million gods, so is its voice also varied. It never has one meaning. The reason for this is the variety of self-images. The Hindu religion never accepted one guru, one god, or one book. This way, the Hindu society is the world's most absorbing, ultra-modern, varied, and stable society. It may sound strange that the RSS and other Hindu parties that have been trying to represent the variety and worldly affairs of the Hindu religion should use, and actually do use, a language with varied meanings and interpretations. With time, this could become a headache for a one-sided party like the RSS; however, the RSS has used this multi-directionality as a supportive element. That is why its spread in this present scenario is terrifying (and, for the same reason, technical restrictions only give it new validity.)

The important thing is that the BJP and the RSS have kept their goals clear during the last two years. Yes, their language was varied. This was the specific Hindu language that was used during the last two years.

The BJP leaders spoke with three different mouths. "We have been given the mandate by the people to build the temple. We are determined to remove all the obstacles." The RSS leaders spoke about the awakening of the Hindus. "This is a Hindu nation and Ram is its symbol." The VHP leaders and holy men emphasized different points. "Kar seva will begin from there. We will build a temple right there. We take oath in Ram's name." Vinay Katiar, the Bajrang Dal leader, said even to the last minute, "Kar seva will begin according to kar sevak rules and will begin at that spot." Kalyan Singh said, "I will obey the people's mandate; not the government."

Before 6 December (and even after that), all these people give different kinds of statements; however, all agree that the temple must be built at that specific place. If someone misunderstood the similarity of the meanings of these groups that always make different statements, then those were the non-BJP groups and those who talk about secularism.

Doordarshan's 'Neutrality' in Coverage Questioned

93AS0414A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 25 Dec 92 p 1

[News Report: "Secularism a la Doordarshan"]

[Text] New Delhi 24 December (JANSATTA)—The Doordarshan has given a new meaning to secularism. After the Ayodhya disaster, it has become totally neutral about religion. All films covering the 6 December incident have been put under lock and key and mention of Ram-Rahim or temple-mosque is banned.

The new style of secularism that the Doordarshan has started will not allow screening of religious movies on the small screen or even the mention of religious terms. Until now, the Doordarshan had encouraged all religions. Its rural radio programs used to begin with the "victory to Ram" salutation. Perhaps they will stop that too.

The Doordarshan has also rectified other problems. When the Doordarshan officials took news editors Suresh Singh and S.M. Kumar to task for failing to air the film clips showing Aviation and Tourism Minister Scindia's visit to Kanpur, the employees became upset and refused to cover the president and the vice president when they went to the memorial of former Prime Minister Charan Singh on Wednesday. When all efforts to get their cooperation failed, the officials had to use VHS cameras to cover the event.

The administrators cannot do anything if the Doordarshan employees go home at 1700. The government had classified shift duty employees into 18 categories after negotiations with the striking employees. However, no one really knows what these categories are. Thus, most of the people take advantage of the ambiguity and leave for home at 1700.

The Doordarshan has a temporary plan to deal with these problems. However, how they use this plan was clear to us when transmission was started from Pitampura tower. On the first day they forgot to take the music montage that goes with the English news. Thus, the viewers checked their watches when they saw Hindi news at 2130 because the Hindi news is broadcast at 2040. Later, they showed the English news program! The Parliament News was shown after it with a screeching sound. There was no connection between this sound and what the news reporter was saying. He was talking to someone who perhaps was standing behind the camera!

One Doordarshan administrator said that the flaws in the arrangements made because of workers demonstrations can be blamed only on the workers.

Secularism Seen Inappropriate Model for Nation

93AS0437B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 19 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Mukul Asthana: "After Ayodhya: The Secularist Delusion"; italicized words as published]

[Text] The demolition of Babri Masjid has proved two things. First, both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism have come to stay in India and, secondly, the imported ideology of secularism has failed to counter and contain the forces of fundamentalism. Since secularism gives rise to fundamentalism, the former suffers from an inherent infirmity to fight the latter.

For George Jacob Holyoake, who coined this term in 1850, secularism was the peaceful co-existence of all religions. Thus the secularist ideology speaks in two voices. But both the varieties of secularism, bound by the same internal logic of modernity, have treated religion not as a system of faith but as a system of ideology. In

other words, for a secularist religion has no transcendental basis. It is rather an idea in movement which requires to be checked as it is inimical to modern Statecraft.

Ideology

Once religion is reduced to ideology, it provides fertile ground for the forces of fundamentalism and revivalism to flourish. What is common between secularism and fundamentalism is that they have the same view of religion. Both attempt to organize the religious realities to suit the cognitive, moral and social needs of men, and both reject those parts of the realities which do not respond to these predetermined needs. Thus, from the religious point of view, secularism and fundamentalism are not related as thesis and anti-thesis, but they are two sides of the same coin; and one is as evil as the other.

In such a case all distinctions between "positive" and "pseudo" secularism collapse. In fact, what is being touted as positive secularism is mere pseudo for men who know what is meant by a religious way of life. A religious life is primarily an authentic life, a life in which "the nature of things" ought to be known and actualized. The philosophies of religion, both in the East and West, have laid emphasis on gaining an insight into the nature of existence in order to lead a qualitatively superior life.

The version of secularism which has dominated Indian public life is that of Holyoake, not Bradlaugh. It is accommodative of different religions, and while it attempts to keep public policy free from religious considerations, it does not entirely prohibit the religious groups from entering the public space. One of the several reasons why this version of secularism was accepted by our political leaders and Constitution-makers was that it coincided with the ancient Indian ideal of "goodwill towards all religions," or sarvadharma sambhava. But by adopting this ideal the secularists only debased it and emptied it of its religious content.

The definition of Indian secularism as "sarvadharma sambhava" is an attempt by politicians and intellectuals to reconcile the irreconcilables, writes the author who teaches Political Science at Gorakhpur. He warns that even after the demolition of Babri Masjid, "which has shattered the self-image of Indian secularism," the attempt by politicians is continuing to resurrect the edifice of positive secularism, or what is left of it.

In advocating the policy of sarvadharma sambhava, the politicians and intellectuals were trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. They assumed the role of mediators between tradition and modernity, or between religious culture and secular politics. The Government-controlled media and the urbanized English Press were too ready to give a helping hand to these self-proclaimed guardians of culture and polity. They invoked the name of Gandhi to justify what they were doing and put a seal of legitimacy on their ideas and actions, but they completely ignored the fact that for the Mahatma it was impossible to separate religion from politics.

Gandhi, a deeply religious man, was only carrying on the old tradition of the Gita which states: "There is no deity that I am not, and in case any man be truly the worshipper of any deity whatever, it is I that am the cause of his devotion and its fruit... However men approach, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine." Gandhi belonged to the company Ramkrishna and Vivekananda, and his policy of religious tolerance (the fact is that it was no policy) flowed from the ideals of religion, not from the principles of secularism.

Non-Religious

If this view of religion is to be accepted, the fundamentalist organizations are essentially non-religious. Their fundamentalism has nothing to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor with the revival of the religious spirit. This point is more relevant in the context of Hindu religion, more appropriately, the sanatan dharma. The Hindus never believed in erecting a religious organization or in prescribing a single book to all. They did not believe in propagating their religion or in converting to Hinduism men who professed different faiths.

It is these reasons that the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] remains a typical un-Hindu organization. It is an illegitimate offspring of British colonialism, and since the secularist ideology in India is but a continuation of colonial ideology in a nationalist garb, the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] and the Bajrang Dal are the illegitimate children of Indian secularism. What these Hindu fundamentalists are trying to destroy is the catholicity and liberalism of Hinduism. The Hindu attitude to history and religion, which the zealots of Hindutva conveniently ignore, does not demand a Ram temple even if one existed there before Babari Masjid came up.

Though Islam does believe in propagation and conversion, it does not advocate annihilation of other religions. The Koran proclaims that there should be no coercion in matters of faith. Akbar's policy of religious tolerance was derived not from any secular doctrine but from Islam. The seeds of Muslim fundamentalism were sown in India partly by the British and partly by the Muslim League of Mohammad Ali Jinnah who himself was a thoroughly Westernized person.

Watershed

The partition of India provided the proper manure for these seeds to sprout. Irrigated by the policy of appeasement pursued mainly by the successive Congress Governments in New Delhi, Muslim fundamentalism grew into a healthy plant. The annulment of the Supreme Court judgment in the Shah Bano case by parliamentary legislation must be considered a watershed in the long policy of appeasement as it cleared the way for the rising tide of Hindutva.

But what really sustains the ideology of Islamic revivalism in India is the inspiration that it receives from the fundamentalist Muslim world which is ever-increasing

in size and militancy. It was Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran who set the example for the Indian Muslims to demand a ban on The Satanic Verses. They extracted that ban from our secular Government. They even refused to condemn the death sentence passed by the Ayatollah on the writer who was merely exercising his intellectual freedom.

The week-long orgy of death in almost all parts of the country which followed the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya has badly shattered the self-image of Indian secularism. What shocks one is that there is only a series of ad hoc and muddled responses to the present crisis. If half of politics is an exercise in image-making and the other half an art of making people believe in the imagery, politicians have become busy either to evolve a strategy to project the happenings in Ayodhya as being "unfortunate" yet a right step in the direction of positive secularism, or to devise an action plan to retrieve whatever is left of secularism from the ruins of the mosque. Alas, the innocent public will continue to believe in the images advertised by these traders of power.

Advani Says Debate On Secularism Requires National Elections

BK0802114793 Delhi PATRIOT in English 13 Jan 93 p 1

[Quotation marks as published]

[Text] The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has demanded a mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha, sought to delink itself from ally VHP's [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] call for removing mosques in Mathura and Varanasi and asserted that its concept of secularism was akin to the one visualised by the framers of the Constitution and the freedom fighters, report agencies.

Addressing a joint press conference in the Capital on Monday [11 January], BJP president Murli Manohar Joshi and senior leader L.K. Advani called for a snap poll on the basis of its five-point programme, which included construction of Ram temple at the very spot where the disputed Babri Masjid [mosque] existed and immediate election in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.

Asked to comment on the different stand being taken by the VHP and the BJP on extending its area of actions to Mathura and Varanasi, Mr. Advani made it clear that these two temples were not on the BJP's agenda. "My senior colleague Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr. Bhandari have already explained our party's stand," he told the questioner. He said the BJP takes its own independent decisions.

"It was only in 1989 that we came into the picture as far as construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya was concerned, even though the VHP was agitating for the past decade on these three temples", he said.

Mr. Advani then went on to explain that while the BJP was a political party, the VHP was working within a given 'sphere'.

Replying to another questions the BJP leader was confident that even the Muslims in the county would 'accept' their party programmes soon. Over a period of time, Muslims would realise that this "dynamo of cultural nationalism" was best for the unity and progress of India. "Our track record in the four BJP-ruled states has vindicated our stand," he added.

Mr. Advani when asked to react to Mr. Vajpayee's reported comments that he was being sidelined since he was a 'moderate', said, "these simplistic interpretations of hardliner and soft liner are not suited to us. Please spare us from this," he appealed to the media.

Demanding a snap poll, the BJP leader said "the present mandate of the Government has evaporated. The ruling party has majority but no mandate."

On the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Mr. Advani said, "the pulling down of the structure was unfortunate because it was something not desired by his party. But this was not such a calamity that the nation should feel ashamed of. I am not ashamed."

By pulling down the structure, abandoned 55 years ago, how could anybody consider it as a demolition of a mosque, Mr. Advani asked adding it was the repeated description of the dilapidated structure as a "Babri Masjid" that led to the sorrowful events since December 6.

Nor was the pulling down of the dilapidated structure any heroic achievement for those who had done it, he added.

"We are sorry for the incident since demolition was not in our agenda", Mr. Advani clarified.

He said the Ayodhya movement had acted as a catalyst insofar as ideological debate on nationalism and secularism was concerned.

He accused the Congress and other 'pseudo-secular forces' for wrongly interpreting the meaning of secularism as enshrined in the Constitution and [envisioned by] the forefathers of the independence movement. This has 'fractured' India's society, he said and added that it was not the Ayodhya movement which had caused the present riots.

The distortion of the word 'secularism' had channelised a strong resentment among the majority of the people in the country, he said.

But for the Ayodhya movement, the deliberate distortion of the word 'secularism' would have led to an explosive situation in the country, Mr. Advani claimed.

He held the Centre solely responsible for the aftermath of the December 6 incidents for officially describing the structure at Ayodhya as a mosque.

Therefore, he said the debate on nationalism and secularism, which was started in 1990 following the no-confidence motion moved against the V.P. Singh government should be taken to its logical conclusion by going to the people on this major issue. [passage about Advani's plans omitted]

BJP Leader Sees Double Standard on Secularism

[Quotation marks as published]

93AS0422A Hyderabad DECCAN CHRONICLE in English 10 Dec 92 p 7

[Text] New Delhi, Dec. 9—The Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] on Wednesday continued its defence of the demolition of Babri masjid by ker sevaks and said that the 'vicious and intemperate' criticism of the incident was sending wrong signals to the people.

The leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and senior BJP leader, Mr. L.K. Advani, in a statement issued before he was taken to Agra by Uttar Pradesh police, said that the tirade against the Ayodyha movement is only making the Hindus feel incensed an outraged.

He alleged that critics of the movement were adopting double standards in a bid to further their own interests. He said that neither the establishment nor any one uttered even a single word of condemnation when over 50 temples were razed to ground few years ago in Kashmir. Similarly, none protested the massacre of over 3,000 Sikhs in the aftermath of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination.

He regretted that, today when an old structure which ceased to be a mosque over 50 years ago is pulled down by a group of people exasperated by the tardiness of the judicial process and the obtuseness and myopia of the executive, they are reviled by the President, the Vice President and political parties as betrayers of the nation and destroyers of the Constitution.

Mr. Advani hoped that those in authority would realise the dangerous consequence of what he called irresponsible outbursts. They are providing a justification and rationale to communal elements in the country to precipitate violence. The frenzy is the direct upshot of the vicious tirade unleashed by the Government and the official media against the kar sevaks, he said. [passage on BJP party plans omitted]

Non-Secular History Said Impacting Present

93AS0429A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 14 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Meenakshi Jain: "History Is Not Always Secular";]

[Text] However contemporary one's views on the activities of the kar sevaks in Ayodhya may be, the demolition of the Babri structure is a landmark in the history of Hindu-Muslim relations.

Marxist historians and secularists of various hues may shy away from discussions on the role of religion in India's historical development, but the 1,000 year encounter of Hinduism and Islam has undoubtedly taken a new turn.

Islam's inability to steamroll the Hindus during its centuries long political ascendancy must rank among the more remarkable achievements of the Hindus. It is Marxist misinterpretation of historical reality to insist most Muslim rulers were not conscientious concerning their religious duty in a country of infidels or that Hindus did not, as Hindus, offer stiff resistance.

As Professor S.A.A. Rizvi points out in *Religion in South Asia,* "Conversion to Islam by political pressure began with the conquest of Sind and Multan by Muhammad bin Qasim between 711 and 713."

The non-religious nature of Muhammad Ghazni's campaigns has been commented upon ad nauseum by Marxist historians. The views of more dispassionate scholars have been documented in C.E. Bosworth's *The Later Ghaznavids: Slendour and Decay.*

They concede "the importance of the spirit of Muslim jihad in this period should not be underestimated, even if secular motives for the spoliation of India loom more largely in our minds today than in those of the traditional Islamic sources on the Ghaznavid campaigns in India... The intensity of this spirit of jihads is seen in the fluorescence of the post-Firdausian Persian epic genre in eastern Afghanistan, the region of Ghazna and Zabulistan."

All sultans who occupied the throne of Delhi from the 10th to the 14th centuries, along with their governors, sought to make their contribution to the cases of Islam in the subcontinent.

Certain features of their proselytisation efforts deserve to be highlighted. Beginning with the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids the missionary zeal of Islam was directed at tribal chiefs and rulers "to establish Islamic outposts in border areas and other strategic regions."

One can cite the example of the forced Islamisation of the Gakkhars which "served as a pattern for the Islamisation of tribal groups in Punjab, west of the Ravi, and the garrisons in the forts built to prevent the Mongol onslaught were an important means of Islamisation in that region."

Similar was the conversion of the Mej and other tribes in western India by Bakhtiyar Khilji and the Barwars who inhabited the region between Gujarat and Malwa by Alauddin Khilji. Here the gains could not be regarded as permanent for many of the converts became apostates.

That apart, the significant point to emerge is the absence of a concerted effort to take on Hindus in what may be considered the heartland of Hinduism. Even Alauddin Khilji, undoubtedly the first truly despotic Muslim ruler to grace the throne of Delhi, left the Hindu hereditary village leaders to "their traditional ways of life."

Economically, the heat was on then to the extent that, according to *A Comprehensive History of India* edited by Mohammad Habib and K.A. Nizami, "No gold, silver, tankas, jitals or superfluous commodities, which are the causes of rebellion, were to be found in the houses of the Hindus, and owing to their lack of means, the wives of the khuts and muqaddans went and worked for wages in the houses of the Musalmans."

No effort, however, was made to forcibly Islamise them. The founder of the Tughlaq dynasty, Ghiyasuddin, made some concessions to this class, but when his successor Muhammad bin Tughlaq again attempted to squeeze them, he provoked an armed uprising in the Doab region.

This is not to say demands to Islamise this class were not repeatedly made by the Muslim religious divines, particularly the ulema. Under pressure from orthodox opinion, Ferozeshah Tughlaq, in fact, imposed the jaziya on Brahmins in the belief they "were the principal impediment to Islamisation."

But the attempt failed. "Brahmins threatened to burn themselves alive rather than pay jaziya: rich Hindus intervened and offered to pay jaziya on behalf of Brahmins, and a concessional rate was ultimately fixed for them."

This is not to deny some high caste conversion did take place. Enslaved high caste men and women and the odd Hindu ruler did succumb to the power of the sword. In areas like Kashmir, the persecution of Brahmins together with their replacement by Iranis in the administration resulted in many Brahmins embracing the new faith. But by and large the core of India remained kafir.

The *Ain-i-Akbari* states that as late as 1600 more than two thirds the total revenue of the districts of middle Doab, present day Agra and Allahabad divisions, Awadh and the eastern part of the United Provinces were paid by Thakur zamindars. Till the 18th century, the entire Benaras region remained firmly in the control of the Thakurs.

But like their predecessors the Mughals too were determined to weaken the position of entrenched groups in the north Indian countryside. In the Benaras region, for example, they encouraged other indigenous groups, principally Brahmins and Bhumihars, against the Thakurs.

Similarly, in Awadh, the Mughals pressed their nominees to dislodge the Thakurs by buying out their zamindars. "The objective behind this policy," says Muzaffar Alam, "was to open the gate to outsiders into regions which had been, or had lately been developing into, strongholds of the established zamindar castes." In Unao and Sandila, for instances, this policy led to the establishment of Saiyid zamindaris.

Muslim penetration into India proceeded further in the 17th and 18th centuries as the Afghans consolidated their hold in what is known as the Rohilkhand region. They did this initially as revenue farmers and subsequently as chieftains. They were also instrumental in establishing many market towns such as Pilibhit, Moradabad, Sambhal, Shahjahanpur, Najibabad, Etawah and Rampur.

But extention of Muslim power was never a one way success story. Contrary to popular belief, the Hindus fought every inch of the way. In 1707, the Mughal empire reached its "farthest physical limits." But to what avail?

It would be in order to describe the situation in the words of a Muslim scholar: "Within the heartland of the empire, in the Mathura-Agra region, the Jat zamindars and the peasants had repeatedly challenged Mughal authority. The revolts of the zamindars in the early 1700s marked an assertion of the power of local 'despots' against the Mughal system and perhaps were symptomatic of a kind of social resurgence.

"In the Punjab, the Sikh movements were emerging as a significant force. The Rajput chiefs who had made crucial contributions to the consolidation of Mughal rule were becoming lukewarm in their support of the imperial cause."

Yes, the Hindus fought every inch of the way. Those parts of the subcontinent which were late in experiencing Hinduism were the first to fall but wherever Hinduism had been entrenched for millennia they put up dogged resistance. However, the outward symbols of success were few and far between.

Events in Ayodhya represent an important symbolic victory for the heartland of Hindustan. Symbolic because the structure in dispute had not functioned as a mosque for close to half a century. But then that is enough to satisfy the Hindus.

Secularists, Hindus Seen Battling for Conscience of Nation

93AS0429C Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 18 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Suhas Majumder: "Apology for Intolerance"]

[Text] Despite the hue and cry raised over the events of December 6, 1992, and the subsequent near unanimous condemnation of Hindu organisations and Hindutva by almost all sections of our "secular" media, one may be forgiven for the unorthodox view that the Ayodhya conflict is not primarily a Hindu-Muslim but a Hindu-secularist one.

It is unnecessary to labour over the point beyond saying that, from the day the idols were installed within the disputed structure till the day of its demolition, Muslims did not interfere decisively in the Hindu movements for the Ram Janmabhoomi cause. The decisive moves were always taken by secular organisations: the secular administration, the secular national integration council, the secular members of our venerable Parliament, not to mention the secular representatives of our secular judiciary.

As for the secular media, the less said the better. Even now, in the post-demolition phase, the most strident voice heard across the country, barring that of secular politicians most of whom are non-Muslims, belongs to mediamen of authentic secular credentials.

By contrast, the Muslim reaction within the country has been low key. Even the much publicised march to Ayodhya to offer namaz ended in a whimper. It is not clear whether the riots that claimed more than a thousand lives were a spontaneous outburst of outraged Muslim feelings. There are suspicions they were contrived by the secular frenzy engendered by the media and politicians who wished to fish in troubled waters.

The truth behind the tragic affairs may never be known. But the hypothesis that certain secularists were the real inspiration behind some of the riots has to be taken seriously.

As for the media's contribution to stimulating passions, one example is particularly representative of the virulent language used by most of our mediamen. An editor of a national daily launched a veritable jihad against Hindutva forces, taking scurrility to ridiculous lengths. On December 7, before the ink was dry on the news of the demolition, this worthy appeared on the frontpage of his newspaper, loudly declaring Mahatma Gandhi had been assassinated a second time.

As if the language and the analogy were not intemperate enough, he enjoined on a miraculously reincarnated father of the nation the duty to have the "Babri Masjid" rebuilt by the Hindus. It may be futile to point out no responsible journalist gives vent to his anti-Hindu feelings in such patently offensive language or inflames Muslim passions by the insinuatory nature of his message. This example is strong evidence the Ayodhya affair is a conflict between Hindus and secularists rather than Muslims. No Muslim spokesman has been on record demanding the structure be rebuilt by Hindus. The demand has come from secularists and secularists alone.

It is in this context Professor Amlan Datta's reflections on the root of India's Hindu-Muslim conflict in his article, "Pragmatic About the Fanatic" (THE TELEGRAPH, January 2, 1993) have to be judged. Mr. Datta is well known for his sobriety when approaching both national and international questions. But his views on Ayodhya somewhat compromise this reputation. He sees the demolition of the Babri structure as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim conflict, leaving out the main party from his consideration.

To see secularists as the Hindu's true adversary is, as said before, an unorthodox view. But if one considers the orthodox view has been sedulously formed over the years, mostly by the tribe of secular mediapersons, and adds to this the fact Mr. Datta is an independent analyst who judges things without taking the journalistic cue, his echoing the media view may be seen as renunciation of objectivity.

Mr. Datta's remedy for the endless Hindu-Muslim problem is the recognition communalism exists in both communities. This is to be followed by self-criticism, including a criticism of one's own religion. Needless to say, this admirable approach is not consistent with the author's reputation for soberness in addressing social questions. For, one is forced to understand, the matter has been complicated by attributing to Hindus the desire to get rid of their Muslim brethren by forcible expulsion, if not outright extermination.

It is not clear by what hard evidence and by what process of deductive reasoning this dangerous conspiracy has been unearthed. Such imputations, in the absence of proof, coming from men of intellectual stature seriously damage their claims to neutrality.

The article cites two passages from the Quran to prove it is a gospel of tolerance. Both are found in the Sura Baqara, the lengthiest chapter in the Quran containing as many as 286 verses. One verse says "all mankind is one community." This is an admirable sentiment no doubt, but the reader is not provided the verse number. The second, more famous, verse says "there is no compulsion in religion." This equally laudable sentiment suffers the same disadvantage. The omissions may not be entirely fortuitous, except when one locates them in the Sura they occur in backgrounds hardly justifying the assumption they preach any kind of tolerance.

The first passage does not say mankind is one community but that it originally was so. This was the state of affairs till, because of people's conflicting views on religious truth, Allah sent his messenger to instruct a privileged section of mankind. It was Allah's prerogative to "set in the way of truth whom he chose." The verse, 213 of the Sura Baqara and presumably the one Mr. Datta refers to, hardly suggests religious tolerance.

The second passage is actually the first part of verse 265 of the Sura in question. It is supposedly against religious compulsion, except that it is immediately followed by the warning that the "right path"—obviously the Islamic path—is "henceforth made distinct from the wrong path." This warning is, in turn, followed by a threat that "followers of the wrong path" will suffer "eternal hell fire."

It is no secret the Quran preaches everlasting hatred and enmity between believers and unbelievers. This is the

simplest explanation for all aspects of the Hindu-Muslim conflict present in India today. It however does not incriminate every Muslim as a communalist nor does it absolve every Hindu of the charge. But it certainly indicates it is futile to expect India's communal situation to improve without far reaching reforms within the Islamic religion. To say this is not to declare war against Muslims but to ask them to critically examine what their faith teaches and to safeguard themselves against its gospel of hatred.

It is here Indian secularists have failed most miserably. In their obsession with Hindu fundamentalism they ignore the same defect when it comes to Islam. Mr. Datta's reference to Quranic passages reverses the much needed reform process. It is ridiculous for him to suggest we ought to accept the so-called Quranic concept of the oneness of humanity as the starting point to solve India's communal problem.

It is a fact the Quran nowhere preaches equality between believers in Islam and believers of other faiths. Even a cursory reading makes its basic message clear: Islam recognises a single god, Allah, and two communities, the mumin and the kafir, believer and unbeliever. To deny this and present the Quran as some kind of humanist gospel is preposterous.

But this is exactly the kind of picture secularists all over India are painting of Islam as a weapon against Hindu fundamentalism. All this neverending anti-Hindu tirade, for which the Ayodhya events provided an occasion for redoubled stridency, needed was to be fortified by a resounding apology for Islam.

Secularism Seen Inconsistent With Hindu Ethos

93AS0429H Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 15 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Swapan Dasgupta: "Hindu, and Still Proud To Be"]

[Text] At 4.49 pm on December 6, the shrine built by Mir Baqi in 1528 was reduced to rubble by thousands of determined and frenzied kar sevaks. The demolition constituted an unabashed violation of the rule of law; it made a mockery of the repeated assurances given to the Allahabad high court and the Supreme Court by the Kalyan Singh government and the high priests of the sangh parivar; and it provoked some of the most vicious communal rioting in independent India.

Encouraged by a powerful section of the ruling elite to view the "roofed structure" (the Allahabad high court's description of the disputed shrine) as the symbol of their status as equal citizens of the republic, the Muslim community has responded emotively. There have been spontaneous expressions of fury and not-so-spontaneous incitement to violence, not least from across the borders. In many cities and towns, this outburst has triggered a ruthless Hindu backlash and fractured society into antagonistic, warring communal groups. For the moment, as Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee admitted helplessly, the moderate middle ground seems to have been swept away by an overdose of emotion.

Politically, the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]has been the most affected by the misadventure. In the eyes of an influential section of the intelligentsia, Mr. L.K. Advani's carefully cultivated image of a party that should be regarded as the government in waiting has collapsed. To its detractors, it is now the Bharatiya Danga Party, an outlaw organisation whose leaders should be locked up and the key thrown away. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's [RSS] reputation as an organisation committed to discipline has suffered a grievous blow. In more practical terms, the BJP has had to relinquish power in Uttar Pradesh, the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Del have been banned, and a dithering Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao rendered an ideological prisoner of the left. Above all, the votaries of Hindutva are being subjected to state-sponsored repression and a left wing McCarthyite witch hunt which threatens to assume sinister proportions.

The debit side has, however, been offset by other dramatic developments. Since the arrest of Mr. Advani last Tuesday morning, the BJP has witnessed a surge in popularity centred on a so-what counter-belligerence. This explains the decision of the leadership to revive the offensive and keep aside, for the moment at least, the existential heartburn of its parliamentary wing. The Centre's decision to construct the Narasimha mosque within 12 months on the site of the demolished structure has come as Ram's gift to a beleaguered party. A horrible tactical miscalculation has been overshadowed by opportunities presented by new assertive Hindutva which focuses on the denial of civil and religious rights to the majority community.

With feelings still running high and the lynch mob mentality prevailing in some rarified circles, a dispassionate analysis of Hindu reaction may fall on deaf ears. The righteous indignation of those who demonstrated before the BJP offices in the capital with placards announcing "sharm se kahon hum Hindu hai (say you are a Hindu with a sense of shame)" threatens to drown other voices. This has been compounded by the profound anger of the media at attacks by kar sevaks on photo journalists. In a larger perspective these are extraneous issues, and the lung power of the chattering classes cannot be allowed to distract from a more realistic appraisal of Hindu reaction to the traumatic happenings in Ayodhya.

For a start, there is no doubt that the initial Hindu reaction to the demolition in Ayodhya was one of profound horror and bewilderment. There are good reasons for this. The collective racial memory of Hindus have been one of fatalistic acceptance of the destruction of their own symbols of faith. This phenomenon has been internalised, rationalised and, in the case of the most hardened secularists, even legitimised. That is why there is the macabre temptation of seeing Mahmud of

Ghazni as an early version of a Harshad Mehta, and Aurangzeb as a medieval booth capturer preserving his factional dominance. The Nehruvian consensus has denied and even outlawed legitimate expressions of Hindu disquiet. Using state power and patronage, it has forbidden Hindus from coming to terms with their own history.

This explains why even hardened advocates of Hindutva, like Mr. Advani, were unable to evolve a coherent response to the unexpected developments in Ayodhya. Indeed, it was anguish and shame which prompted Mr. Advani to resign as leader of the Opposition. Having observed him from very close quarters that fateful Sunday in Ayodhya, I can say with a reasonable degree of certainty that the BJP leader was probably contemplating total withdrawal from public life. He was also mirroring the dominant Hindu confusion.

The transition from utter defensiveness to strident belligerence in little more than 36 hours has been interpreted by many as evidence of premeditation. Attractive though this theory may be, it does not distract from the fact that triumphalism in the saffron ranks is a case of post facto rationalisation. Till Monday morning, the Hindu was deeply apologetic, but this remorse now appears to have transformed into anger and belligerence.

Two factors were responsible for the radical shift. First, the blunt realisation that the government was not interested in paying heed to the powerful emotive outburst which led to Ram Janmabhoomi becoming an issue in the first place. The prolonged agitation for the temples at the birthplace of Lord Ram, Mr. Advani's threat of the "biggest mass movement in history," the political upheavals in Uttar Pradesh, the entire debate over secularism and pseudo-secularism, and the final explosion of pent up fury on December 6, seemed to have made not the slightest impression on secularist thinking.

On the contrary, there has been a semantic shift in the secularist ranks. The disputed structure which functioned uninterruptedly as a temple from 1948 has categorically become the Babri Masjid. And the likes of Professor Gyan Pandey are demanding that Ram Janmabhoomi be banished from the Indian lexicon. After all, where is proof that a mythical epic hero of the treta yuga was born there?

Initial Hindu remorse arising from a decisive rupture with tradition has only confirmed that the hidden agenda of secularist India was not merely the non-resolution of the dispute, but the simultaneous denial of a temple at the garba griha. The secularist camp had taunted the kar sevaks into reckless adventurism—even till the other day, there were jibes at the BJP government in Lucknow: "sarkar to ab teri, mandir mein kyon deri (the government is yours, why then the delay on the mandir)." Successful, they were now determined to go for the kill and bury Hindu nationalism and Hindutva once and for all in Ayodhya.

Second, Hindu anguish over the happenings in Ayodhya was mistakenly interpreted by the government and the communists as evidence of unconditional surrender. Provocative slogans such as "sharm se kahon hum Hindu hain" were calculated to make self-flagellation into a national preoccupation. The secular crusaders failed to comprehend the depth of disquiet of Hindus as Hindus which had found reflection in the Ayodhya movement. Instead, they went for the jugular, announced a plan to build a mosque on the site of the demolished structure, and ended up triggering a vicious backlash which, in purely emotional terms, may become difficult for even Mr. Advani to manage. The riots, the bans, the reaction in Pakistan and Bangladesh have added up to a volatile situation whereby the slogan "garv se kahon hum Hindu hain" is acquiring a menacing stridency. The kar sevak from Andhra Pradesh who paraded the streets of Ayodhya with a T-shirt proclaiming "I am an angry Hindu" may not seem entirely ridiculous today.

It is, of course, possible that the mood of aggression will be woefully shortlived and that once rioting subsides it will be back to the Swami Vivekananda caricature of the "patient Hindu, mild Hindu." Such hopes, I fear, may be unwarranted. December 6 was in many ways a decisive rupture with the past, not quite the storming of the Bastille but near about. Hindu rashtra of the variety propounded by some sants and sadhus in Ayodhya is still not remotely on the agenda. For India's sake I hope it never will be. But what cannot be prevented and denied any longer is a Hinduised polity which takes into account the cultural underpinnings of nationhood, and at the same time accords full citizenship to all minorities.

How loose it remains will depend to a very large extent on the government and secularist response to Ayodhya. If the prime minister is reduced to pathetic helplessness and becomes a pliant instrument in the hands of well-heeled communists who have abandoned political struggle for repression, it is unlikely the explosion can be contained. Hard secularism and the gleeful projection of Hindus as vulgar, rabid fundamentalists who should be denied a say in national life will almost certainly guarantee that the agenda in the coming months will be determined, not by Mr. Advani, but by Mr. Bal Thackeray.

If the republic is to be salvaged, albeit with another prefix, there is no alternative to viewing Ayodhya as the final destruction of one of its less-attractive embellishments—the Nehruvian consensus. We may mourn its passing and the manner of its demise. But remain firm in the conviction that attempts to set the clock back will prove dangerously counter-productive. It is time to think of the new India, not the pangs of a Caesarean birth.

Hindu Activism Seen Reawakening Indigenous Culture

93AS0472D New Delhi ORGANISER in English 20 Jan 93 pp 7, 10-11

[Article by Hari Chandra Prasad: "Media Should Give Lectures on Tolerance to Pakistan, Not India"; italicized words as published]

[Text] If ignorance is bliss, then international media, and some sections of the Indian media have displayed more than their share of it. Nothing else would explain the systematic distortion of facts in many of the articles that are being written about the country. Adding insult to injury are the lectures on tolerance and secularism to India.

India does not have to learn lessons about secularism from neither media pundits nor fundamentalist Islamic Pakistan. India's secular credentials are beyond reproach as the facts bear out. At the time of partition of India in 1947, the time when British left India, 75 percent of the population was Hindu, and 21 percent of the land as Pakistan. At the time of partition Hindus constituted 23 percent of the population in West Pakistan. Today only about 0.5 percent of Pakistan's population is Hindu and number about 0.5 million. Over the years, Hindus were either liquidated, forcibly converted to Islam or driven into India. On the other hand, despite partition, more than 90 percent of India's Muslims stayed back, and today at more than 100 million outnumber the entire population of Pakistan. So much for the Muslims' fear of persecution from the Hindus as highlighted by the media.

India had chosen Muslims to be the president, vice president, chief justices, armed services chiefs, governors, ministers, ambassadors, and many others in important public positions to represent the country. In fact, the last Indian ambassador to the United Nations. The head of India's successful and on-going missile program is a Muslim, and so is the captain of India's cricket team, just to name a few.

India is secular because of its Vedic Hindu character of its society. It allows for not just tolerance but respect and equality of all religions. Hindu tradition is quite distinct and different from the semitic tradition in this respect. The very concept of religion associated with a fixed prophet, book and dogma is alien to Vedic Hindu thought and tradition. Hindu tradition emphasizes on truth and righteous conduct more than anything else. No wonder, India has been the cradle to several major religions of the world.

Minorities have a special place by law as well as in practice in the Indian society. Parsis, Sikhs and Christians and many other minority groups exist under the same conditions as the rest of India. They not only survived, but have thrived and contributed meaningfully to the Indian society.

Not for nothing is a disproportionately large mass of Muslims in India economically weaker than the sections of the society. The obscurantist and self-serving mentality of the so-called Muslim leadership in India has harmed the interests of the Muslims more than anybody else. This leadership has treated the Muslim masses as a vote bank for political purposes by dividing them from the rest of the mainstream purely on religion. This process led to the de-nationalization and emotional alienation of the Muslim minority from the Indian society and culture.

Examples of this can be seen in the Muslim strife and rebellion in the Indian state of Jammu Et Kashmir. Hindu population has been systematically targeted to vacate the Kashmir Valley, making them refugees in their own country. The first action of Shahi Imam Bhukari of Jama Masjid in New Delhi, the most prominent leader of the Muslims in India, after the events in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, was to visit the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi. As a follow up on Ayodhya, the immediate destruction of more than 60 temples in Pakistan with the official complicity, tells the quality of his leadership. Muslims of India have been in the forefront in defense of Saddam Hussein when the rest of the world was decrying his senseless acts. Muslims in India had started street fighting and destroyed government property when Salman Rushdie's *"Satanic Verses"* was published, and forced India to be the first country to have banned the publication from entering its shores. Muslims in India are the first to jump for joy when India loses even a sports event with Pakistan. The Muslims are indifferent when the rest of the country celebrates a victory. No wonder every sports event between India and Pakistan is treated as a war by other means.

Ghetto Mentality Keeps Muslims Far From Mainstream

Though Muslims constitute 12 percent of the Indian population, by and large they suffer from a ghetto mentality. They refuse to integrate in the national mainstream for fear of losing their identity. This is an outright ridiculous argument by the Muslim leadership, given the fact that Muslims number more than 100 million today.

The Indian Muslims seem to revel in a sub-nation psyche, which is distinct and opposed to the national identity. They refuse to have a uniform civil code as the rest of the country. For them, Sharia (Islamic law) is supreme in matters related to marriage, inheritance, divorce among others. The Sharia allows them to practice polygamy, to take divorce without bothering about alimony, and many such practices which would go against the interests of Muslim women. As late as in 1986, the Muslims in India had forced the Indian government to overrule a Supreme Court judgment, which upheld the payment of alimony in divorce cases.

Special rights and privileges are given to educational and religious institutions run by Muslim and other minority groups, when at the same time they are denied to similar institutions run by Hindus. The Muslims want Urdu to be treated as a language of their religion. The Minorities Commission of India in all its existence has done nothing but only further the dogmatic ideas of the so-called Muslim leadership. Indian Muslim cultural identity is still that of the early invaders that marauded

the country, and extra-national loyalties towards Islamic countries as opposed to that of India still prevail.

All this has led to a widespread perception that Muslims are being given preferential treatment in the name of secularism. This explains why secularism (where no religion was to be a consideration of the state), the way it is practices in India, when dubbed as "Pseudosecularism," is readily accepted by many Hindus.

The ethnic strife in Kashmir and Punjab, and the role of Pakistan in fueling these have provided further thrust to this Hindu sentiment. Religion being the main ingredient in these issues, the mute response by the Muslims and Sikh communities respectively have had a strong bearing on the Hindu psyche. This explains why when L.K. Advani, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the main opposition party in India, equates Hindu activism with Indian nationalism, it seems justified to a wide cross section of the people.

It is in this background that the call for predominance of traditional Hindu symbols not as a religion, but as a cultural heritage and national identity of the people come into focus. It is not a revenge on the Muslim history but a renaissance in Hindu consciousness, in renewing its cultural heritage and national identity.

The symbolic appeal of the Ram Janambhoomi in Ayodhya, Krishna Janambhoomi in Mathura and Kashi Viswanath Temple in Varanasi, in this context is unmistakable to anyone who is familiar with India, its culture and its heritage. What the Hindus are asking for is a reinstatement of the three most important holy shrines out of the total of more than 3,200 Hindu temples that were destroyed by the Muslim invaders. The destruction of Hindu temples and the construction of mosques over them is not a figment of fundamentalist Hindu imagination, but well chronicled by the historians of the Muslim era. Further evidence of this is the confirmation by archaeologists of the presence of a Vishnu temple at the recently demolished structure in Ayodhya. The debris had enough samples of the earlier Hindu temple.

The BJP being in the forefront in the campaign for renewal of national ethos, has channelized this appeal into a political force. What happened in Ayodhya was a fait accompli (a thing done that cannot be changed). It would have happened anyway. The structure was a symbol of national shame. However, the way it happened was unfortunate. The ideal situation would have been a peaceful restoration of the temple where the embers of all religious beliefs and political mosaics could have participated in a show of national unity and integrity. But the obstinacy of the so-called Muslim leadership even in the face of compelling evidence would not allow that.

Let it be straight and clear: Ayodhya is a cultural symbol in the political battle for the soul of India. Ayodhya is India's mutiny against status quo. To put it in the words of the writer V. S. Naipaul, it is a mutiny which is not be wished away for it represents the beginning of a new way for millions, part of India's growth, part of its restoration.

Assertion of national identity and a reawakening of cultural traditions of the country are the hallmarks of this battle of epic proportions. Religion is only incidental, and happens to be the major outer manifestation of this cathartic process, but however serves the useful purpose of cutting into the roots of evil in India's social hierarchy. The prevailing economic inequities and the social ills that the present system represents are its prime catalysts.

At the core of the battle in Ayodhya is a determined effort to give the Indian nation an identity. It's a political battle to transform the country to realize its full potential in economic, cultural and political spheres by tapping India's creative genius.

'Secular Fundamentalists' Historian Bias Claimed

93AS0430E Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 1 Jan 93 p 9

[Article by Dina Nath Mishra: "Writing in the Debris"]

[Text] The evidence from the debris of the demolished Babri structure vindicates the claim made by Hindus that a temple existed at the site. A temple that was destroyed by one of the commanders of Babar, Mir Baqui, so that a mosque could be built. The discovery of a five feet by two feet red sandstone shila lekh should, in fact, clinch the issue.

I remember Mr. Vasant Sathe's comment, "Even a blind man could see that it was a temple." He was more than correct. The carving on the stone wall conclusively proves it was indeed a temple.

The deciphered part of the inscription, now under the charge of the army in the Ram Katha Park, reads like this:

Line four ... janmabhoomi

Line 14 ... shaila shikhara sreni shila-samhati vyuhair Vishnu-Hari hiranya kalasha srisundara mandiram...

Line 17 ... Ayodhyam-adhyasya tena saketa-mandalam...

Line 19 ... kurvano Bali raja bahudalanam kritva cha bhumirvvikraman kurvan dushta Dashanana...

The incription clearly mentions the Janmabhoomi and records it was at Ayodhya, in a subregion called Saket Mandala. It also states a beautiful and magnificent temple with a stone spire and gold pinnacle was built there. It was dedicated to Lord Vishnu-Hari who had humbled King Bali and defeated wicked Dashanana or Ravana.

The voluminous evidence submitted by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] in January 1991 should have

been sufficient for any independent historical or archaeological authority to reach the obvious conclusions. Had the Marxist historians who placed their intellect at the service of the Babri Masjid Action Committee [BMAC] perceived a fact as fact the tragedy of December 6 might have been averted.

I squarely blame the four historians who held the fort for the BMAC. Even Mr. Syed Shahabuddin had once said if a temple did exist at Ayodhya he himself would demolish the Babri structure. He backtracked much later.

The former director of Prayag Museum, Mr. S.P. Gupta, learnt of the shila lekh from Ms. Sudha Maliya. He accompanied her to Ayodhya and filmed the evidence found in and beneath the debris of the demolished structure. Immediately afterwards Mr. Gupta, Mr. B.R. Grover, Mr. K.S. Lal, Mr. S. Mukherjee and Mr. D.S. Agarwal wrote a letter to the prime minister saying, "We request you to kindly arrange for the proper preservation of these valuable archaeological remains as well as their study by archaeologists and epigraphists of the Archaeological Survey of India and other institutions."

I wonder what the four generals of the left intellectual army, Mr. R.S. Sharma, Mr. M. Athar Ali, Mr. D.N. Jha and Mr. Suraj Bhan, would have to say now. Will they concede the truth or fight it out with the help of their lieutenants in the media and other fields? No doubt they will.

The news of the discovery of evidence did not find a paragraph space in a number of newspapers which are controlled by them. More than 60 journalists were present at the press conference addressed by Mr. Gupta. It was reported in most newspapers but the "secular fundamentalists" did not consider it fit to print.

Archaeological evidence found in June 1992 when the digging and levelling was being done has now been supplemented by the new evidence. But the four historians continue to refute it. They ask for proof of Ram's birth and of his birthplace. They even indulge in character assassination of a veteran archaeologist like Mr. B.B. Lal.

It is this obstinacy which created the psychological ground for a section of kar sevaks to demolish the structure.

Now the second batch of stormtroopers have jumped into the fray. A large number of nondescript historians have reached the conclusion the archaeological evidence found in the debris and now stored in the Ram Katha Kunj were brought from outside to prove the VHP case. They have even demanded a CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] inquiry to trace the sites from where the various odd pieces were brought to Ayodhya.

If they call themselves historians they should know this evidence can be proved wrong or right quite easily by the highest archaeological authorities of the land. Archaeological tests can determine the age of the stone and the inscriptions. In an interview given to a Hindi daily the director general of the ASI [Anthropological Survey of India] has categorically said the veracity of the concerned archaeological findings can be conclusively ascertained if they are handed over to the ASI.

Now these gentlemen did not think it fit to refer the matter to the ASI. Instead they have once again chosen to deviate from the issue by demanding a CBI inquiry into an imaginary conspiracy theory. This is amazing intellectual audacity.

They must have been disillusioned to know the Uttar Pradesh government has already sent its report about the state of some temple pillars recovered from the demolished mosque site. The Centre is still undecided on how to handle the report. There is pressure on it to sort out the controversy once and for all using this report and the help of the ASI. But there is counter pressure too. And as always the Centre is in two minds.

In fact Hindus have been certain about this fact right from 1528. They have fought for the temple all through these years. That there has been bloodshed over this issue as many as 76 times proves this beyond doubt.

There is also the evidence of Muslim testimony. A large number of Muslim writers have given detailed accounts of the Awadh region. Sahila-i-Chihal Nasir Bahadur Shahi is the oldest known account of the destruction of Ram Janmabhoomi for the construction of the Babri mosque, and its author is none other than Aurangzeb's grand daughter.

Leftist monopolists of historical truth have not cared to peruse this evidence. This includes the Hadiqu-i-Shahada Mirza Jan (1856) pages 4-7; Muhammad Asghar's Petition (1858); Fasani-i-Ibrat by the Urdu novelist Mirza Rajab Ali Beg Surur; Tarikh-i-Awadh or Muraqqa-i-Khusrawi by Sheikh Mohammad Azmat Ali Kakorawi Nami (1809) and so on. Perhaps they mean nothing to Marxist historians.

They have even ignored European documentary evidence. They have many theories to brush these aside, including the Gazeteer Settlement Report. How can one deal with such hardcore negationists?

Two serious attempts were made—one by the former prime minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, and the other by Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao—to bring the VHP and the BMAC historians to the negotiating table. The evidence was exchanged. The BMAC documents were an exercise in creating more confusion. The total report, published by the People's Publishing House, a confirmed communist outfit, was authored by the four historians.

This exercise in obfuscation was repeated after the November round of talks and is being seen once again. It is this mentality which has, bit by bit, convinced a section of kar sevaks that reason and evidence would not work. The four historians must bear the responsibility for the hardening of attitudes on both sides and putting

the government in a dilemma. They lacked truth and even respect for the truth. They are the chief intellectual culprits for the mess the country is in today.

Advani Calls for 'Cultural Nationalism'

93AS0430H Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 4 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Lal Krishna Advani: "Agony and Opportunity"; italicized words as published]

[Text] Last year, a Calcutta daily asked me to identify a day or moment in my life which I regarded as my happiest. I named October 30, 1990, and more specifically, the moment I heard that kar sevaks had overcome all obstacles and broken all barriers put up by the Mulayam Singh government, penetrated into Ayodhya and performed kar seva.

Ironically, this year's kar seva day at Ayodhya, December 6, turned out to be one of the most depressing days in my life. Of course, most others there were ecstatic with joy, a mood I just could not share. I have seldom felt as dejected and downcast as I felt that day.

My sadness, however, did not stem from any disenchantment with the Ayodhya movement, or with the path the party had chosen for itself, or, as the trite phrase goes, that we had been riding a tiger which we could not dismount. In fact, the post-demolition developments have fully vindicated our misgivings about the opponents of this movement, and have reinforced our resolve to pursue the path more vigorously.

There were three very specific reasons for my distress.

First, I felt sad that the December 6 happenings had impaired the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and the RSS's [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] reputation as organisations capable of enforcing discipline. True, a very large percentage of the over 200,000 assembled at Ayodhya were not members either of the BJP or of the RSS. But that did not absolve us of our responsibility.

Second, I felt that a meticulous, drawn up plan of action whereunder the UP [Uttar Pradesh] government was steadily marching towards discharging its mandate regarding temple construction, without violating any law or disregarding any court order, had gone awry.

The BJP's action plan contemplated delinking the dispute about the structure from commencing construction at the shilanyas site (within the 2.77 acres of acquired land), negotiating about the structure while the construction work proceeded apace, and, if negotiations failed, resorting to legislation.

If state legislation was blocked by the Centre, we intended to seek a national mandate. We were thus working towards achieving our objective peacefully, and by the due process of law. Not only the BJP, but the RSS, VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] approach. If the exercise contemplated has now been short circuited in a totally unforeseen manner, the above organisations can certainly be blamed for not being able to judge the impatience of the people participating in the movement.

No one can deny that the manner in which courts had been dragging their feet on all issues relating to Ayodhya, and the obstructive and obtuse role of the Central government had tried the patience of the people to the utmost limit.

The third and most important reason for my unhappiness that day was that in my perception the day's incidents would affect the BJP's overall image (not electoral prospects) adversely, and, to that extent, our cause would suffer a temporary setback.

When I speak of a setback I am not at all thinking in political terms. In fact, politically, these events have boosted the BJP's poll prospects no end. The Congress, the Janata Dal, the communists—all are frantically exerting to ensure no elections are held for at least a year. In a recent article (THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, Dec. 17) S. Sahay, former editor of THE STATESMAN, has noted: "The feedback is that were elections to be held today in UP, Congress candidates would find it difficult to retain their deposits." Reports pouring in from other parts of the country are no different.

Despite what our adversaries have been saying about us, we have never regarded Ayodhya as a ladder to power. Through this movement the BJP has only intensified its ongoing crusade against the politics of vote banks, and the politics of minorityism, which we believe is gravely undermining the fabric of national unity.

The Ayodhya movement, according to the BJP, is not just for building a temple. It is a mass movement—the biggest since Independence—to reaffirm the nation's cultural heritage. This reaffirmation alone, we hold, can provide an enduring basis for national unity and, besides, the dynamo for a resurgent, resolute and modern India.

It is slanderous to say that the Ayodhya movement is an assault on secularism. It is wrong to describe even the demolition of the Babri structure as negation of secularism. The demolition is more related to the lack of a firm commitment in the general masses to the rule of law, and an exasperation with the frustrating sluggishness of the judicial process.

The BJP is unequivocally committed to secularism. As conceived by our Constitution makers, secularism meant sarvapantha sama bhava that is, equal respect for all religions. Secularism as embedded into the Indian Constitution has three important ingredients, namely (i) rejection of theocracy; (ii) equality of all citizens, irrespective of their faith; and (iii) full freedom of faith and worship.

We also believe that India is secular because it is predominantly Hindu. Theocracy is alien to our history and tradition.

Indian nationalism is rooted, as was India's freedom struggle against colonialism, in a Hindu ethos. It was Gandhiji who projected Ram Rajya as the goal of the freedom movement. He was criticised by the Muslim League as being an exponent of Hindu raj.

The League did not relish the chanting of Ram dhun at Gandhiji's meetings or his insistence on goraksha. The Muslim League at one of its annual sessions passed a formal resolution denouncing Vande Matram as "idolatrous." All this never made leaders of the freedom struggle apologetic about the fountainhead of their inspiration.

Unfortunately, for four decades now, in the name of secularism, politicians have been wanting the nation to disown its essential personality. For the left inclined, secularism has become a euphemism to cloak their intense allergy to religion, and more particularly, to Hinduism.

It is this attitude which the BJP characterises as pseudo-secularism. This attitude is wrong and unscientific. Coupled with the weakness of political parties for vote banks, it becomes perverse and baneful.

A silent minority even among the Muslims has been building up, which appreciates that the BJP is not anti-Muslim as its enemies have been trying to depict it, and, more importantly, the BJP leadership means what it says, and says what it means, and is not hypocritical like other political parties. The BJP governments' track record in the matter of preserving communal peace in their respective states has added considerably to the BJP's credibility in this regard.

It is this process of widening acceptability of the BJP's ideology which has upset our opponents the most. It is this process precisely which may be somewhat decelerated by the December 6 events. I have little doubt, however, that the party can, with proper planning and effort, soon overcome this phase.

It is sad that over 1,000 persons have lost their lives in the aftermath of Ayodhya. It is certainly a matter of anguish. But when one compares this time's fallout with what has been happening in earlier years over incidents which can be considered trifling, this time's has been a contained one. And in most cases the deaths have been the consequence not of any communal clash between communities but of security forces trying to quell the violence and vandalism of frenzied mobs.

I wonder how many in government, in politics and in the media realise that their stubborn insistence on calling this old structure (which was abandoned by Muslims 56 years back, and which for 43 years has been a de facto temple), a "mosque," has made no mean contribution towards building up this frenzy. Even so, there is little doubt that the December 6 happenings have given our opponents a handle to malign the Ayodhya movement as fundamentalist and fanatic.

For four decades the pseudo-secularists have commanded undisputed supremacy in Indian politics. The Jan Sangh's and the BJP's was, at best, a feeble voice of dissent. Ayodhya has enabled our viewpoint to become a formidable challenge.

Unable to meet this challenge at the ideological and political level, the government has pulled out of its armoury all the usual weapons used in such situations by repressive regimes. Demolition of the Babri structure is only an excuse to carry out what they had been itching to do for quite some time. After all, all this talk about the need to have the BJP derecognised or deregistered has not started now.

Elementary political prudence should have restrained the prime minister from taking the series of unwise steps he has taken after December 6: banning the RSS and VHP, dismissing the three BJP governments, and promising to rebuild the demolished "mosque." But then, history keeps repeating itself in a quaint fashion.

Left to himself V.P. Singh may not have obstructed the rath yatra of 1990. But the internal politics of the Janata Dal forced his hand. To prove himself a greater patron of the minorities than Mulayam Singh, V.P. Singh asked Laloo Prasad Yadav to take action before the UP chief minister did so.

Laloo Yadav did as he was told, and became instrumental in terminating V.P. Singh's tenure. This time it has been Arjun Singh who had played Mulayam Singh to Narasimha Rao. The denoucement may well be the same.

In Parliament, as well as outside, a prime target of attack for our critics has been Kalyan Singh. He is being accused of betrayal, of "deceit," of "conspiracy" and what not. The general refrain is: Kalyan Singh promised to the courts, to the NIC [National Integration Council], to the Central government that he would protect the structure; New Delhi trusted his word; he had betrayed the trust.

None of these Kalyan baiters ever mention that along with every assurance, there was an invariable addentum: that he would not use force against the kar sevaks, because he would not like to see the repetition of the traumatic happenings which took place in 1990 during Mulayam Singh's tenure. This has been stated even in the affidavit given to the Supreme Court by the UP government.

On December 6, Kalyan Singh stuck to his stand. When informed that all efforts at persuading the kar sevaks to desist from demolishing the structure had failed, and that protection of the structure had become impossible except by resort to firing, he forthwith resigned.

I shudder to think what would have happened that day at Ayodhya if firing had taken place. Jalianwalla Bagh would have been reenacted many times over. There

would have been a holocaust not only in Ayodhya but in the whole country. Kalyan Singh acted wisely in refusing to use force.

No doubt, it was Kalyan Singh's duty to protect the Babri structure. He failed to do so; so he resigned. Protection of the country's prime minister is the responsibility of the Union home minister. The country should not forget that Narasimha Rao was the home minister when Mrs. Gandhi was brutally killed. It can be said that Rao failed to protect her, and that he failed to protect more than 3,000 Sikhs who were killed in the wake of Mrs. Gandhi's death.

Today, I am not arraigning him for failing to resign on that score. I am only trying to point out how outraged he would have felt if, say, in 1984 he had been accused not just of a failure to protect, but of actual complicity in the perpetration of those horrendous crimes!

Political observers who have been feeling baffled by the abrupt change of mood of the BJP-RSS-VHP combine, from one of regret on December 6 to one of "determined belligerence" from December 8 onward, must appreciate that it is a similar sense of outrage over all that the government and our other opponents have been saying and doing that fully accounts for it.

Some of our critics have been comparing the demolition of the Babri structure with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The comparison is ludicrous. But from a purely personal angle, I can establish a nexus. I was 20 years old at that time, and an RSS pracharak in Rajasthan. Mahatmaji's murder was also followed by a ban on the RSS. I was among the tens of thousands of RSS activists jailed at that time.

I recall that the accusations and calumny heaped on us then were far more vile and vicious than we are having to face today. The trial of Godse and the commission of inquiry set up later nailed all the lies circulated, and completely exonerated the RSS from the libellous charges hurled at it. The RSS emerged from that first major crisis in its life purer and stronger.

It is not without significance that one of those who was spearheading the anti-RSS campaign in 1948, Jayaprakash Narayan, later became one of its most ardent admirers and protagonists. When the RSS was banned in 1975, he and the RSS became comrades in arms, waging an unrelenting battle for the defence of democracy.

In one of his speeches in 1977, the Loknayak observed: "RSS is a revolutionary organisation. No other organisation comes anywhere near it. It alone has the capacity to transform society, end casteism, and wipe the tears from the eyes of the poor. May god give you strength and may you live up to such expectation."

Self preservation is the basic instinct of all living beings. Only a human can think of, and commit, suicide. There is, however, a rodent found in Scandinavian countries, called lemming, which in this context is supposed to be unique among animals, and behaves unnaturally. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* describes the lemming as a "small Arctic rodent of the genus Lemmus... which is reputed to rush headlong into the sea and drown during migration." To me, it seems the Congress these days is in the grip of a terrible lemming complex!

Let the Congress do with itself what it wishes. For the BJP, the situation poses a challenge which, if tackled wisely, with determination and a readiness, if need be, to wage a protracted struggle, can become a watershed in the history of independent India.

Let us also realise that intolerance and fanaticism are traits which may appear to give a cutting edge to a movement but which actually cause great damage to the movement. They have been consciously eschewed. Once that happens, even our Muslim brethren would appreciate that in India there can be no firmer foundation for communal harmony than cultural nationalism.

The present situation presents to the country a unique opportunity. Let us grab it by the forelock. December 6 did not turn out to be as we expected, we did not want it to happen that way. But then, as the famous essayist Sir Arthur Helps has said: "Fortune does not stoop often to take any one up. Favourable opportunities will not happen precisely in the way that you imagined. Nothing does." Or, as Goswami Tulsidas has put it in a somewhat different vein: "Hoi hai soi jo Rama rachi rakha."

RSS Leader Foresees Continuance of Secular State

93AS0431C Hyderabad DECCAN CHRONICLE in English 3 Jan 93 p 2

[Interview with RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) General Secretary Rajendra Singh by Radha Viswanath in Delhi, date not given: "India Has To Be Secular"; italicized words as published]

[Text] It's business as usual for Rajendra Singh, Joint General Secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and key member of the Sangh Parivar, despite the official ban on the organisation espousing the cause of Hindutva. Rajju Bhaiyya, as he's fondly and reverentially called by members of the Parivar, continues to lord over the sprawling "Keshav Kunj," the RSS headquarters in West Delhi. The premises, where this correspondent met the 72-year-old leader for an exclusive interview, seems an oasis of peace in the bustling business centre very near Karol Bagh. Sitting on a first floor balcony in the mild winter sun, Rajendra Singh argued that the RSS wasn't at all affected by the ban. "The main thing is to be able to communicate with one another and this we're doing," he said. The RSS was committed to rid the Hindu community of its various outdated practices and building a national society. It respects the government, Constitution and national symbols and didn't have a theocratic state as its ultimate goal, he said in an attempt to put the RSS in the right perspective in public mind. On the Ramjanma Bhoomi issue, the hitherto

publicity shy leader feels that he's convinced that the government proposal to acquire the land and get a temple and a mosque constructed through two separate trusts was a prescription for further disaster. In a candid interview where analysis dominated emotion, Rajju Bhaiyya shared his views on the role of the RSS in the temple movement, its relationship with the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] and non-political assortment of sadhu and sant associations. And its plans for the future. Excerpts:

[Viswanath] Is Hindu rashtra the ultimate goal of the RSS?

[Singh] No. Never. In fact, it isn't possible to convert India into a theocratic state. It has to be secular. However, secularism means *sarva dharma sama bhav* rather than a irreligious State. This is what our Constitution envisages and our quarrel with consecutive governments has been that this lofty ideal isn't being translated into reality. The parties in power have tended to play vote politics.

[Viswanath] Would you put Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in the same category?

[Singh] Yes. I had been meeting him periodically in recent months and offered suggestions on how to resolve the Ramjanma Bhoomi issue. He hardly heeded them as he was pre-occupied with scheming the dismissal of the Uttar Pradesh government. I met him last on December 3. I tried to prevail over him to get the Allahabad high court [to] deliver its judgment on Kalyan Singh government's land acquisition at least on December 6. I also suggested that he acquire the entire area. He struck it down saying that the last experience with this step wasn't positive. I tried arguing with him that it had gone bad then because V.P. Singh's intentions weren't clear. But the Prime Minister was under tremendous pressure not only from within his party but also from the left parties to dismiss the state government.

[Viswanath] He seems to have acted on your advice now. He hasn't only taken over all the land, but has announced plans of constructing both a temple and a mosque in the area.

[Singh] Not really. The proposal to set up a new trust to undertake temple construction isn't welcome to anyone. After all, where's the need for establishing a new trust when the Ramjanma Bhoomi Nyas is in existence. The Nyas has been planning the temple for a long time and has also collected over Rs. 6 crore for construction. The Nyas is a body which consists of many members well-versed in the Rama sampradaya and such a task can't be entrusted to any ordinary trust.

[Viswanath] Is it your contention that the package announced by the government is no solution at all to the problem?

[Singh] This is a solution if the government agrees to hand over the area to the Nyas after receiving the advisory opinion of the Supreme Court. But in the event of the government persisting with the idea of floating a new trust, it'll not be tolerated. The government would be repeating the Amritsar experience when the Akal Takht pulled down what was built through such a sarkari trust. The government should keep away from constructions of this nature.

[Viswanath] How do you react to the proposal of building a masjid also in the area?

[Singh] Locating the mosque within the Panch-Kosi Parikarama isn't acceptable to us. The Babri Masjid Action Committee which is fighting for the rebuilding of the mosque, really doesn't want a solution. It knows that the Quran doesn't permit the construction of a mosque at a place where there has been bloodshed, and blood has split at the Ramjanma Bhoomi.

[Viswanath] Are there no such restrictions on temple construction? I mean, can a temple be built at a place where lives have been lost?

[Singh] No. Hinduism is a vast stream with all kinds of faiths and traditions. There are temples where animals are sacrificed to propritiate the presiding deity. In the present event, Hindus perceive the government attitude as a denial of its fundamental right to have a temple at what's believed to be the birthplace of Rama. It isn't a question of just a temple, but that of the Ramjanmasthan temple and therefore the entire community's particular that their wish is fulfilled. The Hindu society is now not willing to be cowed down by anything to achieve this objective.

[Viswanath] One major reason for the resistance from the minority community to let go of the Ayodhya site is their apprehension that this one would lead to the opening of the floodgates for demands for reconversion of mosques into temples.

[Singh] Vishwa Hindu Parishad is a representative body of the Hindus and it has clearly stated that it won't stake claims to the thousands of places which got converted into mosques. Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi are the most pious places for the Hindus just like Mecca and Madina for the Muslims. Millions of people visit these teerthasthans each year. The assurance of the VHP should count for something. In fact, it's in the event of this adamant stand continuing that several other organisations claiming to represent Hindus are likely to come up to reclaim many other mosques as temples. If this happens and local bodies spring up to stake local claims, the present representative leadership of the majority community might lose control of the situation. Therefore, it's in their own interest that the Hindu demand for the three religious places is conceded at the earliest.

[Viswanath] Does the RSS also limit its demand to these three placec?

[Singh] Actually, we are involved only in the Ramajanma Bhoomi. We'll decide whether to support the VHP in its demand for Mathura and Kashi after this issue is resolved.

[Viswanath] Would you say the same for the BJP also?

[Singh] The BJP is a political party. For them, Rama is a national hero—a pride of the nation with whom every Indian should identify. They too would have to think afresh about the other two temples.

[Viswanath] Do you mean that the BJP does not hold Rama as a religious symbol at all?

[Singh] Actually, there's very little difference between nationalism and Hinduism. Respect for religion, nation and humanity is the Hindu way of life. When Gandhiji called for a Rama rajya he was obviously not referring to a Hindu rashtra. However, these concepts have got mixed up. Dharma isn't religion but a way of life.

[Viswanath] There are others involved in the temple movement who say they've no faith in the Constitution. Do you support their stand?

[Singh] Such statements aren't made by any agency in charge of the Ramjanma Bhoomi movement. Sadhus say they are above law—they can say anything. We've respect for the Constitution and democratic way of life. In fact, it's our charge that it's the government which's going away from its constitutional obligations. The cherished goal of socialism has been totally lost and secularism and democracy are both in danger. The aberrations crept in because the Muslims are very political-minded. They always bargain with political parties as to what they'll get on supporting it. This is how we, in a secular State, come to have a Minorities Commission instead of a human rights commission.

[Viswanath] What have you to say about the statements made by leaders like Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Rithambara?

[Singh] They are good speakers. It's in their nature to make such fiery statements. We do try to restrain them. Sometimes they listen. At other times they don't.

[Viswanath] How has the ban affected you? Have you floated parallel organisations like the reported "Ram Sevak Sangh" (RSS) to circumvent the ban?

[Singh] The only thing that has been curtailed as a direct consequence of the ban is the morning shakhas. There's no need to assemble under another name and that too without losing the abbreviated nomenclature to maintain our identity. The RSS has lakhs of active members all over the country. There're hundreds of places where they can meet. They can meet in clubs, parks, cinema hall—anywhere. The essential thing is being able to communicate with one another and this can't be stopped by any repressive measures.

Nationalism Said to Require Respect of Hindu Ethos

93AS0432B Calcutta SUNDAY in English 9 Jan 93 pp 6-7

[Article by Swapan Dasgupta: "The Real Pariah"]

[Text] A reassuring facet of instant punditry is that it is rarely correct. When the tale of the demolition of the third dome of the Babri structure was received in the newsrooms across India, many commentators combined their agonised outpourings with an obituary of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. Terms such as "outlaw," "fascist," "loony fringe" and "pariah" were freely used to describe the future status of India's main Opposition party.

Nearly three weeks after the event, the obituaries seem woefully premature and misplaced. The RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] have been banned; the BJP president and the leader of the Opposition have been jailed; all the BJP state governments have been dismissed; and Kalyan Singh has been slapped with a contempt of court charge.

But unlike the Emergency, there have been only selective arrests and the Centre has been careful to avoid accusations of high-handedness. Where administrations have been overzealous, like in New Delhi and Calcutta on 20 December, the results have been counter-productive.

Unfortunately, for the Narasimha Rao government, even the kid-glove confrontation with the "forces of communalism" has not resulted in the BJP's relegation to the fringe. On the contrary, the defiance of the sangh parivar has been bolstered by spontaneous expressions of sympathy and approval.

Kar sevaks returning from Ayodhya may not have been publicly feted, but in countless localities they are being silently viewed as heroes. There has been no undignified triumphalism, but in hushed whispers people are already talking about the bhagwa dhwaj fluttering from the ramparts of Red Fort in the not too distant future. Hindu nationalism was always a vibrant movement; now Hindutva is becoming a mind-set.

The Congress has been the most affected by this revolutionary upsurge. The story of a Cabinet minister imploring the Prime Minister to desist from arresting his mother, a prominent BJP and VHP functionary, on the ground that he would otherwise not be able to show his face in his constituency, may be apocryphal. But, nevertheless, it is indicative of the existential dilemma of the party.

It is all very well for a beleaguered Prime Minister to run away with Arjun Singh's hard-line agenda, to extend his hand of friendship to a parasitic left and inform a delegation of the Delhi Grain Merchants Association that communalism will not be tolerated. The more pertinent question is: what will he tell the millions of

nameless and faceless Congress voters who have overnight become Ram bhakts? Akbar "Dumpy" Ahmed need not have been so indignant over police harassment of Congressmen mistaken for VHP members. After 6 December, even this thin line has been completely blurred.

Nor can Narasimha Rao take comfort from the myth that Hindu belligerence is merely a cow-belt phenomenon. Anyone present in Ayodhya on that fateful Sunday could not have failed to notice the generous representation of kar sevaks from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. There are also uncharitable suggestions that a fair number of the advance guard were from Nandyal.

The refusal of the Shankaracharya of Puri to endorse the government's rebuilding plans, Jayendra Saraswati's description of the demolition as "fortuitous" and Jayalalitha's closet saffron utterances are important pointers that the Hindu response to Ayodhya may be truly pan-Indian. Due to organisational shortcomings, the BJP may not be a political beneficiary of the process, but the Congress will not emerge unscathed.

To attribute this shift in popular attitudes to a subliminal desire of Hindus to become the new Ghaznis is crass and oversimplistic. Even now, the Hindu response to the demolition is somewhat confused and ambivalent—remorse conbined with quiet satisfaction.

The apology offered by the BJP in Parliament is not tactically unwise; it mirrors the need to keep a discreet distance from reckless impetuosity. Where the Congress has erred is in mindlessly tailing the hardened secularists and equating a nagging sense of unease with Hindu capitulation.

In seeking to project the demolition in Ayodhya as an act of vandalism and a manifestation of "pseudo-Hinduism" for which the nation must atone collectively (a letter to the editor in a Calcutta daily used the term reparations), secularist opinion is at odds with grassroots wisdom. Evocative headlines such as "The Face of Lumpenised India" and "Nation's Shame," while appealing to the creamy layer, serve to offend the majority "non-U."

To them, it confirms the suspicion that the orchestrated self-flagellation is an act of subversion; an attempt to undermine Hindu pride and self-confidence. L.K. Advani's parting reference to Hindu temples destroyed in Kashmir touched an emotive chord precisely because it linked Hindu pride with Indian nationalism.

Paradoxically, Advani was merely borrowing a leaf from the Congress. Notwithstanding recent attempts to rewrite the past and portray the national movement as a secular, republican endeavour, the reality is more complex. The Congress occupied the political centre-stage precisely because it never shied away from a recognition that a mass movement must reflect the dominant cultural ethos of the majority.

The organisation was in the forefront of the Hindi prachar movement, the anti-cow slaughter stir, the popularisation of Vande Mataram and, after the Khilafat miscalculation, uncompromising opposition to Muslim separatism.

Until Savarkar's release from jail in the Thirties, the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha were virtually synonymous in much of the country. Lokmanya Tilak, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad were not peripheral to the Congress; they were central to its status as the broad Hindu consensus. In the 1946 election, the Congress won a resounding mandate because it was the voice of majoritarianism. It was rejected by those who rejected India.

In 1947, India became a Hinduised rashtra, not a theocratic construct, but a modern republic which nevertheless reflected the cultural underpinnings of nationhood. The Constituent Assembly with its endorsement of cow protection, reservations as a means of Hindu social reform and a common civil code reflected these yearnings. The plea for separate communal electorates was firmly rebuffed and even Article 370 was prefaced with the term "temporary."

Jawaharlal Nehru was never at ease with these developments, not least because he sensed the long-term dangers to his private agenda. He attempted to bypass the problem with an alternative vision centred on the collectivist ethic. It was called socialism. He was remarkably successful and the nationalist legacy was soon supplanted by a Nehruvian consensus which gradually eased out Hinduised polity.

In her last years, Indira Gandhi attempted to check the imbalance and promoted Hindu consolidation as an alternative to secessionism. Her son reaped the harvest in 1984. But Rajiv Gandhi was unable to gauge the magnitude of the new upsurge. He saw it as a convenient electoral card which could be harnessed to advantage by allowing shilanyas, talking flippantly of Ram rajya and, at the same time, pandering to Muslim exclusivism.

He failed to grasp that in Ram Janmabhoomi the Congress had been presented a stark choice. It could either appropriate the Hindu disquiet unequivocally and reclaim its nationalist inheritance. Alternatively, it could stand by the Nehruvian commitment to deracinated nationhood.

The kar sevaks have forced the issue. Nehru's Congress has finally come into its own, and Hindu pride has been wrenched out of sarkari nationalism. In the past, before Advani changed the ground rules, the RSS regarded Hindutva as wholly autonomous from politics. For its unworldly wisdom, it remained on the margins. Today, the Congress is replicating that folly.

Secularism Termed Pretext for 'Hindu-Bashing'

93AS0432F Bombay SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 15 Jan 93 pp 62-63

[Article by Haku Israni: "Hindus Do Not Need Advice on Secularism"; italicized words as published]

[Text] The recent worst ever communal carnage in India since independence must have deeply disturbed everyone who cares about India. Since independence, the Muslim-Hindu riots have continued, resulting in chaos in the entire nation.

The Hindu-Muslim conflict, which divided our society before independence, continues to divide us even after 45 years of independence. Those who thought that creating Pakistan for Muslims will resolve the conflict have been proved dead wrong. The communal peace remains illusive.

Where have we gone wrong? Why are we not able to achieve communal harmony? Why has the national integration become a mirage? Why does India continue to be vertically divided along religious lines? The time has come to calmly discuss and debate these questions.

In order to find answers to these questions, it may be worthwhile to turn the pages of India's history and go as far as we can go. Even a cursory review of India's history surfaces the following three observations.

First, disunity has been the hallmark of Hindus. It is because of the disunity that Hindus have always been looted, butchered and badgered by others. However, they simply refuse to learn from their history. Over two thousand years ago, Alexander, with only a few thousand soldiers, conquered parts of Hindu media. About five hundred to one thousand years ago, Mahmud Gazhnavi, Mohammad Ghori, Mohammad-bin-Kasim, and Babur invaded India and unleashed rape, death, destruction, and looting on Hindu India. Even today, 90 percent of the Hindu population of the Kashmir valley has been kicked out of their homes by Muslims, which are barely 12 percent of the population of India. India may be the only country in the entire world where the minority beats up the majority frequently and gets away. It may be worth noting that in the wake of Ayodhya, more Hindu property was looted and burned by Muslims than vice-versa.

Second, Hindus, as US Evangelist Billy Graham has correctly observed, have been tolerant to a fault. Prithivi Raj Chauhan captured Mohammad Ghori six times during the sixteen times Ghori attacked his kingdom. Each time he let him go. On the seventeenth time, with the help of Jayachand, a cousin of Prithvi Raj, Mohammad Ghori defeated him. How well did Ghori treat Prithvi Raj? He took him to his country, blinded him, and put him to death. What a way to repay the person who spared his life six times.

The 1946 elections in India were fought on the issue of partition of United India. Ninety nine percent of the Hindu population supported Congress party's call for the "United India," while more than ninety five percent of Muslim voters supported the Muslim League for the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. In spite of that, Hindus allowed Muslims to stay back in the partitioned house even though Pakistan was forcing out Hindus from its area. Since the partition of India was done purely on the basis of religious lines, the world would not have blamed Hindus if they had chosen to force Muslims to leave India and go to Pakistan. Hindus not only did not force Muslims out of their country, but even have elected two Muslims to the presidency of India. Isn't this a perfect example of Hindu tolerance? Has any Islamic country even come close? It may be pointed out that Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, and most of the other Islamic countries are theocratic states where non-Muslims do not have even the basic political and religious freedoms.

Theocracy is against the history, tradition, and culture of Hindus. They don't need any lectures or training on secularism. If any one really needs these lectures and training, it would be the followers of the religious faiths whose history is replete with denials of political and religious freedoms to minorities whenever and wherever they are in majority.

Third, Britishers pampered Muslims and used them to rule Hindus and India. Congress leaders learned very well this technique of remaining in power from their British masters. They have continued this policy of pampering Muslims to rule Hindus and India.

Pandit Nehru was an extremely smart politician. By raising the issue of Hindu communalism and secularism at every available opportunity and pampering Muslims, he kept Muslims on his side and they voted for his party in election after election during his lifetime.

An analysis of Muslim voting patterns in India's general elections clearly demonstrates that only in two general elections, in 1977 and 1989, Muslims did not vote enbloc for the Congress party. What happened to the party in those two elections? The party badly lost.

Muslims constitute the biggest "vote-bank" in India because they generally vote as a religious community. On the other hand, Hindus get fragmented on caste, subcaste, linguistic, and other lines. It is precisely for these reasons that Indian politicians, on one hand skillfully indulge in Hindu-bashing to get Muslim votes, and on the other hand, play up caste, subcaste, and linguistic loyalties to get Hindu votes. These politicians have developed a very strong vested interest in the continued vertical division of India along religious lines and horizontal fragmentation of the Hindu society along the caste and linguistic lines.

It would not be exaggeration to say that Indian politics has become a hostage of the Muslim "vote-bank." However, as a matter of fairness, it must be said that intensely

power greedy politicians, and not the general Muslim population, are really responsible for this sad state of affairs in India.

In the name of secularism, the Hindu-bashing continues unabated. This has resulted in the insecurity of Muslims and frustration of Hindus. It is disgusting to see that after December 6, 1992, there seems to be a mad race among Congress, Janata, and the leftist parties to woo Muslim votes under the fake cover of secularism.

The distribution of the Muslim population in India is not uniform throughout the country, but rather uneven. This has resulted in the Muslims having a lot more political clout than they should have based upon the percentage of their population. There are over one hundred parliamentary constituencies, where Muslims can almost pick the winner only because, as said earlier, they solidly vote enbloc while Hindu votes gets divided on caste, sub-caste, linguistic, and other considerations. In 1991 general elections, the Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat clearly demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that whenver Hindus get essentially united, they, and not Muslims, can decide the winner. It may be recalled that in this election BJP won 22 out of 25 parliamentary seats in Gujarat, and in Uttar Pradesh, it not only won 55 out of 85 seats for parliament, but incredibly an absolute majority in the state assembly.

The secularism, as practiced by Indian politicians, is not based upon any high principle. It is based purely on vote-arithmetic. It is, as is said, *kisa kursi ka* (an issue of chair). It is an issue of ruthless, shameless, and naked greed for political power. It is an issue of the bankruptcy of the character of our politicians who while talking of national integration, work for continued vertical division of India along religious lines so that they continue to get the Muslim "vote-bank."

The compulsion of vote-arithmetic and Muslim "vote-bank" have encouraged Indian politicians to support unjust demands of Muslim fundamentalists. It is clearly evident from their resources to Shah Bano case and the announcement of the death punishment by an Iranian Ayatollah to Indian Muslim Salman Rushdie for his book Satanic Verses.

The happenings in the Kashmir valley during the last few years is nothing but the continuation of the partition story of India. Until India learns to firmly handle those Muslims whose loyalty is to Islam rather than to Mother India, the work of the Muslim fundamentalists to partition and repartition of India will continue unabated for decades and even centuries to come. Unfortunately, our politicians would rather get the Muslim "vote-bank" than take action against the anti-national elements who continue to work for fragmentation of India. Just for the sake of power, the Congress party, which is never tired of lecturing on secularism, has not hesitated to join hands in Kerala with the Muslim League, the party which was mainly responsible for the dismemberment of Mother India. Can there be a better example of hypocrisy and lust for power?

It is time for a national debate on secularism in India. It is time to analyze the secularism as is being practiced by our politicians.

The secularism which has degenerated into unabated Hindu-bashing; the secularism which has encouraged Muslim belligerency and Hindu militancy; the secularism which has continued vertical division of India along religious lines; the secularism which has prevented national integration; the secularism which is based purely on vote-arithmetic and Muslim vote-bank; that secularism needs rethinking.

Let the next general election in India be fought on the issue of secularism. It is time for the people of India to decide what kind of secularism they want in the country.

Media Claimed Biased Against Hindus, 'Pseudo-Secular'

93AS0432G Bombay SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 15 Jan 93 p 21

[Excerpt from article by Babu Susheelan: "A Time To Stop Hindu-Bashing by the Media"; quotation marks as published]

[Excerpt] For many years Western media has depicted India as exotic, mysterious, complex, and Hindus as eccentric, other worldly, passive, disorganized and spiritualists. In many cases that mysteriousness has been the result of a superficial knowledge of a culture very different from the West. However, in some cases, where a fairly thorough knowledge of Indian culture was attained, the sense of mystery has not been removed, but has been more firmly established at a deeper level. As a result, books, journals and newspapers are loaded with articles and commercials that reinforce the negative image of India.

Now the media is busy smearing Hindus, the Hindu renaissance and the attempt to construct Ram Janmabhoomi Temple at Ayodhya. I was intrigued to read in NEW YORK TIMES, WASHINGTON POST, PHILADELPHIA ENQUIRER, BOSTON GLOBE, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, TIME and NEWSWEEK that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is inspired and manipulated by Hindu fundamentalists. A casual reader of these newspapers could see words like "Hindu militants," "Hindu fundamentalists," "Hindu warlords," "Hindu extremists," "Hindu bigots," and "Hindu fanatics."

This journalistic euphemism, and 'psycholinguistic programming' is misleading, unfair, and potentially dangerous, because it distorts reality and creates a psychologically programming effect on the readers. It creates an

impression that Hindus around the world are fanatics and fundamentalists who use violence as a problem solving technique.

It must be that the media take pleasure in spreading persistent, pervasive lies about Hindu renaissance and the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple movement. What else could explain the credulous acceptance of lies, half-truths and distortion of news about the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple movement. The inconsistencies, half-truths, deceptions and outright falsehoods about the reports were obvious from the beginning. These reports are highly responsible for what the westerners think and do. It is profoundly disturbing to note that the picture that continues to emerge from the media on Ram Janmabhoomi movement in which passive, peace loving, tolerant Hindus comes out as aggressive, militant, fundamentalists and the violent, militant non-compromising Muslims as the victims. The hysteria emanating from the journalists are so persistent that the innocent readers think Hindus are behind every unrest in India.

This distorted reporting is not only patently false, but also encourages Muslims to continue their absolutistic, terroristic and irrational behavior. Muslims in India see their success in manipulating the western media as encouragement for extremist violence. Whether it is in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Libya, or Syria, Muslims indulge in violent confrontation to achieve their aims rather than to come to terms through peaceful negotiations. The Muslims and their Arab sponsors have devised a cunning strategy with the pseudosecular Indian and western media. The entire strategy of the Muslims is keyed to manipulate the Indian and western media, who will focus on the 'events' not the history, on the recorded story, not the reality of the situation in India.

This type of reporting provides selected information and encourages readers to change attitudes and values and establish emotional responses and direct behavior on that basis. Public are not aware that they are being psycho-programmed and thus controlled. Further, people prefer the continued state because it is easy and convenient.

Pseudosecular journalists use loaded words. These words have power and consequences. Virtually every word used in reporting is derived from prior assumptions that have been deliberately shaped by the media. So every word journalists use is intended to manipulate the mind and the future control of behavior. False facts, lies, distorted truths, manufactured events, are all intended to convey a hidden agenda. Words, phrases, and symbols, are skillfully used to confuse and disorient the readers. Sometimes, data, information, and knowledge are refined and modified to make general statements which send a subliminal message to the readers.

This distortion of reality and manipulation and invention of events validate the western belief that Hindus are irrational, emotional and disorganized. I know the western media is biased. In Columbia, El Salvador and Bolivia (all Christian countries) more people are murdered by right wing Christian extremists and hard liners. Western press do not describe them as Christian fanatics, Christian fundamentalists or Christian militants. Western media have a vested interest to protect them. But what I could not grasp is that Indian journalists are also masters of deceit. Pseudosecular Indian journalists are targeting Hindus because Hindu organizations are helping the innocent Hindus to get out of the well-designed mousetrap of the secular radicals, communists, Christians and Muslims.

The missionary school trained Indian journalistic elite have complete control over the media and they are able to generate enough anti-Hindu phobia in the west. Indian journalists team with the foes in India and abroad to undermine Hindu society, which kept India together for thousands of years. Indian journalists' real formula is to destroy Indian culture which will bring headlines in foreign capitals. Their active complicity and support for the western media play a major part in the media bias in the west.

Indian press stigmatize Hindus, Hindu organizations and Hindu culture. They are very disdainful toward our heritage, culture and philosophy. It is no secret that there are powerful groups in India and abroad for whom Hindu survival is anathema.

Psychological thought control, in all its various capacities, has spread the infection, in various degrees, to most phases of Indian journalism. This mentality, created for the purpose of eventually leading to the destruction of the Hindu way of life, poses a crucial problem for everyone. It can destroy India if it is permitted to corrupt people's mind and behavior.

In India the intellectual establishment is worse than non-existent. The concerted effort of intellectual establishment is directed at the obliteration of Hindus. They extol the 'superior power' of Islam, 'religious conversion', attack our own culture, philosophy and glorify the stupidity of the drugged politicians.

In India, journalists are not regarded as fully real until they insult Hindus by making headlines in foreign press. They are blind to the world around them, unable to grasp the hidden agenda of our enemies. Indian media manipulate national interest and divert attention from internal and external danger. India's culture and interior source of strength is described as a weakness. Like the conspiracy theorists, who blame Jews for all the world's problems, India's alienated intellectuals and journalists with extraterritorial loyalty substitute empty rhetoric for significant content and obscure the principle of fairness. They sacrifice truth for slogans, Hindus struggling for basic rights are portrayed as attackers upon India. Organiz-organized, [as printed] portrayed as attackers upon India itself. Well organized, disciplined, orderly and peaceful mass action to retake Ram Janmabhoomi Temple at Ayodhya is dubbed as 'communal frenzy'. At

the same time destruction of Hindu temples and horrors committed against Hindus in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, South Africa, and West Indies draw no attention from the journalists.

While denouncing the all-inclusive, tolerant, Hinduism as a threat to India, journalists have an open admiration for religious intolerance in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Fiji. Media moguls and journalists looked with approval when British government ordered the closure of the largest Sri Krishna temple in London. Still the Hindu revival is paraded out by the alienated intellectuals. Mullahs and the Clergy join together to whip up anti-Hindu hysteria. The hysteria emanating from them is so persistent that the innocent public think Hindus are behind every unrest in India. [Passage omitted]

True Secularism Said To Require Rewrite of Constitution

93AS0432H Bombay SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 15 Jan 93 p 23

[Text] The leftist parties take it as axiomatic that India's backwardness is due to the nature of the Hindu religion. The Hindu right feels that the caste politics of the leftist parties is a ploy to destroy India's heritage. It has countered by seizing on the emotive issue of the historical wrongs by certain Muslim kings like Babar and Aurangzeb to divert the attention from the caste politics of the left.

Observing the events of the past three years one sees that the Ayodhya temple issue has often heated up following the moves of the left on the caste quotas.

There is a feeling that the Congress party will not remain in power too long because of the international collapse of the socialist model of economy, which was the foundation of the party's policies. What we witness then is a bitter fight between the left and the right for the heart of India.

Now imagine the United States with a law that allows only the religious minorities to run their tax-exempt parochial schools. In such a situation it would be natural for the Christian majority to consider this law discriminatory and have it expunged. Such an asymmetry is another reason behind religious discord in India today.

An obscure Article [30(1)] in the Indian Constitution was used in the 70's by the Communist provincial government of West Bengal to challenge the right of the Hindus to run their schools and colleges. According to this Article members of the majority religion do not have the right to establish their own religious schools whereas the minority religions do. When the Supreme Court of India upheld the interpretation of the Communists, several Hindu sects (such as Ramakrishna Mission) that ran schools filed for or received status as minority religions to prevent the government takeover of their schools.

The government of India did not respond to this ruling of the court to try to change the law so that all religions would be treated equally. This has led to a greater resentment amongst the Hindus.

Likewise the change in the law in 1986 that removed Muslim divorces from adjudication by the Supreme Court will remain a lightning rod to channel Hindu discontent with India's legal framework.

There is another important reason for the rise of the recent Hindu militancy. This is the general belief in India that Pakistan is behind the sectarian killings that have racked the provinces of Punjab and Kashmir for the past decade. International pressure on Pakistan to dissociate itself from such sectarian violence would reduce tensions.

Another sore point are the victims of the sectarian violence in Kashmir. The government of India has, for strange electoral reasons, decided to ignore them. The Indian government should be asked to provide a humane settlement for these Hindu refugees who have been languishing in camps in Jammu and Delhi for the past three years. If the government cannot guarantee reasonable protection even after three years of turmoil, it should provide compensation for loss of property and jobs.

The drama building up to the events in Ayodhya brings into focus the inadequancy of the Indian political and legal systems to resolve conflicts. Indian politicians have not shown courage of imagination during the whole episode. The sorry state of the judicial system has come into clear focus.

The government needs to have a clear policy framework. A democracy is a covenant between various interest groups and the colonial practice of banning organizations will be counterproductive.

It is absolutely essential that the government of India undertake initiatives so that India becomes a truly secular state. The cheap remedy of righting historical wrongs through the system of caste quotas that the Narasimha Rao government has embraced should be dropped. Such a remedy is very expensive in the long run.

A modern secular state does not concern itself with questions of religion, caste, or ethnicity. The Indian system is obsessively concerned with these issues. Perhaps this is not surprising because the Indian state is the heir to the colonial British India and the Indian government has gone on with the old ways of divide and rule and in ways more imaginative than the British ever dreamed of. It seems that the time is ripe to write a new constitution for India.

Hindu Sentiments Claimed Disregarded in Name of Secularism

93AS0432J New Delhi ORGANISER in English 1 Jan 93 pp 8-9

[Article by San Khanna: "800 Million Hindus' Sentiments Disregarded"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The bringing down of the mosque in Ayodhya has come for widespread criticism by major news media—national and international. Many in the name of secularism have described it as a crime on Indian Constitution. There is so much hue and cry over the removal of one mosque—which remained discarded by even Muslims for decades. It looks as if eight hundred million Hindus are at the mercy of a few handful of anti-Hindu group cliques.

It is time now to answer the critics and to have some realistic opinions as to the causes and the effects of the whole mess.

The united country India was divided by the British in 1947 into Hindustan for the Hindus and Pakistan for the Muslims. For this division, religion was the yardstick. Pakistani leaders chose to make their country an Islamic state, whereas in the case of Hindustan, the two leaders M.K. Gandhi and Nehru did not call the Hindu portion of the land as Hindustan. They called it the name India in English and Bharat in Hindi. Thus there remained no country by name Hindustan on records, which means the place or country for the Hindus.

Gandhi and Nehru allowed some Muslims to live in India and started giving them special privileges ... in the name of protecting the minorities. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel opposed this policy of Gandhi and Nehru. Both Gandhi and Nehru stand singularly responsible for imposing a piece of land meant for Hindus ... in the name of secularism.

Since independence the Nehru-Indira-Rajiv governments ruled India for almost four decades. All along, their governments have given special favors to Muslims ... in education, in job opportunities and in all walks of life. Muslims have become doctors, engineers, scientists and occupied high places in administration.

In contrast, in Muslim Pakistan and Muslim Bangladesh, Hindu minorities do not have basic Hindu schools, no good jobs, secondary citizen treatment and a continuous trail of harassment, hundreds of Hindu temples demolished, tens of thousands of Hindu women disgraced.

India is the only country in the world where minority Muslims have been allowed to become the president of the country ... the top honorable post of the land. Hindus have shown the maximum cooperation to the minority Muslims all along. Hindus have given not just equal opportunity to Muslims, they are permitted to marry four times legally, and they produce six to twenty five children in most families. Muslims are allowed to obey the Shariat rule of religion; not the Indian civil law.

In contrast in the same country, if a Hindu marries a second time it is a punishable crime. The family planning program focused on the Hindus advocates them to have only one or two children.

To look back at history, Hindus have been ruled for over 500 years by Muslims until they were replaced by the British. It is a long, sad sorrowful path of grief, humiliation and subjugation. For all that Hindus have given to Muslims for the past 46 years, what have Muslims given to Hindus in return?

Muslims are a basically self-centered and selfish race. As is evidenced in the history of India or of any other country, they put their own father or brother or close relative to jail or death to usurp power. Given a piece of land, an opportune atmosphere and a period of forty to fifty years, Muslims soon increase their numbers to match the number of the local or indigenous population. Once in sizable number, they start fighting for power.

India is basically the land of Hindus since past five thousand years. Muslim invaders from Persia came to India, waged wars on Hindu rulers and ruled India. This paved the way for Muslims to settle in India.

In this line of invaders came Babur. After looting a lot of treasure of India, humiliating a large number of Hindu women, Babur demolished the sacred Hindu temple in the holy city of Ayodhya. This temple was at the birth place of Lord Shri Ram, the Hindu God. To put all Hindus into permanent shame, he built a mosque right on top of the demolished temple.

Since the last four centuries, efforts made repeatedly by Hindus to bring down this shame—called mosque—could not succeed and tens of thousands of Hindus have become martyrs in the several wars for this cause.

Babur was not and is not a hero of Hindus but an invader, an enemy, and an oppresser. The hurt, the humiliation, the injustice and the injury inflicted by Babur on Hindus has continued its trail of pain and pinch on the minds of Hindus for over four centuries. This was relieved on December 6, 92 by the removal of this mosque ... which stood as a shame, taunting the prestige of all Hindus. In this demolition, there was no hatred of other religion, there was no militancy involved. It was just a long problem plainly resolved.

Benefiting from the privileges of secularism in India, Muslims have multiplied in number, got good education, finished their degrees and have come abroad. After coming abroad, many of them changed their loyalty to Pakistan. Many Muslim graduates from Bangalore, after coming to New York have left their Indian passports and obtained Pakistani passports. This is plain treachery being practiced by Indian Muslims on India.

Any association of men survives and lasts as long as there is mutual cooperation ... a little give and take. In the wave of privileges to minorities, Muslims went on taking all that came in their way over the last four

decades. In the process they forgot that they have to 'give' something to the Hindus. There are almost eight hundred million Hindus within India and about ten million Hindus outside India. When majority Hindus indicated to Muslims that the temple was to be built at the birth place of Lord Shri Ram and this subject mosque was an obstacle, an out of place entity affecting and hurting the sentiments of all Hindus, Muslims could have gracefully agreed to leave this mosque ... already discarded by them. But their selfish nature again came to the forefront.

Hindus have allowed Muslims to blossom amidst Hindu society. In return Muslims are supposed to express their sense of gratitude. But ungratefully they kicked-up a big hue and cry about this discarded mosque.

Over the past several decades, repeatedly hundreds of Hindu temples have been smashed in Islamic countries. But very few international communities reacted wildly to these destructions. But in the present situation, there are wild reactions from most Islamic countries and some sections of the Western press. Those Muslims all over the world who now point at Hindus for removing the mosque, do they have courage to criticize those Islamic states for the above destruction of Hindu temples? Muslims globally have to share the shame for the destruction of these temples.

If Islamic countries believe strongly in their wisdom, it is good in their interests also to advise Indian Muslims to learn and practice to live in amity and peace with the Indian Hindus instead of complaining on every issue. Islamic states will be glad to know, Indian Muslims are enjoying better living conditions in India than many of the Muslims in Bangladesh and Pakistan, thanks to humanitarian Hindus in India. If there is anything called gratefulness, let the Indian Muslims thank Hindus for all the blessings Hindus have conferred upon them.

As already said, Hindus have allowed Muslims to blossom amidst Hindu society. Hindu religion tolerates all other religions. But this is not a one way or one-sided doctrine. If Hindus respect other religions, Hindus expect others to respect Hindu religion and Hindu sentiments.

In the Indian democracy, Hindus have used very civilized norms through years of peaceful negotiations with the minority Muslims to understand the Hindu sentiments. But ego-boosting of the minority Muslims at the cost of the majority Hindus by the Congress govts prevented them from coming to an understanding with the Hindus.

Unfortunately, whenever feeling and aggravations of Hindus are expressed in national forums even peacefully, it is termed as Hindu fundamentalism. Those who speak of the Hindu cause with conviction have come to be called Hindu fanatics. This is the reaction of several politicians with vested interest and some sections of the press.

The rulers of the land have repeatedly and deliberately ignored the cherished sentiments of the Hindus.

This sad state of suppression Hindus have been forced to undergo in their own land. The sentiments of 800 million Hindus are falling on the deaf ears of Congress governments.

The land where Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and other scriptures had their pride of place in study and learning, they have been systematically removed from education system in the name of secularism. In its place, Islamic thoughts and educational institutions are actively encouraged. This repeated over forty six years, has made majority of the Hindus to feel alien in their own country.

Government of India which has fought apartheid in South Africa, has successfully practiced a kind of apartheid at home in India by suppressing the feelings of the majority Hindus to appease the minority Muslims.

This is a very costly price which is being extracted from the majority Hindus to survive the pro-muslim secularism. What a shame?

It is a sorry and sad state of affairs that the Hindus—who constitute 82 percent of the population—are being ill-treated by the Congress government.

Like political freedom, economic freedom, Hindus want religious freedom .. not subjugation. This is very much normal; nothing abnormal.

When Muslims destroyed hundreds of Hindu temples over the last several years in Islamic countries, sometimes, overnight in a frenzy, nobody in the international community questioned this. But now, when only one discarded mosque was removed by Hindus for very genuine reasons supported by history and Hindu religion that too, after years of painstaking consultations with the Muslims for consensus failed, why should the international community, more so, the Islamic states question? It augurs well for the world community to appreciate the sentiments of eight hundred million Hindus.

All over the world, Muslims know how to take, to usurp. They must also know that time has come to 'give' ... if they have to survive in India or any where else.

All Hindus salute those who paved the way for the construction of the long-awaited temple of Lord Shri Ram ... without animosity towards any religion. Galub (rose) garlands from 800 million Hindu hearts flow out to honor the Hindu heroes blessed by Lord Shri Ram.

Analyst Calls For More Authentic Secularism

93AS0511B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 22 Jan 93 p 6

[Article by Anandeshwar Prasad Singh: "A Frightening Tragic Chapter"]

[Text] Our country is passing through an era of frightening tragedy. India's hub of trade, Bombay, is burning.

The Congress leaders are sitting complacently, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leadership is demanding mid-term elections, the Janata Dal is trying to correct the Mandal figures, the left-wing parties are in a quandary, and the intellectuals in our country are confused. These are not good signs for the future. The situation is just like when Rome was burning and Nero was playing his fiddle. In the present scenario, we do not know how many Neros are playing their fiddles. They are creating and encouraging caste and factional hatred. The unethical competition for building vote banks has ultimately led to incrimination of the whole political system. Only the intellectuals of our country can lead the way to a healthy mentality necessary to rise from this situation. It is their duty. We have begun to see a ray of hope in this direction.

Nanaji Deshmukh, the veteran RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] family leader, said, "This is not the time to start competing for power. All leaders within the government and those who are trying to get into the government must unite to get the country out of this difficult situation. Defending our nation's identity and autonomy is everyone's primary duty." Mr. Deshmukh is showing us the right direction. Similarly, Muslim intellectuals have condemned the Babri Masjid Action Committee's decision to boycott the Independence Day celebration, and appealed to the Muslim people to celebrate Independence Day with zeal to show their support for India and its independence. They reminded the people that they are Indian first and Hindu or Muslim second. This is a welcome sign.

The immediate need is to strengthen nationalism and secularism and encourage the Indian identity. This will put an end to factionalism and division of castes.

We will need to take some courageous steps and give clear answers to some questions to achieve this goal. Will the sadhus, shrine heads, mullahs, and mowlvis be the directors of our politics? Will our politicians give up the greed for vote banks and run the political system within the framework of the rights included in the Indian Constitution? If we have one criminal law in this country, then why do we not have one civil law? The Indian citizens have equal rights without any discrimination according to the Constitution. Is the Muslim Personal Law, which curtails Muslim women's rights, not against the main articles of the Constitution? Is it not the duty of Muslim intellectuals to free the Muslim society from the clutches of fundamentalist mullahs?

Will the BJP leadership take administrative action against those fundamentalist Hindu leaders who, after being elected to the Lok Sabha on BJP tickets, are defying the Indian Constitution? Will the political orders being issued from temples, mosques, gurudwaras, and churches stop?

The political leadership, intellectuals, and the people of this country will have to answer these questions jointly. The right answers will be given only when the role of the intellectuals is important. Secularism and democracy can be strengthened only by keeping religion separate from politics. (The word "dharam" is being used as a synonym for the word "religion" here, and not in its comprehensive meaning). Those who are defying the Constitution are bent upon destroying our nation's solidarity and unity. We must isolate them through political campaigns. Who are these people? These are the sadhus and heads of temples who do not allow the Harijans to enter the temples and who still practice the caste system. How can such bigoted people help in the development of our nation? This kind of mentality has forced India to kneel down in front of foreign invaders and let them make us slaves.

The Muslim mind must be freed from the hold of the fundamentalist mullahs. We need courage and competent leadership that can convince the Muslims that getting out of the mullah's sphere of influence is beneficial to the Muslims, just like getting rid of the fundamentalist hold will help the Hindus. There will be hurdles in the path of this undertaking, and it will be opposed. However, we must keep this in mind at all levels, and we must let the Muslims know that being cut off from the mainstream has only hurt them.

The Muslim woman are also citizens of this country, and they have equal rights. How long will the fundamentalist mullah deprive them of their rights? The argument about the marriage system given by some people is useless. All female citizens can have equal rights without interfering with the marriage system. Why should Muslim women be deprived? The Shah Bano case should not be repeated in the greed for votes. We must show courage and implement equal civil laws. This is the call of the time. This will definitely change the atmosphere. Bukhari, Shahabuddin, Jailani, and such people will always oppose any progressive action because such actions will shake up their leadership. In a short time, the people—Hindus and Muslims—will welcome these actions, and the fundamentalists will be isolated. We must raise the slogan that we are Indian first and Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or Christian second. Our nationality is Indian, and our identity should also be Indian. Once we achieve this goal, many hurdles will be removed and many problems will be solved automatically.

In order to strengthen secularism, election laws must be reformed and made comprehensive so that no political party or person can ask for votes in the name of gods, temples, or mosques. This should be a crime. Issuing directives from religious places or using them to charm the voters should be considered illegal interference in the election process. The election code should identify action against persons and parties who break these rules. We can say that the election code already has such a provision. However, it is not effective and immediate action cannot be taken. What we need is an effective and clear provision.

The Constitution is above all. It is important that it be implemented strictly in establishing the government. We

cannot let Bombay be our cancer. It would be best to implement partial emergency rule under the Constitution's Article 352 and let the military govern the city. Bombay is controlled by antisocial elements and mobsters. If this is not dealt with strictly, conspiracies to create similar situations in other cities could begin.

The RSS family and the Babri Action Committee are both opposing the solution presented by the prime minister. The Babri Action Committee leaders have repeatedly issued statements that, if it is proved that the mosque was build over the temple, they would give up the right to the mosque and let the temple be built. Now they are backing away from their promise. Similarly, the BJP leaders have said that they do not object to the mosque's being built next to the temple. Now they say that the mosque must be built outside the five-mile radius. It shows that both do not want the issue to be resolved. Their political interests lie in keeping the issue alive. The politics of vote based on carcasses cannot be allowed to go on.

No one will benefit by pushing the nation into the fire of factional hostilities. How will they practice politics if our nation is disintegrated? Intelligent people on both sides have begun to understand this now. The tones of their voices are changing, and we hope these will change more in the future. Both sides will have a hard time controlling their supporters and members who do not think it necessary to use their intelligence.

India has a glorious past, and we are proud of it. In order to make our future glorious, we must practice the liberal Hindu mentality. Only it can give energy and strength to our nation.

Secularist's Hypocrisy Blamed for Failure of Secular State

93AS0510D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 30 Jan 93 p 9

[Article by Prakriti Chaudhuri: "Intellectuals Are Too Busy Wooing Muslim Communalists to Answer the Hindutva Challenge: No Ace Up Their Sleeves"]

[Text] David Caute, a well known European scholar of the politics and ideology of the left, once reminded the middle classes the act of political affiliation is mainly that of "personal conviction, personal psychology, personal choice."

Indian intellectuals—call them seinsverbunden or rootless—are to be cautioned against this individual and subjective interpretation of political ideology. It is precisely because of this reason that Indian communists, armed as they are with the formidable "ideological apparatus" of Marxism, cannot convince those who have been swayed by the proponents of Hindu rashtra.

The communists have failed to recognise the sangh parivar preachings have struck a chord in many Hindus. The individual and subjective perception of these Hindus of Indian secularism has led them to believe Muslims have been excessively wooed. A feeling that has been bolstered by the argument advanced by many communists that minority communalism has its uses in countering majority communalism.

The communist position is, however, untenable. True, in any democracy freedom of dissent and protection of minorities are primary requirements. But these cannot be reduced to wooing one particular community at the cost of another.

Saying no quarters should be given to Hindu chauvinists and Islamic fundamentalists is one thing, translating it into action is another. The left has so far been vocal against Hindu chauvinism. The point is to transform criticism into an exposure of the false defenders of Hinduism. There is no denying the rise of Hindu fundamentalism has proved one of the biggest dangers to the future of India's secular polity. The communists succeeded in identifying this in time, but failed to provide the counter measures.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was one of the first to call for a "rethinking" on what had been christened as a secular polity. It declared in its journal, PANCHAJANYA, "Even a small lapse on our part can ruin us. The pivot of rethinking should be: can the country be rescued through politics? Will this immoral politics be able to control the anarchy which it has itself given birth to? If not, then we must pin our hopes on a social force which owes undivided allegiance to the motherland and tradition and is engaged in establishing a monolithic nation worshipping society spreading from the Cape to the Himalayas."

The undivided Communist Party of India, in its election supplement to the party's weekly NEW AGE, correctly identified the danger. It was at the time fighting the grand alliance between the Syndicate Congress, the Jana Sangh, later renamed the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Swatantra Party. It however failed to launch a resistance programme.

The gradual march of Hindu fundamentalists to political centrestage has been carefully planned. The Jana Sangh edged out the CPI [Communist Party of India] from the position of main opposition party in Parliament in 1957. It strengthened its position further in 1962 and 1967. But in 1971 it was hurt by the success of the garibi hatao slogan. In 1977, it won more than 90 seats as a constituent of the Janata Party, Jayaprakash Narayan's contribution to India's political scene. This achievement was next only to the Bharatiya Lok Dal, led by Charan Singh.

In the 1984 elections following Indira Gandhi's assassination, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] was reduced to two seats in Parliament. The BJP groped in the dark for sometime till, together with the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], it discovered the Hindutva slogan as its most effective weapon.

The run of the mill Indian intellectual is not capable of providing an answer to this version of Hinduism. He or she is prejudiced against it as being politically motivated. C.B. Macpherson's comment on the petit bourgeoisie applies to Indian intellectuals in general: "Driven by insecurity to find a solid basis somewhere they veer between attachment to one class and to the other, or rather, different sections of the whole ... veer at different rates of speed and it may be in different directions and at different times."

It is not surprising that a large number of half taught party members of the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and the CPI discovered a logic behind the destruction of the Babri mosque. They argue that while communists condemned the demolition of the Babri mosque, they remain silent when Muslims destroy temples.

While the destruction of any religious shrine is fascist, one should not equate the demolition of a 500 year old mosque at Ayodhya with small temples everywhere. Both Christianity and Islam have the tradition of mass congregations. The repercussions of demolishing a mosque or a church is therefore bound to be widespread.

It should be noted the practice of desecration of places of worship in India did not begin with the destruction of the Somnath temple by Muslim invaders. Shankaracharya destroyed the Sringeri math of the Buddhists long before that.

It is true devout Hindus are hypnotised by the name of Lord Ram. They believe he really existed. The Hindutva politicians cash in on this innocent faith. But Mr. L.K. Advani, who often quotes Swami Vivekananda and even Sister Nivedita, ought to be reminded that Vivekananda believed "religion is a question of fact."

In 1975, the Archaeological Survey of India undertook a survey on the history of the civilisation of the five cities depicted in Valmiki's Ramayana, according to which Lord Ram lived in or before 3102 BC. It found conclusive evidence there had been no civilisation in these cities before AD 800. The BJP leader should be asked to prove scientifically this evidence is false.

A Hindu who values intellectual honesty should decide if he prefers Vivekananda's definition of religion or the rhetorical sedation of politicians such as Mr. Advani, Mr. K.R. Malkani and Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi who claim Lord Ram was born at the site of the Babri Masjid and his temple was desecrated by Babar. Mr. Joshi has done his PhD in physics. Can he deny the validity of the carbon 14 dating process that confirmed the ASI findings?

At the time of his arrest after the demolition of the mosque, Mr. Advani said, "The country is moving towards fascism." The dialectics of history are such that when democracy triumphs the world over, Hindu chauvinists who wish to take over India disguise themselves as anti-fascists.

The Indian tradition of secularism is a legacy of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Both Islamic and Hindu obscurantists have succeeded in desecrating this sacred tradition. Like their Hindu counterparts, self appointed leaders of the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee like Syed Shahabuddin and Imam Bukhari are least concerned about millions like Shah Bano. They care little to raise Muslims from the poverty and squalour of their lives.

On the other side of the fundamentalist spectrum are people like Mr. Advani, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and "Rajmata" Vijayaraje Scindia. The rape of Harijan women, the upper caste appropriation of the lands of the poor and the oppression of labourers in Chhattisgarh are not their concern. Their indifference is perfectly consistent with the Jana Sangh-RSS tradition.

During the shortlived tenure of the radical Mahamaya Prasad ministry—in which the erstwhile Samyukta Socialist Party, the CPI and the Jana Sangh were represented—in Bihar in 1967-68, Jana Sangh ministers opposed land reforms that would benefit bataidars or share croppers.

The opposition of Jana Sangh ministers to land reforms is not at all surprising. Guru Golwalkar, RSS leader, clearly supported Manusmriti and the caste system. Many prescribed woman and lower castes, sudras, could not even be allowed to listen to the Vedas, let alone read them. Thus the sangh parivar is not interested in the socio-economic uplift of backward communities.

The political history of secular philosophy demonstrates genuine secularism goes hand in hand with genuine democracy. In a democracy, no one can be allowed to pit one community against another. A genuine democracy also disallows protection of minority communalism as a weapon against majority communalism.

Intellectuals who profess secularism must rid themselves of the insecurity and vacillation which presently afflict them. The answer to Hindutva ideologues lies in firmly asserting the Indian polity will not be engaged in the game of choosing between varieties of communalism. And in the context of fighting religious fundamentalism in a poor nation such as India, they should never forget Ramakrishna's words, "Religion is not for empty bellies."

Abandonment of 'Pseudo-Secularism' Urged

93AS0437A New Delhi ORGANISER in English 1 Jan 93 p 7

[Article by Sanjay Chabra and Chittampali Narayanan: "In the Aftermath of Babri Episode"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The Babri Masjid incident has been a tragic moment in Indian history. Many Hindus, probably a vast majority, still think themselves as somehow second

class citizens in their own land, shunted aside as Muslims are granted special privileges. But Ayodhya incident may bring a new era in which Hindu majority will no longer be ignored. All segments of India's population should understand the facts and accept the reality. Indians should think hard to find the root cause of such conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, which have persisted after 45 years of independence.

They should also be aware of the following facts before coming to a decision.

Muslims & Islamic Nations:

*Islamic nations worldwide have condemned India for human rights violations and questioned its secular values. What about the human rights of non-Muslims in these Muslim and Islamic nations? What about bringing about secularism there?

*Is there any place in the world, including Islamic nations, where a leader from the minority community had been elected as head of state? Yes, it is India. In past 25 years, three presidents of India were from minority: 2 Muslims and 1 Sikh.

*In some of the Islamic nations, non-Muslims do not even have the basic right to vote, including Pakistan! In some Islamic countries, specially the Gulf nations and other Arab countries, non-Muslims are forbidden to worship their God in the privacy of their homes! Will the Indian Muslims take up this cause with their fellow Islamic brethrens, on behalf of Hindus, Christians, Parsis et al from India working there?

*In some Islamic countries, non-Muslims cannot carry their own religious books: Bible, Gita etc., inside the country. Such religious books are confiscated at airports!

*Is it not ironic that these Muslims, who bashed India for demolishing a non-functional mosque have themselves destroyed hundreds of functioning temples and churches? They talk about Hindu tolerance, but what about their tolerance?

*What do these Islamic nations have to say on destruction of hundreds of Hindu temples in Kashmir during the past 10 years, even before the Babri incident? Did they condemn the act? Are not the human rights of those Hindus who were flushed out of Kashmir being violated?

*Close to half-a-million Muslims in Somalia have died and thousands are dying every day. However, none of the Islamic countries have so far cared to feed them or raise their voice in support. However, the same Islamic world exhibits its outrage at the destruction of an abandoned mosque.

*Have the Hindus ever destroyed a mosque and built a temple over it? The answer is: no. However, the Muslims have destroyed over 60,000 temples and built over 3,000 mosques over such temples. Now, is it fair for the Islamic nations to say that Hindus are fundamentalists, radicals and non-tolerants?

Reasons for Hindus To Be Angry & Resentful:

Since independence, Hindus have seen Muslims rise up in Kashmir valley, which threatens the unity of India.

Hindus have seen the Sikhs of Punjab take up arms to press their claim for a separate state.

Hindus have seen the Indian Supreme Court's biased attitude towards Muslims. The courts have ruled that Muslim law has precedence over Indian Civil Law.

Hindus have seen the Muslims protesting even the school prayer song: 'Sareh Jahan Se Acha, Hindustan Hamara.'

Hindus have seen Indian Muslims cheer Pakistani teams in sporting events against India.

Hindus have seen Indian Muslims favoring Pakistan during the Indo-Pak wars.

Hindus have seen their own government's anger towards them: harassing and banning of pro-Hindu organizations.

Hindus have seen Indian leaders appease the Muslim community for petty political gains.

Hindu Bashing Hindu

Many Hindus have bashed their own community members over the Ayodhya issue while they continue to talk about Hindu tolerance and secularism. It is a pity that they do not know the facts behind the anger and frustrations among their own people. While God can be worshipped in one's own home, there is some sanctity, some religious significance to the place where Lord Rama was born. The temple-mosque issue was overplayed to insult, hurt the self-respect and the dignity of the Hindu community worldwide. Tolerance too has its limits, as taught in Ramayana and Mahabharata.

For centuries the invaders and the Islamic rulers in particular, have wrecked Hindu temples while forcibly converting a very large number of the people from Ramayana to the Islamic faith. Their armies have brutalized our ancestors and raped women and children. Hence, asking the Hindus to further tolerate the heinous acts of aggressions in an independent India is asking the Hindus to commit suicide enmasse. The Hindus may partly share the blame since they failed to unite in the past. Should they continue to regret the present and the future by failing to unite now too? Didn't Hindus pay for their ignorance by years and years of slavery?

Those Hindus who talk lots about secularism should also know the definition of pseudo-secularists which means individuals seeking more rights for minorities by suppressing the majority. This pseudo-secularism is responsible for the anger, pain and grievances of Hindus even after India's independence. How did these pseudo-secularists react during the last 10 years while temples were being destroyed in Kashmir, an integral part of

India? Did they ever show compassion or sympathy for the Hindus of Kashmir who were terrorized and forced to leave their homes by the Islamic fundamentalists? Did they ever raise their voice against the injustice? Would they continue to either remain silent or criticize their own community if their homes are burnt, their properties destroyed? Would they tolerate this in the name of secularism?

Indian government should take bold steps and make changes in the Indian Constitution and implement Civil Law for every Indian citizen.

Article 370 should be scrapped thus allowing Indians to buy property and settle in Kashmir, a part of India.

Muslims in India should think of India's interest first.

Muslims in India should think of their root, about the forceful conversion to Islam. They should remember that they are sons and daughters of Indian soil.

Hindus should guard their unity and should not let any politician divide them. Had they been united, we may not have seen the rise of Islam in India.

Future of Secular Republic Viewed

93AS0473F Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 25 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Jagpreet Luthra: "The Uncertain Future of the Republic"]

[Text] The Indian Republic enters its 44th year on Tuesday 26 with trepidation about its future, as the pessimists look at it and, with hope against hope as the optimists view it. The menacing shadow of communalism as evident in the demolition of the Babri mosque and the riots that followed are factors immediately responsible for stealing the sunshine out of the optimists' horizons.

The abstract concept of "the genius of the Indian people in defending India's secular traditions" is the crutch on which the hopeful hang their positive view of India's future. "I have an indefatigable faith in the genius of the Indian people that will always stand between me and pessimism about the future of India's Republic as a secular and sovereign State," says Mr. M.A. Baby, CPM [Communist Party of India-Marxist] MP [member of Parliament] from Kerala. The burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the Left parties, he says, is awesome as the future of India lies torn between the communalists and the secularists.

The young MP from Kerala believes that India is passing through its gravest hour yet but nonetheless he says that the saner elements of the Indian society will be able to mobilise sufficient popular support to defeat the communalists. Nor would he blame the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and the rest of the Sangh family alone for the events that led to the demolition and subsequent communal violence. In his view, it is the Congress(I) which is to be blamed for finishing the moderate forces in what have today become trouble States, Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab being two of them.

"For its narrow and immediate political gains the Congress(I) has even lent indirect support to the extremists in these States and that is what is responsible for their present troubles," he says, adding that the party repeated the same mistake with the Hindu extremist forces.

The Congress(I) has never taken a firm or principled stand against the communal forces, according to Mr. Baby. On the other hand, it has actually encouraged them. To support his argument Mr. Baby cites the case of the November 1984 anti-Sikh violence in which some Congress leaders are alleged to have been involved.

Shock

Rather than bringing them to book, the party, he says has given them ministerial berths and State security. It is with a sense of shock that he recalls a television speech made by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao at that time.

Mr. Rao, who was then the Home Minister, is quoted to have said this by way of controlling the rampaging and blood-thirsty crowds: "Enough has happened; now we have to put an end to the killings." Mr. Baby believes that for this one statement alone Mr. Rao should have been kept safely away from the corridors of power. Even in the case of the Ayodhya demolition, the Left leader holds the ruling party at the Centre and, in particular, the Prime Minister responsible for the "subversion of the Indian Constitution."

The Prime Minister's failure to protect the Babri Masjid, despite an assurance to Parliament is nothing short of a deliberate act towards the subversion of the Constitution, he opines. As the Left and National Front leaders see it the Congress(I) and the BJP are equally responsible for bringing India to a grave pass where the very future of the Indian Republic looks uncertain. That is on the political front. On the socio-economic front, they view the Congress(I)'s role in worse light.

The dangers emanating from the compromises that the Congress(I) has made with the international lending agencies and multinationals may not be apparent immediately but their long-term impact on India's economic sovereignty is very serious, says Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh. "In the name of liberalisation the Congress(I) is turning India into a slave economy," he says.

Their stiff Opposition to the Congress(I)'s policies notwithstanding, the leaders of the two fronts have maintained that they would not force a mid-term election on the country. And that stance has as much to do with the lack of confidence in facing the electorate on their own strength as with the rising threat of the BJP's popularity. Today the BJP is the only party rearing to have an election because it is in a position to exploit the sharp communal divide that has come about in the wake of the demolition and its fallout.

Wouldn't Help

Some National Front-Left Front (NF-LF) leaders say that it is not unfavourable electoral calculations which are keeping them from ousting the Rao Government but a concern for India's disintegrating body politik. "Even during a regular election, communal passions are sought to be exploited by various parties.

Forcing an election at a time when the communal temper is already so terribly inflamed would be a serious mistake on our part," says Mr. Baby. Nor does he share a growing belief that the BJP would emerge a winner in the next election. The fear of the BJP coming to power is not supported by ground realities, he says, while admitting the reality is very grim.

The ruling party, on the other hand, seems unfazed against the blast of criticism from the NF-LF, the growing cry of the prophets of doom and repeated taunts from the BJP to let the electorate determine the fate of various parties and thereby of the country. Congress(I) spokesman V. N. Gadgil, while repeatedly ruling out the

possibility of a mid-term poll says that the people of India have seen through the fascist face of the BJP and is confident that they would defeat the party.

The party's anti-BJP propaganda is in full swing and it has brought out five booklets on the post-Ayodhya situation for mass circulation. These booklets are a frontal attack on the BJP's exploitation of religion for narrow political ends and its fascist and anti-national policies. More than its false *Hindutva* ideology, it is the BJP's disregard for the Indian Constitution and thereby the threat to the survival of the Republic that is the focus of these attacks.

Observers believe that if the ruling party and the NF-LF carry out their mass contact programmes as planned, even without coming together and a mid-term poll is avoided, the threat from the communal and pseudo *Hindutva* force will fizzle out by the next election. One sure way of averting a disintegration of the Republic, they feel is to let the present Government last the rest of its term. However with Mr. Rao at the helm not many political analysts want to hazard guess on the Government lasting its full term.

Political Infighting Amongst Secularists Viewed

93AS0473G Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 25 Jan 93 p 8

[Article: "Fractious Secularists"; quotation marks, italicized words as published]

[Text] Last Wednesday's anti-communalism rally in Patna was remarkable not just for the size of the crowd that Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav was able to muster for the occasion but also for those who did or did not address it. The Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) leader, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, did, much to the chagrin of his Bihar unit. But one of the loudest champions of secularism, namely, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, stayed away. So did the leaders of Janata Dal (Ajit). Mr. V.P. Singh perhaps could not make it from Bombay where he had been under arrest in hospital till the day of the rally. Of the 23 leaders of the National Front and Left Front who attended, not all could be said to have a following in the State. The tenor, the tone, even the emphasis, of each speaker varied depending on his political party. Thus whereas Mr. Chandra Shekhar blamed the Congress government in New Delhi and the Bharatiya Janata Party equally for the events on December 6 and after, Mr. Jyoti Basu was rather muted in his criticism of the Prime Minister. Many speakers commended Mr. Yadav's administration for the relative peace in Bihar following the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya.

The Bihar Chief Minister is bound to further strengthen his position within the Janata Dal following his impressive show of strength in Patna. But that may not be enough to repulse the challenge of the strident *Hindutva* forces which by all accounts have made deep inroads into the State's interior regions. Since the Congress too intends to occupy a major chunk of the anti-BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] platform, it is doubtful if all the 'secular' forces can join in a single, united front even for the limited purpose of taking the 'sadbhavana' message to the people. Therein lies the BJP's strength. By and large those who addressed the Patna rally were either too insignificant electorally to make a difference to the anti-BJP campaign or were so imbued with anti-Congressism as to reject out of hand any suggestion of co-operation with the Congress. For example, Mr. George Fernandes. His secular credentials are as strong as his anti-Congressism. In any case, the anti-communalism campaign of the Congress party remains a non-starter.

What should, however, cause disquiet to the non-BJP forces is the irreconcilable differences within the non-BJP, non-Congress parties on the question of forming an alliance to fight both. The resignation by the 20 office-bearers of the SJP from their posts to protest against Mr. Chandra Shekhar's sharing of the platform with Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, is an example. Also, the Mulayam Singh Yadav-Kanshi Ram combine's reported decision to keep Mr. V.P. Singh and his Janata Dal at bay would seem to rule out an omnibus front against the BJP. Clearly, even in the post-demolition phase, parties advocating secularism cannot close ranks. 'Sadbhavana,' therefore, can wait till these learn to co-operate with one another.

Congress (I) Said Encouraging Increased Communalization

93AS0429D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 14 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Nikhil Chakravarty: "Damaging by Reparation"]

[Text] The balance sheet of the week after the Ayodhya disaster heightens the concern about the durability of the Indian state system, not to speak of the immediate stability of public life in the country.

The central government claims the situation is limping back to normal. In terms of incidents of raging violence this may be true, since spontaneous outbursts generally peter out after a sudden explosion. At the same time there is no denying that not only a pall of gloom has spread all over the country but bitterness as well by which both Hindus and Muslims have been affected. No one with any knowledge of the realities can confirm what the Pakistani propagandists have been saying, that only the minority Muslim community has been facing the brunt of the violent disturbances.

Communal frenzy has infected many in both communities though its manifestation differs in the two cases. Muslims have been by and large shocked that the government could not honour its repeated commitment to protect the Babri structure until the dispute was settled through negotiations or due process of law. There is

growing concern among them about the future of the community itself in the face of growing communal intolerance.

The sense of shock at the sudden demolition of the Babri mosque prevailed in a large section of the majority community as well, because it blatantly violated the principle of the rule of law and the Constitution which is undoubtedly the binding force of civil society.

The brutal assault on media persons covering the kar seva outraged a large body of opinion cutting across both communities. The prompt dismissal of the Uttar Pradesh government by the Centre came as no surprise, rather many people belonging to the majority community took it as inevitable as per the normal constitutional practice.

However, some of the subsequent measures of the government have not only led to confusion but alienated a wide section of the majority community. While the detention of some firebrands in the Ram temple campaign was expected and had public sanction, the arrest of the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders, particularly Mr. L.K. Advani, has had an adverse effect. Though Mr. Advani was bitter with the government in recent weeks and made statements that annoyed many in Parliament, the impression is that he could not possibly have been a party to any plan to demolish the disputed Babri structure. The general complaint against him now is that he owes an answer to the nation for the pulling down of the structure in his presence and about what he had done to prevent the disaster. As a leading figure in Parliament, he was answerable to the house where his critics and adversaries would have had ample opportunity to grill him. Whatever be the stand of the government and its supporters, this reaction—no doubt in the Hindu community—has to be taken into consideration to handle a very difficult situation.

The question of the future of the Babri Masjid complex has also arisen. Now that the old structure has been razed to the ground—an act of desperate vandalism the government could not prevent—what is to be done by the Centre? The immediate official commitment the mosque would be rebuilt has created great confusion. If it is done the old dispute will resurface again since the bone of contention was the location of the Ram Lala idol within the old structure. The government itself had allowed it to be worshipped daily by thousands of devotees. The situation on the ground today is more intractable: after the demolition of the mosque on December 6, a makeshift temple with the same Ram idol was built which even the security guards in the area hold in high reverence.

If the status quo ante has to be enforced as prayed for by a petitioner before the Supreme Court, this makeshift place of worship is to be dismantled. The dispute would then reemerge with renewed vigour. Hindu conservatives would launch a propaganda campaign that the government's previous assurances favouring the construction of the Ram temple were only meant to hoodwink the public.

One would have expected the government to reaffirm the solemn stand of the prime minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, in his address from the ramparts of the Red Ford on August 15 that while the mosque would be protected the temple would also be built. Now that the mosque has been demolished, the government could have stated that it would both rebuild the mosque as well as stand by its assurance to build a temple dedicated to Ram. This can hardly leave out the question of the location of the Ram idol. The ambiguity on this point has so far had a negative impact. It is something the government will have to state clearly when presenting its stand in the case before the Supreme Court.

Further, given the fact our Constitution is secular, the question arises whether the government should on its own build either the mosque or the temple. The idea of a public trust for the purpose promises a wider support.

In the complex situation that prevails today, with an almost total lack of mutual trust and confidence among the leaders of the two communities in the aftermath of the bloody riots taking a toll of more than a thousand lives, it is not going to be easy for the government to restore order and harmony. It is a task made more difficult by the infighting within the Congress. While the Congress in Parliament, the Congress working committee and the Union cabinet have formally reposed their faith in the prime minister, it is no secret important members of the Council of Ministers have been liberally running him down for the entire crisis and describing him as incapable of taking any decisive action. Never has any previous Congress government had to encounter a situation in which the prime minister heads a cabinet which, while pledging loyalty to him, criticises his functioning and raises doubts about his ability to hold office.

Such a situation inevitably led to speculations about who would succeed Mr. Narasimha Rao in the event of a vacancy in the post at the very top. That the rumblings within the Congress will die out soon is unlikely. Rather, with every passing day it seems the ruling party is drifting away from any possibility of coming together to meet the challenge it faces.

The Congress's situation is no less difficult vis-a-vis the Opposition. While all are critical of the government's performance and responsibility for the disaster on December 6, there is a sharp divergence of views as to what it has been doing since. Mr. Chandra Shekhar has criticised the arrest of Mr. Advani and has asked for Mr. Narasimha Rao's resignation. Mr. Vishwanath Pratap Singh has gone further in demanding Mr. Narasimha Rao's prosecution. Left leaders too joined in the demand for the dismissal of the government, though not as stridently as Mr. V.P. Singh. The Congress move for a joint secular front with the left is yet to be firmly responded to. While the left insists on more stringent

measures against the BJP, the bulk of Congressmen are concerned about winning over the Hindu vote. This can hardly be possible with the government taking more aggressive action against the BJP.

Here is a scenario of baffling contradictions in the entire national spectrum of the political leadership. There is hardly any substantive force to help the nation restore a normal relationship between its two major communities.

Congress (I) Disarray Seen Contributing to Fragmentation

93AS0429I Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 18 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by S. Nihal Singh: "Muffled Sounds of Struggle"]

[Text] We are now in the churning up phase in the political life of the country. The beleaguered prime minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, is fighting for his political survival and gives the impression of taking decisions under duress to ward off challenges to his leadership in the party. The communists, with an I told you so air, are seeking to take the moral high ground. Other factions which go under the name of parties in India are realigning themselves.

The key to the future, as so often before, lies with the Congress even as the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] has chosen to adopt a stance of bravado as it ponders its strategy. A prime minister who has lost his moral authority after the demolition of the Babri mosque is engaged in a war of attrition with his party tormentors.

Such issues as the dismissal of the BJP governments in three states—now accomplished—are mere symbols in the intra-party struggle taking shape in the Congress. Yet the tussle is muted, constrained as it is by three factors: disagreement between the two main challengers, the Southern majority in the Congress parliamentary party and the need to avoid bringing down the government.

The public postures adopted by Mr. Arjun Singh and Mr. Sharad Pawar are revealing in their differences. The former is on the offensive as he sets out the party's political agenda. The latter has chosen a low profile, aware as he is of the wisdom of not revealing one's hand too soon. As they plan their future moves, they are very conscious of the predominant Southern orientation the parliamentary party has acquired after the last general election and the paramount need to reassure fellow partymen they are not rocking the boat to drown them all in another direction.

Ironically, the very qualities of Mr. Narasimha Rao that won him praise in the past—caution, wisdom and a consensual approach—have come to haunt him after December 6. The destruction of the mosque has not merely highlighted the limitations of this approach but has also brought to the fore a central question: what kind of an India do we want?

The Congress and most other political parties have winked at the creeping Hinduisation of the country under the determined onslaught of the BJP and its mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS]. This was not merely in making electoral compromises but in implicitly accepting that over the time the BJP had succeeded in shifting the focus of secularism from the Nehru model to an implicit acceptance of the prerogatives of the majority.

Mr. Narasimha Rao was merely continuing a trend that has been decades in the making. It was the consequences of the Emergency of Indira Gandhi that first gained respectability for the Jana Sangh, the BJP's earlier avatar. The break up of the Janata Party and Mr. Morarji Desai's government was due to their internal contradictions, not the pretence of the Jana Sangh's links with the RSS that was employed to scuttle it.

Mr. Vishwanath Pratap Singh and the communists connived to prop up the minority Janata Dal government with the help of the BJP. It was then that a party pilloried as a pariah gained full respectability. True, Mr. V.P. Singh's intra-party compulsions forced him finally to confront the BJP, but he tried till the end to humour it.

By the time Mr. Narasimha Rao occupied the prime minister's chair, the BJP was a recognised and legitimate component of the Indian political system. The minority nature of the Congress government merely enhanced the BJP's role. Mr. L.K. Advani set about preening his feathers as the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

The demolition of the Babri mosque was a sharp reminder to the country of the BJP's true colours. The Congress and other parties are scurrying for cover to rediscover secularism, but they cannot put the clock back. The BJP has built up its own constituency and, although its new adherents in urban India might have shied away from it in a moment of revulsion, its reach in the Hindi-speaking countryside has grown.

If all the parties ranging themselves against the BJP believe they have isolated it, it is an isolation of a different kind this time around. The BJP can speak from a position of some strength, but it is above all banking on the weaknesses and contradictions among the other parties to surmount its present crisis.

The Congress is in the throes of a leadership crisis, but the other parties are ploughing their furrows to seek partisan advantage. The communists have shown they are ever ready to play a balancing role in a crisis situation and are laying down their terms for a limited alignment with the Congress.

The Janata Dal, particularly its leader, Mr. V.P. Singh, is perhaps the only party that believes in the one point policy of Congress bashing. The present situation offers the Janata Dal leader more elbow room and he is casting his eyes around with hope and wishful thinking. There is no problem with the Janata Dal teaming up with its "natural allies," the communists, to fight the battles of

secularism. On a lower scale the redoubtable Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav has decided to aling himself with Mr. Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party with an eye on the next election in Uttar Pradesh.

Given this scenario, the sooner the Congress can resolve its problems the greater will be the chance of bringing about a measure of stability. This question boils down to how long the process of finding an acceptable replacement for Mr. Narasimha Rao in the party takes. It is ironical that for all the services he has rendered the Congress and the country, his political fate should have been sealed by the fall of a mosque.

Beyond the problems plaguing the Congress lies the central question of the future of Indian polity. Where do we go from here? The destruction of the Babri mosque has posed in stark terms some troubling questions. How strong are India's institutions in the face of a determined attack by a movement that is willing to disregard the rules of the parliamentary game? How does the country adapt secularism to a new consciousness, sedulously cultivated by the BJP-RSS network, to the Hinduness of India?

It is clear that were the BJP model to be adopted wholesale in a carbon copy of the Pakistan model, it would place intolerable strains on the political fabric leading to the country's disintegration. Making Muslims and other minorities second class citizens is not the answer to India's problems. At the same time, chanting the mantras of secularism while making compromises all along the way is to bring the concept into disrepute and make its subversion that much easier.

The success of the Indian experiment in democracy is due largely to the existence and support of a large middle class. It is the middle class that provides the necessary leavening to a democratic state. And the middle class has played a key role in keeping India on a democratic keel in the 40 odd years of independence, the Emergency regime being an aberration recognised as such.

Outside of the political parties, the middle class must now find the answers to the questions thrown up by the present crisis. If sections of the middle class had been enamoured of the BJP's decisiveness and disciplined ranks, the scales have now fallen from their eyes. They have seen the authoritarian and intolerant streaks that go with the BJP philosophy, however it is clothed. If a party that aspires to rule the country defies the highest court in the land and breaks its promises to Parliament, how can a democratic system work?

It is important to separate the question of the temple from the more important question of the BJP's commitment to democracy. The RSS, which guides the thinking of the BJP, has never had much time for the limitations imposed by a democracy. It was on safer ground as long as it maintained the fiction of being a movement for Hindus regeneration and not a political formation.

The RSS's more recent activist role in politics came about because of Mr. Balasaheb Deoras's temperament and the change in the BJP's political fortunes. With the BJP ruling four states until recently and becoming the main opposition party in Parliament, the urge was irresistible to come out of the political shadows openly to guide the party in bringing about a Hindu state.

For the middle class it is not merely a question of rebuilding the mosque where it stood until the forenoon of December 6, but one of opposing an assault on India's democratic framework. Hindus, Muslims and others will suffer equally if the democratic experiment were to come to an end. If Indira Gandhi's Emergency regime was "vegetarian fascism," the RSS-BJP variety of government would be less of a vegetarian feast.

Communists Seen Alienated From Religious Sentiment of Masses

93AS0430G Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 7 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Mohit Sen: "Get God and People on Your Side"]

[Text] The CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] can neither unite with the Congress to combat communalism nor totally back away from the idea. Its leadership is divided between those whose anti-Congress stance is simplistic and those who place being in power above fundamentalist anti-Congressism. It is no longer possible for Mr. Jyoti Basu and the older leaders to pretend even to themselves that their power in West Bengal is no longer threatened by Ms Mamata Banerjee's advancing campaign.

This assessment is making Mr. H.S. Surjeet and Mr. Basu try to strike a bargain with Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. Helping him at the Centre is meant to buy a reprieve in West Bengal. Yet, even in the state, staying in power requires the CPI(M) to retain its anti-Congress posture. The Congress is not only expected to stomach this but is in such a predicament that it seems compelled to do so.

This convoluted argument might seem too bizarre to be believed by normal mortals. But this kind of back and forth talk did go on at the politburo and other high level meetings of the CPI(M) in New Delhi, upon Mr. Surjeet's return from London following the demolition of the Babri Masjad. It is almost believable that in the midst of an unprecedented national crisis the largest party of the left should be wrapped up in its own narrow concerns.

Of course it can all be justified on the grounds that national salvation requires West Bengal to continue to be run as a fiefdom of the CPI(M). This requirements is not only long term but immediate as well. It is so overriding that all kinds of tactical contortions are justified. Long live Stalinism.

Nevertheless if the CPI(M) and other parties of the Left Front campaign against communalism reasonably and sensibly it would still be alright. But this, too, is not likely to happen. From the way the campaign is being conducted so far it may be wishful thinking.

The campaign concentrates exclusively on the sangh parivar. The latter is certainly responsible for the accentuating communal tension and deepening the communal divide, but not entirely.

A settlement of the Ayodhya issue could have been reached if the communalists posing as the champions of Muslim interests had left it to the government to settle the matter through negotiations. Instead they insisted on setting up protection committees and working up narrow and divisive passions.

The government's mistake was arranging negotiations solely between two sets of communalists—the Hindu temple demanders on one side and the mosque defenders on the other. It should have come forward with its own solution earlier, campaigned for it and demarcated as well as opposed communalists of all varieties.

The reference here to the government is not to the present one. Mr. Narasimha Rao inherited a problem of immense and complex dimensions. This is forgotten by the longstanding opponents of the Congress and some neophytes. The crisis has reached its present proportions because of the destabilisers' refusal to allow Rajiv Gandhi to work out a comprehensive programme for settlement and forcing an election in an already charged atmosphere. Since 1989, the two predecessors to this government have only complicated matters.

Just when the present prime minister was on the verge of presenting proposals to the nation which could have become a basis for a solution, the sangh parivar struck first through the December 6 ultimatum and then through the sacrilegious act on the day itself.

Mr. George Fernandes has said all this was done to avoid progress of the joint parliamentary committee's inquiry into the securities scandal. The truth is the exact opposite. If there is a connection between economic policy and Ayodhya at all it is that communalism was and will be used to create such instability that the new economic course will not succeed.

The CPI(M) and its allies have scant respect for the religious sentiments of the masses, no matter what religion it may be. Their intolerance is not restricted to berating others who dare to call themselves communists and Marxists. It is not hegemony and alliance but supremacy and obedience that they want in ideology as in politics.

Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, to name only two sages from whom they quote, are instruments in their campaign. For them religion is only "the opiate of the masses" and not the "self consciousness and self esteem of a man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again ... the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions."

Without profound respect for religion it would not be possible to successfully combat communalism. Mocking religion or paying tactical lip service to some of its exponents is only another side of communalism which also disrespects religion by making political use of it.

Another negative aspect of the Left Front's anti-communalism is its hypocrisy vis-a-vis Muslim fundamentalist organisations. It is quite dishonest of Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad and his colleagues in Kerala to appeal to the Congress to break its alliance with the Muslim League.

Can he give any assurance that the Left Democratic Front [LDF] would not have any direct or indirect alliance or dealings with the Muslim League in a future election? Can he state that if the United Democratic Front [UDF] government was to be assailed by the LDF, the latter would not bring it down with the help of the Muslim League?

Of course it would be in the best interests of the country and the Congress if the Muslim League was no longer in the UDF, whatever the present and future electoral fallout in Kerala. The Muslim League in Kerala and Tamil Nadu is different from Mohammed Ali Jinnah's Muslim League. Nevertheless it is useless in combating the sangh parivar since it is a political organisation based on religion.

The same observation, mutatis mutandis, applies to the Akali parties with whom Mr. Surjeet, in particular, has close and long association.

Further, what the CPI(M) and its allies refuse to accept is that the communalist offensive is an integral part, indeed the cutting edge of the destabilisation drive against the nation and its most powerful and credible protagonist, the Congress.

Opposing the Congress is not only justified but necessary on a whole host of issues. But it cannot be carried to the point of weakening the nation as happened in 1977-78 and 1989-91. This orientation will create problems and difficulties for the left as happened during the freedom struggle.

It is a pity that despite all that has happened at home and abroad the CPI(M) remains powerful yet impotent. It could have done a lot, especially since some of its workers are dedicated to the people and have not yet all been overwhelmed by the Stalinists and the criminals.

Congress (I) Actions Said Certain To Aid BJP, 'Communalists'

93AS0430J Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 20 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Nikhil Chakravarty: "Hanged By Its Own Rope"]

[Text] It is indeed a grotesque situation. If the sudden and unexpected demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya touched off a massive eruption of communal violence in many parts of the country, the days of national trauma witnessed an amazing disarray in the Central government—paralysis interspersed with knee jerk decisions.

As information has trickled out about what happened at Ayodhya on the fateful day of December 6, it has become clear that the Centre put up no serious effort worth the name to protect the disputed Babri Masjid. It was assumed at the time whatever last moment negotiations were taking place, the Centre had already taken necessary steps to guard the epicentre of the dispute—the Babri Masjid structure itself. As the dramatic hours of December 6 revealed, there was not even a semblance of any resistance by any security force to protect the disputed structure.

So far the impression given outside has been that in view of the huge mass of kar sevaks, some miscreant gang demolished the disputed structure. It can, however, be stated on good authority that this version, which incidentally is the essence of the stands taken by both the Central and the Uttar Pradesh [UP] governments, does not tell the truth.

Although a big crowd had collected for the meeting, there were only small clusters of people around the masjid complex that morning. The police force visible was the very minimal, roughly about the same one finds managing the crowd at any meeting of a state level political leader. Even this force withdrew when the first batch of volunteers appeared and pushed their way through—without even as much as a scuffle—followed by men with pickaxes and shovels like those in a municipal demolition squad. They started hacking at the domes immediately, the whole operation having the stamp of experienced hands.

The government certainly has sufficient documentary evidence in its possession to confirm the above. One can understand the reason behind the government's reticence to disclose such evidence. Doing so will definitely invite the charge it was guilty of dereliction of duty in guarding a structure that the prime minister in his Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort had assured the world be protected.

While the mendacity of the UP government is already a matter of judicial investigation, it is equally necessary to find out the reason behind the Centre's failure to guard the Babri Masjid.

The prime minister is right in saying that he felt "betrayed" by the UP government. At the same time one cannot help observing the Centre's own efforts at protecting the disputed structure were miserably unconvincing. The disarray within the Central government implied in the demolition of the masjid became palpably clear. The cabinet was far from unified in either assessing the events of that day or on the line of action to be followed in the wake of the destruction.

The imposition of President's Rule in UP was a foregone conclusion. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] could not but have expected it after the resignation of Mr. Kalyan Singh and his ministry. At that point of time the position of the sangh parivar was pathetic, even many in its circle were critical to the point of denouncing the demolition.

Subsequent steps by the government—particularly three major ones—have a good part of the lost ground. First, the arrest and detention of Mr. L.K. Advani and lumping him with Mr. Ashok Singhal is regarded by many as a tactical blunder on part of the government. Even if Mr. Advani did not rush forward to stop those who were demolishing the mosque, all available evidence rule out his direct complicity in the act itself. More importantly, as a front bench Opposition leader in the Lak Sabha, he could have been grilled in the Parliament itself, to which he certainly owed an explanation.

Second, the manner in which the five organisations have been banned following the Ayodhya incident and the subsequent communal violence in many parts of the country has shown up the amazing ineptitude of the Centre. The government's intention to ban these organisations were announced days in advance, giving them sufficient time to make necessary arrangements to go underground or to resort to alternate methods of functioning. Also the Shiv Sena was mysteriously left out of the list despite the fact that the Sena chief was the only leader in the entire nation who welcomed the destruction of the Babri Masjid.

Third, the Centre's decision to clamp down President's Rule in the BJP ruled states has been widely criticised, even by pro-Congress circles, as a blatant misuse of Article 356. Eminent jurists and commentators have been unsparing in attacking the step.

The process by which this short-sighted step was ultimately taken brings out the state of decomposition within the Congress. It was widely known both the Union cabinet and the Congress parliamentary party were divided over the issue. While the Congress put up the facade it was determined to oust the VJP from all political vantage points as part of an all out crusade to combat communalism, the calculations of its hard headed politicians must also be taken into account.

With the imposition of President's Rule in the states, the Congress would virtually rule. Since all other opposition parties are with the Congress in opposing the BJP, Congress leaders expect there would be no splitting of non-BJP votes. This will ensure the Congress comes back to office when elections follow in the states. The Congress leaders are not thinking of a coalition with other parties. They are interested only in avoiding the splitting of votes.

The miscalculation in such an anticipation lies in the almost sure possibility the BJP will reap the harvest of being a martyr for having upheld the honour and prestige of the Hindu community. More so when it has the advantage of a well knit cadre provided by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS]. No doubt Congressmen in these four states will actively try to present themselves as devout Hindus in the coming months. But there is little chance of the Congress beating the BJP in the run for one upmanship as the champion of the Hindu cause.

As for wiping out communal ideology, this can hardly be achieved by administrative action. Had this been possible, the Jana Sangh and the RSS should have been wiped out by the Emergency. No political battle can be waged by government diktat. Those who are jubilantly clamouring for administrative action against the BJP will realise their folly when winter turns to high summer.

Congress (I) Accused of 'Sneaking Sympathy' for BJP

93AS0431E Madras THE HINDU in English 4 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by K.K. Katyal: "December 6 and After"]

[Text] Who could have predicted the fiery end of 1992 at its beginning? Likewise, is it possible to be precise on how the country fares in the new year, though there should be no difficulty about a general prediction—that the present phase of tumult will continue? The dimennas that loom now are more frightening than the quandaries of 12 months ago. That Ayodhya will remain the main item on the country's agenda is evident, but will the Government and the people have the time for the other pressing issues, the economy, in particular?

The end of the Ayodhya-related upheavals is not in sight, such being the forces let loose by the December 6 demolition. The Government has made known, through a package, its two-fold approach—a reference to the Supreme Court to settle the future use of the site of the demolished structure and the acquisition of the land in its vicinity for building a Ram temple and a mosque. The delay in giving a final shape to the package testified to the host of problems, expected to arise while implementing it, assuming that the initial hostile reception peters out.

The difficulties with which the acquisition processes normally bristle and which frustrate the underlying intention will be the mildest of the hurdles compared with the sensitive matters connected with building two places of worship in the present environment of religious frenzy with rational thinking conspicuous by its absence. A foretaste is provided by the explosive situations created by the campaigns for the "puja" and "namaz." It is a terrible mess howsoever viewed.

Its episodal manifestations, as we have seen, are disturbing but far more drastic is the impact in the conceptual area. In the second case, the validity of the assumptions that had held good since Independence, are being openly questioned and the demands for redefining nationalism and secular values freely voiced. The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], whose espousal of these theories either evoked contempt or received scant attention now finds receptive ears among vast sections in the Hindi heartland. Its leaders are happy at what is perceived as a groundswell in their favour and in this exuberance they tend to overdraw the picture and give a far more optimistic interpretation to the popular mood than is justified.

The Congress(I) members in private concede that their vote banks both among the minorities and the majority community have been eroded. Their panic reaction has taken two mutually conflicting forms—one, the resolve to counter the influence of the BJP and its allies in the Sangh Parivar, along with other secular forces and, two, the use of the Hindu card so as to deny the BJP the advantage of support by the majority. The joint fight idea has not taken off, mainly because others, notably the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist], would like clearer evidence of the ruling party's commitment to secularism and of its seriousness to fight the BJP.

The limited arrangement, that is envisaged, is bound to suffer from a credibility problem. The Congress(I) and the Left parties differ sharply—to take one instance—on economic policy matters and this is certain to cast its shadow over their joint campaign, if and when it materialises. With adversarial positions on one set of issues, the ruling party and the Left would find it hard to carry conviction with the people in regard to their joint efforts in another field.

There is plenty of evidence of sneaking sympathy among a section of Congress(I) members for the type of steps, advocated by the BJP and like-minded parties in the post-demolition phase—for permission for the "darshan" of the idols at the disputed site and for the construction of the mosque at a place different from where the Babri structure stood. Were not some in the Congress(I) camp jubilant at the opportunity for the "darshan," projecting it as a proof that their party was not insensitive to the sentiments of the majority community?

Another disturbing trend in the Congress(I) was the manner in which some of its members, including those holding important positions in the Government, responded to the Ayodhya developments on non-secular lines. What else was the meaning of the reports ascribing to the Muslim members of the Cabinet a viewpoint different from those of the others? True, the Muslim members of the Council of Ministers could not be unmindful of the concerns of their community and the feedback given by them has to be one of the inputs of the

Government decisions. But they could not go beyond certain parameters in a system based on joint Cabinet responsibility.

Similarly, the stories about one or the other Muslim Minister carrying his resignation letter in his pocket, because of his strong reaction to the Ayodhya events or his dissatisfaction with the Government's handling may be a useful ploy to blunt the edge of criticism in the Muslim community, but otherwise it is a sad commentary on the ruling party's secular credentials—and provides ammunition to those wanting nationalism to be redefined.

What does it show? Even those who resist the talk of modifying the concept of nationalism have tended to respond to recent situations in the way the pro-changers do. The extent of the conceptual impact—and its damage—could thus be easily gauged. This is no sudden development. The Congress(I), an omnibus party, has always contained those with their thinking akin to either the BJP (the BJP in the old days) or the Muslim League, but this phenomenon remained hidden behind the secular facade. It has given way under the pressure of the recent developments, revealing the reality.

These questions will need to be addressed in the new year—and, to that extent, it will be different from the period since the dawn of Independence. Whether the answers are provided by the various groups through mobilisation of public opinion or through the elections is not clear. Once again, there is a talk of a mid-term poll, but its chances are to be discounted. The BJP seems the keenest on it, for reasons mentioned above—its belief that the public opinion has turned in its favour in a big way. Whether for this or other reasons, the remaining parties are opposed to the idea. The BJP has sought to make political capital out of the contrast between its anxiety to approach the people's court and the 'cold feet' of the others.

This is the third wave of speculation on the poll since June-July 1991, when the present Government assumed office. The very nature of the election verdict then—with no party getting majority, and the Congress(I) called upon to form the Government in its capacity as the single largest force—gave rise to the talk of a new decisive round. This sentiment was clearly discernible hostile reaction by the election-weary masses. None of the Opposition parties was for it—for some six to eight months—until the CPI(M) congress in Madras in the beginning of last year, proclaimed it would not fight shy of voting out the Narasimha Rao Government. This, however, remained a technical possibility, in a situation where the non-Congress (I) forces, though outnumbering the ruling party, were sharply divided on ideological grounds as also on the basis of personality clashes. The defections in the small Opposition groups pushed that possibility farther. The speculation stopped. It was revived after the Vishwa Hindu Parishad announced the December 6 deadline, and some in the Congress(I) thought they could create a scare by the talk of a fresh poll, with a message that the people were now disgusted with the single-point Ayodhya agenda and would rebuff the party that appeared obsessed with it. The trick did not work. Now, it is the BJP which would like to garner the full electoral advantage out of the present surcharged atmosphere.

Ayodhya was nowhere in the picture at the beginning of 1992. The BJP which played the Ayodhya card before the last election and was to make use of it again towards the end of the year, was, in fact, considered soft towards the Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, giving rise to the talk of an unannounced understanding.

In the last two months of 1992, strong pressures were at work below the surface, which brought about a drastic, even qualitative transformation of the political scene. The unpredictability was breaktaking indeed. There is no guarantee that there will be no such turns in the new year. Even if there is no sudden twist, the aftermath of Dec. 6, 1992 promises to engage the attention of the Government and the political parties, virtually to the exclusion of other issues. This is not a happy scenario but the country will have to reckon with it. Will there be a silver lining? Will something positive come out of it?

Secular Basis of Nation Seen Weakening

93AS0431H Madras THE HINDU in English 29 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by C.P. Bhambhri: "Ayodhya & the Indian State"]

[Text] The Indian State collapsed on December 6, 1992 because it failed to defend itself against the action of a mob which was determined to destroy the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya. The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, did not speak the whole truth when he told Parliament on December 21 that because of the happenings at Ayodhya "the Constitution lies shattered. Article 365 lies shattered." This statement does not reflect the real significance of events at Ayodhya where the mob succeeded in destroying all the pillars of the Indian State.

Every institution of the Indian State was committed to defend the mosque, the rule of law and the Constitution. The U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] Government had made a clear commitment before the Supreme Court that legality would be fully enforced during the period of kar seva. The Central Government concretised its own commitment by sending battalions of paramilitary forces to Ayodhya. In spite of all public pronouncements and actions of the functionaries of the Indian States, the mosque was demolished by the kar sevaks and the protectors of legality and Constitution remained mere spectators of their own helplessness. Why has the State become [too] weak to protect the Constitution?

The effectiveness and strength of the authority of a democratic State depend on organised political parties and their role in society. It is a sociological law that

serious distortions and weaknesses of the political process exercise a crippling effect on the authority structure of the State. Can a State act as an effective guardian of secularism if the political process is moving towards militant competitive communalism? The answer to this can be found by analysing the role of the organised political parties in the democratic process of India. India has many weak secular parties and also religion-based parties of the Sikhs, the Muslims and the Hindus. Every religion-based party operates in the democratic process by mobilising the members of a community on the basis of special demands and privileges by projecting its special deprivations. The Akali Dals in Punjab have always maintained that the Sikh community has been a victim of discrimination and the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala has always won the elections by projecting itself as the guardian of the interests of the Muslims. The Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh and its later designation, the BJP, have always targeted the Muslims for every act of omission and commission.

Thus the religion-based parties have created political Sikhs, political Muslims and political Hindus for capturing political power to protect their respective communities' interests which are perceived to be threatened by the other communities. Thus communal politics is a reality and it has always challenged the weak secular democratic parties.

How have the secular parties responded to communal politics? Every major centrist political party has operated its secularism by accommodating community interests by following the politics of vote banks. The logic of politics of vote banks had definitely harmed the goals of secularism because the secular parties made compromises with the community leaders to win the elections. This compromise was dramatised by the Congress(I) in the Shah Bano case and was further highlighted when the leaders of all secular parties such as the Congress(I), and the Janata Dal approached the Muslim religious leaders for support in elections. The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid became an important luminary for the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal leadership. In this process, the cause of secularism suffered because the vote bank politics strengthened the vested interests among the communities and castes and the representatives of the communities started demanding a price from the secular parties.

Secular democracy is strenghthened if the leaders of various communities have a solid political base of their own and if they are able to act as authentic leaders across the communities. The Congress(I) and the Janata Dal do not have strong community leaders whose voice is heard across the communities. The struggle between secularism and communalism has become unequal because the secular parties are primarily concerned with the strategies of winning the elections on the basis of adjustments with the vote banks. The secularists have not launched an ideological offensive against the communalists and the result is that communalism has become strong in comparison to secularism.

This reality of the political process is reflected in a weak secular State, which fears to confront the militant Hindu or Muslim or Sikh because it will provide political ammunition to the communalists who will capitalise it during the elections. Mr Mulayam Singh, the former U.P. Chief Minister, became the victim of Hindu anger because of the firing in Ayodhya on October 30, 1990. So the Narasimha Rao Government decided not to confront the kar sevaks on December 6, 1992 because it may lead to Hindu backlash. How can the cause of secularism be advanced if the Indian State is worried about Hindu or Muslim or Sikh psyche and backlash?

Since the secular political process of India has become weak, the State has been compelled to use its administrative apparatus to confront and contain the challenge of militant communalism. Such an administrative response of the Indian State has been either inadequate or counter-productive. This administrative action of the State through the Operation Bluestar in June 1984 was considered a direct assault on the Sikh religion by the Sikh community. Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav's administrative action against the kar sevaks at Ayodhya on October 30, 1990 was considered illegitimate by a large number of Hindus in North India.

Another aspect of administrative response of the Indian State is that many functionaries of the State are also influenced by the ideology of religion-based parties. The growing communalisation of civil and police services is a reality of contemporary India because public services can never be completely insulated from the immediate social milieu.

The deepening of the economic crisis contributed to the growth of new communalism during the Eighties. It is well known that in Punjab, the Green Revolution has exhausted its potential of growth and new avenues of employment have not been generated for the youth of Punjab. All North Indian States are today the most backward regions of India and the large army of unemployed youth has been attracted towards Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, providing the muscle to Hindu militancy. The ideology of communalism provides a licence for criminality for the unemployed youth of various communities.

The secular and democratic State of India is involved in a deep struggle against the rising militant new communalism and this challenge can be met by drawing correct conclusions from the experience of the political process of post-Independent India. First, the politics of vote banks has completely distorted the meaning of secular politics and it has weakened the secular parties. The minority communities should be represented through their authentic and genuine grassroots leaders who have linkages across the communities. This would strengthen the social and political base of the secular parties because the genuine secular parties can launch real mass mobilisation against communal parties and organisations. Second, the political parties cannot fight ideological battles without an organisational network and the Indian

State is weak because the secular political parties have no effective mechanisms of mass linkage. Third, the political process has to be cleaned because a clear nexus has been established in large parts of India among the politicians, speculators, smugglers, bureaucracy and the land-grabbers. The financiers of communal riots and inter-community discord in important industrial and trading cities and towns of India are not committed to religion but to keep the State functionaries busy in fire-fighting activities.

The Indian State is becoming a simple "law and order" State because a powerful nexus has emerged among the socially parasitical groups to trade in illegality. If on the one hand the economic crisis has given birth to an army of unemployed youth, on the other smugglers and speculators are manipulating the State apparatus.

The crisis of a secular State will not end by simply marginalising the communal forces through administrative actions. The Indian State has to make a frontal attack against poverty and the nexus of criminals with communal forces. The events of December 6, 1992 are a warning that the crisis of the Indian State is quite basic and it has been in the making for the last 45 years and this trend can be reversed if appropriate lessons are drawn from the past.

Reasons Behind Growing Hindu Activism Viewed

93AS0428B Calcutta BARTAMAN in Bengali 2 Jan 93 p 4

[Article by Jayanta Ghoshal: "Why Are By-Gones Being Raised, It's Quite Late Now"]

[Text] There is a reason for everything. Nothing is created from a void. Now, we have suddenly beome concerned about the rise of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. What is the reason for the party's rise? We still are not facing up to this question. Yet, this is the time to do so, while the country is facing so much unrest. Why did the BJP expand? I know personally those who who are talking about creating a secular front to confront the BJP's rise. What these people have done all these years in the name of secularism, I, you, all of us know very well. They have appeased Muslims in order to make more secure their own vote banks on the pretext of secularism. In an educated manner, the communists speak against religious "communalism," while at the same time introducing their own atheistic Marxist prattle. Instead of our Vedas and Upanishads giving us strength, the Communist Manifesto is supposed to do the job. Truths considered basic in the past have been devalued, we are told to value only economic progress. We have forgotten the course of the past and now suffer increasing unrest. The BJP did not grow in a day; what were the political leaders doing all this time?

In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, suddenly BJP went from 2 to 89 seats. When I inquired as to the significance of this, leaders who are anti-BJP answered that the BJP's rise is only temporary, Hindu fundamentalists will never accomplish anything in this country. They are nothing but fanatics. They will quickly fade. They never once envisioned that this [movement] would not fade away. The power of Hindutva is bursting the dam and flooding us. Jyoti Basu did not understand this that day he met with Atal Behari Vajpayee in celebration [of victory over Congress (I) in the 1989 elections].

But why has the Hindutva wave grown more powerful? Look, often the motivation behind agitation movements is economic in nature. We have become accustomed to understanding agitation movements by minorities as economically motivated—but the majority community! We thought that this was not a possibilty, but it has become a reality.

It was not supposed to be like this. Bal Gangadhar Tilak [a Hindu Nationalist leader in the early 20th century] was very active in supporting Hinduism. Gandhiji called for Ram Rajya [a state founded on democratic principles found within the Hindu tradition]. He also supported Muslims in the Khilifat movement. Was this all a hoax? I don't know. The arguments still go on. Some say Hindu chauvinism was born in our country due to Muslim separatism. Others say Hindu malice towards Muslims is due to the torture, rape, and outrage Hindus suffered at the hands of Muslims when they ruled this country. It is difficult to say who is right. It is fruitless to ask—like the which-came-first, the-chicken-or-egg question.

What we really face today in this country is the reality of Congress's many years of treating Muslims as a "vote bank" [preceeding in English]. The Muslims have not been treated as human beings by Congress nor by Janata Dal or the leftists who do the same thing. It is due to this disgusting politics that BJP has managed to rise. If we don't accept this and simply raise slogans of secularism as opposed to communalism, we will not get anywhere. The situation simply will not change.

We must also note that Congress has used the religious issue for political gain as much as any party. They have created the BJP by their actions. Congress has serious conflicts with the leftists. At the same time, BJP has come to be considered the sole [political] representative of Hindutva. Yet the question remains; how did BJP become so powerful?

If Congress and leftist leaders could for even one moment forget political considerations and get together and calmly consider the cause of the increase in communalism, they would conclude that they are the cause. For all 45 years of independent India, this is true.

Congress leadership has considered the use of religion in politics as an investment, while the leftists have considered it the opium of the people. Both approaches have failed to accomplish anything for the masses. These approaches have been hollow and meaningless. The BJP is emerging in this political vacuum. Political deception runs rampant in this country. We can quote Karl Marx himself, "Force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new." In reality, we must respect the

fact that a new society is born out of the womb of the traditional society. Things would not have become as they are had we not disregarded our cultural past and become trapped in the idealism spawned by the diseased dialectics of determinism. We have come to consider Hinduism and Islam as hindrances to life, because of these atheistic dialectics.

Politicians during the past 45 years have come to view Muslims as votes! Sensitivities have not been considered. What's the use of making a big fuss now that Hindu sensitivities have been aroused. The BJP is by no means alone in playing the religion card for political gain; Congress and the leftists are equally guilty. If we are going to call politics that emphasizes the Hindu tradition "communal," then we must also refer to the politics of imams as communal. Congress and the leftists have been unwilling to do this.

We who are intellectuals, we who are supposed to be progressive, have not been willing to look at both [politics which are based on Hinduism and Islam] equally and critically. Intellectuals have been quick to condemn Hindus involved in recent incidents as fundamentalists. Yet these same intellectuals have not yet uttered a word about Islamic fundamentalists. How many times have these "intellectuals" spoken against appeasment of Muslims? Have they even had the guts to open thier mouths?

Now I come back to my original point. There is a reason for everything. One understands that a fire exits when he sees smoke. Communalism is nothing new in this country. Our country was divided on this very basis. Why are we surprised at the rise of Islamic communalism?

The same people who express such astonishment at the rising Islamic communalism are quick to condemn Hindu communalism. Those who have always spoken of Rabindranath [Tagore] as a bourgueous poet and Ramakrishna as a madman are now trying to use their names for political gain. But it's too late.

The sympathy wave for BJP was born out of the decadence of the Congress and leftist opportunists. So why are by-gones of their error-plagued past being raised now? Its much too late now.

Political Atmosphere Seen Surcharged Due To Politicians' Neglect

93AS0428A Calcutta BARTAMAN (Supplement) in Bengali 3 Jan 93 pp 1

[Article by Nishikh Ranjan Roy: "The Razed Structure and Ramlala"]

[Text] Did Emperor Babar think that, after 450 years, the name of the Babri mosque would not only be uttered, but would create such an excitement throughout the whole country? This has not only darkened the present, but also made the future uneasy and uncertain. It is such a "non-issue" that it cannot come closer to the real important "issues" of post-independent India, but the very name created unprecedented excitement in the minds of most Indians.

In comparison, the name Ayodhya is a much older one. This name is found in many old books and papers. According to hearsay, Ayodhya was the capital of the rulers of the Ikshaku dynasty in the age of "Treta," which means the second age of the world, according to the Hindu belief. From this place Ramchandra was sent into exile. After the end of the period of exile, he returned to this place and established his rule, the "Ramrajya." Many famous works of poetry and literature written about that story are read by millions of Indians with great respect as an act of virtue. Everything was going all right. It was suddenly claimed that the Babri mosque was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple. But they did not want to know for sure if there was any solid archeological evidence behind that claim. That mosque had not been in regular use for prayer for Muslims for a long time and remained almost deserted. On one morning, without the knowledge of anyone, some idols were placed inside the mosque. It was said that those were the idols of Ramlala and, therefore, the mosque would be used as a Hindu temple. This situation remained for a long time. It was not said that, because the mosque was build on the ruins of a Hindu temple, it should be destroyed. After a period of time, a new demand was made. It was claimed that the place was actually the the birth place of Ramchandra, and, therefore, it was a holy place for the Hindus. So, the mosque should be demolished, and a Hindu temple should be built on the same site. What is the proof of this claim? If they could not find acceptable evidence in support of their claim, the archeological department of the government might have been given the responsibility of searching for historical evidence about the claims. But nobody suggested it at that time. In those early days, if the whole region had been declared a "protected area," based on the existing law of the nation, for the purpose of the work of the department of archeological survey, then today's explosive situation might have been avoided. Everyone knows what happened after that. In the name of kar seva, the government was cheated (the state government also played a part in that), and the mosque was not only destroyed in the open daylight, but a makeshilt temple was erected on the ruins of the mosque. The whole matter was surprising and unbelievable. Some political parties were among these who instigated this wrongdoing. Those political parties, in spite of offering complete loyalty to the Constitution, allowed the destruction of the ideal of secularism.

They not only opposed the Constitution, they also opposed all the lessons of the history of India. India was never a country for any particular religious group. India was and still is a country of many different races, languages, cultures, creeds, and religions. Sometimes, there have been hostility and guarrels among different sections of people in the past. But the whole future of the nation was never tangled up in them. Similarly, the

question of the very nature and characteristics of our country, as well as the question of our safe existence, were never challenged.

There are many grave problems before our country. The problems in the world are also endless. But what is the justification of creating such excitement by bringing an unproven issue from the depths of the forgotten past? Some are saying that this kind of thing reminds them of the fanaticism of the Middle Ages. I must say that the incident of the Babri mosque is more disgraceful than what happened in the Middle Ages. When the Arab merchants started to arrive on the west coast of India for business, many of them began to live there. In response to their appeal, the Hindu kings of that region not only permitted them to build mosques, but in many cases also took responsibility for maintaining the mosques. The Sultan of Gazni attacked and damaged the Somnath temple, not for his religious fanaticism, but to plunder wealth. And the repair of the temple was never objected to. We usually forget that Aurangazeb arranged a tax free land in Punjab for the Vaishnavas. But we do not forget the destruction of the temples. It is doing nothing but arousing the spirit of the sleeping devil. Is there any logical explanation for this kind of dangerous tendency?

Many Islamic states have been established. We have Bangladesh and Pakistan right here in our region. India stands out as an exception. Some Hindus want India to be a Hindu state, in response to the establishment of these Islamic states. In addition, no matter how much we follow secularism as an ideal, we will be affected by our two neighboring states who do not share this ideal. Hindus in these countries are a minority and have no security. The Indian Hindu majority is prevented from fully being comfortable with secularism for this reason. In the name of religion, we were forced to accept the misfortune of the divison of this country into two independent states. History, therefore, does not help us to face the current unrest. We are, in reality, facing a situation as serious as that in 1947. India has more religions, castes, and races gathered into itself than any other country. Yet we have never faced a situation like we do today. While other nations have progressed and make plans for increased unity, we, despite our historical experience and increase in education and knowledge, are going backwards. Why? Where is the solution? It is unfortunate that we have never made an attempt to teach the masses a historical perspective. Our leaders are only interested in their vote banks; they don't give a damn about people's educational progress. Their policies also fail to reflect historical understanding. Now, as we face the end of the 20th century, India faces a national tragedy.

Congress (I) Mistakes Blamed For Rise of Political Right

93AS0437F Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 5 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Rakhahari Chatterji, professor of political science, Calcutta University: "Wrong Turn Helped the Right"; italicized words as published]

[Text]

The Congress's communal shift in the early 1980s weakened the political centre to the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] benefit.

Much ink has been spilt, and quite justifiably, on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. What needs to be answered is how this controversy, with political and religious ramifications but totally unknown to most Indians before 1986, could assume such proportions as to virtually bring India's political life to a standstill.

It must be understood first that the issue is not religious at all, but entirely political. For the crusaders of *Hindutva*, the Babri Masjid became a symbol of "pseudo secularism." Its destruction was the first major step towards the consolidation of Hindus, otherwise fragmented by caste and class, and the establishment of the Hindu Rashtra by popular mandate.

Babri Masjid was not a symbol of Indian secularism, but a historical monument. It needed to be preserved just as the Kandariya Mahadeo temple or the Taj Mahal does. The vandalism on December 6, 1992, was therefore incomprehensible, more so because the *Hindutva* warriors thought they could get away with it in the name of Ram.

One reason for it was Rajiv Gandhi's capitulation to fundamentalist Muslims in the Shah Bano case. It emboldened the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh- [RSS] Vishwa Hindu Parishad-Bharatiya Janata Party combine to take an aggressive course. But this is only part of the answer. For the rest it is necessary to go further back.

A high point in the chain of explanatory events is the election of 1977 when the Congress was, for the first time, voted out of power. Till then, the Congress's 43.5 percent votes in parliamentary elections were dependent on the minorities-Scheduled Caste/ [SC] Scheduled Tribes [ST] section constituting about 37 percent of the electorate. Secularism for the Congress, therefore, meant support or protection of backward communities vis a vis Hindu communal forces drawing sustenance primarily from urban upper caste groups in the Hindi heartland.

The Janata victory in that year represented the alienation of these minorities from the Congress. The Janata Party captured the 38 reserved SC seats in the Hindi heartland and 61 percent of ST reserved seats all over India.

Most Muslims too moved away from the Congress. During the campaign the imam of Jama Masjid had accused Indira Gandhi of turning Indian Muslims against the Jana Sangh and the RSS. "Freedom for Muslims," he said, "depends not upon the election of a pro-Muslim government but on living in a country in which the laws protect all communities."

In 1980, Mrs. Gandhi's return was indeed "triumphant." But in the Hindi heartland states, apart from Madhya Pradesh where she fared marginally better than in 1971,

the Congress faced a debacle. Among the minorities, only ST voters returned overwhelmingly to the Congress fold. SC votes remained divided.

The Muslim electorate was also divided. The Congress won only 36 percent of the Muslim vote and 45 percent of the seats in 64 constituencies with 20-50 percent Muslim voters. These statistics prove the party was being eased out of north-central India and the opposition was making inroads into its minority vote bank. The impressive Congress victories in 351 parliamentary constituencies in 1980 were mainly due to opposition disunity rather than a restoration of its relationship with the minorities.

The relationship was, of course, difficult to reestablish. The process of separating parliamentary from state elections, beginning from 1971, and the manipulation of the Emergency in 1975 to impose centralisation and Mrs. Gandhi's personal domination were detrimental to the Congress's interests.

The wider powers under Emergency were wrested at the expense of seeking grassroots support through patronising, bargaining and compromising with local leaders, as had been the Congress practice earlier. In the absence of local mediation, it was impossible for the Congress to rebuild bridges with alienated voters, whether minority or not, at local and constituency levels.

The emergence of the political right was simultaneously being spearheaded by the BJP in the 1980s. By 1982, the BJP had not only established itself as the second major party in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, it also began winning rural support in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It successfully competed with the Congress for upper caste votes. Added to this were the major defeats of the Congress in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and the exposure of its bankrupt policy in Kashmir which drove Mr. Farooq Abdullah into the opposition camp.

An *India Today-Marg* opinion poll carried out in December, 1983, showed around two-thirds the electorate responded positively to queries about Congress mismanagement. More particularly, it indicated support for the Congress ranged between 27 to 37 percent of the electorate in the four southern capitals.

Theses factors, combined with the imbroglio in Punjab, led to a major shift in Congress strategy towards communalism. Elections in 1983 in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh indicated south India was an uncertain turf. Hence the Congress once again looked to north and central India for electoral support.

Since the institutional mechanism for generating local support as well as its traditional vote banks had been destroyed, the Congress felt courting Hindu chauvinism would be the quickest and surest way of creating a base in the Hindi heartland. It was only apparently a "creative strategy," aimed at reversing the party's decline in influence before the elections in late 1984 took place.

The main themes of the aggressive and decidedly communal campaign launched by Rajiv Gandhi in 1984 had very likely been worked out well before Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. There is evidence to show it was a line adopted by both mother and son.

The success of the strategy was immediate. Many RSS activists deserted the BJP and turned liberal under Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's leadership, extending support to the Congress. Mrs. Gandhi counted on undermining the BJP by moving to the right of the party. She sought to protect India from communalism and, in the process, transformed the Congress into a communal mouthpiece. The Congress's landslide victory was not due to its organisational strength, but its new communal appeal.

The Congress shift from its centrist position under a political novice like Rajiv Gandhi led to confusion in matters of policy after 1984. He began to indulge in bipolar communalism by giving in to both Muslim and Hindu fundamentalists. This policy neither brought the minorities back into the Congress fold nor satisfied the increasingly menacing demands of the Hindu lobby. Support in north-central India continued to elude the party. The BJP, after Mr. Vajpayee's departure from leadership, regained its preeminent position in the *sangh parivar.*

The exit poll conducted by the *India Today-Marg* during the 1991 elections clearly indicated the 36 percent of the upper caste vote had shifted to the BJP as against the Congress's 32 percent. The SC/ST and Muslim vote remained divided. The Congress managed to win 44 and 46 percent of the latter respectively but this was due to the sympathy wave following Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. The Mandal issue had further fragmented the Hindu vote with the backward castes evenly divided between the Congress, the BJP and the Janata Dal.

The Ayodhya crisis has to be considered in this context. The strategies and policies adopted by the Congress completely destroyed its pre-1967 image of a consensus building, secular and centrist party supported by a significant network of leaders at state and local levels. Its power base today is fragmented all over the country, particularly in the Hindi heartland despite Mrs. Gandhi's courtship of Hindu chauvinists. A quarter century of short sighted politics and brazen corruption has transformed it from party representing everyone in general to one representing no one in particular.

The rise and shaky survival of a number of centrist outfits have created a kind of multiparty system about to self-destruct by splitting the same vote banks. The left has failed miserably in its attempt to penetrate the Hindi heartland and expand its base in areas other than traditional strongholds. Hence the BJP, with strong organisational support from the RSS and the VHP, is about to fill in a genuine power vacuum in the country.

Mr. Jyoti Basu's repeated calls for a common platform to fight communalism is, in essence, an attempt to rejuvenate the centre in Indian politics. It could not have been

more . Yet it must also be borne in mind the platform will not be easy to build. To be more than a political gimmick, it will demand an energetic campaign at grassroots levels.

But the Congress, still the most important centrist party, appears too demoralised at present. Organisationally it is so weak it may not be able to readopt the process of bargaining and accommodation at local levels. Its failure to genuinely democratise itself, as the recent elections of chief ministers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka demonstrated, is an ominous sign. The extent it has been infiltrated by communal elements welcomed in the 1980s is also not known exactly.

The party can no longer exercise control over ambitious members who may seek to wreck its system of alliances with strong state level parties for personal gain, as was the case in Kashmir in 1983-84. Leaders of other centrist parties are so dogged in their pursuit of high office that there is every possibility they would sabotage the common platform were it to be formed. Differences would soon arise between the potential partners of the alliance against communalism over divergent views of economic policy. In addition it will have to face the BJP charge of minority appeasement. A task that calls for distinguishing between the genuine and fake charges, responding to the former and exposing the latter. It is quite likely this will be beyond the capacity of the proposed common front.

There are winning votes for a strong centrist party. But the failure of the Congress and the left to take unambiguous stands has emboldened rightist and communal forces to think their moment has arrived. A common platform is necessitated by the fact the centre may truly fail to hold, thanks to the Congress's internal weaknesses. But whether the party can create a coalition of forces tackling real issues rather than taking symbolic postures is the important question. If the platform is merely a front it is sure to be defeated by the *Hindutva* warriors. It remains to be seen if the Congress is capable of denying the BJP the 20 percent votes it still needs for a parliamentary majority. This is precisely the percentage the BJP expects the makeshift Ram temple at Ayodhya to deliver.

Political Parties Misusing Religious Symbolism

93AS0412B Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 2 Jan 93 p 4

[Article by Sunit Ghosh: "Not Only BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), But Congress, Janata, Everyone is Politically Capitalizing on the Mandir-Masjid"]

[Text] Has Narasimha Rao lost control over his government? The reason for doubt centers around the prime minister's recent statement about the visit of "Ramlala" at Ayodhya in order to pay homage. On 28 December at Tirubanantapuram, in reply to the questions of the reporters, the prime minister said that he did not know under what circumstances the district administration of Faizabad opened the doors of the temporary Ram temple at Ayodhya for the visits of the devotees.

On 6 December, last, the devotees erected a makeshift temple on the ruins of the Babri mosque and placed an idol of God Ram and started worshipping in order to establish the right of Ramlala on the disputed site. When the local administration prohibited the visiting of the temple by the devotees because of a curfew, the three Hindu organizations appealed to the Allahabad High Court against the order of the local administration. The Uttar Pradesh government argued before the court that, since a curfew was in effect in that area from 6 through 27 December, the devotees were prohibited from visiting that place. This decision of the state government annoyed the devotees. A few hundred saints disobeyed the government order and were arrested. The religious leaders threatened that, if the visitors were not allowed to see the idol and to worship in that temple, they would start a larger movement.

As usual, the Allahabad High Court took time to make a ruling, which made the situation more complicated. Under these circumstances, on 28 December the district administration of Faizabad allowed some devotees to visit the idol of Ramlala. It is natural that this decision of the local administration created confusion within the political circle.

But the kind of "ignorance" expressed by the prime minister in this regard at Tirubanantapuram was not only ridiculous but also dangerous. As long as the BJP government was in power in Uttar Pradesh, the Central Government could remain free of worry, because the decisionmaking responsibility about Ayodhya was entirely a matter for the state government. At that time, the Central Government could say anything against the state government. But after the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh government and the imposition of president's rule over Uttar Pradesh, a statement like this—"I don't know what the local administration did"—by the prime minister is not acceptable. It was not possible for the district administration of Faizabad to allow the visitation of "Ramlala" without receiving prior permission from the state government authority at Lucknow. Otherwise, this kind of work will be suicidal. And even a child will not believe that the representatives of the Central Government at Lucknow took the risk of making such a decision without consulting the home ministry at New Delhi.

Though it is an old thing, it should be said again that, from the beginning the Congress Party has played a political game with Ayodhya. It began in 1949, when Jawaharlal Nehru was the prime minister and Govind Vallabh Pant was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. Both of them were ardent supporters of secularism. The big Congress Party leaders of those days did not think it necessary to investigate the reason for the sudden emergence of Ramlala in that disputed structure. Then after the ruling of the Allahabad High Court, the doors of the temple were closed to the devotees. But the state government did not try to transfer the idol from the structure,

and the worship of the idol regularly took place for year after year inside the locked temple. For the last 37 years, the Uttar Pradesh government, whether under the Congress Party or the Janata Party, never made a decision about the idol, thinking of the emotions and sensitiveness of the Hindus about God Ram. On the other hand, the Muslim leaders of the state accepted the reality and never insisted on praying inside the mosque.

The Congress government of Uttar Pradesh opened the doors of this temple to the public on 1 February 1986. It was done clearly to respect the emotions and the sentiments of the Hindus. At that time, Rajiv Gandhi, known as a secular person, was the prime minister of India. It is difficult to believe that Arun Nehru put pressure on the Uttar Pradesh government to do that without the knowledge of Rajiv Gandhi. It may be that Arun Nehru was an extremely powerful person at that time, and he committed many wrongs. But it is also not true that Rajiv was completely innocent and perfect.

Arun Nehru and others did all their things with Rajiv's approval. But the opening of the doors of the temple was not a wrongdoing. Because Rajiv was certain about the existence of the temple, he did not object to the opening of the doors. Because he was so certain, he thought it wise to remain silent when Narayan Dutt Tiwari arranged to lay the foundation stone of the temple. According to confirmed sources, after the beginning of the temple-mosque dispute, Rajiv privately told some of the non-Congress leaders, "My brother, I know that is a temple." The same kind of utterances were heard from V.P. Singh in his conversation with the BJP leaders. Maybe at that time, V.P. Singh found it necessity to satisfy the BJP leaders in order to secure his position. All these big so-called "secular" leaders did not have the moral courage to speak the truth openly because of the fear of losing Muslim votes. All of this happened a few years ago. Prime Minister V.P. Singh had decided to declare an ordinance to secure the disputed land for building of the temple. But within 24 hours, he had to change his decision because of the pressure of the Imam of the Jama Masjid. There is no need to repeat the history of what happened later on. Everyone knows the circumstances under which the BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani started his "Ratha Yatra" from Somnath just to neutralize the power of the "Mondal Weapon" of V.P. Singh, and, by arresting Advani, how Lalu Yadav helped him to become a "national leader" in the Hindi-speaking region. It is also known to everyone that Mulayam Singh Yadav lost his government in Lucknow by forcing the police to open fire on the nonviolent "kar sevaks" at Ayodhya.

In the background of this scenario, the placement of the idol of Ramlala on the ruins of the mosque and the withdrawal of the order allowing visits to the temple should be judged. According to the report in an influential daily English newspaper of New Delhi, the district administration of Faizabad permitted the devotees to visit the temple after receiving permission from the government at Lucknow, and the Uttar Pradesh government, which is under president's rule, gave the green signal to the district administration, after consulting with the authorities in New Delhi. In spite of knowing everything, now Prime Minister Narasimha Rao pretends that he knew nothing about the whole affair. Thus, like his "secular" predecessors, he is trying to cheat his own conscience.

Narasimha Rao is conscious of the fact that the Hindu sentiments are deeply involved with the name of Ram. From Nehru, Govind Vallabh Pant, to Rajiv Gandhi—all were conscious of that fact. Whether or not Narasimha Rao will openly admit it, he told the saints in a meeting prior to the incident of 6 December, that the disputed structure was a Hindu temple. Because he was sure about the Hindu character of the structure, he decided to take the opinion of the Supreme Court. It is undesirable to involve the court in such a matter. It falls in the jurisdiction of the archaeological department.

There is no doubt that, however undesirable it may be, the temple-mosque dispute is number one on the agenda in the national politics. The BJP definitely can claim the credit for this. Rao said that some steps should be taken to end this controversy once and for all. The course of the steps taken by his government from 6 December could not make anyone happy. While the declaration of intention to rebuild the mosque made the Hindus unhappy, the permission to visit the makeshift temple of Ramlala made the Muslims unhappy. It is not possible to reach a national consensus on the issues of securing the disputed land and making a trust to build the temple and the mosque. On the other hand, all the political parties, including the Congress, are busy with the publicity of their own "action plan." Everyone thinks that another election is coming.

Whether this apprehension is correct or not, and whatever efforts are being made by the prime minister to brush off that apprehension, the fact is that the verdict by which the Congress came to power in the Central Government two years ago now is absolutely meaningless. To end an undesirable and damaging dispute, the Rao government would have to go to the people to get a fresh mandate. In a poor country like India, repeatedly having elections is nothing but a luxury. But, probably, there is no other alternative.

Religion Said Indispensable

93AS0411B Bombay NAVBHARAT TIMES in Hindi 2 Jan 93 p 6

[Commentary by Kishan Patnayak: "Politics in the Wrong Turn"]

[Text] Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had become infamous for his inactivity. Then he made several aggressive decisions in his cabinet meeting on 6 December: 1. He dismissed the U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] Vidhan Sabha; 2. Imposed legal restrictions on five communal parties; 3. Announced that the mosque would be rebuilt; and 4.

Dismissed the remaining three BJP- [Bharatiya Janata Party] controlled state governments. Each decision was solid and aggressive and created an atmosphere of active involvement.

From a limited perspective, all these decisions were appropriate. A prime minister would have no other alternative in a such a situation. If we had done what Narasimha Rao had done until 6 December, we would have done exactly what Narasimha Rao did after 7 December. The trust in the government would have all disappeared if all these steps were not taken. It would have seemed like there was no government in the country, and the concept of secularism would have been shredded totally. Even declaring mid-term elections at that time would have been dangerous.

It would have been better if the party had replaced Narasimha Rao with Arjun Singh and let Arjun Singh take all the steps that Narasimha Rao took. However, the result would have been the same.

These steps were not taken for the purpose of solving any problems. The government had to protect itself and salvage secularism. It was done as a temporary measure. It appears that, while communalism has the strength of unity, secularism has the support of the government. The government has put a hold on political parties. Soon, the people will be tested as to whether they support the person who used the government for controlling political parties.

It is ironic that no effort has been made to get the support of the people. The restrictions will be removed soon, since any more repression would mean taking away rights that are required in a democracy. An emergency-like situation will have to be created in order to ban the BJP. The restrictions on the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] are useless without imposing these restrictions on the BJP also. In a democratic system, we cannot suppress factional or communal campaigns for a long time by imposing restrictions on them. This problem will resurface whenever the BJP plans to confront the Central or state government.

Just after the 6 December incident, it looked like there was going to be wide-spread dissatisfaction in our society. The BJP leaders were also thinking along that line. However, the feelings about nationalism and national unity have weakened so much that this dissatisfaction proved to be momentary. Even in the states where there are secular governments, there was no public refutation. This situation will be ideal for the RSS family and they will become active again under the BJP flag.

All non-BJP opposition parties are fully dependent on the Congress Party. It does not matter how much they criticize Narasimha Rao, they are not ready to confront the BJP without the direct or indirect support of the Congress Party. The remaining parties, except the Janata Party (S), also want the BJP to be restricted. At this rate, soon there will be a demand for emergency rule in order to save secularism. The communists will welcome it the most. There are people here and abroad who want to impose emergency rule in order to accelerate economic reforms. The conviction that economic reforms are slowed down because of the democratic system is being presented to the IMF again and again. The economic reform zealots will have the opportunity to implement these reforms under the guise of saving secularism.

The most unfortunate and ridiculous decision the prime minister made is to rebuild the mosque. The prime minister should not have made this announcement so suddenly. No Muslim organization demanded that the mosque be rebuilt. The paradox about our secular politicians is that they try to be more Muslim than the Muslims themselves.

Who will be responsible for rebuilding the mosque? Will the Center's Public Works Department select two contractors for building the mosque and the temple? Or will this work be given to the religious organizations representing the two communal groups? How will these trusts function? Will there not be opposition to rebuilding the mosque just as there was to saving it? First, they have to resolve the issue of whether the area belongs to the temple or to the mosque. The structure was gone on 6 December, however, the Hindus worship there. Has Narasimha Rao decided to remove the worship place from there? If not, then the announcement about rebuilding the mosque is unethical.

The mosque will not be built just because of a government order or the formation of a coalition of secular political groups. If the prime minister is serious about rebuilding the mosque, he must take some dramatic steps. For example, he can relinquish all other duties of the prime minister's position for one year and focus on this one task. He should poll the people about building the mosque. He should visit the whole country and tell the people that this is a question of the dignity of our nation and our Hindu religion. We should return to the Muslims the land on which Babri Masjid was located, and give them permission to rebuild there. They should collect money for that purpose, since government money cannot be used for building a mosque.

If Narasimha Rao is sincere, this drama will be a part of our history. If he is not sincere, this drama will not even begin. Building the mosque by another means does not seem to be practical. It is not possible in a democracy. Hindu tolerance cannot always be used as an easily-available coin. This is just something hidden in the Hindu mind or just a possibility. In order to use it, one must expand it and augment it. They must be able to touch the Hindu mind, but that cannot be accomplished by raising slogans or asking them, "Brother, embrace the Muslims." The Hindu ire over the mosque destruction has cooled down now. The broken mosque does not worry them. If there is a Hindu campaign against rebuilding the mosque, it would not consider it wrong. The secular groups could not carry out any effective meeting or procession against the mosque demolisher in

December; how can they do something more successful in the support of rebuilding the mosque a few months later?

There is another possible solution. The idea is to make the disputed site a national museum, leaving it in the present razed condition, and not building any fancy temple or mosque there. That place is not good for worship anymore. At times, we wonder if the secular leaders' policy is just to appease the Muslims. Why are the communist and socialist leaders not trying to get popular support for building a museum there? They are not talking about either a national museum or the organization of a national kar seva. Therefore, their secularism is suspect. The BJP definitely is a communal political party. However, it is not wrong in asserting that it is being opposed by pseudo-secularism.

Narasimha Rao has expressed his opinion about only one political program so far. Actually, it is an election program—organization of a secular camp. This camp is a distinct possibility because the communists welcome it. The Janata Dal has some problems with it; however, some of the more powerful factions of the Janata Dal will support it. Establishment of such a camp would be a blessing for the BJP and the RSS family. The BJP will not only be the Hindu political party, but also the one and only opposition party at the national level. Formation of this camp means acceptance of the fact that no party can oppose the BJP by itself.

There are several other dangers of the secular camp. Until now, secularism has been the declared policy of most of the political parties. However, no party had declared it as the only or the most important issue. The people never considered it an important issue. The meaning of this "Nehruist" word is not clear. There is one anti-religious connotation also. If a leader is secular, why does he repeat demands for building the temple or the mosque? How can we use such an ambiguous word as a war whoop to stop the Hindu crusaders? By uniting all the parties against the BJP, one could win the elections once, but it would not effect the people. The better word is, social justice.

The slogan of secularism does not attract Hindu groups totally, but the mention of Hinduism attracts all Hindus. Secularism attracts only non-Hindu groups, because they interpret it wrongly and think that separate laws will continue for each religious group.

Making secularism the main issue would mean making religion the main issue. In practice, the Ayodhya issue will become the sole Indian political issue. The economic issue will lose its importance. The economic slavery of our country and questions about the desolation of our people caused by the conspiracies of the capitalist powers will disappear. This would be a major triumph for the government that desires economic equality when it silences the communists and the Janata Dal by bringing them into its own camp. It is difficult to believe that all communist parties are ready for it. Not only communists, but, because of their efforts, the Janata Dal and the Mulayam Singh camp are also leaning toward it. Arun Ghosh, famous economist and former member of the Planning Commission, expressed his surprise in a recent article. He says, "The left-wing parties have relinquished economic issues totally. It is a surprising and totally incomprehensible development. Even the Janata Dal leaders who wanted to help the backward people are charmed by the "internationalization" of the Indian economy. They are not worried about the increase in foreign debts." (THE MAINSTREAM, 12 Dec 92.)

The secular groups will have to answer a question in this connection. The question is very old and they themselves have raised it. If there are no economic issues and economic problems continue to increase, will communal tension increase or decrease? Will it be easier or not to move against communalism by focusing on economic issues and uniting the people to fight against inflation, unemployment, and economic slavery?

If the issue of economic and social justice become weak in the secular political groups' agenda, their politics will also become weak. How can they fight the BJP then?

RSS Leader Interviewed on Plan, Views

93AS0399A Varnasi AJ in Hindi 30 Dec 92 p 12

[Interview with Rajju Bhaiya, RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) leader, by Alok Shahi, date and place not given; "The Sangh is Sad But Not Remorseful"]

[Text] [Shahi] How responsible do you think the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] was for the 6 December happenings? Do you have any regrets?

[Rajju Bhaiya] It is wrong to blame the RSS for what happened in Ayodhya on 6 December. It was not the first time that the kar sevaks had assembled to demand the building of the temple. In October 1990, when Mulayam Singh was UP's [Uttar Pradesh] chief minister, more than 100,000 kar sevaks assembled there. Mulayam Singh had announced that "even a bird would not be allowed to reach the disputed area." Some people had to testify over it. A large number of kar sevaks gathered in July 1992 also and were active on the 2.77 acre of land. On both these occasions, the kar sevaks did not demolish the structure because that was not their goal. Ram's worship has been conducted in this structure for the last 40 years. It was considered practically a temple. The kar sevaks just wanted to rebuild the temple of Ram representing the identity of India. The Central Government used complicated legal formulas to stop the kar sevaks twice. The devotees of Ram had no faith left in the government. They did not want to return empty-handed again and again. Even until the last minute, all we wanted was for the government to remove legal restrictions on worship in the 2.77 acre parcel of land. We had been quietly carrying out worship in that disputed structure for two or three years. We had hoped that someway would be found by then. The Central Government

wanted to hurt the Hindus on purpose and made the legal system a pawn in this effort. As a result, Hindu patience was lost on 6 December. The RSS feels sorry for this incident, but is not remorseful.

[Shahi] The government blames the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] for breaking the series of negotiations.

[Rajju Bhaiya] The way the prime minister called the disputed structure Babri Masjid in his speech on 15 August in the Red Fort hurt the feelings of the Hindus. We still continued the negotiations hoping that the Central Government would remove the hurdles preventing the building of the temple on the 2.77 piece of land, 2.04 acres of which belongs to the Ram Janambhoomi Trust. As for the question of the disputed structure, we have provided proof to Chandra Shakhar's government that Ram's temple was destroyed and a mosque built over it. We also provided proof to Narasimha Rao's government. However, Narasimha Rao continued to follow the policy of procrastination. Had the Supreme Court decision on the 2.77-acre land been delivered on 5 December instead of 11 December, the 6 December occurrence could have been avoided. We had appealed to the government to insist that the court make this important decision before 6 December, because of rising tension. Kumar Manglam, the central minister, also agreed with us; however, the only goal Narasimha Rao had was to make this issue explode and have a reason to dismiss the BJP governments.

[Shahi] Why do you consider the 6 December incident sad?

[Rajju Bhaiya] Because destroying the disputed structure was not our goal.

[Shahi] Do you not think that the provocative speeches that Sadhvi Rithambhara and Uma Bharati issued before 6 December caused the situation to deteriorate?

[Rajju Bhaiya] Sadhvi Rithambhara and Uma Bharati are not RSS members. What they and other holy sadhus said can be described as the anger of the Hindus against the government.

[Shahi] What is your opinion about the dismissal of the BJP governments?

[Rajju Bhaiya] This is the murder of democracy. The two basic elements of the Indian Constitution are democracy and secularism. The Congress governments until now have been publicizing their secularism while practicing the policy of Muslim appeasement in order to get votes. However, it has strangled the democracy to fulfill its petty political ambitions and feels no embarrassment or hesitancy in this act. Over 250 million people of our country are under presidential rule now and have been deprived of their right to be ruled by elected governments. As for stopping the violence that erupted after the Ayodhya incident, the violence in the BJP governed states was much more controlled when compared to the bloodshed in Congress states like Maharashtra, Gujrat, Karnataka, and Assam.

[Shahi] What kind of political path will the RSS take after imposition of restrictions on it?

[Rajju Bhaiya] The RSS, of course, will knock at the doors of courts against these restrictions. At the same time, it will bring the issue to the people's court.

[Shahi] Does the RSS still have faith in the legal system after all this has happened?

[Rajju Bhaiya] The RSS has full faith in the legal system. Why do you not ask this question of the Narasimha Rao government, which refused to follow the court decision made over the Kaveri case? A similar incident took place in UP a few years ago. Three bodies of Sunni Muslims were buried in a Shi'a Muslim cemetery. The court declared the Sunni act inappropriate and ordered the Sunnis to remove the bodies. The state government, however, refused to obey the court order saying that it would disrupt law and order. You also know what happened in the Shah Bano case. It is not appropriate to keep the courts waiting over a question of national identity.

[Shahi] Are you still planning to raise the questions about Mathura and Kashi which followed Ayodhya as promised earlier?

[Rajju Bhaiya] The issue of rebuilding temples in Mathura and Kashi is not any less important than Ayodhya to us. The temples of Mathura and Kashi are as important to the majority Hindus as is Ram's birthplace. If these three temples are not returned to the Hindus peacefully and fairly to show respect for their religious feelings, then the VHP is ready to raise the issue of 3,000 temples.

[Shahi] What is the guarantee that the VHP will be quiet after the three temples are returned to it?

[Rajju Bhaiya] We are ready to guarantee that.

[Shahi] Can the BJP form a coalition with other political parties during the next elections?

[Rajju Bhaiya] Agreements with other parties can be made if they give up their policy of showing contempt to the Hindu faith and accept the Hindu claims on their temples in Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura that are our national identity. No agreement without it will be possible.

[Shahi] If it is installed at the Center, what will be the BJP's attitude toward the Muslims?

[Rajju Bhaiya] The RSS or the BJP have never said anything about pushing the 140 million Muslims our of this country. They will receive justice just like other citizens of this country. They will have the freedom to worship. However, there will be no pacification. All

efforts will be made to spread education among the Muslims and make them competent citizens.

[Shahi] I would like to change the subject and discuss the basic character of the RSS now. Why does the RSS avoid playing an effective role in removing prevalent ills in Hindu society?

[Rajju Bhaiya] Look, we do not have pipe dreams like the socialists and communists of being able to change the society overnight. The RSS believes that reforming an individual's character is the most important step in reforming society. Changing the society without changing the people is a hopeless cause. The RSS is organizing groups of disciplined volunteers for this purpose. We have 26,000 branches all over the nation. We teach the youth character-building, patriotism, and responsibility for the society. When these youth have all these qualities, the society will be cleansed of ills.

[Shahi] It is often said that the RSS is controlled by the higher castes and urban people. What can you say about it?

[Rajju Bhaiya] The truth is that we neither ask nor do we know the castes of the people who are in the RSS. We do not know which volunteer is of which caste. During the initial phase of its organization, the RSS needed literate people who could understand our philosophy and spread it among the people. The persons who met these criteria were mostly of higher castes and from cities. However, there are 26,000 branches of the RSS now and there are no more than 3,000 cities. Villagers of all castes are members of these branches in large numbers. Not only this, the RSS is managing more than 5,000 projects for helping the aborigine Indians through various organizations affiliated with it.

[Shahi] What would you say about the lack of a democratic structure in your party?

[Rajju Bhaiya] We hold elections for officers every three years. We also hold elections for the state party chiefs. The appointment of "sarsangh sanchalak" who is the guide, friend, and philosopher of the group is nominated by the office holders and is made by common agreement.

Meaning of Being a Hindu in South Asia Examined

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[Article by Prabash Joshi: "The Religion of a Hindu"]

[Text] Being called an anti-Hindu is not a major accusation. I have been called a mullah, Mir Jaffar, and Jai Chand during the last few months. It was said that the blood of some Muslim slave girl is flowing in my veins. Many people even raised questions about my parents. Some people believe that I am spewing poison just to prove that I am secular and an intellectual. The remaining people believe that I desire money and position by brownnosing the government. Some of the people who know a lot have learned that I have embraced Islam in order to receive thousands of petro dollars from Saudi Arabia and to have permission to marry three more times!

As if all this were not enough, a "pure" Hindu from Calcutta has demanded that orders for my assassination be issued, just like for Salman Rushdie. The Bajrang Dal from Bombay said on their regular letter pad that I will die like a dog. We published that statement on the front page of the Bombay edition of the JANSATTA. In the Hindu religion, we have the practice of expelling people from their castes; however, not even the highest Hindu priests have the right to expel one from the religion, because a Hindu is not baptized by a saint, religious guru, or Shankaracharya. Thus, it does not matter how much they wish to, they cannot evict me from my religion!

Justice Ranganath Misra, former chief justice of India, told me in Cuttock not to worry about all these letters, phone calls, and warnings, because I am in good company. He was the chief justice when the Supreme Court imposed the restriction on building the temple until the court could make a decision. That is when his being a Hindu was questioned, and he is being called names in the letters he is receiving. I have a hard time believing that the Hindus who want to build Ram's temple are that petty and cowardly. However, I am fully assured, after receiving letters for six months and hearing all these talks that, "this is an explosion of Hindu feelings." My mature and respected friends within the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], and the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] tell me that this cannot be the work of people belonging to the RSS family. However, they say the same thing about the destruction of the Babri Masjid structure on 6 December. They also call it unavoidable and "The Hindu Victory Day," even though they call it unfortunate and condemnable. The BJP leaders say that this is not the work of their party members; however, they are trying to cash in on this incident and plan to establish a government in Delhi. I do not hesitate even a second in believing that the RSS leaders do not think there is anything wrong in silencing me with these letters and threats. Just like Babri Masjid was torn down in a Hindu emotional outburst, they do not think it wrong to cool down a writer-editor. I am aware of the narrow and merciless aspects of the RSS mentality, and have no complaint or bitterness about it against them.

I am a Hindu and believe in the immortality of the soul. I also believe in reincarnation and punishments or rewards for one's karma. My religion gives me strength to deal with sins. I do that on the strengths of my faith, philosophy, my nonviolent nature, and the indestructible power of religion, and not by reacting negatively and using cowardly violence for revenge. I am a Hindu because I was born a Hindu. I had no right over selecting my religion. My parents could not deny the fact that I was their son, even if they wanted to. Similarly, I cannot deny the fact that I am a Hindu. If in a hypothetical situation the Hindu religion had the same system of evicting people as do other religions and the Hindus were allowed to change religion if they wished, I would have strongly opposed my eviction from the Hindu religion and decided to remain a Hindu mentally, vocally, and through deeds.

Being a Hindu means having a direct connection between oneself and God. I do not need to reach him through a pope, archbishop, or preacher. I do not need to get support from a mulla or a maulvi. I am not controlled by a mahant or a Shankaracharya. My religion gives me full freedom to choose my deity, my method of worship, and my life-style according to my convictions. It is not required of me to have long hair, holy thread, loin cloth, or special worship clothes, or to worship daily, visit temple in the morning and evening, deify, sing religious songs, and visit pilgrimages to bathe in holy rivers. This religious freedom gives me education in secularism and democracy from my birth.

The philosophy of my religion gives me freedom and the ability to face any situation openly and to find a solution for it. My religion does not put any restrictions on me like those imposed by other religions. As a Hindu, I am as independent as I cannot be in any other religion. My religion also frees me from the pressure of death and other situations because death is just part of the continuous cycle that has no beginning and no end. It considers the soul indivisible, indestructible, and inexploitable. It considers the soul as constant, omnipresent, flawless, permanent, and eternal. This religion takes me above birth and death. There is no other philosophy that gives me more freedom. I do not have to believe in the Vedas. If this religion did not allow diversity, it would have only one Veda and not four. I do not have to consider an Upanishad my religious book. There is not one Upanishad; we have 108 of them! We have 18 Mahapuranas also. We do not have to consider the Bhagavad Gita the only and required book, like the Bible, the Koran, or the Guru Granth Sahib. The Bhagavad Gita is a part of the Mahabharata and many of its poems are found in the Upanishads. There are so many Puranas and religious books. However, there is also the tradition of worshipping the God with or

without qualities so one can totally ignore all these books. The worshippers consider having a guru a must. However, even Poet Kabir, who considered a guru to be everything, admitted that "the guru will suffer the results of his karmas and the disciple his own." In other words, even the guru cannot save you at the time of last accounting. Thus, the last truth is your own deeds, and you will have to suffer the results. No one is exempt from the results of one's deeds. We receive the results in our next incarnation, if not in this life.

My religion has not exempted even incarnations of God from punishment of deeds. God is above sins and good deeds, therefore, is above being rewarded or punished for his deeds. However, every incarnation of God has to pay for his good and bad deeds. Lord Brahma created the universe, but fell in love with his own daughter, Saraswati. That is why there is no temple for him, except the one at Pushkar, and he is not worshipped by anyone, because his daughter cursed him. The Great Ram, who never broke any ethical requirement, did all the required religious deeds; however, he cheated in the Bali-Sugreev battle and unjustly exiled Sita. He had to suffer the punishment of these deeds by being defeated by his own sons, and Sita decided to disappear into the ground. She did not return to the husband who had exiled her. Lord Krishna was considered a perfect incarnation of God; however, because of Gandhari's curse, his whole Yadav dynasty was destroyed right in front of his own eyes. The great warrior Arjuna could not protect Krishna's 1008 queens from robbers and scoundrels, and a common hunter killed him with an arrow. Lord Shiva was insulted by his own father-in-law and had to bear his sutty wife on his chest. Even Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh could not save themselves from the result of their karmas. The remaining 330 million gods, of course, had to accept punishment, just like humans do. No other religion has such a universal justice system in which even God's reincarnation is not exempt. The modern version of a legal system is nothing compared to it, because even God is treated like humans in our system.

Partly because of the Muslim and partly because of the British regimes, the minority Hindus in Sindh and Punjab and the conservative Hindus that were the product of powerful reforms in Maharashtra believe that the defeat of the Hindus by the Muslims and the British was caused by the 5000 years of all-encompassing Hindu tolerance and liberal nature, as well as the nonviolence borne out of the Mahabharata. They also believe that the Hindu is a coward, because he is liberal, tolerant, all-accepting, and nonviolent. The Hindu will become brave only if he becomes violent, narrow-minded, intolerant, cunning, and a swindler. The Hindus cannot do that without first organizing themselves; therefore, the RSS is emphasizing organizing the Hindus.

The minority Hindus in Sindh and Punjab have lived with a minority mentality in reaction to living in the shadows of semite communities, such as Muslims and Sikhs. They react almost like the minority Muslims and Sikhs do in India. It is no coincidence that Swami Dayanand's Arya Samaj movement, geared at making the Hindu religion simple, focused, and united took root in Punjab. As the result of this movement, the Sikhs, who had prospered as a religion and were recruited by Guru Gobind Singh as soldiers, left the Hindu society. The minority Hindus in Sindh and Punjab with reactionary mentality were the victims of partition of India. Hindus in no other areas have suffered the results of communalism as did these Hindus. However, it did not make them indifferent to communal politics. After becoming victims of communal politics, they began to believe that they could protect themselves only by uniting as Hindus. Their desire to unit for self-defense is what gave momentum to the RSS. The RSS is a minority Hindu group created as the result of reforms in Maharashtra. It recognizes the British perception of India. Its Hindu nation is just like the British Hindu nation—separate from the Muslim nation. The RSS could be, and is, only a minority party in the greater Hindu society, a society that has always been unorganized as a religious community and accepting of all other groups.

The Hindus have been a minority in one part of Bengal, in addition to in Punjab and Sindh. However, in the rest of the country, they have been the majority with the self-confidence that goes with it. The majority society does not define itself as a separate group, because it is there and exists thus. The separate identity is taken by a minority group, because it is surrounded by a larger and different society. The Hindus in Punjab and Sindh had to form such an identity. The Sikhs also had to do so. The Muslims had to form an identity in the rest of India, and they are continuing to do so. This continuing effort to establish a social identity turns the group into exactly what it was fighting against. If India's Muslim and Sikh societies want to avoid being absorbed by the majority Hindu society, they must look and continue to look different. Call it identity or egotism, the Muslim and Sikh communities in India have been so consumed by this effort that they have built many layers of shields around themselves and have submitted their destinies to the hands of phony and fundamentalist mullahs. We do not have to go into the details of all this.

Unfortunately, the Sindhi and Punjabi Hindus that came here with the minority mentality never developed self-confidence even after joining the majority society and prospering economically here. They felt some assurance in the cluster provided by the RSS. This aggressive Hinduism that was borne out of the mixture of these three opposes the secularism of the Congress and left-wing parties and considers our all-encompassing, liberal, and tolerant traditions to be wrong. Just like in Islam and Sikh religions, where writing or speaking against one's religion is considered treachery against the religion, these neo-Hindus also consider any person analyzing or criticizing any action done in the name of Hindu religion treason. This group has no affinity for the tradition of this religion and society which had room for respect even for the agnostic Charvak and religious poets who rebelled against some [Hindu] religious practices. In

this religion, Gautama Buddha and Mahavir, who were of different religions, are also considered reincarnations of God. If they were not divided and fighting, the Prophet Mohammed and Jesus Christ would also have been included as God's reincarnations!

This neo- or fake Hindu worships the 5000 year-old tradition, but does not practice it. Swami Vivekanand has said, "Understanding of a religion does not lie in theories, it lies in practice." Being pure and helping others be pure is the essential element of religion. Our traditions and practices are not acceptable to the neo-Hindu because these did not protect us from foreign Islamic invaders and from British slavery. The phony or neo-Hinduism sends out the message that being broad-minded, tolerant, nonviolent, and all-encompassing is not beneficial to us, because these have made us cowards and had us defeated. We can vindicate our defeat only when we give up the tolerance, broad-mindedness, acceptance of all, and nonviolence. We must unite as Hindus and gather so much strength that the whole world accepts our supremacy. The history of our empires, religion, and social tradition does not go with this phony Hinduism. It only takes out some symbols and specific periods from the total picture and projects these on the whole Hindu screen. They know that the greater Hindu society will not accept it. Therefore, they call those who criticize it or oppose it anti-Hindu, non-Hindu, or Muslim. This reactionary and acid flow of this phony Hinduism appears to be influencing the timeless Ganges of Hinduism. However, can a tributary stream really change the main river?

I am being called anti-Hindu, Jai Chand, Mir Jaffar, Mulla, and secularist, because I have criticized the way kar seva was carried out in Ayodhya in July. The BJP government was still in UP [Uttar Pradesh], and this government was elected according to democratic means. It has called the building of the temple in Ayodhya a mandate issued by the people. However, instead of implementing this popular mandate according to democratic and constitutional means, it has used lies and fraud. It has taken over the 2.77-acre land in front of Babri Masjid supposedly for developing facilities for the pilgrims but actually for building the temple. The court had ordered that no permanent structure be built and that the land be kept as it was until a final decision was issued. Still, the VHP and its trust started kar seva there. When the holy men tried to stop kar seva, warnings about "starting rivers of blood" were issued. The RSS family spokesmen began to justify ignoring court orders and breaking the Constitution through various excuses. It continued for seven days; and I asked if they were going to build a temple for Ram-the-ethical by lying and swindling?

What I had written in that article is backed by the unanimous decision of the three judges of the Allahabad High Court's special tribunal. This special tribunal declared that acquisition of that land was an act of cheating and fraud and nullified the acquisition. The special tribunal said that any party's popular mandate and election declaration is not above democracy and the Constitution. Any popular mandate which is not within the framework of the Constitution is not democratic. The BJP government discriminated against the Muslims while building the temple and was guilty of violating Articles 14 and 15-25 of the Constitution, because a government is supposed to be neutral. The decision of the special tribunal may not have any meaning to the RSS family, and the holy men associated with the RSS may have called democracy and the Constitution anti-Hindu and a document of slavery, but the people in our country have faith in the Constitution and the democratic system that it supports. Therefore, the decision of the special tribunal is very important. I have called Ashok Singhal and Vinay Katiar the Bhindrewalas of Hindu society. Who but the Bhindrewala group would have dismantled Babri Masjid on 6 December!

However, I cannot feel good just because the court action and the incidents that followed have proved me right. The motherland is what people believe in and [some words missing] those who criticize it because they believe in something else. They do not consider you a believer; they consider you someone who has sold out because you criticized their action instead of being with them. These "faithful" Ram devotees do not know what it means to follow tradition and remain truthful in Hindu society and tradition. One can give up a person for a family, a family for a village, and a village for the state. However, one can give up the earth for one's spiritual faith. One arrives at the conclusion after a lot of thought that you must call wrong what is wrong and also pay the price for doing that. That is the Hindu tradition.

They say that if you do that, you will not be a Hindu and will hurt the Hindu religion and society. Criticism of Hindu religion, they say, helps the Muslim and, therefore, Pakistan. That is why such action is like the actions of Vibhishan, Jai Chand, and Mir Jaffar. They want to roll the Hindu religion into a communal group and become its spokespersons and protectors. The RSS family and its affiliated holy men say that the Hindus will not tolerate it, and what is not acceptable to the Hindus cannot be allowed in this country. Their neo- or phony Hinduism is the Hindu edition of the Islam of the Indian Muslims and Sikhism of the Sikhs. It is important to give the examples of these holy men, sadhus, saints, mahants, and leaders of various Hindu groups and parties, because they cannot be labeled non-Hindus.

The original Shankaracharya did not go out to propagate his brand of religion like any scholar or saint. He went out to reestablish the orthodox Vedic religion to counter Buddhism and Jainism. He started from Kaldi village in Kerala when he was a child and did not have 200,000 kar sevaks with him to destroy Buddhist stupas or Jain temples. All he had with him was his religion, which he had attained through study and worship. Shankaracharya established four centers, but did not declare one center higher than the other. He appointed four Shankaracharyas in those centers, but did not make one supervise the other three. He did not give the right to any

of the Shankaracharyas to give religious orders to the people in their constituencies. He did not make arrangements for the four Shankaracharyas to jointly issue religions orders that were binding to all Hindus. These Shankaracharyas served the four Vedas, 108 Upanishads, 18 Mahapuranas, the Ramayna, the Mahabharata, and other religious books. He did say that there was only one God and establish monotheism. However, he did not identify one supreme book or one supreme religious leader or one supreme method of worship. Shankaracharya viewed the traditional Vedic religion within the framework of his religion and society. The gurus and Shankaracharyas of the RSS family are not higher than the original Shankaracharya. Who appointed them to speak for the Hindus and start doing things that even the original Shankaracharya did not allow anyone to do? Ashok Singhal, Vinay Katiar, Swami Chinmayanad, Murli Monohar Joshi, and Lal Krishna Advani cannot have this monopoly which this religion and society has never given to anyone!

However, during the last six months an elected government has abused a popular mandate in the name of Ram's temple and Hinduism. It also allowed violation of court orders to be committed and gave false affidavits to the court. It made promises to the Supreme Court, the Parliament, and the National Unity Council and broke these promises in the name of Ram. It destroyed the integrity of the Constitution, justice, and an elected government. It still claims that the Hindu emotions have been suppressed for centuries. The Indian government did not pay attention to them and respected the Muslim feelings. The Constitution was amended for the Muslims. The courts cannot impart justice because the Ram Temple-Babri Masjid case has been dragging on for 42 years, and justice delayed is justice denied. The judicial branch does not respect Hindu feelings, therefore, Hindus cannot respect it! The Parliament does not make uniform civil codes for the nation, and the laws it passes are not in the interest of the Hindus! In Addition, the Congress government has not tempered little with the Constitution, the legislative, and the judicial systems. [as published] Since, all this has been happening in this country, we will also do that!

Those who give this argument forget that Indira Gandhi was always criticized by the informed public and the press for the liberties she took with the Constitution and the democratic system. The Constitution is not complete, that is why it has been amended 74 times. No one claims that the Constitution does not have weaknesses and flaws. However, there are ways to improve these, and these flaws have been criticized often and enough. The failure of the Indian government in Kashmir and Punjab has not been minimized, and the Central Government has been criticized for it. The whole press took to task the government that bowed down to religious and communal fundamentalism. However, incompetency and indifference belong to another category, and an elected government's submission of its mandate, democracy, constitutional duties to a religious group is a totally different issue. You can elect to ignore it or say that it was a great religious deed because it was done in the name of Hinduism. That will not make you a Hindu! The Hindu religion does not condone any wrong action taken without consideration and just because it was done in the name of Hinduism. It does not matter whether that action was the result of reaction to another action or eruption of suppressed emotions.

The definition given by Vyas in Mahabharata is the most important in the context of our present democracy. [Sanskrit couplet] "Religion is the sum total of the rules that accommodate the people and the society. What encompasses this element is religion."

The kind of Hindu image that has emerged after destroying the structure and trying to solve the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid issue does not exemplify that image that maintains Hindu religion. The Hindu society is sustaining India because it is the largest social group in India. It cannot sustain India if it relinquishes its character, its tradition, and its culture in retaliation against the actions of Muslims and Sikhs. The earth sustains us and suffers; that is why we call it our mother. I know many Hindus will be angry because I am preaching only to the Hindus. I should also condemn the Muslims for their narrow-mindedness, inflexibility, and treachery against the nation. Why are they not forced to behave properly? Our country and religion are not dependent on enmity with the Muslims. Indian society and the nation is sustained by the great, all-assuming, and positive character of the Hindu religion. It is our duty to strengthen these qualities, because these will sustain us in turn.

When Vyas had finished writing the Mahabharata, he felt disappointed and unsatisfied. He said: "With hands spread high, I am repeating it, but no one is listening to me. Practicing religion means acquisition of worldly goods, duties, and salvation, however, no one is following religion." I know that the scholars of the phony Hinduism will ask why they should practice this if no one else does? They want to recreate the Mahabharata. Therefore, I should read them the part that sums up the whole Mahabharata. "It is improper to abdicate religion because of fear, greed, sex, or threat to life. Religion is permanent; happiness and unhappiness are temporary. The body is temporary, and life is permanent." People may relinquish this religion in the name of neo-Hinduism. I prefer to die within my own religion. The religion of the others is not for me. This order of the Bhagavad Gita is my duty as a Hindu.

Hindu State Feared, Termed 'Obscurantist'

93AS0437H Madras FRONTLINE in English
29
Jan 93 pp 4-5

[Excerpt from article by Manini Chatterjee: "Strident Sadhus: Contours of a Hindu Rashtra"; italicized words, quotation marks as published]

[Excerpt] In the bleak post-December 6 landscape of India where communal violence continues in several areas, the ruling party, the Congress(I), remains in a state of coma, the High Court judgments become virtual advertisements for *Hindutva*. Perhaps the most ominous sign of the times to come is the emergence of a motley group of 'holy men' who have decided to give 'direction' to the country's future polity.

For the past few years, the country has witnessed the rise of a political party which blatantly used religious symbols and sentiments to gain political power. Now here is the beginning of a phenomenon in the reverse—religious priests coming forth to dictate the political agenda. Ever since the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation became a rallying point to generate mass hysteria, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) decided to play a behind-the-scenes role and let an assortment of 'sants', 'sadhus' and 'mahants' 'lead' the agitation. The BJP thus allowed various 'dharm sansads' and 'sant sammelans' to work out the timetable for kar seva et al and repeated endlessly that it was not involved in the actual temple-building exercise. The BJP leadership, particularly L. K. Advani, emphasised that his party's involvement on the issue was in the political-ideological plane (a crusade against 'pseudo secularism' and 'minorityism') while the holy men were entrusted with the task of the construction of the temple.

But like numerous other political movements which relied on religion, the most recent example being that of the Akalis in Punjab, the politicians are in danger of being sidelined by the 'sadhus,' who are now relishing the prospect of regaining temporal power. The sadhus and sants, in recent months, have received more attention and publicity from the Indian Government as well as the media than ever before. It has clearly whetted their appetite for more. And so, while the BJP leaders speak in different voices and remain unclear about their future course, it is the sundry 'sadhus' and 'mahants' who have been occupying centre stage and making pronouncements on the 'anti-Hindu' Constitution and how it should be changed. Even a few years ago, their views could have been dismissed as obscurantist rantings of medieval minds which posed no threat to the modern Indian republic. But in the wake of all that has happened in the last few months and the remorseless drive towards fanaticism, the statements made by the 'sadhus' are profoundly serious and dangerous and mark the first tentative contours of what a theocratic Hindu *rashtra* may mean.

Recent press conferences, interviews and booklets given by both the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and non-VHP 'sadhus' reveal two distinct thrusts in their rhetoric. The first is a deep-rooted hatred towards aliens, specifically Muslims, and a desire to obliterate every trace of Muslim presence in India. The second is to destroy the reforms and progress made within Hindu society and re-establish a fundamentalist 'Hindu order' marked by a return to a fluid caste system and Brahminical supremacy.

At a press conference in New Delhi on New Year's Day, 'sadhus' belonging to the VHP laid claim to the Jama Masjid on grounds that it was originally a Vishnu temple. Vamdev Swami, one of the prominent figures in the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation, said the VHP had made a list of 3,000 mosques which were allegedly created after destroying temples, and that unless Muslims surrendered the three most important ones (in Ayodhya, Mathura and Varanasi), the others, one by one, would be 'liberated' by force.

Apart from this outrageous claim on the Jama Masjid, Vamdev announced that the 'sant samiti' at its meeting on October 13-14 had set up a four-member committee to rework the 'anti-Hindu' Constitution to suit the country's needs. The committee, headed by Swami Muktanand, has already prepared a draft of their criticism of the Constitution in a 63-page booklet which was released to the press. The present Constitution, they claim, is based on laws made by the British and does not reflect the ethos of this ancient land. Their main objection is to the 'special rights' given in the Constitution to the minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, but they are also against reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The booklet criticises several provisions in the Constitution, including those relating to the preamble, the definition of citizens, the continuing use of the English language, minority rights and the policy of reservations. It also advocates the replacement of the national anthem by Vande Mataram. The booklet, which is only a preliminary draft, does not specify the details of the alternative 'Hindu' Constitution but makes one point clear—that citizenship rights should not be bestowed automatically on those who are born in India of Indian parents but on the basis of 'loyalty and patriotism.' In other words, the minorities will be given rights only if they submerge their identity in a preordained (by whom?) mainstream.

If the booklet brought out by the VHP-affiliated sants is deliberately vague about what the Hindu 'constitution' would mean, individual sadhus have shown no such hesitancy. In an interview to *The Pioneer* (January 3, 1993), Swami Muktanand Saraswati explained that since there was no discrimination in the Hindus ethos, "there should be no reservations on the basis of caste, language or religion. There should be uniform laws for everybody. Also, the state should not interfere in religious and personal matters. [passage omitted]

Line Dividing Religion, Politics Said Increasingly Blurred

93AS0437I Madras FRONTLINE in English 29 Jan 93 p 10

[Article by S. K. Pande: "The Saffron Hold"]

[Text] The line dividing religion and politics in India, blurred for so long, has now wholly ceased to exist. The two have become inextricably linked, and sadhus and sants and imams and mullahs, who were only peripheral

prompters providing their cues to the primary performers, have overrun the political stage. From there they pontificate—not on matters spiritual, but affairs rather more worldly. They hold forth on any subject—be it the Constitution or the laws of economics—and, what is more worrisome, at times spew searing words that reflect sentiments rapidly communal.

Religious leaders have become part and parcel of avowedly fanatical groups and are adding fuel to the already explosive situation. Organisations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) are virtually setting the political agenda for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

And just as the sadhus and the sants are wooed by politicians of all hues, the mullahs and the moulvis are placated in a number of ways. The high-voltage publicity they have received in the last few years in the official and the print media and the importance that has been given to their views have led to the present dangerous state of affairs.

And, inevitably, organisations with the same combine seek to outdo one another in their radical posturing. For instance, with the VHP now in full cry, the Bharat Sadhu Samaj (BSS) has felt it necessary to get into action. Recently its executive met in Delhi to discuss the situation regarding "Ayodhya temple reconstruction" and the "undue interference by political parties in religious affairs." It welcomed the Centre's acquisition of the "Ram Janmabhoomi," called for the establishment of a national trust to construct a temple at the "birthplace," and appealed for a "spirit of tolerance."

"Within the BJP-RSS-VHP combine, the VHP acts as the hawkish wing which is seemingly difficult to tame, while the other two have been moderates." But the fact is that they are all different teams working with a unity of purpose. In addition, there are such outfits as the Durga Vahini and the Bajrang Dal, working in tandem with Shiv Sena volunteers. The hold of sants and sanyasins on the combine is so firm that some sadhvis even hold positions in the BJP Sadhvi Rithambara has her own lobby; Uma Bharati, who took up sanyas not long ago, is an MP with sympathisers in the top rungs of the party.

Consider the recent statements of some leaders closely associated with the BJP. Swami Vamdev Maharaj and Swami Muktanand, also top VHP leaders, say they reject the Constitution, which they dub "anti-Hindu." What the VHP does openly, the BJP does subtly. L.K. Advani says: "Ayodhya has enabled our viewpoint to become a formidable challenge." He and BJP president Murli Manohar Joshi, in fact, sent another signal to the VHP before December 6, 1992, when they launched their yatras to Ayodhya from Mathura and Varanasi. Now there are statements such as "Ram is our national leader."

To understand all this, one has only to see the inter-play of politics and religion within the different organisations. The BSS, considered relatively moderate, has adopted a middle course on the Ayodhya issue, somewhat akin to the Congress stand, but not far from the BJP's either.

On the eve of its executive meeting, its general secretary, Swami Harinarayananand, who claimed the capital would see the largest congregation of sadhus, went hammer and tongs against Bihar Chief Minister Lallu Prasad Yadav, who had reportedly said he would ensure that persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes became mahants of temples and maths. This, the swami said, amounted to politicising a religious issue. In the same breath he voiced his opposition to some instances of the VHP's politicisation of religion.

Earlier, in a statement, he strongly criticised Swami Vamdev's claim that the Jama Masjid in Delhi was a Hindu temple. This, he said, was not only ridiculous, but went against the "spirit of our religious teachings and is contrary to the wishes of the Hindu community." Muslims should take no notice of it, he said. Referring to the assault on the members of the family of the then Union Minister for Civil Aviation, Madhavrao Scindia, allegedly by BJP activists, he said it is against the decorum of democracy.

He also condemned the move to stage a "long march" from Bangladesh to Ayodhya to rebuild the Babri Masjid as a direct interference in India's internal affairs. He appreciated the steps taken by the Centre to prevent such interference and urged it to expel all Bangladeshi infiltrators immediately. The swami accused the Janata Dal and the Left parties of trying to divide the "Hindu samaj." He was particularly critical of Lallu Prasad Yadav who, he said, was trying to create tension and dissension in the "Hindu order."

Intellectuals Urge 'Harmony'

93AS0473D Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 24 Jan 93 p 5

[Article: "Communal Harmony Need of the Hour, say Intellectuals"; bold words as published]

[Text] Bangalore, Jan. 23—Former Vice-President B.D. Jatti today said that the only way to counter the threat to secularism and peace in the country was by fostering communal harmony.

Inaugurating here the State-level conference of the Forum for Secularism and Rule of law, Dr. Jatti said that the essence of real "dharma" was to allow people to lead a peaceful life. The Ayodhya incident had demolished the tradition of truth in the country, he said while exhorting the need for reviving faith of the people in the secular tenets of the constitution.

FRONTLINE Editor N. Ram said the communalism in its various hues had "poisoned" democracy in the country. The murky developments in the wake of the Ayodhya incident should be understood as a political strategy, he said. He regretted that divisive forces had

put their political game plan into action at a time when secularism was fragile in the country.

Decried: Decrying the concept of uniting the Hindus on the idea of Hindutva, he stressed the need for a broad secular approach as advocated in the constitution. "Indian Constitution never preferred any particular religion and with such a constitutional background, the country is on a good wicket," he remarked.

The confusion about secularism was the result of mixing religion with politics and the demand of the present situation is to separate the two, he said while pointing out that matters of faith should not be placed above the rule of law.

Mr. Ram said that the fears of the divisive forces that the Centre was trying to appease the minority community were misplaced. Ridiculing the propaganda by these forces that the population of the Muslim community would within three years exceed that of the Hindus, he said that on the basis of demographic figures, the population of Muslims was barely about 12 percent of the total population of the country.

Denying the charges by the divisive forces that the minority community was being pampered with unholy concessions, he pointed out that the community was not adequately represented in civil and defence services.

PM [prime minister] Flayed: Mr. Ram came down heavily on the fascist tendencies of the protagonists of Hindutva and remarked that Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and his colleagues had a "soft spot" for Hindutva. The December 6 incident would not have occurred if Mr. Rao had minimum respect for the rule of law and a commitment to communal harmony, he said.

Regretting that three was no end in sight for the burning issues confronting the country, Mr. Ram said that Mr. Rao was the greatest "bungler" in independent India. He expressed the view that the delay by the apex court in giving a verdict on the Ayodhya issue provoked fundamentalists to go on a rampage.

Condemning the recent inhuman killings and communal tension in Bombay, he held the Shiv Sena responsible for fanning the flames of communalism through its inflammatory messages. He urged all social organisations to help restore the people's faith in the secular values upheld by the constitution.

Supreme Court advocate R.K. Garg urged people of conscience to check the rampage by the fundamentalists. Another advocate Rajeev Dhawan pointed out that it was against the principles of any religion to demolish places of worship, and suggested that a secularism awareness campaign should be organised.

Suggestion: Mr. A.K. Subbaiah, MLC [member of Legislative Council], questioned the need for the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] to hoist the national flag on Republic Day at the Idgah grounds in Dharwad. Stating that political parties and leaders had failed in checking the threat to secularism, he was of the view that only a united approach by Indians could counter the threat to secularism.

Mysore University Department of Journalism Head Syed Iqbal Khadri said that true leaders, who could guide the people were, the need of the hour.

Former Judge of the Karnataka High Court H.G. Balakrishna said that the focus should be on upholding the rule of law. The constitution was supreme and uniform law was the need of the hour, he said.

Advocate Ko. Channbasappa presided over the conference.

Motivation for Destruction of Disputed Structure Viewed

93AS0413B Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA (Supplement) in Bengali 24 Dec 92 p 1

[Excerpt from article by Sanjay Sikdar: "Ayodhya: The Storm and Its Prelude"]

[Text] Do the political leaders have anything called heart—especially, those leaders who are involved in the politics of creating excitement on the basis of false notions? If those leaders have any feelings at all stored in their hearts, then it must be said that Mr. Lal Krishna Advani is deceiving himself. On 6 December, one of the darkest days of post-independent India, at the time of the destruction of the Babri mosque by the frenzied "kar sevaks," Mr. Advani was standing with a sad and dejected face, which was nothing but careful acting. Was it a fact that Mr. Advani did not know what was going to happen at Ayodhya? Could he deny his responsibility to his own conscience? On his way to the so-called "Ayodhya Yatra," which means march to Ayodhya from Varanasi to Lucknow, he got the hint of that dangerous incident. And in spite of that, this senior leader went on feeding it with fuel.

After calling thousands of people at Ayodhya in the name of "kar seva," Murli Monohar Joshi's decision to march from Mathura and Mr. Advani's from Varanasi toward Ayodhya were the greatest instigation. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad had already declared its decision to raise the temple-mosque debate in Mathura and Varanasi after settling the issue of Ayodhya. By selecting Mathura and Varanasi as the starting point of their marches, did the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leaders not try to put psychological pressure on the Central Government and on the people? Behind this decision, was there not the intention to satisfy the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] and the Bajrang Dal?

Mr. Advani repeatedly tried to convince the journalists that the demands about Mathura and Varanasi belong entirely to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The BJP did not agree with those demands. This leads to the logical

question, whether the demand for the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya was once raised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Where is the line of demarcation between the viewpoints of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and BJP? Mr. Advani gave many different explanations in his replies to these kinds of questions. But, unfortunately, he did not give those explanations in his large public meetings or street corner meetings. Is this not an act of instigation?

On the other hand, Mr. Advani has been saying from the very beginning that, "All the obstacles in the path of building the Ram temple in Ayodhya will be cleared. The Uttar Pradesh government of Chief Minister Kalyan Singh will not use force on the kar sevaks under any circumstances." These utterances helped to increase the mental strength of the blind religious fanatics. Their mentality was exposed too. When Mr. Advani was giving a speech in a meeting at Azamgarh on 2 December, a group of young people shouted with excitement, "We will destroy the mosque." This demonstrates that a kind of mental preparation was going on to destroy the mosque. After the shouting of that young group, sounds of bugles and conchshells were heard at the meeting. Mr. Advani immediately rebuked them and said, "Beware, never ever you must say like that." He said just that and nothing more. So, behind this rebuke, the real mind of Mr. Advani could be explained like this—"Oh no, why are you saying this publicly?"

Is it true that Mr. Advani did not understand the fact that cracks were found in the so-called concrete wall of discipline of the organizations of BJP and its associates in Gorakhpur on 4 December and in Khalilabad? On that morning, Mr. Advani went to the house of the assassinated RSS leader Shambhu Prasad Gupta and faced an agitated and angry group of workers of his own party. Some of the workers openly complained that Mr. Pankaj Chaudhuri, a BJP member of the Parliament elected from Maharajganj, was protecting the persons who were involved in the murder of Shambhu Prasad. In reply to Mr. Advani's question, those workers said that they had evidence to prove their charge. After this, Mr. Advani did not talk much.

In Khalilabad, when Mr. Advani came to the dias of the street corner meeting, some workers of a local sugar mill showed him black flags. They had slogans—"First open the mill, then build the temple." The workers of the local sugar mill, which had been closed for the last two years, had no other alternative than this to draw attention to their condition.

They did not receive any remedy or sympathy from the BJP government of the state, in spite of making repeated appeals. The local BJP member of the Parliament, Astabhuja Shukla, did not keep his promise to open the mill. Mr. Advani's so-called disciplined cadres angrily chased those workers as soon as they showed the black flags. Mr. Advani could not stop the cadres, in spite of making repeated appeals from the dias over the microphone. Within a couple of minutes, the starving workers were badly beaten. Eventhough the showing of black flags is considered a method of protest in a democratic society, the police attacked the workers again. It was not true that Mr. Advani did not understand; rather, it should be said that he remained silent after realizing the fact that he did not have full control over his so-called disciplined followers.

Is one to believe that a seasoned politician like Mr. Advani does not understand the meaning of that proverb that "even if you close your eyes, the storm will not stop."

Did he not indirectly inspire the fanatics in Khalilabad by not denouncing the harassment of the mill workers? As his eyes are fixed not on the Ram temple of Ayodhya but on the power house of New Delhi, he is ignoring reality. He could not keep it secret that Delhi was his final goal. Once he said, "There will be a Ram temple in Ayodhya. But we have to think about the future of our country with more importance." He further said, "We have come to power in four states. We are coming to power in New Delhi in the near future."

Article Sees Delicate Fabric of Secularism Tattered

93AS0422D Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 19 Dec 92 p 11

[Article by Sunil K. Nair: "Secularism: The Fall of a False God"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya is undoubtedly one of the most shameful acts ever perpetrated in our secular country. This blatant and unwarranted wanton act of unprovoked aggression in lieu of what was to be a symbolic kar seva has forever besmirched the secular credentials of this nation. And it has certainly been symbolic. A more outrageous and sacrilegeous 'symbolic act' can never be conceived. It cuts through and cleaves the moral and ethical fibre of a land renowned for its oft-proclaimed virtues of tolerance and amity. Forgiveness and forbearance seem to have given way to vengeance and vendetta. The delicate fabric of secularism, so subtly woven on volatile strands over the centuries lies tattered seemingly irreparable. Our time tested, self-proclaimed virtues now ring hollow, deprived of all sincerity and truth in this hour of reckoning.

Who is responsible: Who is to be blamed for this sorry state. Not just the political parties and their leaders, but also the common man in the street. No upright citizen can absolve himself of this responsibility. After all, it is the masses that gave the mandate for accomplishing this odius task. Political parties, based on religious fundamentalism have engendered and fostered the ideas of hatred and vengeance in the gullible minds of the people in the name of religion, is the one thing in India which inflames passions like nothing else ever will. A morbid sense of pseudo-patriotism and Hindu chauvinism has been inculcated in the minds of the people, permeating

their entire being, depriving them of the power and ability to perceive, to analyse, to apprehend and to decide. A sense of insecurity has pervaded the masses which is manifested in the frenzied acts of vandalism which we now witness. The dominant and over-powering feeling is to antagonise, to destroy, to kill, to conquer. Anything seems justified so long as it gives us a sense of power of accomplishment of fulfilment. The deluded masses rant and rave, looting and pillaging, oblivious to the voices of their conscience. They are the guardians of the Hindu dharma and will do anything to uphold the glory of their religion, even if they have to shed blood for it. Ayodhya has become the new dharma-shetra Kurukshetra. They are on a religious crusade to free the holy janambhoomi of infidels, the gallant, virtuous knights of Hinduism. The country owes them a great debt. History records their dubious deeds for posterity. They bask and bathe in its bloody glory.

Is this justified? Why this bigotry; this obstinate, persistent dogmatism in the name of religion? Where have our ideals of brotherly love vanished overnight? Or perhaps, was it only reserved for our own Hindu brethren. Why is it intimidation, why not any attempt at reconciliation? Have our senses become warped overnight, irrecovably and inexorably. We seem to have let our sentiments get the better of our sense. A nation burgeoning into the twenty-first century, deluded and overwhelmed by passion for the acts of a sixteenth century invader. Has this hatred been simmering and smouldering for centuries, waiting for the right moment to erupt. The embers had never been really allowed to die down, but have been constantly stoked to keep the flame alive, for the final act, when in one huge conflagration it would consume all that had tried to smother it.

Someone has pointed out that the course of India is its Hindu religion. Possibly true, seeing the state we are in today, but not entirely. The course of India has not been Hinduism, but the false prophets of Hinduism. The religious leaders who for their own private ends, have unscrupulously played time and again on the religious fervour of the nation. Everything is justified if it helps in meeting their sordid ends, if it is shrouded in the saffron and ochre cloak of religion. Everything, morals, justice and ethics may be put to the sacrificial fire so long as it serves the cause of Hinduism. After all, one may argue, lofty goals cannot be achieved without sacrificing something, no matter if they happen to be long cherished values and ideals. Our benevolent and benign gods will no doubt overlook this minor indiscretion. After all, it is for the sake of our gods that we are doing all this.

Hindu psyche: This then is the shameful and ignominious state of the Hindu psyche today. There is no time or occasion for magnanimity. Hinduism justifies the unjustifiable. How could we be so indifferent, so callous, so blind? Every one has failed the nation in its hour of need. Both, the government and the people are equally to blame. The government for its tardiness and indecisiveness; the people for their dastardly actions. A more heinous subterfuge will never be perpetrated on such an enormous magnitude. Nations, by and large, deserve the governments they get. This is very apt today in India's context. A confounded and confused leadership governing a deluded and delirious rabble. A distressing and regrettable state of affairs. Do we really observe this? Let each one of us ask this question to ourselves. The answer is unequivocal. We must learn to accept it. We are nation demented and this is our sorry lot.

In our democracy the will of the people, manifested in this shameful manner, has come to the fore, though not in the way one had hoped for. Is not democracy for the people, after all, to do with it as they choose to. We have upheld our democracy, our rights, albeit in a dubious manner. This unparalleled act of desecration will forever be our nemesis. It will never have the goodwill which was so necessary to building a temple, no blessing can possibly be showered upon it. Even if the wounds heal, the scars will still show, a constant and ever present legacy. History will never vindicate this nation, never exonerate it completely. No prayer of atonement will ever free us of this national shame; and all the waters of the mother Ganges will never cleanse our unpardonable sins.

Recognition of Muslim Compromise Urged

93AS0423B Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 26 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Nitish Chakravarty: "Give Sanity a Chance"]

[Text] The demolition of the Babri Masjid—or the disputed structure as some would like to call it—on the fateful afternoon of December 6 was not the first man-made catastrophe India has had to face since its independence 45 years ago, but never before was this country shaken to the foundation so severely as it was by the Ayodhya sacrilege.

Pakistan locked India in combat on three occasions; but India had little difficulty in tackling Pakistan's challenges as the nation as a whole stood like a rock in the face of external aggression. The conflict with China in 1962, which changed the course of Sino-Indian relations, was a different matter. The failure of the Indian leadership then to guard the frontiers in the belief that a friend can do no wrong lay behind India's discomfiture.

On Trial

Even if some of the earlier man-made disasters caused greater damage in terms of men and material, they were qualitatively different from the Ayodhya tragedy. External aggression has always brought Indians closer. Whenever there was an attack from outside, the entire nation faced the challenge unitedly. The cry of Islam in danger has not dissuaded numerous patriotic Indian Muslims from laying down their lives for the defence of their country.

But the Ayodhya outrage has put India's nationhood on trial. As a result of the divide it has caused inconvenient questions, which have for long been shoved under the

carpet, to come out into the open. The unity built up over the years has begun to crack. The people are no longer able to face together the worst challenge to the nation's integrity.

Never before has the country had to grapple with this kind of a crisis which poses a challenge to the very rationale of Indian nationhood. The ostrich-like attitude of most political leaders has created doubts about the nation's ability to successfully face up to the challenge, for every politician puts his concerns before the interests of the nation.

The truth hurts all. Much more time and energy is being spent on attempts to mask the reality, as if palliatives are going to provide a lasting solution. The debate on the no-confidence motion brought by the Bharitya Janata Party in the Lok Sabha revealed how hollow is the politicians' claim that their actions are guided by national interests and nothing else. In spite of their glib talk of commitment to the unity and integrity of India, few showed the courage to identify to causes which had led to the present crisis of confidence.

And still fewer had any bold remedies to suggest. The stand of almost every political leader on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy is conditioned by his perception of the immediate impact on the electorate. There people's sentiments are of no concern. It matters very little to any political leader where the Ram temple is built or what happens to the Babri Masjid so long as voters are not swayed either way.

If there was a shared perception that the demolition of the Babri Masjid was an act of great sacrilege and had seriously undermined the religious rights of the second largest segment of the Indian population, there was no reason why all the so-called secular parties should not have come together to face the challenge? Instead of burying the hatchet to save the nation from the course of self-destruction on which it is set, the party leaders wasted their time in witchhunting and screwing up Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

Won't Help

The Prime Minister, of course, has to bear the primary responsibility for the Government's total collapse in spite of being forewarned of the impending disaster at Ayodhya but Mr. Rao is not the one who created the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi Frankenstine. And how would the vacuum that would be created by Mr. Rao's exit at this point of time be filled and how would his resignation improve the chances of evolving a solution?

The Opposition leaders know as much as the Congress(I) MPs [members of Parliament] do that given the composition of the Tenth Lok Sabha, it cannot throw up an alternative government. They themselves are no less scared of fresh general elections so soon than the Congress(I) MPs. The fear that if general elections are held this winter, the party that the so-called secular forces are so keen to keep from power will swing back triumphantly on the debris of the Babri Masjid also keeps them from going to the hustings.

Undoubtedly no sensible person, regardless of his religious identity, would approve of the razing of the structure without exhausting every other option of settling scores with history.

Opportunity

But the truth has to be faced that howsoever deplorable the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the opportunity it provides for healing the wounds of religious and communal friction should not be wasted. Exigencies of political power should not be allowed to come in the way of a lasting solution.

Mr. Narasimha Rao is now looking for a way out of his hasty announcement that the mosque would be rebuilt at the same site where it stood before December 6. His omission of any reference to the earlier commitment when he intervened in the no-confidence debate in the Lok Sabha makes this apparent. And this was no act of forgetfulness, for when pressed for a definite answer, all he said was that the matter is now before the Supreme Court. The judges hearing the case have asked the Government to state its position, and the Government is formulating its views.

It is fair to assume that the Government has an open mind on the location of the new mosque. It does not seem to be the case that the Prime Minister will lose face or can be accused of reneging on his off-the-cuff assurance if better counsel suggests a more widely acceptable alternative site. Naturally, therefore, the Government is having second thoughts and evaluating other options.

It needs to be recognised that the Babri Masjid—which in the eyes of those gloating over its demolition was a victory monument built under Emperor Babur's orders—is no more in existence. The claim that idols of Hindu gods and goddesses have been removed from the debris remains to be confirmed by disinterested experts in archaeology and sculpture but there is no denying that emotions have been aroused.

There are many well meaning and peace loving Muslims in this country who see no harm in making adjustments for the sake of communal harmony and fraternity. Some of them have come forward with offers to vacate the site for the construction of a Ram temple, if that assuages Hindu sentiments. They must be given a chance.

Indeed, a representation was submitted to the Prime Minister by eight organisations of Indian Muslims at the end of last September suggesting that the Babri Masjid be shifted to a new site 10km away. In the tempestuous days that followed, the Prime Minister's office appears to have lost track of the representation.

Just as a small section of Hinduvta fundamentalists have usurped Ram for their own sake, a few obscurantist but

articulate Muslims have arrogated to themselves the right to speak in the name of the entire community. They have created the impression that Muslims as a whole are opposed to any compromise on the location of the Babri Masjid. The Government should not allow the initiative to rest with obscurantists and fundamentalists of any hue.

Adjustment

The good offices of devout religious leaders, within India or from abroad, who have faith in human brotherhood can be sought. The representation given by the eight Muslim organisations—and there might be others as well—should not be thrown into the waste basket but given a fair trial. Their plea for sanity may turn out to be the voice of the silent majority who do not mind a little adjustment for the sake of long-term harmony.

Intellectuals Favoring Hindu Nationalism Termed 'Dangerous'

93AS0429E Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 21 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Dayita Datta and Rudrasangshu Mukherjee: "Dark Musings in Grey Cells"]

[Text] The article "Hindu, and still proud to be" (Dec. 15), that was published in these pages could not have been more ill timed. It is the latest of a series of articles by Mr. Swapan Dasgupta that has sought to protect Hindu fanaticism with an intellectual face. With beguiling prose it condemns what happened in Ayodhya on December 6 but then proceeds to elaborate on the very sentiments that made possible the destruction of the Babri Masjid. The prose is particularly insidious and dangerous. With the likes of Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi or Mr. Ashok Singhal one knows where one stands. In this article extremism is laced with a dose of liberal rhetoric.

Let us pick out a few examples. There is a reference to a "new assertive Hindutva which focusses on the denial of civil and religious rights to the majority community." Which civil and religious rights are not specified. Some communal organisations have been banned. But the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal do not stand for the entire Hindu community. There are innumerable Hindus who have no truck at all with these organisations and who have not had any rights denied them. Has any Hindu been stopped, on the grounds of religion, from his chosen form of worship, from joining a school or college, from finding employment or from exercising his or her franchise? The article does not elucidate.

It is claimed "the likes of Professor Gyan Pandey are demanding that Ram Janmabhoomi be banished from the Indian lexicon." Mr. Pandey had in fact drawn attention to the fact the site was called the Babri Masjid. There is not a shred of historical evidence proving the site was the birthplace of Ram or that it was called Ram Janmabhoomi before the British in 1902 decided to christen it thus—a christening it might be added, the sangh parivar has upheld. If there has indeed been what Mr. Dasgupta calls a "semantic shift," it has been on the part of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] and those who sail with it.

There is, of course, a profound irony in the shift the BJP has occasioned, of which the writer is seemingly oblivious. It was as late as the 19th century British officials and writers began to legitimise the myth that Babur had ordered the destruction of a temple to build a mosque. Manipulation of history was part of the British understanding of India: it saw Indian society as divided along religious lines, each religious community having separate political, social and economic interests. The BJP has accepted this "history" in its entirety.

Thus a political party that trumpets its nationalism is actually trapped in a fiction created and legitimised by British colonial rule. Nothing better reveals the hollowness of the BJP's nationalism. Those who warn against the dangers of turning the clock back are the very people parroting colonial historiography in their attempt to usher in a Hindu India. The clock has already been turned back by the BJP. The task ahead is to take it forward once again.

To demand people see things in a "larger perspective," as the Hindutva ideologues do, is one of the oldest tricks in the world. When you want to deflect attention from relevant issues, raise the smokescreen of larger issues. The larger perspective is in fact the narrow sectarian vision of Hindu Rashtra.

There is no broader and more humane perspective in India than to see the lives, homes and livelihood of millions are at stake. Yet it is this that is sought to be suppressed by the intellectual claptrap on the death of the republic and the end of the Nehruvian consensus.

This is not to say the foundations of the Indian republic and the Nehruvian consensus have not always been fragile and that the fractures do not require serious reappraisal. The events in Ayodhya produced perhaps the most serious crisis in the history of independent India. But to argue they represent the death of the republic is to present an assertion as fact.

The article essentially treats political analysis as a game of shuffling worn out concepts and dealing a different suit of trumps. Asserting the republic is dead paves the way to speculations on the creation and nature of the new republic. When people are served a fait accompli they can be forced to debate on terms already set.

It is worth probing, nonetheless, the nature of the "new India." It is to be built by stringent and militant Hinduism. The Third Reich represented the birth of a new Germany. It was characterised by violence and pogroms against minorities. The regret expressed in the article that the current "mood of aggression (in India) will be

woefully shortlived" makes it appropriate to recall the adage that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.

The seeming liberalism of the article wears off when it discusses the place reserved for minorities in the Hindu Rashtra. They are to toe the majoritarian line. The "Hinduised polity" will, in exchange, accord them "full citizenship."

What the article does not bother to explain is why any rabble rouser armed with his faith should accord citizenship to those belonging to another faith. The minorities are citizens of India in their own right, not because of the charitable dispensation of self styled spokesmen for the Hindu community.

None can claim to be the representative of Hindus and the Hindu Rashtra. Besides, there is no such thing as a "collective racial memory of Hindus," since the Hindus are not a race. Such misrepresentations are characteristic of those who adopt postures of championing the Hindu cause.

'Communalism' Said Eroding Secular State

93AS0472A Madras THE HINDU in English 23 Jan 93 p 9

[Article by Pran Chopra: "Communalism as a Cover-Up"]

[Text] One has always credited Mr. Advani with intellectual integrity and regard for proprieties. Was one mistaken, or has he now given up these values? If neither surmise is correct, how does one explain the astonishing leap in semantics he made on January 12?

On that day he held his first press conference after hoodlums had destroyed the mosque at Ayodhya and put India to shame; after his party's Government in India's largest State had violated solemn undertakings it had given only a few days earlier to the country's highest court; after vile barbarities had been inflicted on Bombay in the name of the gentlest of Hindu Gods.

After all that, and after hundreds had been killed in the name of religion, in riots instigated by people belonging to or closely associated with BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], Mr. Advani appealed to the Muslims to accept "the dynamo of cultural nationalism" as the best assurance of communal harmony. Under BJP rule.

What "culture" Mr. Advani? Of which "nation," enshrined in which history? Reports of the press conference do not answer these questions. Perhaps no one put them to him. But he owes answers to those millions who must have read these remarks. Otherwise, the readers would be entitled to take Mr. Advani's words as merely his cover-up for the embarrassment any decent man would feel over such events. Or as a cover up for something worse: a hidden rejoicing over this dance of the demons.

But one does not expect Mr. Advani to use his nimbleness of mind for such purposes. That is why one expects some answers from him. But not from his saffron-clad cohorts, because they have more honestly said that they are only firing salvoes of "Hindutva," a high sounding name they have given to a kind of religious intolerance which was hitherto unknown to Hinduism. They do not even pretend that their objective is an Indian renaissance. They do not feel any need to invent a "dynamo of cultural nationalism" for repairing the damage they have done to Hinduism through the recent events.

On the contrary, they proudly wear the visage of all that has tarnished Hindu traditions, the visage of the grasping, the corrupted, the oppressive and fake sadhus and priests, and keepers and beneficiaries of an iniquitous social order which they have foisted upon Hinduism. The finest brains of Hindu philosophy have shown often enough that such manifestations are a foul accretion upon this proudly intellectual religion, which has produced the finest flowers of the human mind.

But one would put these questions to an intellectual like Mr. Advani, because one believes he understands nationalism and Hinduism better than those who are happy to wallow in ignorance and superstition. One would ask him what, according to him, "culture" in the rich diversity of Indian society; and what nationalism mean in this unique amalgam called India. One would ask him how culture and nationalism, as born under the Indian canopy, are to be squared with "Hindutva," and how either Hindutva or culture and nationalism have been served by pulling down a mosque.

One would ask him, and wait for his answers before making further comments. Except one: that the matter goes to the heart of the electoral prospects of the BJP. These do not depend now only on the popularity of the BJP. (It would have been better for the party if they had). Now they have also come to depend upon the battle which has been joined between the BJP as a party of contemporary patriotism, and the fire-eating cavemen who came to the fore amidst the ruins at Ayodhya. The latter are going to demand their pound of flesh, and more, when the *sangh parivar* dishes out tickets at the time of the next election. How would the voter vote when he realises that a vote for BJP is only going to be a vote for men such as these?

One would also defer for the time being a longer comment on the Prime Minister's record regarding Ayodhya. In the meantime, a brief remark must stand in for a more considered assessment: that he was mostly right up to the morning of December 6, being more sinned against than sinning; but for six weeks after that date, he became his own worst enemy, making mistake after mistake as the pressure of events mounted upon him, showing lack of judgment or firmness, and showing lack of both in some matters, such as in (not) dealing with the Shiv Sena.

The main argument of the present comment is that not only the BJP and some of its allies but many others too

have used communalism as a cover-up for many other things, including their own very serious failings. Failings in the present crisis of course, but also their failings for the past four decades, including failings in matters which have nothing to do with communalism in the sense in which the word is mostly used, denoting that peculiar Indian brand of communal poison in the relations between Muslim and non-Muslims.

The cumulative effect of these failings has been that we have allowed, or rather encouraged, communalism to loom larger on our horizon than the facts warrant. This has helped parties which see communalism as their political ally and has hampered those which see it as an evil force which can ruin India. In both ways, this misperception of the "communal problem" has come in the way of its resolution. On the one hand, it has encouraged communalism to infiltrate into areas which are secular by their nature. On the other hand, it has become an excuse which the secularists have been using for covering up their failures on secular issues.

Thus, in fighting communalism, secularism has violated the first principle of battle: size up your enemy correctly. Underestimating him breeds complacency. Seeing him larger than life-size causes demoralisation. We have been making both mistakes in different phases, and, therefore, have been paying both penalties. That is why in all phases we have failed to pick up the right weapons for fighting him.

At present, we are in the phase of exaggeration. Indeed, communalism has become a more serious threat than at any time since 1947. No question about that. But with minds overheated by the recent events, we are reading communalism into maladies which are rooted in other causes. This propensity is dangerous for many reasons. It encourages communalists, for one. For another, it gives them a strategic advantage in the war they have declared on secularism.

They are well able to boast now that secularism, which for four decades was regarded as the philosophic core of Indian politics, has been completely thrown on the defensive, and is now fighting for its very survival.

Worse follows then. Misperceiving and exaggerating the threat, all parties try to forge alliances against the force or coalition considered to be communal. This enables parties of Hindu communalism to claim that they alone are the champions of 80 per cent of India's population.

Not only that. The whole political arena comes to be occupied by the battle between the communal alliance and its anti-communal opponents, giving a still higher salience to communalism. This works to the advantage of communal parties, whether they do, in the present context, of Hindu or Muslim orientation. When the whole agenda wears a communal face, it polarises the electorate along communal lines, with Hindus aggregating around parties of Hindu orientation, and Muslims towards parties of Muslim orientation.

The final act of the tragedy is the eclipse of all those social and, more particular, economic issues on which voters would divide according to their diverse other social and economic identities, not according to their religious affiliations. This is exactly what we are witnessing today. All that our secular parties and leaders are doing is to exhort people against the dangers of communalism. Very little is being done effectively to put an adequate secular agenda before the people.

They blame the strength of the communal appeal for their failure. But this is only a cover-up for their own reluctance or inability to project a vigorous secular agenda. On the other hand, communalist parties are being allowed to escape the dilemma that on secular issues their communal constituency would divide in non-communal ways.

Muslims Said Already Culturally Assimilated

93AS0472E Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 22 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Parwez Hafeez: "A Bond Forged By Time"; italicized words as published]

[Text]

Cultural assimilation has brought Muslims closer to Hindus than the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) would like.

The new year advice of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] president, Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, to the Muslims of India to join the mainstream was as preposterous as asking someone to put on a cap after beheading him. After alienating Muslims by demolishing the Babri Masjid, this cliched suggestion was an exercise in hypocrisy.

Hindu fanatics have always accused the Muslims of keeping to themselves. But the assimilation of Muslims in Hindu society began taking place as early as the 13th century. The great Islamic scholar Ali Mian write: "The Muslims have benefited immensely from the ancient cultural heritage of India.... When two civilisations meet, transmission of cultural effects and impulses between them is always a two way process."

Except for professing a different faith, a Bengali Muslim is no different from a Bengali Hindu. In his food habits, cultural and linguistic behaviour, a Bengali Muslim is closer to a Bengali Hindu than, say, a Maharashtrian Muslim.

In my childhood, with other Muslim boys of my village, I used to look forward to the Dusshera and Holi festivals in Bihar. In our school, the annual Saraswati Puja was an occasion which students of both communities celebrated in an atmosphere of bonhomie. Except for a bigoted few, the festivals of Dusshera, Diwali and Holi, were considered occasions for fun and laughter by the Muslims of the villages.

The assimilation of the two communities is evident not in Bombay or Kanpur but in the villages which constitute more than 70 percent of India. But thanks to the preaching of hatred by the BJP-Vishwa Hindu Parishad-[VHP] Bajrang Dal combine, today Muslims remain on tenterhooks till a Ram Navami or a Muharram passes off peacefully.

With the exception of a microscopic minority, the majority of Indian Muslims are converts. Today one will not find any descendant of the Arab, Mughal, Turk or Afghan rulers. The anguish and hurt the Muslim community experienced at the destruction of the Babri Masjid was not due to its association with the 16th century king, as erroneously propagated by the BJP leaders, but because of the blatant violation of the sanctity of a *khana e khuda*, abode of god.

Muslim festivals and ceremonies as they are celebrated in India show how Indian Muslims have developed certain characteristics not found in other parts of the Muslim world. The customs, festivals and even reaction to occasions of joy and grief in life are greatly influenced by the attitudes and practices of the Hindus.

Copied directly from the Hindu caste system, Indian Muslims, unlike Muslims elsewhere, are divided into various castes like Sayyids, Sheikhs, Khans, Ansari, Quraishi and so on. Even in their day to day life Muslims have adopted all the manners, rites and customs of their Hindu brethren. During a Muslim wedding, for instance, except for the *nikkah*, the rest of the customs and ritual performed like *haldi, mehndi, mandwa, manjha, munh-dikhai*, singing of bawdy songs, and sprinkling of rice owe their genesis to Hindu culture.

In Bihar the Muslim bridegroom also applied *sindoor* on the bride on the wedding night. Even the manner in which some Muslim festivals like Shab-e-barat or Muharram are celebrated in India bears similarity with Hindu festivals.

The contributions of the Muslim Sufi saints to the Hindu-Muslim synthesis cannot be underestimated. Shri Chaitanya, the doyen of the Krishna Bhakti movement and Jalauddin Tabrezi, the fountainhead of the Sufi movement in Bengal had followers from both the communities. Daulat Kazi, another mystic who wrote *Sati Meenavati*, is considered the father of the Bengali novel. Syed Sultan and Ala'ul wrote Vaishnavite hymns.

Can Mr. Joshi and all those who shed crocodile tears about Muslims not joining the mainstream ask why a Muslim like Haider who was a former president of the BJP's minority cell in Uttar Pradesh and who had announced a year ago that he would himself demolish the Babri Masjid was killed Ayodhya on December 6?

Mr. Joshi and his friends should explain why the painter, M. F. Hussain, a liberal Muslim who has deep devotion for Durga, Kali, Saraswatia and other deities of the Hindu pantheon, had to abandon his apartment in Bombay, apprehending an attack by Shiv Sainiks.

In these circumstances what will the Indian Muslim have to do to join the mainstream? Mr. Joshi should know that India is described as a country where there is unity in diversity. India is a multireligious, multilingual and multicultural society. There can never be complete homogeneity here. There can only be syncretism.

Instead of demanding the Muslims join the mainstream, Mr. Joshi should ask the mainstream to accept the Muslims in its fold. It is no secret that the Hindu mainstream looks upon Muslims with condescension and contempt. Hindus lose no opportunity in castigating the entire community for some aberration like Shah Bano or Ameena.

Few, however, try to understand the genuine problems of the Muslims. How ironical, the Muslims who live in grinding poverty in squalid shanties, who are not educated and who do not get employment either in the public or private sector, are accused of being pampered. No matter what their achievements, all Muslims are branded Pakistani agents.

The misconceptions and the resultant bias against the Muslims are on the rise because of the mischievous and distorted manner in which the BJP and its allies have presented the entire Muslim community to the Hindus.

The mainstream should interact and develop close contact with the Muslims and embrace them with open arms. The majority community should treat the minority with compassion and understanding instead of terrorising it like a bully as advised by the BJP-VHP combine. In this connection, the observation of an American author, Kathleen Cox, is worth quoting; "A democratic country is only as strong as its weakest link and in every democracy the weakest link is its fragile minority. Once the safety and rights of the minority are threatened, then the security of the country is undermined."

The eruption of every communal conflagration, invariably engineered by the BJP-RSS- [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] Bajrang Dal-Shiv Sena activists, tears asunder the composite fabric of Indian society and polarises the two communities. Ahmedabad is already divided into a Muslim Ahmedabad and a Hindu Ahmedabad. So are Jamshedpur and many other so-called "sensitive towns."

After rupturing the syncretic cultural heritage of India, Mr. Joshi's plea to the Muslims to join the mainstream sounds hollow and hypocritical. The champions of Hindu Rashtra do not or rather cannot relish the concept of an united India or *akhand* Bharat.

A study of the writings of Golwalkar, Savarkar and the speeches of Mr. Ashok Singhal and Mr. Joshi prove that the forces of Hindu militancy have been striving since the Thirties to divide both the communities. The day these two communities forge a strong unity, Mr. Joshi and his friends will go out of business.

Communal Animosities Seen Predominant Cultural Factor

93AS0430F Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 6 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by Sadar Nayeem: "Waking From Illusions of Oneness"]

[Text] After communal violence broke out following the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the pious homilies dished out by political and religious leaders and eminent citizens urging Hindus and Muslims to maintain peace have gotten on everyone's nerves. It seems the country could not succeed in its struggle against communalism despite all the appeals to nationalism and morality, the protest fasts, rallies and political pacts.

Most have ignored the fact the demolition was more a result of the sustained hatred of a section of Hindus for Muslims than of a devotion to Ram. Communalism has never been analysed taking into consideration its historical basis nor that it is a reality we cannot wish away. This is the reason a clear and effective strategy to fight it has not yet been found.

Every communal riot succeeds in spreading communal ideology. Even secular persons join hands with or are forced to depend on communal forces to defend their lives and property. Animosity between Hindus and Muslims, the two largest religious communities in India, is a social reality. Sermons about unity serve no purpose against this.

The ban on communal organisations is merely a short term solution to the communal problem. With or without the sangh parivar, divisive and disintegrative religious movements will emerge time and again unless the causes within Indian society responsible for communalism are not rooted out.

For this, it is necessary to trace the origins of communal hatred in the country. In the medieval period, the Muslim conquest of India meant an Islamic extension into a country with a well established social structure, a fully developed way of life and a living culture. Successful as Hindu society was in absorbing barbarian invaders, it could not do the same with Muslim incursions. Muslim invaders too did not want admission into the Hindu fold.

Hindus soon lost their powers to assimilate alien cultures, hardened into a closed society that was fanatically convinced of its superiority. It not only failed to absorb Arabs, Persians, Turks, Afghans and Mongols, it also considered converts to Hinduism as unfit to be members of common society. As a result, the descendants of the Muslims who settled in India forgot their past and showed more solidarity with foreign co-religionists than with native Hindus.

Both Hindus and Muslims were thus responsible for the break in genuine racial relationships and the emergence of a new social and cultural association. The parting of ways virtually put an end to any social intercourse between members of both communities. The consequent Hindu-Muslim enmity has done irreparable damage to this nation.

This animosity was not clearly evident till 1857, the year of the Sepoy Mutiny. The myth of Hindu-Muslim oneness has actually done more harm than good to the relations between the two communities. If we ignore that Muslim invasions were responsible for a xenophobic Hindu revival and the Muslim belief in pan-Islamism which, Muslims think, will help them survive in India with the help of extranational support, it will not be possible for both communities to correct their communal attitudes.

Persisting Hindu xenophobia during British rule encouraged Muslims to believe it would be impossible to safeguard their interests when the British left. This led to the monstrous idea India ought to be partitioned. Muslims wrongly believed the British had wrested political power from them, since India, when the British arrived, was ruled by despots who merely happened to be Muslims. There was no such thing as "Muslim power" in the country. The rulers belonged to the community but the large Muslim populace was as alienated from them as the Hindus.

Muslim rulers in India did not aim to establish a theocracy. Fanaticism among them was a matter of personal disposition, not a policy dictated by the Sharia.

The false idea of being political predecessors of the British made Muslims particularly suspect in the eyes of the rulers after the failure of the Sepoy Mutiny. The mutiny was seen as an attempt of the Muslim community to revive its rule. Despite the inherent hatred between Hindus and Muslims, the strength of the mutiny lay in their unity against a common enemy. But after 1858, the British decided to maintain their hold over India by encouraging communalism through a policy of divide and rule. They allied themselves with the most backward and obscurantist religious and social forces.

But the policy of pampering Muslims did not bring about any genuine improvements in the socioeconomic conditions of the community. Only the elite was rewarded for its loyalty. As the nationalist movement gained momentum, this elite was carefully brainwashed that the continued well being of Muslims depended on the presence of the British in India. It was told if the British left, Muslims would come under Hindu majority rule.

Muslims thus found solace in the pan-Islamic movement that reached India in the last quarter of the 19th century with the visit of the Muslim leader, Syed Jamal-ad-Din Afghani. They were prepared to ally themselves with forces beyond the country. This was the major mistake made by the community. Indian Muslims were shocked by the rise of Mustafa Kamal Pasha, when the Turks themselves rejected the caliphate. Turkey had therefore chosen nationalism over religion. At the same time, Arab

states and Iran emerged, both not caring to be bound with other nations on the basis of religion.

Indian nationalist leaders too made the mistake of forming a coalition with the Muslim League under Mohammad Ali Jinnah in Lucknow in 1916. The Indian nationalist movement and the caliphate movement only appeared to be working hand in hand, promoting an artificial Hindu-Muslim cooperation. The Indian caliphate movement was, in fact, a result of the prevailing fear among Muslims of losing their identity in a country in which 80 per cent of the population was Hindu.

Hindu-Muslim unity was proved ephemeral by the outbreak of the Kolhat riot immediately after the end of the caliphate movement. With the exploding of the myth of pan-Islamism, the only hope for Muslims seemed to be the partition of India after independence. Partition served to strengthen the erroneous belief Hindus and Muslims could never evolve a common nationality. The fact is even Muslims with different cultures and languages found it difficult to live with each other, as was demonstrated by the division of Pakistan within 25 years of its creation.

It is ironical the one-third of the Muslims left behind in India after Partition could not relinquish its moral responsibility for India's fragmentation in the face of the implacable hostility of a handful of Hindu communalists. The general majority community attitude towards Muslims after Partition was a mixture of indifference, contempt and suspicion.

However, it is true the hostility has not been active but rather in the nature of an emotional bias. It is also true that Indian Muslims would not have been able to live in peace with full citizenship in India without the sanction of the majority community. But in the absence of any form of social intercourse, they have become virtual pariahs in their own country.

After 1947, Indian Muslims seldom initiated communal violence. They have been its victims. Hindu communalists, active since the Twenties, found an opportunity after Partition to step up their activities. They readily adopted and propagated the imperialist view medieval Indian history was one long nightmare of Muslim tyranny, murder, rapine and oppression, the forced spread of Islam through conversions, persecution of Hindus and destruction of temples.

Coupled with this was the post-Independence propaganda Muslims were being appeased by every government for their votes. How are they being appeased? The Hindu communalists answer that Muslims are allowed to have a personal law distinct from the civil code of the nation. Muslims are unceasingly attacked for non-issues like polygamy and divorce laws despite the fact they are largely leaderless, illiterate and steeped in grinding poverty.

It is unfortunate self proclaimed secular parties have often associated themselves or compromised with communal parties and groups. This strengthens the popular belief communal politics is the road to success. The emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] and the Ayodhya controversy are logical concomitants. The only way out of the communal quagmire is for both communities to realise their faults. They have to acknowledge Swami Vivekananda's advice that only a "Hindu mind with the Islamic body" can shape the future of India.

Muslims can hardly be blamed for being apprehensive of living in a country the BJP may one day rule after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The age old hostility between the two communities has never been as pronounced as now. Considering the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is essentially political and the BJP's efforts to communally polarise society at breakneck speed to capture power at the Centre, it is not impossible the BJP will assume power if elections are held within a year.

This is perhaps the right time for the BJP to effectively attack the tattered Congress led by an indecisive prime minister. Mr. Narasimha Rao has already alienated Muslims by his failure to protect the Babri mosque. Hindus too do not believe the Congress can find an unbiased solution to the Ayodhya crisis.

The question is, if the BJP assumes power how successfully can it rule the country with its single point programme of building a Ram temple in Ayodhya? The nation is yet to know the details about the BJP's economic and foreign policy. Sensing this disbalance, the BJP is at least trying to act as a responsible government in waiting. In its resolution adopted in the recent national executive committee in New Delhi, the party asserted its belief in "equal opportunity and equal rights to all citizens of India." This was an attempt to shed its anti-minority image.

The resolution also mentioned the party's opposition to theocracy. Since the division of Pakistan in 1971 proved that religion cannot bind a nation, the BJP has had to accept national unity as its ultimate goal based on the common interests of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians. Another factor the BJP has to consider is power at the Centre means complete dissociation from the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Its policies will then have to be based on rationality. If it chooses unreason, the BJP will lose the moral support of millions just as the Muslim League lost out after Pakistan was created on the basis of its one point programme of the partition of India.

Hindu Based Politics Said Leading Towards New Partition

93AS0430I Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 20 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by M.J. Akbar: "Portents of a Partition"; italicized words as published]

[Text] There is a profound misleading analogy being circulated in New Delhi to explain the crisis that has seized India following the aggression of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] and the regression of the Congress on December 6. The destruction of the Babri mosque is being compared to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

There are many reasons for this—some well intentioned, others self seeking. One obvious wish of liberals who make this comparison is to dramatise the magnitude of what has occurred, to shock the undecided or the indecisive out of any complacency. This is a worthwhile enough mission.

A more mercenary mission was to frighten the Congress Parliamentary Party into not only unity but also loyalty behind the status quo. It was not a moment for ambition but for selflessness. Just as Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel set aside their differences in the wake of Gandhi's assassination, so must Mr. Narasimha Rao and Mr. Arjun Singh together in this hour of national peril and so on.

The analogy might have been dismissed as a harmless exercise in politics by the prime minister's intellectuals were it not for the worry that this false analogy could lead to a disastrous misunderstanding of the nature of December 6's events. Inevitably this would lead to assumptions and policies which would become even more self destructive than the government's behaviour on December 6.

The point to remember is that while Mahatma Gandhi's assassination was an emotionally wrenching national tragedy, it was not a historical event. It did not affect the course of history. What was done was already done. The noncooperation movement was a historic event; the salt march shaped the Thirties; the Quit India call was an arbiter of fate. But Gandhi's role as a leader who held the reins of history in his hands and could nudge it in the directions he wanted ended with the colossal failure that climaxed his political life: Partition.

Gandhi himself understood this. Which is why August 15, 1947, was the saddest day of his life, a day he spent in near silence in Calcutta while Nehru and the Congress leadership celebrated in New Delhi. It was in January 1948, a little before his death, that Gandhi conceived of an impossible scheme to reverse Partition with a symbolic walk across the borders. At best what would have created an emotional incident even if it had taken place. It would not have changed reality. It was only a gesture, perhaps only to rescue something from defeat. And death denied him the consolation of even that symbolism. Gandhi did not want the responsibility of running the freedom movement, most often through the vehicle called the Congress, but sometimes also independently of it as for instance in the non-cooperation call.

He had passed on the responsibility of keeping India united, of pushing India's economy forward, of raising India's place in the world, to Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. History was now in their control, not Gandhi's. The Mahatma saw his only role in post-Partition India as healing wounds, as a moral authority, as the conscience of the Indian ethos. He had evolved, if you like, beyond politics and policy after his politics of unity failed against Mohammed Ali Jinnah's politics of separation.

The true analogy of December 6 is not with January 30 when bullets from the gun of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's [RSS] fanatic ended his life. If you see the destruction of the Babri Masjid as only an incidental horror, then your attitude towards the RSS and so on will be an exact repetition of what happened in 1948 and 1949. When the shock passed and the anger died down, as they inevitably must, Nehru and Patel quietly released RSS leaders from jail, the ban was lifted and the unbanned leaders of the Hindutva movement went right back to their work. They even organised a political party in time for the 1952 general elections. The present ban in any case is time bound, presumably on the assumption that if you keep RSS leaders in jail for two years prison food will make them secular.

The correct comparison for December 6, 1992, is with only one other event in India's troubled modern history: August 16, 1946. That was the day the kar sevaks of a man called Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy implemented a resolution of a Muslim dharam sansad, also known as the Muslim League.

The target on December 6 was a centuries old structure which had become a symbol of hope for Muslims and hatred for the Hindutva movement. The target on August 16 was a people. The aim was similar. Through the destruction of a mosque in 1992 and through the death of thousands in Calcutta in 1946, the perpetrators wanted to change the course of history. In 1946 Muslim fundamentalists succeeded beyond their wildest expectations when Partition and Pakistan came within precisely one year of August 16, 1946.

What Indians do in the next 12 months will determine if what has been started on December 6 by Hindu fundamentalists triumphs as splendidly as four and a half decades ago. Muslim extremists wanted a separate country. Hindu extremism demands unity, of course, but the unity of a different kind of state. In a sense they want to create a Pakistan in India, a Hindu Pakistan. Whether they succeed or fail depends on us, not only them. Just as the victory of the Muslim League equally represented the defeat of the Congress, the victory of the BJP will not be possible unless the Indian National Congress allows itself to be defeated.

There are interesting echoes even in detail. Mr. Lal Krishna Advani would be surprised to learn quite how much he sounds like Mohammed Ali Jinnah, another suave and sophisticated politician with an absolutely unimpeachable personal life. August 16 too was at least officially the consequence of a collapse of negotiations—of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

In 1992 Indians were only arguing about a mosque and a temple—in 1946 they were getting passionate about the destiny of India. Jinnah had accepted the plan but, as M.A.H. Ispahani narrates in his book *Quaid-e-Azam As I Knew Him,* he immediately, albeit privately, began regretting this display of reason. He then exploited a remark made by Nehru at a Bombay press conference to publicly denounce the deal he had made. On July 29, 1946, Jinnah gave his call for a journey—towards Direct Action Day on Friday, August 16. A correspondent asked him whether Direct Action Day would be violent. "I am not prepared to discuss ethics," Jinnah replied.

The Kalyan Singh of the Muslim League, Suhrawardy, was the man who had moved the League resolution in New Delhi in April 1946, demanding a solemn pledge from members to do "anything" for the creation of Pakistan. He asked a question of the gathering: "What next?" He supplied the answer: "I have long pondered whether the Muslims are prepared to fight. Let me honestly declare that every Muslim of Bengal is ready and prepared to lay down his life."

It is a question which Mr. Advani must also have pondered over deeply: whether the Hindus were prepared to fight. In the end Mr. Advani did manage to prove what Suhrawardy also achieved. Not his ability to make every Muslim fight, but to motivate enough of them towards violence to show he could hold India hostage.

Yet the collapse of Congress resolve to fight Partition contributed as much as anything else to the eventful success of Muslim communalism. The party was still led by men schooled in Gandhi's commitment, endowed with character honed by sacrifice. But even their will to save India's unity at any cost weakened. There was one cost they were unable to reconcile themselves to—the prospect that the sacrifice demanded might again be the surrender of power. It was not Jinnah who accepted a moth eaten Pakistan; it was Nehru who accepted a moth eaten India.

Once again has come a test of will and strength of commitment. What will be necessary to save India from Hindu communalism? So far we have had a large outpouring of post facto bravado, interspersed with decisions muddied in their implementation. Pronouncements waver depending on which minister is making them. For a little while there was talk of a united front against communalism. So far the only sign of that is in newspapers. Even there the tatters are showing. Can the left trust Mr. K. Karunakaran and the Muslim League in Kerala; will Ms Mamata Banerjee now remain Union minister and walk hand in hand with Mr. Jyoti Basu in West Bengal? There is no front. We are back to the old ways already.

In such an environment, quick fix thinking is always an immediate consolation. Let us not underestimate the import of what has happened. The last and critical stage of an old political battle has begun. It is a battle which has to be fought in the political arena, not in samadhis.

Hindu Nationalists Termed 'Fascistic'

93AS0431A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 19 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Vasant Sathe: "Mid-Term Folly: Congress (I) in BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) Trap"]

[Text] If the country does not show enough sagacity the likely fall-out of Ayodhya would be further polarization, division of the two major communities and consolidation of the fundamentalist and the obscurantist forces on both sides. Today's tendency is to overreact emotionally. The dismissal of constitutionally-elected Governments in all the BJP- [Bharatiya Janata Party] ruled States is likely to prove counter-productive.

The act of vandalism committed in demolishing the Babri structure was not only foolish but was fascistic. It exposed the rabid face of Hindu communalism and provided sufficient ground for dismissing the Kalyan Singh Government and imposing President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh.

The meaning of secularism in the Indian context has been equal and due respect for all religions and faiths—"Sarva Dharma Samabhav." The other meaning of secularism, which has come from West, means delinking the State from the Church. In the Indian context, neither according to the Vedic or the Sanatan philosophy nor according to Islam can State be ever delinked from religion. The word "dharma" itself means a way or code of life that upholds the entire society. "Dharayate Iti Dharmah."

Divine Oneness

Similarly, under Islam, everyone who believes in the basic tenets as propounded in Quran Sharif, including those who run the apparatus of State, have to believe in the basic principles of "Tohid Nububiat and Akhirat"—the oneness of God, the existence and prophethood as his messengers and the ultimate justice. Therefore, people who believe in Islam all over the world have never accepted the non-religious concept of secularism. I have deliberately avoided using the word "Hindu" for the simple reason that this word has no place in any spiritual or religious text of India.

Therefore, if we were to restore the basic meaning of "Sarva Dharma Samabhav" then alone can we restore sanity. Two wrongs cannot make a right. If the extremists who demolished the Babri structure committed a heinous crime, the answer is not to commit another crime as has been done in some neighbouring countries where temples have been demolished. It is time to show greater political wisdom and tolerance and the dismissal of all the BJP States does not seem to be the right step. Elections that will have to be held in those States would put pressure on the Centre. The Congress (I) itself may

find itself seeking the support of the so-called Left and other parties which cannot be relied upon. After all they have repeatedly asked for the Prime Minister's resignation.

The political maturity of Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao and his keenness on consensus on major national issues have held the Central Government together. By being forced to take the extreme step of dismissing the three BJP Governments, the Congress (I) has more or less called a referendum on this small issue—Ayodhya. This is precisely what the BJP wanted. Instead of having elections on economic issues, on which account the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have failed miserably, elections would be held on religious considerations. That cannot be beneficial to the Congress (I).

The main issue is whether the question of the existence of a religious structure on the site of the Babri Masjid should be resolved judicially. It is a question of fact. A commission of inquiry consisting of five judges of the Supreme Court, belonging to different faiths, could have been appointed and asked to determine the fact through archaeological and other evidence.

Today, after the structure is no more, it might be easier for archaeologists and experts to find out whether there was any such religious structure on this site. Such a finding will help resolve the dispute. The Babri Masjid leaders, like Syed Sahabuddin, have themselves said that according to the Quran (and I had quoted Sura 2 Ayat 114) disturbance of any religious place is prohibited.

Fact-Finding

Therefore, if any such evidence was found, the Muslim leadership would have given up their claim on the structure by saying that it does not deserve to be called a mosque and this is what their leaders had repeatedly said. If the evidence proved otherwise, that there was no religious structure, the case of the BJP, VHP [Vashwa Hindu Parishad], RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], Bajrang Dal and others would have been totally knocked off and there would be greater justification for the Government to act against them.

This main bone of contention is now being sidelined. This is what must be decided first before we talk of reconstructing the earlier structure. If it later proved that there was some religious structure prior to the erection of the mosque, the act of Babar would have been wrong, even according to Islam. If one insisted in the face of such evidence, on constructing a mosque there, one would be committing another wrong, contrary to Islam and only repeating the barbaric act of Babar.

Mr. Rao had tried to resolve this dispute in a peaceful and amicable manner. He was not at fault in believing that the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the president of the BJP, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, would keep their promise given in an affidavit to the Supreme Court. These people betrayed the promise and the betrayal was against the whole nation and contrary to the values of Satya Vachani Shri Ram.

It would have been absolutely unconstitutional for Mr. Rao to dismiss Kalyan Singh's Government and to impose President's Rule in anticipation of such a betrayal, because Mr. Rao would then have to disregard the order of the Supreme Court which had allowed "Symbolic Kar Seva." Today, with hindsight, to try to blame Mr. Rao is not only unfair but is an act of calculated mischief.

Today's Arjun

One can understand the Kauravas of the Opposition asking for the Prime Minister's head. One cannot understand the modern Arjun aiming his arrow at Krishna himself. This is what is happening in the Congress today. It would be a sad day if some friends were to join hands with the Opposition leaders in seeking the resignation of Mr. Rao, or to create a situation to force him to do so. The logic behind the dismissal of all BJP Governments was that the Chief Ministers were members of the RSS, now a banned party. The point, however, is that they were in Government not as RSS but as a political party known as the BJP which had not been banned. The dismissals could, therefore, be considered contrary to the provisions of law or Constitution.

One can prosecute a Chief Minister like Kalyan Singh, for example, for committing an overt act or if he and other leaders commit an act in breach of the law. But one can hardly co-relate the membership of the RSS, or for that matter Bajrang Dal or the VHP, with that of being a Chief Minister of a political party like the BJP. It would be understandable if the Constitution was amended to say that every political party under the Constitution must abide by the basic principles of the Constitution, and if one does not, one will be derecognized and not be eligible for contesting elections.

Such an amendment will have to be brought about in the Constitution. As things stand, it is doubtful whether the membership of the RSS was a valid ground for dismissing the BJP Governments. For narrow, selfish gain some persons pushed the Congress(I) into the BJP trap of an early mid-term poll. It will be a worse tragedy to see Mr. Arjun Singh join hands with Mr. V.P. Singh.

BJP Politicization of Hinduism Condemned

93AS0431J Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 15 Jan 93 p 13

[Quotation marks as published]

[Text] The similarity between Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and E.M. Forster's Professor Godbole in *A Passage To India* is extraordinary. Both are well read in the scriptures, both are intelligent and philosophical men. As neither Fielding, the liberal Englishman in the

book nor Dr Aziz, the passionate Muslim, could understand Godbole, so Rao too has the air of an indecipherable soul from that pan-spiritual bracket which defines a good Hindu.

Of course, Forster's reaction to Hinduism was based on a visit he made to the subcontinent in the early decades of the century. It was something he respected but couldn't understand, as the Marabar caves cosmic 'Om' indicates (completely messed up by David Lean in the movie, by the way). But one thing the book does underline and that is the fact of the matter—Hinduism, as a faith, does not communicate well. Therefore, like Judaism, its appeal is limited to its original followers who themselves find it difficult to communicate the religion to others who may have been interested.

The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and its allied associations, then, are the self-appointed articulators of what Hinduism is all about and they are speaking, essentially, to Hindus who have, earlier, never really been interested in the essence of the faith, even though they have participated merrily in its rituals. But, as we have said, they are self-appointed and it is the process of this selection that is getting curiouser and curiouser, particularly after Ayodhya.

Seen strictly from their own point of view, the destruction of the mosque is a stroke of political genius. They are doing politically exactly what E.M. Forster did in a literary fashion—trying to explain the Hindu to himself and to others by means not of thought but of contrast. They have decided that the most expeditious way to understand themselves is by analysing what they are not. And to articulate the results, to communicate to the synthesis, a political party needs what every communicator—novelist, painter or film-maker—desires. It needs a symbol. Communication will not work without it. In other words the destruction of the Babri Masjid explains to me what my faith is all about by demonstrating what it is not. It is not Islam. What is it, then? Give the Hindutvists a chance! Even their leader, L.K. Advani, has arrived from Sind, the North-West corridor of invasion (now in Pakistan) only about a generation ago. He and others need a little time to figure out Hinduism. Hindutva wasn't conquered in a day, you know!

Narasimha Rao, on the other hand, is a Brahmin from South India, his antecedents probably going back a dozen generations if not more. But that is not why he is a good Hindu. Jawaharlal Nehru was a Kashmiri Brahmin but an agnostic; so were, fundamentally his daughter and grandson. After Lal Bahadur Shastri, Rao is the next leader of the Union with a genuinely Hindu sense and sensibility. That is not how or why he came to power. It is a coincidence of History and it is both Rao's strength as well as his apparent weakness. His scholarship enables him to argue—mythology for mythological character—with the agitating sadhus but his Hindu sense of tolerance has led him to "pamper" their leaders and his false sense of political "secularism" has allowed Advani and his ilk to communicate by inverted symbolism (break the mosque, make a temple) that our 5000-year-old religion is different from Islam! The Third Reich did exactly the same thing with the Swastika—telling the Germans that they were not Jews because they were Aryans. That was the first time the average German probably heard the word Aryan, let alone figuring out what it meant.

All around one hears supposedly intelligent and nice people talking about how the BJP's version of Hindutva gives us Indians a sense of identity and purpose. There is of course the advertising executive who agrees that a dose of Hinduism is good for us and then orders a beef-steak at his favourite restaurant. But he is the joker in the pack, a member of the ruling elite who wants to be on the right side of whoever comes to power and something tells him that "the Russians are coming, the Russians are coming."

The more interesting sort of person is the one who is in a position to influence others. The one who slants his reporting in national newspapers or the one who uses Orwellian 'double-speak' in the edits. I strongly believe that this media man or woman is not interested in religion at all. What he is demonstrating is the classic Hindu instinct to subjugate himself before an authoritative force. By bringing down the mosque, the BJP has cracked the whip, just as the Muslim conquerors did and the British after them. More recent history comes straight to the point. The magic word in Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency was 'discipline', the mantra that led thousands of mediapersons "to crawl when they were only asked to bend." Therefore, one suspects that this talk of a sense of nationality that Hindutva can supposedly give is nothing more than a need for a sense of order in the chaos that is India. Girilal Jain, for example, is doing exactly what he did during the Emergency. Some people never change!

What this self-deception does to us in the communication professions is to cause a psychological block that shuts out the real identity problems of the country. Surely, the law-and-order breakdown in the nation should have indicated this—things fall apart, the centre cannot hold. The fragile nature of the republic is due to languages and regions, due to over-population and social injustice. The battlefield that was Bombay in the early part of December was poor people fighting poor people. Because there are not enough taps for drinking water and not enough place to sleep in. How can you have a religious identity when you have no space to establish a sense of self? It is easier when you live in a flat to talk of Hindu identity and to articulate yourself in the English language in a land with more than a dozen officially recognised languages and a myriad ethnic identities that cause far more severe problems to the process of development than does a temple or a mosque. This is the myth of Hindutva—associating progress with religion when the two have never been remotely nice people, civilised on every occasion and working in the media, are duped by every kind of social communication—symbolism.

You don't need to be a semiotician to understand the syntax of political communication, much less be fooled by it.

The trick is to look a little beyond the BJP's brilliant use of symbolism and ask for the sub-text. It is simple and brute power, absolutely no different from what was underneath the Swastika in central Europe of the late 1930s. They claimed that the trains ran on time then, too. The second trick is to ask: 'After Hindutva, what?' The text is a little fuzzy here, and asked a few fundamental questions on Punjab, Assam, population, environment, the BJP agenda looks no different from any other political party. Ah, but their foreign policy is different. No mollifying the Arabs, this time, energy is going to come from our oil wells in Texas!

Ironically, and this is something the Indian media does not seem to have grasped, the structure of BJP ideology can only lead to the marshalling of centrifugal forces. The party sells Hinduism as a centripetal and binding power—80 percent of India is Hindu—but the historical reality of the sub-continent, even during the time of Asoka the great, is regionalism not religion. The wars between the Mughals and Marathas were essentially territorial, the tension between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (Cauvery) linguistic. Can this party hold the nation together on the bond of a temple? On the contrary, its coming to power will be just the cataclysmic accelerator needed for a Soviet Union-like demolition of structure, and the pun is intended. As a British general once said in Latin after conquering Sind: 'Peccavi' (I have sinned).

Democracy Said Threatened by Hindu Nationalism

93AS0432A Madras FRONTLINE in English 15 Jan 93 pp 28-29

[Excerpt from article by A.G. Noorani: "Democracy in Peril"; quotation marks, italicized words as published]

[Excerpt] "Those Congressmen who by their acts or inaction in an emergency support directly or indirectly communalistic activities, are not worthy of remaining in the Congress," declared the Congress Parliamentary Party in April 1961. (THE HINDU, April 15 and 24, 1961). By this test the present Congress(I) leadership is a traitor to the heritage of the Congress of old. The decision to allow darshan of the illegally-planted idols and thus legitimise the crime of December 6, the retreat on the rebuilding of the Babri Masjid and the acceptance of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) old package by the P.V. Narasimha Rao Government on December 27 (delinking of the mosque from the adjoining land and reference of the dispute regarding the mosque to the Supreme Court under Article 143 rather than Article 138(2) of the Constitution) reveal a desire to compete with the BJP for the Hindutva vote rather than to confront the vile forces that have inflicted so grave a damage on the secular polity and which now threaten to destroy democracy itself.

The BJP has responded to Narasimha Rao's signals. On January 4, BJP veteran Atal Behari Vajpayee appealed to the Congress(I) and the BJP to start the new year with a "new conciliatory step." He would not have dreamt of issuing such an appeal to the Janata Dal or the Left. It is not a coincidence that his parivar's boss, Rajinder Singh, joint general-secretary of the now-banned Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), has sung the same dulcet tune. "Look at it this way—the Congress opened the lock, the Congress allowed the shilanyas, so the temple can be built too" (FRONTLINE, January 15, 1993), also with the Congress' help. Now that he has so openly, revealingly, attributed the opening of the locks to a political decision rather than a judicial order by Faizabad District Judge K.M. Pandey on February 1, 1986, that order is stripped of whatever little worth it had as a judicial ruling. That Home Minister S.B. Chavan cited it in support of the decision to allow darshan, on December 28, is understandable. Rajinder Singh still calls the Prime Minister "a very nice man" but blames "the thorns" on his side, identified as Arjun Singh, Human Resource Development Minister, H.S. Surjeet, CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] general secretary, and Jyoti Basu, West Bengal Chief Minister.

Thanks to the Government's appeasement of the Hindutva forces, they have raised their demands despite their complicity in the crime of December 6. They are not impressed with the Government's acceptance of their own earlier proposal. They have begun talking of the mosques at Varanasi and Mathura with yet greater stridency.

Implicit in the BJP's entire credo, its rejection of the judicial process and its recourse to force was a rejection of the Constitution itself. Now that has emerged in the open. This, incidentally, has been a marked feature of its style of politics ever since the Hindu Mahasabhaite of old, Shyama Prasad Mookerji, set up the Jan Singh in 1951 ostensibly as a party whose doors were open to all communities. This was simply because as a member of the Nehru Cabinet he was privy to the Constituent Assembly's resolution of April 3, 1948: "Whereas it is essential for the proper functioning of democracy and the growth of national unity and solidarity that communalism should be eliminated from Indian life, this Assembly is of the opinion that no communal organisation which by its constitution or by the exercise of discretionary power vested in any of its officers or organs, admits to or excludes from its membership persons on grounds of religion, race and caste, or any of them, should be permitted to engage in any activities other than those essential for the bona fide religious, cultural, social and educational needs of the community, and that all steps, legislative and administrative, necessary to prevent such activities should be taken."

This was very much a lawyer's draft. Not without reason did Edmund Burke say that the law sharpens the mind, by narrowing it. The resolution concentrated on form and overlooked the substance. A party can formally open its doors to all, yet espouse a communal creed. The ADMK (Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) became the AIADMK (All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) when it was feared that regional bodies would be banned. Mookerji seized on the lacuna and launched the Jan Sangh. His Mahasabha would not open its doors to non-Hindus even as a mere formality. The RSS agreed to give him the cadres.

But Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was wise to the perils which the Constitution can face even without a formal amendment. He told the Constituent Assembly on November 4, 1948 that "it is perfectly possible to pervert the Constitution, without changing its form, by merely changing the form of the administration and to make it inconsistent and opposed to the spirit of the Constitution." *If the administration is riven by men with a communal outlook—whether by Ministers or civil servants—the letter of the Constitution will be of no avail.*

This is what the BJP has in mind when it says India will not be declared a theocratic state. It need not be; you have only to place the BJP in power to achieve the same results as its Governments in the States proved.

Secularism is an aspect of democracy. Now democracy itself is in peril. The Constitution is openly under attack. Is it a mere coincidence that the parivar's sadhus have let loose their attacks on the Constitution openly just at this moment? On December 25 in New Delhi, Swami Muktanand and Swami Vamdev, who are closely connected with the parivar's Ayodhya movement, gave a call to the people to reject the "anti-Hindu Constitution." In the same breath they described the demolition of the Babri Masjid as a "commendable act which has started the process of wiping out the black spots and blemishes of Mughal aggression from the face of our motherland."

Remember that the BJP abided by the Dharam Sansad (religious parliament) decision on kar seva at Ayodhya. It is men like these who will set the agenda for the country if they are allowed to. Not only the minorities, the entire nation will come to grief. Its cherished freedoms will be destroyed. The two sadhus openly declared that they and other 'sadhus' "have no faith in the country's laws" and were, indeed, above them (THE HINDU, December 26, 1992).

On New Year's Day, Vamdev added Delhi's Juma Masjid to the list of mosques which "the Muslims must surrender voluntarily to the Hindus." It is foolish to laugh away all this as the outpourings of "the lunatic fringe" that exists in all democracies. In India, that fringe has infected the mainstream. Many publicists who denounce obscurantism in the minorities—and rightly so—are silent on these outpourings. Some of them have enthusiastically hailed the crime of December 6; others have tried to mitigate it. Doubtless, a good many manfully denounced the crime.

Muktanand has prepared a 68-page booklet, "The Present Indian Constitution?" It would not only be undemocratic to ban it but unwise too. The top leaders of the BJP kept silent. Its general secretary, K.N. Govindacharya, said on January 2: "I don't condemn the Sadhu Samaj but only reject their claim" (to the Jama Masjid). Asked whether this attitude would not change, he replied meaningfully: "It is presently not on our agenda."

Govindacharya's detailed interview to THE STATESMAN (December 30, and 31) is an eyeopener. He admitted that the BJP consciously "decided that on the one hand we will persuade the Government to allow construction on 2.77 acres and on the other collect crowds to foil the dismissal plan. Actually, as early as November 28, when the crowd strength was already 30,000, the Centre had realised that dismissal would not work." The BJP was determined to show it was no "mere paper tiger." He has thus confirmed the ORGANISER's disclosures of a considered game plan—file the affidavit in the Supreme Court and continue the negotiations until the crowds are in place in Ayodhya.

It is disingenuous of Narasimha Rao and Chavan to harp on the difficulty of intervention on December 6 itself. Their culpability lies in permitting the BJP to mobilise the people, after the National Integration Council (NIC) meeting on December 23, and leaving the mosque a hostage to men who were pledged to destroying it. Consider the alternative scenario—of its non-destruction on December 6. The construction would have gone on unchecked and, as Govindacharya said, "we would have eventually encircled it," rendering judicial adjudication a farce. "If the (Article) 143 decision was in our favour, we would have included it, otherwise gone in for legislation." In plain words, the advisory opinion would have been overridden.

Advani was privy to this game plan. Correspondents in Ayodhya of both THE HINDU and INDIAN EXPRESS reported, as the former's put it, that Advani could be heard telling the gathering in the afternoon to seal all approach roads to Ayodhya as the Central forces could intervene any moment." The INDIAN EXPRESS correspondent also reported that he was "heard ordering sealing of all entry points." Advani gave the call "in the afternoon." Even according to Vajpayee (December 17) the kar sevaks had stormed the structure at 12-30 p.m. None should believe Advani's belated denial of his order. Arvind N. Das exposed in full detail the falsity of Advani's denial of his give-away remark, on December 1, that "kar seva does not mean bhajans and kirtans" THE TIMES OF INDIA, December 18, 1992).

This explains why there is no contrition but defiance on the part of the BJP. On December 31, its president Murli Manohar Joshi said he was not repentant over the

incidents of December 6. "In fact, I pay my homage to the kar sevaks who were killed at the site..."

What Govindacharya said of the future is revealing: "When we come to power... the process of assimilation will progress rapidly." The Muslims will be "assimilated" in the BJP style. His revelation that in 1988 the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the BJP were prepared to "commit themselves to constructing the temple, keeping the structure (of the mosque) intact" provided Muslims "in a gesture of goodwill handed over the structure" proves two things—the site of the mosque was not a matter of faith. It was negotiable. And it was really a matter of getting the Muslims to surrender to the parivar's will. [passage omitted]

Hindu Nationalists Termed 'Militant' Threat to Society

93AS0432C New Delhi PATRIOT in English 12 Jan 93 p 4

[Article by Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey: "Hindu Society and RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh)"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] is desperate and is making its utmost efforts to capture power at Delhi. Its various outfits are leaving no stone unturned to realise the objective. Its supreme command has realised that it has reached the point of "now or never." If it is not able to make it now it will never do it in future. The reason is simple: it will not get a more catching issue than the Ramjanambhoomi to arouse the passions of the people. The two earlier issues, namely, Kashmir and cow slaughter, petered out in spite of all efforts to keep them alive.

In its desperation, the RSS and its outfits like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, etc. have come out with very inflammatory slogans. One such slogan is: "Hindu hit ji jo baat Karega, wohi desh per raj karega." Implicit in this slogan are two things: first, there are interests common to all Hindus, and, second, the RSS and its various front organisations are the only or the sole guardians of Hindu interests.

Let us take the first. It is being asserted that the "liberation" of the birth place of Lord Ram and construction of a grand temple is in the interests of all the Hindus. If one looks at the Hindu society and its history, this claim falls through. The Arya Samaj and its followers are also a part of Hindu society. They do not accept the theory of the incarnation of Vishnu nor do they believe in idolatry. They reject the Puranas and look at the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as the pieces of literature only. Hence, they cannot be a party to this so-called common interest.

The same is also the case with various smaller sects like Kabirpanthis, Aghorpanthis, Dadupanthis, etc. If one goes by the common Sanatani belief that Buddha was the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Buddha was against idolatry. Obviously, the "liberation" of the birth place of Lord Ram and the construction of a grand temple cannot be accepted as the common Hindu interest. At best, it can be regarded as the common interest of only Sanatani Hindus.

Then the question arises: is the RSS with its front organisations like BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad], Bajrang Del and so on competent to be guardian of the Sanatani Hindus? The credentials of the RSS to speak for the Hindus were called in question by none else than Swami Karpatriji about two decades or so ago in a full length book Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh aur Hindu Dharma (Varanasi, 1970). The people of north India have not been unfamiliar with his name and activities. His learnings in ancient Hindu scriptures were so deep that very few people could equal him. He was regarded as the maker of Shankaracharya. In the field of politics, he was uncompromisingly against the Congress and Marxism. His book, Marxwad aur Ramrajya (running into several hundred pages) was published by the Gita Press, Gorakhpur, and it created such a furore among the orthodox Hindus that the CPI [Communist Party of India] had to mobilise a renowned person like Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan to write a reply to it.

Karpatriji had a political party called Ramrajya Parishad which was an ally of the Jan Sangh and once it even had a member in the Lok Sabha also. Karpatriji was against the entry of Harijans into temples to worship deities. He also participated in the RSS stunt of the anti-cow slaughter movement and faced lathi charge in 1966 and courted arrest. It is beyond doubt that Karpatriji knew the ins and outs of RSS politics.

The publisher of the book by him was no other person than Mahant Virbhadra Mishra, the chief priest of the diety of Sankatmochan (Varanasi). One may recall that it was Mishra who conferred the title of Rajarshi on V.P. Singh during the late 1980s. In the preface of the book, the publisher wrote: "Venerable Shri Swami Karpatriji has, by giving quotations from the books of Golwalkarji, proved from all aspects that Rashtrawad of the RSS has nothing to do with the Hindu religion but it is of the Western Nazi or Hitlerite variety."

Karpatriji exposed the illogical approach of the RSS people and told them that "In reality, you accept not one but hundreds of books from the Vedas to the Ramcharita Manas as authority, yet you are not committed to anyone of them. From a book whatever is favourable to you, you accept and whatever goes against your sayings and practice, you reject without hesitation. It is a semi-Kukkuti Nyay. It is like that person who tries to eat up one half of a hen and wants to preserve the other half so that it may lay eggs."

Karpatriji went on to add that Golwalkar was really the incarnation of Hitler and Mussolini in India. Golwalkar has written in his book Vichar Navaneet that "Bhagwa Dhwaj (saffron flag) is the symbol of our nationhood." On this Karpatriji commented: "Can the Bhagwa Dhwaj

be called universal? ...Different kingdoms of India had different standards. In the war of the Mahabharata the chariots of Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Bhima and Arjuna had different flags or standards... Therefore, it cannot be asserted that all our ancestors accepted only the Bhagwa Dhwaj."

Golwalkar did not like the national tricolour flag of India. In his book Vichar Navaneet, he called the tricolour as "a clearcut proof of our going downstream and following the others." "It is not an expression of a pure and healthy national approach" but is "only the contrivance of a politician" and "political ad hocism."

Karpatriji asked Golwalkar: "But can you tell me what was your one national flag? When was the Bhagwa Dhwaj the national flag and what proof can you adduce in your support? In the war of the Mahabharata all warriors had their own different flags... Since some king who was a devotee of a Sanyasin adopted the Bhagwa Dhwaj, it became the standard of his kingdom. Nepal is a Hindu kingdom, but its flag is other than a Bhagwa Dhwaj. Our country adopted the combination of saffron, white and green colours in the form of tricolour as the symbol of sacrifice, purity and peace and it has every right and justification to become the national flag of India."

Golwalkar claimed that the great task of Indian renaissance could be completed by none other than the Hindus. He asserted that ancient sages had delved deep in the domain of self and propounded and given content to the treatise of the self-realisation of the form of the principle of great unity.

Now let us hear the comments of Karpatriji: "But which is this treatise? Are you saying this on the basis of modern incomplete knowledge of history or is there any treatise like other treatises of the world? You do not accept the Vedas, the Vedantas and books on philosophy, yet you are proud of a treatise which is the product of your realisation. It is false pride that the people of the Western world are devoid of the realisation of self. We have already said that among Jews, Parsis, Christians and Muslims also the knowledge of soul developed. They also have the traditions of charity and benevolence."

Golwalkar said that once when Ramakrishna Paramhans saw that a cow was being mercilessly beaten with a hunter, he started crying with pain and he found that there were scratches on his back. On another occasion when he found that an ox grazing in a field got injured, the sign of its hoof automatically got printed on his chest. Karpatriji commented, "Do not be surprised, the RSS guru is a past master in talking nonsense and spreading falsehood. It is a matter of surprise that you believe such things that have no sound basis... these things have nothing to do with knowledge of the self nor can they have by any stretch of imagination. Knowledge is the appearance or expression of element or matter, not its cause. No testimony proves it."

Commenting on the definition of the term "Hindu" by the RSS, Karpatriji wrote: "The RSS people say that 'one who regards India stretched from sea to sea as his fatherland and holyland is Hindu" ... but this definition is full of fallacies of both too narrow and too wide definition. According to this definition, the Hindus of the ancient times who lived in other islands could not be called Hindus."

Goldwalkar claimed: "Our existence has been since those days when nomenclature was not needed. We Aryans were enlightened people. We were knowledgeable about nature and self. We had created a great civilisation, grand culture and a unique social system."

According to Karpatriji, "All this assertion is meaningless because your culture and civilisation are baseless, undefinable, therefore, they are an impossibility or they are your conceipt."

Karpatriji goes on to tell Golwalkar: "Your so-called growth will lead to the destruction of real Hinduism. Your meaningless, so-called Hinduism should remain confined to you only because it is baseless, indefinable, devoid of any substance and irreligious songs and player of kabaddi... You have confined the last rites only to the cremation of a deadbody, the same way you have taken only early to rise as the morning rituals because, perhaps, this may be necessary for going to the Kabaddi Shakha."

Analysing the term 'nation', Karpatriji wrote: "...militant nationalism: It has two forms—nation state and cultural state. The first was common in British, France, Spain, etc., and the second only in Central European countries. Its proponent Hitler said: one race, one nation. Mussolini and Jinnah also repeated the same thing."

"India's Jana Sanghis are also the followers of this militant nationalism. The difference is that Hitler accepted the primarcy of blood but these people are without any basis. These people have vicious animosity towards the Muslims as Hitler had towards the Jews. Just like Hitler they also want to overawe the people through demonstrations by paramilitary volunteers. Hitler was of the view that only the people of the German stock could be citizens of Germany, similarly, these leaders also hold that only Hindus can be citizens of India. According to them, if the Muslims, Christians, etc., declared themselves to be Hindus and take on Hindu names, style of dress, etc., they will qualify to be Hindus."

"If one reads the autobiography of Hitler, one will realise that it has influenced the RSS leaders deeply. They are vainglorious like Hitler. They also want to drive the Muslims out of India as Hitler did the Jews."

Karpatriji concluded that RSS nationalism had nothing to do with the spirit of India. In fact, it was an Indian version of Hitlerism. "The very definition of nationalism by Golwalkar is un-Indian." He warned that once the RSS people got an upper hand, they would finish

whatever democracy we had and uproot all the democratic institutions and lead to the disintegration of our unity and social harmony.

Editor Calls for 'Illegitimizing' Hindutva

93AS0510E Madras FRONTLINE in English 30 Jan 93 p 15

[Article by N. Ram: "Ban the Shiv Sena, Illegitimise Hindutva"]

[Text] The horror and shame of Bombay—India's most populous city and way and ahead its financial capital—has been brought out movingly and powerfully in the lead story of this issue written by Dr. V.K. Ramachandran. This analysis, based on a careful investigation of the happenings and the factors, brings out the truth that Muslim masses have been the primary, although not the exclusive target of this violence and thuggery.

What happened in Phase II was succinctly characterised by a member of the delegation of film personalities which met the Prime Minister on January 14: it was "planned, pre-meditated carnage" which related to, but was no mere "fall-out" of the Ayodhya catastrophe. In response (as FRONTLINE's lead story in this issue points out), "the Governments of Maharashtra and India became, in substance, non-governments; they served the cause of rampaging Hindu communalism by standing and waiting and by following a scandalous policy of appeasement" of the semi-fascist communal organisation.

This ugly pogrom and the consequent breakdown of civil society in what is purported to be India's most cosmopolitan city have been in the making over quite a long period. The virtual immunity from preventive legal action and prosecution that has attached to the Shiv Sena's criminal and dangerously disintegrative rampage of December-January raises the vital question whether the Indian state is at all committed to the rule of law. Indeed this question must be raised about the whole official response to the offensive that the Hindutva constellation has launched against constitutionalism and democracy in India.

The Shiv Sena must be banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, as amended in 1972, and its leaders, criminal gangs and publications must be proceeded against, without further temporising, under the criminal law of the land. On a wider plane, Hindutva, its core and adjunct organisations, its saffron-extremist fringe and its most dangerous political vehicle, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], have virtually declared war on the Indian Constitution and the rule of law. And the Narasimha Rao Government's substantive response makes it clear that it does not have the political will, the constitutional and moral sense and the practical guts to meet this unprecedented challenge.

Democratic sense requires that bans must not be easily resorted to and that tolerance levels must remain high. It is also clear that bans by themselves cannot be the real answer to the expanding danger of organised communal extremism and disintegration. No ban can substitute for the absence, or weakness, of a public education and mobilisation strategy and of a sustained political campaign in defence of communal harmony, secularism, the democratic framework and civil society. But this does not in the least imply that the rule of law must be reduced to a nullity when the Shiv Sena, in concert with the street gangs of Hindutva, decides to unleash the devices, methods and tactics of fascism.

The question of tackling the Hindutva organisations, including both the BJP and the Shiv Sena, involves politics as well as the law, but it actually goes beyond both. Philosophically, too, from the standpoint of the system, it is challenging.

The contemporary philosopher John Rawls, in "A Theory of Justice" (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972), addresses the question of "toleration of the intolerant." He emphasises the need to distinguish at least three questions as part of working out a just answer: "First, there is the question whether an intolerant sect has any title to complain if it is not tolerated; second, under what conditions tolerant sects have a right not to tolerate those who are intolerant; and last, when they have the right not to tolerate them, for what ends it should be exercised."

The answer to the first question is that an intolerant organisation has no title, or right, to complain if it is not tolerated by a democratic system or is "denied an equal liberty." The just answer to the second and third questions depends partly on the stability of just institutions in society.

"If an intolerant sect," observes Rawls, "appears in a well-ordered society, the others should keep in mind the inherent stability of their institutions. The liberties of the intolerant may persuade them to a belief in freedom... So even if an intolerant sect should arise, provided that it is not so strong initially that it can impose its will straightaway, or does not grow so rapidly that the psychological principle (specified) has no time to take hold, it will tend to lose its intolerance and accept liberty of conscience. This is the consequence of the stability of just institutions, for stability means that when tendencies to injustice arise other forces will be called into play that work to preserve the justice of the whole arrangement... this situation presents a practical dilemma which philosophy alone cannot resolve. Whether the liberty of the intolerant should be limited to preserve freedom under a just constitution depends on the circumstances."

The contemporary philosopher's carefully-worked-out conclusion is that while an intolerant group or organisation "does not itself have title to complain of intolerance, its freedom should be restricted only when the tolerant sincerely and with reason believe that their own

security and that of the institutions of liberty are in danger. The tolerant should curb the intolerant only in this case."

Applying these principles to the complicated and very mixed-up circumstances of contemporary India, can it be said that the stability of just, democratic and secular institutions is such that we can afford to provide an open general licence to the Shiv Sena and other dangerously communal political organisations to mobilise electoral support by poisoning the well of electoral democracy, as it were? The Shiv Sena must be immediately banned, for a start, entirely on merits. Such action would also have the advantage of sending a long-overdue practical message through the system that the "politics" of organised anti-constitutional thuggery cannot be tolerated even by the tolerant.

Hindu Nationalists Said Misleading Public

93AS0412C Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 3 Jan 93 p 10

[Excerpt from article by Goutam Roy: "The Hindu Nationalists Are Telling Innumerable Lies"]

[Excerpt] What the kar sevaks attacked on 6 December was not any disputed building structure, but the structure of Indian secularism. Only the future can say whether that structure was completely ruined or some deep marks or ulcer has been created on its body by that frenzied action which lasted for five hours. But it is clear from the talks of the supporters and advocates of the kar sevaks that they want to destroy the whole structure of secularism in India. Those advocates argued that the stories of the destruction of unnumbered temples in the hands of the Muslim rulers in the medieval period were stored in the "collective racial memory" of the Hindus, and that anger stored in the memory instigated the kar sevaks to take that historical revenge.

Needless to say, the theory of the racial memory of the Hindus is nothing but an absolute false assumption. If this kind of false theory and worthless talk is presented in the wrap of good English, it might, sometimes, appear to be a serious and even intellectual theory. But it is very difficult to find a buyer of the theory of Hindu racial memory, because the Hindus are not any race at all. The Hindus of India are a mixed race created by the centuries of mixture among the Mongoloids, Australoids, Dravidians, Nordics, Alpines, and Armenians. The Hindus are not a race in the sense that the Jews are a race. Just as the Hindus are not integrated as a race, so the religion of the Hindus is also not a well-defined religion.

In the semitic religions there are some characteristics, such as a rigid structure, a particular holy book, one preacher, and an organized institution, such as church, etc. But there is nothing of that sort in Hinduism. There is no other diverse and loosely knitted religion like Hinduism. "God is one and you can call it many different names"—this is the basic teaching of Hinduism and here lies its inherent power. The Shaivites (the worshippers of Lord Shiva), the Shaktas (the worshippers of the Goddess Kali), the Ganapatas (the worshippers of Lord Ganesha), the Vaishnavites (the worshippers of Lord Vishnu) and even the atheistic Chakrabhaktas—all are Hindus. Their idols are different, their style of worshipping is different, and some of them do not even believe in the existence of God. The differences become wider from place to place and community to community. Searching for a memory in the Hindu mind for a history of racial and religious torture like that stored in the memory of a semitic race like the Jews would be useless and unhistoric.

If we talk about the historical memory of religious torture and the destruction of temples, then many other names and faces should come up besides Sultan Mahmud of Gazni. We read about a Hindu king of Kashmir in the 11th century named King Harsha from the famous book Rajtarangini of Kalhana, who was said to have employed a group called "Devotpatanayak" whose primary duty was to destroy the temples and to take the wealth for the enrichment of the royal treasury, which was almost bankrupt. Sultan Mahmud also did the same thing. In the 12th century, King Subhatvarman, the Hindu king of Parmer, attacked Gujrat and destroyed many Jain temples in the Davoy and Cambay region. The Shunga king Pushyamitra killed many Buddhist monastics and Shashanka, the king of Gour, destroyed many Buddhist monasteries, monuments and prayer houses. In the whole Hindu period starting from the 5th century A.D. onward, the Hindu rulers of north and northwestern India and the Vir Shaiva and Lingayats in south India destroyed unnumbered Buddhist and Jain monasteries and temples. The coreligionists Shaivas destroyed more temples of Vishnu than the Muslim ruler of Gazni destroyed Hindu temples. The kar sevaks feel so much for Ram, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, but they have no bad feelings for the Shaivas. Instead, at the time of the destruction of the mosque, they shouted, "Hara, Hara, Mahadev!" The three main Hindu religious sects—Shaiva, Shakta, and Vaishnava—destroyed the religious places of each other whenever they had the opportunity. These examples in history should have been stored in their community or sectarian memory. But today, the Shaivas, the Shaktas, and the Vaishnavas are not eager to settle their scores with each other. Therefore, why are they trying to make a theoretical justifications for taking revenge against the destruction made by Mahmud? Actually, all the present advocates of Hinduism, like their predecessors, learned history from the colonial British imperialists; therefore, they are pinpointing only those cases where the Hindus were tortured and oppressed by the Muslim rulers. Following the course of the imperialist historians, they developed the 19th century divisive idea that the Babri mosque was built on the ruins of a temple, and they are trying to sell the idea as a historical truth of the 16th century. The same kind of colonial idea tried to color Tipu Sultan and Aurangajib as Hindu haters.

In his textbook of history for the whole of northern India a learned man like Mahamaho Padhyay Hariprasad

Shastri wrote that three thousand Brahmin committed suicide when Tipu Sultan tried to get them to convert to Islam. This information he got from the self-serving and untrue description of Colonel Myles who was an adventurist British general. When Sir Ashutosh was informed, he immediately withdrew that textbook from the syllabus. But for more than 50 years, until 1972, the students of the schools grew up reading that history. But Mr. Shastri suppressed the fact that 156 Hindu temples were maintained in the kingdom of Tipu by government grant. It was not mentioned that Tipu never took his breakfast without visiting the idol of Ranganathji in his Srirangapattan fort, that Tipu had a friendly relationship with the priest Jagatguru Shankaracharya of Shringari Math, and that Tipu's prime minister and chief general were Hindu. If all these facts about Tipu are known, the story of his Hindu hatred does not stand. Because today's Hindu idealists took their history lessons from the divisive schooling of the colonialists, like the nationalists of 19th and 20th centuries, they publicize Aurangajib as a Hindu hater like Tipu Sultan. There is no doubt that Aurangajib was a deeply religious and devoted Muslim. And for that reason he could not be a Hindu hater as a religious minded and devoted Hindu cannot be a kar sevak.

On the basis of the records kept in different religious places, the historians have shown that Aurangajib continuously issued decrees for annual financial grants and land for the proper maintenance of many famous Hindu and other temples of northern India, such as the Mahakaleshwar temple of Ujjaini, Balaji temple of Chitrakut, the Umananda temple of Guhati, the Jain temple of Shatrunjayi, etc.

Whenever the two groups of priests had a problem, Aurangajib took the role of mediator. If the Muslims tried to create some problems in any religious place of the Hindus, he suppressed them with a strong hand. But he was painted as an incarnation of Sultan Mahmud because of the incident of the Viswanath temple of Varanasi. He definitely destroyed this temple. But why? On his way to his Bengal expedition, the wives of the Hindu kings who were accompanying him went to the temple of Viswanath to pay homage after bathing in the river Ganga. But it was discovered later that the queen of Kautch was missing. After the search of the whole of Varanasi, finally, the tortured, raped, and half-dead body of the queen was found in a secret room under the idol of Viswanath. The angry Hindu kings wanted action from the Emperor and demanded punishment of the guilty. Due to their insistence, Aurangajib transferred the holy idol of Viswanath from this unholy place to a different site, destroyed the temple, and arrested and punished the priest who was guilty of the crime. Were those actions not just on the part of a ruler? The imperialist rulers tried to turn the face of the edge of the nationalist movement toward the Muslims by painting them as the "enemy of the nation," and the historians, who served as the agents of the imperialist rulers, found Hindu hatred in this action of Aurangajib. If the structure of the temple is used as a place for illegal sexual activities and other sorts of wrongdoings, or if it becomes a place for political conspiracy against the state, it can no longer be a place of worship. Should the sentiments of the genuine religious persons be hurt in the fall of that unholy place? There was no anti-Hindu motive behind the zizia tax. The Muslims also had to pay this kind of pilgrimage tax called zakat. The cost of building the Tajmahal emptied the treasury of Hindustan, and this pilgrimage tax was one of the sources to earn money for the treasury. And in that respect too, Aurangjib's predecessors were the Hindu Jamorin kings of Malabar who used to impose zizia tax on the Jewish subjects. But to the theorist gurus of the kar sevaks, history is nothing more than the motivated diary of third rate adventurist writers and collectors of the foreign rulers.

RSS Termed 'Important Fascist Force'

93AS0432E New Delhi PATRIOT in English 14 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by V.D. Chopra: "RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh): The Saffron Brotherhood"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The tragic events of last week, beginning with the demolition of the historic Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6, bring into sharp focus how Indian fascism is paving its way in our country. Through recent horrifying events, they have almost succeeded in effecting a crack in the citadel of our country's unity and its secular foundation. These fascist elements had a measure of success in turning the two communities—the Hindus and the Muslims—against one another; blood has been spilled and hatred generated all over the country.

The most distressing part of the last week's developments is that secular forces are not only divided among themselves but also continue to play their cards with an eye on power politics. There is no doubt that the common Indian—the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Christians—does not want to go along with the fanatics of the Ram-Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. This secular body of opinion can still be mobilised if the chasm which divides the secular forces is bridged. Things would not have taken such an ugly turn if the forces operating behind the scenes had been spotted and the people made to understand their roles clearly.

If one looks at the course of events in the recent past, dispassionately, it becomes clear that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was the main driving force behind the national tragedy that has engulfed India. To say this does not mean that one should ignore the role played by minority communalism in deepening the crisis.

The RSS was established in 1925 as a kind of an educational body whose objective was to train a group of Hindu youth who, on the basis of their character-building experience in the RSS, would work to unite the Hindu community so that India could again become an "independent" country and a creative society. Its

founder was convinced that a fundamental change in social attitudes was a necessary precondition of a revived India, and that a properly trained cadre of nationalists would be the cutting edge of that change. The two leaders of the RSS during the pre-independence period—its founder, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1925-1940) and Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1940-1973)—laid a firm foundation, supervising the training of the full-time workers who thereafter spread the organisation outward from its original base in eastern Maharashtra.

Linked to the RSS in India are several affiliated organisations, referred to in the RSS literature as the 'Parivar', working in politics, in social welfare, in the media, amongst students, industrial workers and Hindu religious outfits and groups. If the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and in the past the Jana Sangh, was the political platform of the RSS, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] is the ideological platform for Hindu revivalism.

It is also relevant to mention here that the far-sighted leadership of the RSS adopted a cautious non-confrontational approach towards political authority to reduce the chances of governmental restrictions in the post-independent period. After independence in 1947, however, the RSS came under political attack of the government. Through Gandhiji's assassination isolated the RSS from the national mainstream the RSS leadership did not dilute its operations. The RSS was banned twice. It was first banned in 1948 after Gandhiji's assassination and again in 1975.

However, till the sixties, the RSS could not integrate itself into the national mainstream. In the sixties in the post-Nehru period when the Congress became weak and its mass influence declined, the RSS and its political wing, the Jana Sangh, started growing in strength. The main reason for this was that in a number of States coalition governments were formed between 1967 and 1969, in which the Jana Sangh shared power with the non-Congress political formations, including the Indian Left. In retrospect, it will not be incorrect to say that the emergence of the RSS, and its front organisation as a political force started with this new trend in Indian politics. Blind anti-Congressism prompted certain secular forces to make a common cause with the Jana Sangh. The formation of the Janata Party government at the Centre gave a new credibility to the RSS and the Jana Sangh, though later this government disintegrated on the controversy over the 'dual' membership, one of the RSS and the other of the Janata Party.

Nevertheless, the fact of life is that the Jana Sangh merged into the new governing party, the Janata Party, and former Jana Sangh leaders were included in the national cabinet and served as Chief Ministers in several States during the 27-month period that the Janata Party remained in power. Never before had the RSS worked so closely with such a broad range of groups, many of which had previously demanded restrictions on its activities.

After the defeat of the Congress in 1989, and the formation of the Janata Dal government headed by V.P. Singh, a new phase began in the evolution of the RSS. The V.P. Singh government depended for its existence on two pillars, one of the BJP and the other of the Left Front, though of the two the BJP pillar was the stronger. Naturally, the RSS and BJP started asserting themselves in shaping the policies and finally, as was expected, a break took place between the BJP and the Janata Dal government.

The crux of the problem is that this Hindu revivalist force is now far more self-confident about its place in Indian society than at any time since India's independence. The unprecedented growth of the RSS and its affiliates may also be traced to the upsurge of militancy among a section of Hindus. There are various reasons for this. However, the main reason for this was that Indian political forces, including the Congressmen, the non-Congress political formations and the Indian Left, grossly under-estimated the potential of the rise of Hindu revivalism in the Indian society. As a result of this, many Hindus came to believe that the Congress and the Indian Left were "pampering" the Muslims for political ends. The government's decision in March 1986 to enact legislation negating a court order that did not adhere to the traditional Islamic law on the question of alimony was seen as a sign of such favouritism.

What is of far-reaching significance is that the various front organisations of the 'parivar' are controlled by the RSS cadre. The front organisations have a highly centralised authority structure very similar to the RSS. All of them recruit their cadre largely from the RSS and the RSS-trained cadres occupy the main organisational positions. In this sense, the organisational structure of the RSS plays a key role in moulding the policies, ideology and orientation of the various front organisations of the RSS parivar'.

In recent years, the RSS leadership has changed its tactics. The RSS leaders have come to the conclusion that close association with the political power evokes envy and opposition which complicate their efforts from long-term point of view. With the massive increase in their influence, the RSS leadership now controls these organisations from behind the scene, though most of the leaders of the various front organisations have undergone a period of training within the RSS. The training is carried out in the Shakhs of the RSS which meet daily to teach character-building exercises to the Swayamsevaks. The founders of the RSS have devised a training system which was intended to establish what is described as the Saffron Brotherhood.

The RSS training ideally starts in the pre-adolescence age and more ideologically oriented during adolescence. It is a period when the individual is particularly susceptible to ideological appeals.

The whole propaganda is to intensify a perception of threat in the majority community with a view to inciting

aggressive hatred against the followers of other religions. The high watermark of this demagoguery is the assertion that India should be declared a Hindu state because then alone would secularism, democracy and non-alignment be safe.

Though the first ban on the RSS was lifted in 1949, it gave a serious setback to the RSS. Its dream of playing a major role in independent India was shattered as has been the case after the Ayodhya tragedy. The RSS leadership then had come under heavy attack both from within and without. The RSS was treated as a pariah organisation and the leadership was ridiculed in the press and by politicians as is happening today. Its membership dropped and the number of pracharaks decreased. Morale within the organisation was an all-time low.

Between the lifting of the ban in 1949 and 1953, Golwalkar was confronted by an organisation beset by internal divisions. However, the RSS leadership in 1952 again became active and started on agitation against cow-slaughter.

Given the continuing problems in the mid-1950s, the central leadership decided that a further consolidation was needed. Eknath Ranade, appointed general secretary in 1956, ruled that the RSS could not afford to loan pracharaks to the affiliates when its own work continued to languish. The RSS would devote its resources almost exclusively to character building. This policy came as a blow to the affiliates and their leaders lobbied against it. Some activist pracharaks, such as the Deoras brothers (Balasaheb and Bhaurao), withdrew from RSS work.

The main reason for the change in the policy after 1962 was that following the Sino-Indian border conflict the Congress received a serious setback and for the first time direct political attacks on Jawaharlal Nehru began. Since then, particularly in the post-Nehru period, the RSS and its various front organisations have been expanding their influence.

Far-sighted as the RSS leaders are, in the sixties they evolved a well-designed policy of "mind management." In the initial stages they created an informal communications system based on verbal messages carried by RSS cadres. The RSS in this period, created trusts for publication of newspapers and journals. The publication ORGANISER was started on July 3, 1947, a month after Lord Mountbatten announced the decision to partition the country. Later, weeklies—PANCHJANYA in Hindi and RASHTRA SHAKTI in Marathi started their publications. In 1970, the HINDUSTAN SAMACHAR News Agency with a network of over 1,000 correspondents was started. By the 70s, the RSS and its front organisations had nearly 41 newspapers and journals in the country. After the emergency period—1975-1977—the RSS created newspapers experienced an upward urge in circulation.

Though the Vidyarthi Parishad was started in 1948, it was in the 50s and the 60s that it became an important factor in the youth movement, particularly in Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. By the early 1970s, the Vidyarthi Parishad had become a significant force in the various universities.

Surprisingly, in the 50s, the RSS worked out a neat plan to penetrate the working class movement. In the sixties, the RSS-led Mazdoor Sangh became an important factor in the working class movement. Following the 1977 electoral victory of the Janata alliance, the influence of the RSS in the working class movement began to increase rapidly.

However, the most important component of the multi-faceted activities of the RSS is that it began to organise Hindus on religious basis. In 1964, it established the Vishwa Hindu Parishad with three main objectives. They are: 1. to consolidate and strengthen the Hindu society; 2. to protect and spread Hindu values, ethical and spiritual, and to make them relevant in contemporary society; and 3. to establish and strengthen the links among Hindus living in different countries.

Till the early 70s the VHP concentrated its resources in the Hindi-speaking belt with the main focus on the tribal people. It was in the early 80s that the VHP started organising the Hindus on the national plane.

From whatever angle you look at the situation, the Saffron Brotherhood, namely, the RSS, has already emerged as an important fascist force in the country and has been pushing forward to build a theocratic state in India by demolishing the secular edifice built over the last one century during the freedom struggle and in the post-independence period.

This challenge cannot be met by any single secular force. The need of the hour is that all the secular forces in the country unite and see the writing on the wall. The Indian fascism has launched a full-throated and multipronged offensive. This the crux of the problem.

Secular Values Seen Deteriorating On all Sides

93AS0431G Madras THE HINDU in English 19 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Sudhanshu Ranade: "Can We Swim or Must We Sink"]

[Text] What will happen in the wake of the Black Sunday, two or twenty years down the line, is not only unknown. It is unknowable. For, the future is not something which already exists, sitting there awaiting prediction or discovery. It would be too much to say even that it exists in the form of a spectrum of possible outcomes, each of which could come into being with varying degrees of probability. As of now we yet have a chance to shape the future according to our preferences or, at any rate, a chance to decide about what we should do, how we should react.

Many of us have reacted with a gush, forgetting the distinction between what will make us feel better here and now and what will make things better over the long term. But there is yet time to shrug off our first reactions. We can even now prevent ourselves from getting trapped by positions that have been hastily forged in the heat of the moment. We can yet pause to take stock of where we have reached, and consider how we got here, before attempting to decide about what we should do next.

Such an exercise would, however, be useful only if all people who consider themselves to be well-informed, thoughtful and sensitive engage in introspection, paying particular attention to the question of whether they need to revise their assumptions, tactics or goals. In particular, it is not as if the need for introspection is confined to the Hindutva lobby, even though this lobby alone is directly to blame for the Black Sunday and the lives lost in its aftermath.

One question the Hindutva lobby obviously needs to ask of itself is whether things may be getting out of hand, whether it is not in danger of eventually getting devoured by forces of its own creation. After all, even those who dismiss the possibility of India following in the footsteps of Iran will not lightly be able to dismiss questions about the ability of the moderates to control the crowds they have been so indiscriminately arousing, or questions about the extent to which the attempt to forge a Hindu national identity has begun feeding on, and falling a prey to, the petty-mindedness and intolerance which arouse, for example, the born-again Christians in the United States and the racists in Europe. One of the other questions that urgently needs to be asked is about the equation that Hindutva proposes to strike with the largely non-Hindu, and already much-alienated, parts of the country; the North-East, Kashmir and Ladakh.

Three inter-linked subjects particularly suggest themselves for Muslim introspection: history, arithmetic and politics. As regards the first, it would not do for the Muslims to ignore the numerous incidents in contemporary history that have kept the "divided loyalty" issue alive, including the curious tendency of the Muslim "spokespersons" to approve of both secularism in India and the Islamic rule in the countries with a Muslim majority. The charge is certainly unjustified, and therefore outrageous, as was the raising of a similar charge against the CPI [Communist Party of India] at the time of the war with China in 1962. But outrage by itself can hardly be an effective response.

On the subject of arithmetic, the thinking Muslims could usefully compare the situation of their community with, say, the situation of the upper-income group Indian professionals in the United States, of the Parsis and Christians in India, of the Bengalis in Assam or the Assamese in Bengal, of the Tamils in Maharashtra or the Maharashtrians in Tamil Nadu, and so on; and derive appropriate lessons from the changing equations between the Indians and the Americans as they wing their way from Bombay to New York, or Malayalee and Hindi-speaking passengers on the Kerala Express as the train speeds towards Delhi.

On politics, it is worth recalling the views of Dr. Ambedkar, whose death anniversary fell on December 6. Particularly worth mention is his view that, thanks to serious divisions among the Hindus, the Muslim minorities were in no great danger so long as they did not, by their actions, unwittingly provoke Hindu consolidation. Some might argue that it was Hindu belligerence that provoked retaliatory action on the part of the Muslims, not the other way around. But even if this were true, even if one can lightly ignore the fact that majority communalism was not a serious problem for so many decades after Jinnah's Muslim League forced partition on this country, a different choice of weapons seems to be indicated, given the disparity in the numerical strength of the two communities.

Meanwhile, broad-based alliances with the ostensibly secular Congress and Janata Dal have not only conferred few tangible benefits on the Muslims, they have also ceased to be credible, for various reasons including the tendency of these parties to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, and the exaggerated stances struck by the Muslim "leaders" who have been involved in forging such alliances. The Left parties, too, may or may not be a viable option, on account of their long association with the Congress and the Janata Dal, and on account of the fact that the Left cadres and sympathisers, having liberated themselves from pedestrian modes of thought, tend often to forget that, for practical purposes, one can choose only between being left of the centre and being left behind. Making matters worse, even responsible persons from these parties sometimes show an amazing lack of sublety. For example, as the Ayodhya issue began building up to a crescendo a few years ago, a CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] leader aired the view that urinals ought to be constructed at the place which the Muslims and the Hindus regarded as the Babri Masjid and Ramajanmabhoomi respectively. Predictably, this brave posture has since then frequently been echoed by lesser mortals.

The point of all this is not that the Muslims must buckle down to an existence as second-class citizens. There is no reason why they need do that. But it does seem that a secular State is more likely to come into being if, in the face of the growing majority communalism, the Muslims decide to participate in the political life as citizens rather than as Muslims.

Whatever the potential utility of a thorough-going introspection among the thinking people, introspection has not been very much in evidence in the past few days. Even people from whom one would have expected better have allowed themselves the luxury of knee-jerk reactions. The Hindutva sympathisers are, of course, as guilty of this as anyone else. But the consequences of haste on the part of those outside the fold of Hindutva have been rather more tragic. It is the latter who have

today managed to tangle the situation even more than the Hindu fundamentalists were able to do on December 6. A call for firm action against the persons directly or indirectly responsible for the events of that day is understandable. But there does arise a question about what we can expect from a Government that has arrested the moderates, while going around telling the people that Mr. Bal Thackeray has not been arrested.

Similarly, whatever the effect of the ban on the communal organisations, there is sure to be a great deal of popular suspicion about the bonafides of a Government that has precipitately dismissed all BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] Governments outside U.P. [Uttar Pradesh], and even begun to speak of a possible derecognition of the country's largest opposition party. This is particularly so given the record of the Congress(I) on Centre-State relationships, its evident anxiety to return to power in the Hindi heartland, and its proneness to self-interested definitions of the national interest. Opposition to Indira Gandhi, for example, bad as it may have been for the Congress(I), was surely not an anti-national activity.

As regards the call for rebuilding the mosque, one can only say that the very idealism which makes it laudable also makes it worthless. Fortunately, Mr. Arjun Singh, one of those seeking to champion the fight against the communal forces, seems inclined to a more pragmatic view on the matter. In a recent interview to this paper, in reply to a pointed question about the nature of the redress required, the Congress(I) leader said: "It has to be a broad-based nature. If the pendulum has swung tragically as you have said to one extreme, I don't think a tragic swing to the other extreme is the answer.

There is, of course, scope for honest differences of opinion on all these matters. But this only makes it all the more important for us to be able to continue to talk to each other. The intense acrimony and suspicion which have forced a polarisation of moderate opinion in recent days cannot possibly help counter polarisation in the nation at large.

Hindu Based Politics Said Impacting Bengal

93AS0429B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 15 Jan 93 p 9

[Article by Udayan Majumdar: "Dialectics of an Emerging Ram Rajya"; italicized words as published]

[Text] Much of the political discourse in West Bengal prior to the demolition of the disputed medieval structure in Ayodhya was characterised by a cold indifference towards the Bharatiya Janata Party. If anything at all, Hindutva was considered a throwback on the past for its attempts to resurrect the atavistic Hindu folk imagination. Its imagery was dominated by primordial deities and warrior gods.

Like the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the south, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] was considered limited in its appeal. Only a particular region of the country, the "cow belt," was its stronghold. It was not seen as a force to be reckoned with outside the Hindi heartland.

Though the BJP's detractors considered it inimical to India's multireligious, secular and democratic polity, the party's presence in West Bengal was likened to that of the ghost in *Hamlet*—intangible.

December 6, 1992, dubbed by a section of the popular press as "the day of India's shame and sorrow," has changed everything. Notwithstanding the increasing anti-Hindutva tirade unleashed by the ruling Left Front, the local Congress and a part of the media, the Hindutva cult is evidently an emerging force in the state.

With the rising tide of Hindu militancy in West Bengal, the BJP is gradually being held in awe and reverence by the masses. This indicates the party does not operate in a vacuum. The CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and the Congress, much to the disappointment of their supporters, have seemingly merged into a single voice of reprobation against the "trishul culture."

While the BJP has now achieved a respectability and credibility that would have been unconceivable only a few weeks back, both the CPI(M) and the Congress consider it a stumbling block to their progress in the state. Accordingly, these traditional foes are now jointly engaged in exorcising West Bengal of the BJP's influence. All ideological differences have been swept under the carpet and the traditional rivalry between the CPI(M) and the Congress also shelved for the time being.

Both parties are now being confronted with the resurgence of primordial loyalties among West Bengal's Hindus. The Hindu community has apparently realised unless it closes ranks and reasserts itself as the majority community, "it will be treated like dirt in its own homeland." This is reflected by the growing numbers of visitors at the BJP's state unit office.

Marxists and Congressmen seem to have suddenly lost touch with reality. Their failure to realise the complexities involved with the Hindutva cult currently sweeping India and to understand the prevailing fears of Islamic expansion as a major cause of the revival of the tradition of the great Hindu temple worship has led them to their predicament. That these trends reflect manoeuvrings within the country's political leadership as well as the deepest longings of a society which has largely lost its moorings has been ignored.

Ill fated schemes of containing the BJP are launched daily by the ruling Left Front and the state Congress. The BJP rarely misses an opportunity to use these very schemes to promote its own political gains. If media coverage is any guide, the concerted efforts of the CPI(M)-Congress combine in West Bengal to marginalise the rightwing party has only served to encourage Hindu nationalists.

Moreover, the BJP, today in the forefront of the Hindutva movement in Parliament, symbolises the Hindu's most fundamental claim to legitimacy. It is also the only political party to have succeeded in raising the tricolour in Kashmir.

The party has recently begun to represent popular dissatisfaction with present rulers, be it at the state or central level. It symbolises many people's anger against the policy of nurturing Muslims like exotic hothouse plants.

People in West Bengal are increasingly beginning to understand that Hindutva, the Hindu ethos and values may not actually be as opposed to the concepts of equality and secularism enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution as they were once led to believe. Nor does the demand for a Ram temple at the "birthplace" of Ram—real or mythical—necessarily imply a shift away from the precepts of the Upanishads and the Bhagawad Gita especially since hundreds of Hindu temples across the country had been razed and mosques and mausoleums built in their place by Muslim invaders as part of their evangelical endeavours in India. More and more people in West Bengal are beginning to believe the BJP stands for the values they endorse—one land, one law, "justice to all, appeasement to none."

Marxists and Congressmen have to face new challenges. Shifting attitudes towards the BJP reflect a popular struggle against the CPI(M) and Congress practice of pandering to minorities, especially Muslims, for their votes. In their attempts to consolidate the Muslim electoral base in the state by plumbing the depths of communal pathology, both the CPI(M) and the Congress have often gone out of their way to curry favour with the Muslims.

That this has always resulted in cross currents of acrimony, hatred and fanaticism seems to bother neither party. The recent communal riots in the state, precipitated by "antisocials" and slumlords at the behest of real

estate developers and vicious landgrabbers in collusion with the ruling party, bear testimony to this.

The trail of destruction of Hindu lives and property in the December 1992 riots has helped awaken an unprecedented and formidable militancy not only among Hindu masses but social scientists and intellectuals as well.

The BJP, always sailing with the wind, now seeks to shape this militancy based on a Hindu consciousness to its benefit. It plans to organise protest rallies and demonstrations throughout West Bengal, distribute pamphlets and influence newspaper commentaries that glorify a Hindu rashtra to justify the toppling of the disputed Babri structure.

The bans on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal and the excesses committed by the state government by ordering the arrest of several prominent leaders of these organisations and restricting the BJP's peace marches, public meetings and rallies have only proved detrimental to the interests of the Congress and the left.

The state government has been imposing severe restrictions on the BJP despite the assurance of the home minister, Mr S.B. Chavan, on the floor of Parliament that "no hindrance has been placed on the functioning of the BJP as a political party ... there is no question of interfering in the working of the BJP and there is no discrimination between one political party and the other."

All this has only served to make Hindus more conscious of their rights as members of a religious community in a country whose Constitution respects all religions. It has also raised questions concerning the dominance of the Marxist political culture in West Bengal. This culture, intellectually and politically, seems opposed to everything Marx and Lenin prescribed. Voices of dissent are being heard both within the CPI(M) and the state Congress.

The Westernised elite and the Marxists may continue to believe people's participation in the political process, industrialisation, obsession with "class conflict" and science and technology have eroded the influence of religion and ethnic loyalties in the state. But the BJP has succeeded in driving home Swami Vivekananda's message: "Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition or of the power and spread of commercialism; these cannot inspire India...Religion...is the one consideration in India." Learned accounts suggest that for the wandering Hindu monk this "religion" was none other than Hinduism.

Hindu Spirit of Nation Said Emerging From Bondage

93AS0429J Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 17 Dec 92 p 9

[Article by Girilal Jain: "A Spirit Still in Bondage"]

[Text] Issues raised by the demolition of the Babri structure in Ayodhya and the widespread violence in large parts of the country in its wake are so complex that one cannot possibly hope to do anything like justice to them in a short space. This is especially so because public discourse is dominated by the liberal-Marxist idiom which is an alien import and therefore divorced from Indian reality.

Nothing less than a complete shift of paradigm is necessary if we are to make sense of what is happening in India. However presumptuous it may appear for me to say so, this task has not even begun to be undertaken.

Swami Vivekananda died long before the freedom movement had matured; Sri Aurobindo lived after Independence but he was engaged in a very different enterprise. Other than these two giants, it is difficult to think of an Indian who has escaped the grip of borrowed ideas, ideals and, indeed, phrases in this country.

To confine myself to the immediate issues of the demolition of the Babri structure and its aftermath, the first point that needs to be made is that it is just not true that a mosque, even a disused one, has been brought down. The structure had ceased to be a mosque in 1949 when Ram Lalla idols were installed there. The reasons they were not removed are not pertinent to the determination of the status of the structure.

It speaks for the absence of logic, common sense and realism in our public discourse that so many educated Indians should have refused to recognise this fact. Some of the statements of judges of the Supreme Court are especially notable in this regard.

This is not to suggest that the structure had become a temple, as Mr. L.K. Advani described it under the strain of events in the wake of the demolition. If that was the case, there would have been no need or justification for the mass movement which the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] has been conducting with the backing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS]and the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. The structure lacked the sacred geometry of a temple and as such it could not be regarded as a temple despite the opening of the main gate in 1986 and continued worship.

In plain terms, the structure was of ambiguous character when it was built in 1528 since it contained Hindu temple pillars with visible Hindu carvings and it retained that character when the Ram Lalla idols were installed there. The irony of it all, however, is that no other monument could have served as so eloquent a symbol of independent India as this one. It can be said to have summed up the reality of independent India.

Christ has been included in the Hindu pantheon as have several Sufis. Their images are duly installed in or outside Hindu temples. But that is an expression of age old Hindu "syncretism" and "inclusivism." It has nothing to do with the dominant "secularist" elite.

Before spelling out the implications of this unique phenomenon of the presence of the idols of the seventh avatar of Vishnu in a mosque like structure, I draw attention to the fact that up to the time of its demolition on December 6 no one seriously suggested that the idols be removed and the structure be restored to its former status.

In the past one year or so some Muslim leaders such as Syed Shahabuddin went through the motions of threatening to make such a demand but they did not carry out the threat.

This point is made to underscore the one made earlier. The status quo was more than acceptable not only because it would have been dangerous to try to disturb it but also because it reflected and represented the "personality" of independent India.

I shall not be stretching the point too far if I say the Ram Lalla idols symbolise the spirit of Mother India. If this symbolism is accepted, the rest should be obvious. Independent India has admitted of the possibility of this spirit being stolen into the structure, which a conqueror had built at the site especially dear to its devotees precisely for that reason, but not of replacing it with one appropriate for it.

This reality of the spirit of Mother India still too weak to come into its own has suited the dominant ruling elite as much as it has suited Muslims. Both have had an enormous stake in the preservation of the status quo. It shall not be an exaggeration to suggest the stakes of the former have been much higher and its power to preserve the status quo much greater.

For one thing, it has been in possession of the machinery of the state, the academia and the media; for another, the might of Western civilisation has stood behind it. Marxism is as much a child of the West as liberalism.

These references to Mother India and her spirit must come as a surprise to readers even in West Bengal which has given us Mahaprabhu Chaitanya, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who Hinduised the Western concept of nationalism in his famous Anandmath, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. But without these references it is impossible to understand what is happening.

The spirit of Mother India as symbolised by the idols has been in search of an instrument so that it could come into its own. It would appear that it first selected Rajiv Gandhi, grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, a pilgrim in search of that spirit in one part of his complex personality, and son of Indira Gandhi, also a pilgrim on the same journey, and his cousin, Mr. Arun Nehru.

They fulfilled the role up to a point. They secured the opening of the main gate; the spirit could now breathe more freely. But they could not see the task through in view of the constraints of the law, law courts and electoral calculations.

Their role was over with the shilanyas ceremony on November 9, 1989. But its significance must not be underestimated. Rajiv Gandhi in his confused way cleared the path for the hitherto auxiliary forces assembled under the banner of the RSS backed VHP. They could and did move to the centre of the stage.

This is not only a long but also a relatively well known story which needs repetition. The pertinent point in the present context is that the same constraints which had worked in the case of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress began to apply to the BJP and therefore to the RSS and the VHP.

These constraints came into play after the May-June 1991 elections which placed the BJP in office in Lucknow and made it the second largest party in the Lok Sabha.

Since the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh [UP] could not possibly disregard the rulings of the Lucknow branch of the Allahabad high court, it found itself hamstrung, its brave declarations notwithstanding. In the final stages the Supreme Court chose to add to its woes. Judges of the Supreme Court assumed an activist role perhaps without a precedent in the history of independent India and possibly British India as well. They tied the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh hand and foot.

The plight of the central leadership of the BJP has, if anything, been worse. In addition to wanting to protect the UP government from dismissal which Mr. Arjun Singh and his allies were pressing for, it had to safeguard the image of being a "responsible" and "moderate" party which Mr. L.K. Advani and Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee had assiduously and skilfully, won for it.

Yet it could not go back on its commitment to include the Ram Janmabhoomi site in the proposed Ram temple without loss of credibility in the eyes of millions of those who had rallied under its banner on that count. So it opted for a strategy riddled with contradictions. On the one hand it chose to let the VHP continue mobilisation of the people. On the other it asked the UP government to assure the courts that it would protect the structure "imprisoning" Ram Lalla and with him the spirit of Mother India.

All manner of reports have appeared in the media about those who disregarded the BJP-RSS leaders and demolished the structure. I have no personal knowledge in this regard to share with the reader. All that can be said is that if the structure had to go, it could not have gone any other way.

This is analysis and not endorsement. I do not feel entitled to hand out such post factum endorsement because I have argued earlier in favour of postponement of the project to build the temple.

The demolition was bound to outrage Muslim opinion in view of the political importance that had come to be attached to the otherwise nondescript and ambiguous

structure. The shortsightedness of the response of the government and the media could not but have gravely complicated the problem. They have.

'Cultural Nationalism' Said Setting New Agenda

93AS0472B Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 25 Jan 92 p 12

[Article by Rashmee Z. Ahmed: "The Saffron Cloak for Culture"; quotation marks, italicized words as published]

[Excerpt] The Indian Muslim's passionate avowal of fidelity to the tricolour, independent of his fealty to the banner of Islam, may be rendered futile by the future. Events may overtake these protestations—Muslim professionals issuing anguished testimonials of patriotism; Janata Dal secretary Wasim Ahmed launching a Hindustani andolan for secular values, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board denouncing the 'boycott Republic Day' call as anti-national. For, the national debate may have already moved away from familiar frontiers. It is not their nationalism (as the term is commonly understood) which will be at issue, but their cultural correctness.

Mr. Advani may well have set a new agenda by thinking aloud about India's need for 'cultural nationalism.' The concept seems innocuous, indeed too abstruse to merit close scrutiny. But it is an interesting euphemism for a certain mind-set. This is the perception that the patriotic Indian is one who is defined by a given set of cultural norms, to be distinguished from the customary norms of citizenship prescribed in the modern world. This belief is of a piece with Mr. Advani's exposition that the minorities must find their place in India as Mohammadiya Hindus or Christian Hindus, where the terms, Hindu, is used more in a generic and cultural sense than a religious one. [passage omitted]

Doomsday Scenarios

These are doomsday scenarios. But the dangerousness of a portent does not preclude the possibility of its coming to pass. The Indian Muslim seems to have realised his predicament, and has launched into an exercise in social Darwinism to survive the current turbulent times. It is unfortunate that he has done so only now, when Mr. Advani has transmuted the logic of Mr. Shahabuddin's "Muslim Indian" concept into the Hindu equivalent of the *volk*.

For, it must be said that Mr. Shahabuddin's schoolmasterish insistence on the semantic correctness of "Muslim India" may have left little leverage for his co-religionists to argue against the Hindu fundamentalists writing a whole new vocabulary for the ideal Indian nationalism. More regrettable, perhaps, is that all this while the Indian Muslim had apathetically accepted the irresponsible word-play which his self-proclaimed leaders had tried to legitimise. He should have known better. Words, after all, are malleable weapons, gelignite. They can mine and undermine. And, if Mr. Shahabuddin's "Muslim Indian" mined the subterranean reaches of the communal equation, the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] "cultural nationalism" can only undermine it.

Leftists Said Ready To Use Religion in Politics

93AS0472C Bombay SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 24 Jan 93 p 11

[Article: "Left Wingers Reconsidering Role of Religion in Politics"]

[Text] New Delhi (Reuter): Left-wing Indian atheists are reconsidering the role religion has to play in politics following a rise of Hindu fundamentalism and the destruction of the Babri mosque.

India's communists, for example, are responding to a national agenda set by their arch foe, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), by organizing concerts, seminars and debates to discuss religion.

"There is something to their (the BJP's) religious appeal that we had ignored," said Madan Gopal Singh, a Sikh-born left-wing teacher and atheist.

"If the majority of Indians are religious, then atheistic parties automatically get reduced to a minority."

Earlier this year, a three-day concert organized by the leftist Sahmat group with links to the Communist Party of India-Marxist—the main communist party—attracted over 10,000 intellectuals and artists, nearly all of them atheist.

So why are India's atheists suddenly invoking God?

"To combat the juggernaut of Hindu nationalism," said Nalini Taneja, a Marxist teacher at the Delhi University. "It resembles the rise of fascism in Europe 70 years ago."

Taneja, a Hindu communist, said "the juggernaut" had begun to roll years before December 6, the day thousands of frenzied zealots tore down a 16th century mosque in Ayodhya.

The campaign was brought to life by the BJP which made substantial gains in government at both state and national levels with its emphasis on Hindu fundamentalism.

A major opinion poll last month said the BJP would make substantial gains if elections were held now.

"Today religion is at the center of the national agenda," said M. Farooqi, a senior member of the Communist Party of India and a Muslim-born atheist. "We must support a tolerant religion against an intolerant one."

Few leftists dispute the necessity of Farooqi's new-found faith in religion, although some see it as tactical retreat from the communists' avowed message of the past.

"What they (the communists) now see is a deeply religious nation," said Singh. "Religion cannot be dismissed as the opium of the masses. Not in India. Not any more."

The Communists' pragmatism was summed up by an article published in the Pioneer newspaper, which said: "The belated realization that Hinduism is a powerful influence on the majority of Indians signal a major change in the attitude (of the Communist parties)."

It said publications brought out by the parties were attempting to "demarcate the vital difference between what Hindu humanism stands for and the distortion it has suffered at the hands of the self-arrogated champions" of Hindu nationalism, a reference to the BJP and its allies.

The Sahmat concert includes mystics and dervishes from across India and neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh.

One Pathan singer came from Afghanistan to sing verses from two mystical Persian poets. Their theme was spiritual unity of all religions.

"It was a very unusual gathering. There was that godless audience looking for spiritual succor and minstrels from the entire subcontinent defying all geographical and religious barriers," said S. Kalidas, a music critic.

For a largely atheist audience, it was an unusual treat to hear the philosophies of medieval saints.

Hindu Interests Said Overlooked By Secularism

93AS0419C Varanasi AJ in Hindi 14 Dec 92 p 7

[Article by Ashok Pandey: "The Road Ahead May Be Rocky"]

[Text] Lucknow, 13 December. There will be long-range effects from the restrictions imposed on the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad], and the Bajrang Dal. The Sun of Hindu awakening can burn the ropes of these restrictions, and the Congress Party, with its golden history of freedom struggle for centuries will find its path very difficult. Indira Gandhi wanted to do a lot for this country. Her emergency rule was thrown out by the people, and she lost her seat of power. The RSS has been withstanding the attacks in the form of restrictions and bans for the last seven decades; however, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal are relatively young organizations. Restrictions imposed at an early age emerge as rebellion by the youth. The eruption of the volcano can uproot the strong columns of a government.

The RSS was established on the Dussehra day in 1925 by Deshav Rao Baliram Hedgevkar with its head office in Nagpur. This organization began with only five members and now has over 40,000 branches all over the world, with three million full-time volunteers. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January, and the next day on 1 February, the government announced that Gandhi's assassinator was a member of the RSS. The next day, 3 February, the government imposed restrictions on the RSS and started to arrest VHP and RSS leaders all over the country. This ban was lifted six months later on 10 July 1949 [sic]. Later, the RSS spread its network in every village in the nation and established a large army of disciplined volunteers after 25 years of hard work. Mrs. Indira Gandhi became worried, seeing the increasing hold of the RSS on the Hindus. She had full control over the Harijan and Muslim vote; however, the first rank leadership of the Congress Party was still in the hands of high caste Hindus. During the emergency rule, prime ministers of eight major states were Brahmans. Indira Gandhi felt the danger, since the RSS was in a position to blackmail her. On 26 June 1975, exactly one day after declaring emergency rule, the RSS was banned once again and orders were issued to arrest minor and major leaders all over the nation. However, thousands of volunteers went underground and could not be arrested. The political scene in the country had changed by 1977, when the emergency was lifted. The ban on the RSS was lifted in March 1977, and the opposition fronts won the elections that year. A political force in the form of Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] was born.

History tells us that the RSS emerged with new strength about Hinduism after each ban. After the emergency, the BJP took over four important cabinet positions in the Morarji Desai government with Atal Behari Vajpayee in the foreign ministry, strengthening the RSS's roots in foreign countries too. The BJP was hurt during the chaos after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 and managed to grab only two Lok Sabha seats. However, the party did not lose its popular support and managed to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 80 during the next elections. The BJP was in a position to "blackmail," as Indira Gandhi had feared. When Advani took back his endorsement, the V.P Singh government fell. The BJP was able, not only to help form a government, but to topple it also. In order to strengthen its position at the national level, the BJP threw its "trump card," the temple issue, and controlled 118 Lok Sabha seats.

All the political parties have ignored Hindu interests under the guise of secularism. They have fulfilled all demands made by the minorities directly or indirectly in order to protect their vote banks. The RSS called this practice "pacification" and brought the Hindus together on a strong common platform.

After the emergency, the whole Hindu community focused on the RSS, because of its dramatic maturation. The pinnacle of success that the RSS is sitting on now was not achieved just because of circumstances. It was achieved because of the pacification policies of the non-BJP parties. All conspiracies hatched by other parties to weaken the RSS made it stronger instead. The Janata government took it to task in 1977 for making problems. Fingers were raised at its identity; however, that very identity has emerged as a challenge to the government.

The RSS demonstrated its strength on 6 December in Ayodhya, even though the results of this action were destructive. This success started in 1980 in Meenakshipur where Hindus were forcibly being converted to Muslims. The whole Hindu population was outraged, and they looked to the Constitution, which did not help them either. The rage and fury caused by the Meenakshipur incident gave birth to a new wave of Hinduism. When the BJP took control of the Ram Janambhoomi campaign, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal became its identity and successors. The ban perhaps will result in a new revolt because of this new identity, and the skepticism in the mind of the non-BJP parties will disappear.

Redefinitions Within Hindu Society Viewed

93AS0419A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 16 Jan 93 p 4

[Article by Sudhish Pachauri: "The Way For This Society To Survive"]

[Text] This happened a little before the emergency rule. A new Hindu Devi Santoshi Mata became popular. During the emergency, a new movie broke all previous attendance records in Uttar Pradesh. This movie was "Jai Santoshi Mata." Can we connect the people behind the emergency rule and those behind Santoshi Mata? Is a logical explanation of Santoshi Mata's becoming a major force in the Hindu mind possible? If yes, there can be explanations of the present Ram wave and the mythical new reincarnation of Ram. If these definitions are admitted, then it is also possible to get rid of the fear that is prevalent in the current Buddhist debates.

The readers can remember that when Jai Santoshi Mata emerged on the silver screen, Gabbar Singh was born in "Sholay." During those days, either the chants worshipping Santoshi Mata or dialogues spoken by Gabbar Singh were heard in wedding processions. Women who were always home-bound, suddenly found reasons to go out. They would go to the movie and feel delighted after seeing a safe movie. They felt that their home life was finally on the right track. They began to fast on Fridays.

Gabbar Singh of Sholay could not build a temple; however, the myth about him dethroned the traditional hero. Instead, the emotions ran high on philosophy, and the unemployed youth learned the Indian form of existence by playing with danger. Sholay became the expression of the youth, and Gabbar Singh become a legend. He was not real. Santoshi Mata was not real. There is no mention of him or her in any Veda or Purana. Still, she became a myth. The movie, "Sholay," makes the whole society mythical and Santoshi Mata a myth in the world of women. In spite of this difference, both were and are equally mythical.

Santoshi Mata became mythical, perhaps because Hindu women need a myth. Such a reasoning is principled. If the social scientists decide to argue, they will start with the idea that Santoshi Mata suddenly appeared at that time and became popular. The peculiarity of a mythical character is that soon after its birth it separates itself from its supporters and historical context. We can bring out the figures on the money earned by Jai Santoshi Mata, but we cannot put a finger on the solid reasons behind her. It is possible that she resulted from a momentary lament of an ordinary filmmaker or from a hobbyist making movies with little money. However, we saw that after she was created and won the trust of women, she became a goddess—holy, supernatural, and full of mystery and romance.

Modern people have accepted that myths will stop after logic and science are introduced. The reincarnation of Santoshi Mata will surprise them and they will wonder what is going on. However, there is no special reason for being surprised. Many answers can be found in the conception and presentation of a subject, and this tendency can be seen easily in the Hindu mind, because Hindus always have been a myth-loving society.

How much the Hindu society loves a myth can be estimated by the fact it prefers to be a mythical society. It has made a habit of being illogical and mystical. It does not mean that it does not have the logic or organization for living. It has established various organizations at times; however, it still moves with the great secret of "God is infinite." That is why the Hindu society does not define itself. It was named and defined by other people. Economic, social, and historical viewpoints have been incorporated into these definitions. Still, no one has been able to break the total myth surrounding this community.

Everything is apparent and clear about the Christian community. Its history is also available. It can create new myths but does not make itself mysterious. The Islamic community also stays with history. It just does not have any myths. If there are, they are new and approved by Islam. The Hindu community has never stayed with history. It created gods whenever it needed them. These gods were mythical; not one, but many. This is the cultural basis of the Hindu mentality. These characteristics are part of its rituals. Perhaps, that is its life-style as well as the reason behind its endurance.

In the Ramacharitmanas, Parvati asks Shiva in Shiva-Parvati dialogue, "Why is Ram a king's son if he is God? If he is supreme Brahma, then why is he human?" Shiva listens to Parvati's innocent questions and describes "Ram's character" in these words, "There is no difference between someone who is void of qualities [God] and those with qualities [humans]. The one who is void of qualities attains qualities because of the love of devotees. Water becomes ice and then water again. That is how it happens. Ram became human for his devotees."

We can see the process of creating myths in Shiva's reply. Shiva himself was a myth and a deity. Kak Bhashundie is Garuda the deity. So is Shukdev. All of them are telling-listening to Ram's story. There were ten reincarnations, and each of them is a myth. It is an art to lead a life full

of imagination and drama. Tulsi Das also created a myth—Ram's myth—the myth of Ram's story. This way, we can see the making of Ram's myth.

We can see the sociological process of creating myths here clearly. Ram was separated from his god-element as soon as he was reincarnated to play the role of a human to protect his devotees. The word, "acting" is a strange mythical word. All devotees are charmed by the Ramcharitmanas and this leela [play] delivers them. The Hindu mind has been related to "quality character" for a long time. It has no problem with the one "devoid of qualities." Nirguna [devoid of qualities] is the supreme thought. A form and name is essential for the leela. The whole world is the result of his leela. What is the whole world? That is his play. This play is mythical. A society that considers this whole action mythical, does not need logic or reasoning to prove its love for myths and the ability to create myths.

Marx, in a letter to Engels in 1853, quoted Aurangazeb's campaign on Kashmir as described by Barniar while trying to explain the Eastern definition of heaven. Barniar was amazed that such a small army with so little equipment had started on such a huge campaign. He is surprised that these soldiers were happy as long as they had khichdi [cooked rice mixed with beans] and ghee to pour on it. Marx was also surprised at this fact. Marx later comments that the reason for this satisfaction in the Eastern character is their treating land as private property. Later, Marxists may have said something to define the Asian character. They had always considered the Eastern character mockable and easy to dominate. However, they never tried to learn more about it. The leela process, practice of internalization of worldly problems, endurance of its existence, and other characteristics give it a mythical image. The Western philosophy retreated after encountering it. In the present Ram temple context, calling Ramlala, Ramlala in English is a minor example of this affinity. Ramlala does not seem to be upset at it!

The Hindu society started to create another myth about seven years ago. It was just like a personal history or a personal identity. All reasonings related to myths are applicable here. Rolland Barth has listed seven attributes of myths: separation and privatization of history, resistance to outside influence, an inner underground journey, definition of identity symbols, lack of explanation, mystery of God's infinity, dearth of quality, extension of journey, and creation of new parlance for one. We can see all these attributes at work in the present mythicization of Ram.

There is some history about Ram, and at the same there is none. One can understand Ram only by being a Hindu. Tearing down the structure without any announcement, or uncovering a fact, adjustment of Trishul and Ram, and the meaning of Ram are needed to be understood. One symbol of God's infinity spread in the whole of Asia. All these describe the present myth.

This myth was here before the lock on Ram Janambhoomi was opened. It was not worth building at that time. Once opened, it had to be built again. This time, it was built with the modern instrument called politics. Whenever myths become symbols, they lose their inner content and look for a new one. Tulsi created Ram's myth. How happy and contented he is after victory over Ravan can be learned by his instructions given in the Uttarkand chapter. In Uttarkand, Ram says, "Knowledge is beyond reach and there are many problems in attaining it. Worship is an open road, but it cannot be attained without pious company. One cannot meet the holy men without doing good deeds. What kind of route is worship? It is straight and does not require major charity, yoga practice, or fasting. All it needs is a simple mind and someone who is satisfied with whatever he gets. What will happen if a person expects something from another? One is used to that kind of habit. Ram is the myth of worship, and worship is Ram's myth. They both are Tulsi's myths. Ram the perfect is the ideal person. Tulsi is the ideal devotee. The specialty of Tulsi's myth is that it was created from heaven and not on this earth. This is pure mental imagination—unusual and original.

Some myths have been created around this great myth during the last few years, and some meanings and allegories were changed. If Ram is separated from Tulsi's "Ramism," it is because of mythologizing. If the modern Ram devotee is not like Tulsi it is because of mythologization. Ram fought his own war. Hanuman could have vanquished Ravan if he wanted to and so could have Angad. However, they did not want to replace their beloved Ram. They did not want to devour their own myth. The new devotees of the new Ram are fighting without his life force. That is the symbol of mythologization, and this symbol is political. This is the symbol that goes with the present government's vocabulary.

Symbolism is active in mythology and is more active when it has to create a new mythology. The new mythology is breaking Ram's myth by describing it. Even the most devout Hindu is disturbed. This definition is based on capitalism and a search for power.

There are two elements of a myth—one expressive word and the other suggested meaning. Santoshi Mata was the expressive symbol. She "expressed" money for the filmmaker and an ideal for the housewife. Both joined to complete Santoshi Mata's myth. In the new Ram incarnation, the temple is the expression, and the suggested meaning is the present government. The rare thing like worship is not involved here. The Hindu nation is the crux of this government. Ram's myth is the myth of the modern capital-dependent Hindu. The irony of the modern mythology is money. This is the struggle of money and land. That is why the heaven of the East is in trouble.

Perception of Secularism As Appeasement of Muslims Said Growing

93AS0437D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 20 Jan 93 p 8

[Excerpt from article by Alok Ray: "Isolating the Saffron Virus"; italicized words as published]

[Excerpt]

To define the battlelines against the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party] in religious terms will be self defeating.

Ayodhya has relegated all other national issues to the background. Politicians and public are more preoccupied with "adjusting" the Babri structure than with the structural adjustment of the Indian economy. In the past India missed the bus for rapid economic progress. This time the threat to the process of economic reform comes from fundamentalist religious forces.

If this temple-mosque impasse continues the flow of foreign investment as well as earnings from foreign tourists, on which the rejuvenation of the economy largely depends, will be reduced to a trickle. Foreign investors can always avoid regional trouble spots like Assam and Punjab. But Ayodhya is a different kettle of fish. This dispute has the potential of engulfing the entire nation in political and economic instability. This will have grave consequences in terms of human lives, property, the rule of law and even the concept of India.

Despite the outrage expressed over the demolition of the Babri Masjid in the electronic and print media, a striking and growing number of urban Hindus are beginning to express sentiments in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. These sentiments are not restricted to the half educated man in the street but are being increasingly voiced by lawyers, doctors, professors and executives. This, however saddening, cannot be wished away. The appeal of the BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh must be recognised. The reason it has caught the imagination of such a cross section of the people need to be analysed to help the country meet the challenge.

No doubt there has been a latent mistrust and intolerance between the Hindu and the Muslim community. This is for various historical reasons, not the least being the divide and rule policy of the British aided by some British historians. This has occasionally found expressions in isolated incidents of violence. India has survived and can survive these flare ups, as do many other countries, without problem. What is worrying today is the spread of this hatred to a growing section of educated and apparently rational people.

The feeling that the minorities, especially the Muslims, have been appeased far too much by the state may be questionable, but is beginning to grow. This is a result of the fact no political party, except those unabashedly Hindu like the BJP, can afford to ignore the Muslim vote bank. Unfortunately this voting bloc follows the dictates of its religious leaders.

Hindus offer the Shah Bano case, the existence of Muslim Personal Law and Article 370, the destruction of Hindu temples in Kashmir and the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits and the humiliation of the Jamia Milia vice-chancellor as instances of Muslim appeasement. The government failed to act and the Muslim intelligentsia failed to protest in each of these cases.

Most Hindus accept the Babri Masjid should not have been destroyed. They, however, cannot understand why the Islamic world should be in such an uproar and why communal riots should break out over the demolition of a structure where no *namaz* has been conducted for the past 50 years. As Hindus did not destroy mosques even after temples were damaged in Kashmir, they wonder why the Muslims should be incensed over the destruction of the Babri Masjid.

Finally, Hindu chauvinism is rationalised as a natural reaction to the rise of Islamic chauvinism all across the world. All Islamic countries have supported Pakistan's stand on Kashmir. Yet India has gone out of its way to appease Muslim sentiments by supporting the Arab states in their conflict with Israel. This view holds the Ayodhya dispute to be the manifestation of a bigger issue. Ayodhya merely gives the majority community an opportunity and focal point to assert rights which have supposedly been ignored by successive governments.

Such sentiments must be countered on two levels. First, by exposing the BJP interpretation of history as the myth it is. All secular parties, organisations and individuals must campaign actively to make the masses, and not just academics, aware of this. Second, the *Hindutva* movement must be contained politically. [passage omitted]

Hindu Consciousness Seen Increasing Rapidly

93AS0510B Madras THE HINDU in English 29 Jan 93 p 8

[Article by S.S. Gill, former Information and Broadcasting Ministry Secretary: "A New Hindu Consciousness"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] They say that history is what is remembered. Facts may be sacred, but inconvenient facts tend to be forgotten. Thus, they fade out of history. The collective consciousness of a people is shaped by their historical experience. But a historical experience, based on careful reordering of selected facts, produces a consciousness where truth is fictionalised and history mythologised.

There is nothing very unusual about this phenomenon; this keeps happening all the time, and everywhere. "Nation-States have to create their own mythologies to shore up self-consciousness." Its most telling illustration is now unfolding before our eyes. Just consider the sea-change that the Hindu consciousness has undergone

as a result of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The initial reaction of most people to this outrage was that it will greatly hurt the national image of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], and secularism would get a shot in the arm. Even the BJP leaders seemed quite apprehensive and Mr. L.K. Advani resigned as Leader of the Opposition, owning moral responsibility for this "unfortunate" happening.

But within a week there was a radical change of mood. Everybody in the Sangh parivar was openly jubilant at the destruction of this "old dilapidated structure," and it soon became a symbol of resurgent Hindutva. In one fell swoop, the perceived stigma of centuries of humiliation was washed away and "Hindudom" seemed to brimming with a new-found pride. The community seemed to have acquired overnight a spanking new consciousness: bold, self-assertive and belligerent.

Whereas it will take years for the ramifications of this deed to unfold, its one aspect merits immediate attention. If a community's consciousness is the product of its historical experience, how did this new Hindu consciousness emerge so suddenly from a single event or, at best, a single issue, which engaged public attention for just half a decade? After all, few people had heard about Babri Masjid—Ram Janmabhoomi when the gates of the "disputed structure" were unlocked under court orders in 1986. And it caught public imagination only with Mr. Advani's "Rath Yatra" in 1990.

Actually, whereas the unlocking of the gates, the Rath Yatra and the demolition represent the high spots of this drama, they are more in the nature of culmination points than prime movers in the Hindutva crusade. The soil was prepared much earlier and a favourable climate generated over a long period of indoctrination at the grassroots level. V.D. Savarkar raised the slogan of "Hinduism is Nationalism" in his Hindutva way back in 1917.

The RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] turned this slogan into its motto and strove tirelessly to flesh it out by persistently propagating a totally skewed view of history. "They (Muslim) are born in this land, no doubt..." wrote Savarkar, but, "together with the change in their faith, gone are the spirit of love and devotion for the nation." And further, "...non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture ... or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to Hinduism." These words not only exude communal hatred, they take it as axiomatic that religion is the basis of nationality; that the Hindus are the only true Indians and that the other religious communities are intruders and traitors. Secondly, the Hindutva brigade diligently broadcast the view that after Independence most political parties have tried to pamper the Muslims to get their votes. In the process, the Hindus have been reduced to the status of second class citizens in their own country.

In one form or the other, these ideas were propagated for decades. But the likes of Mr. L.K. Advani gave them a more sophisticated formulation. Indian culture was Hindu culture, they argued. Therefore, by definition, all Indians were Hindus, including the Muslims. Of course, the Muslims were Mohammadi Hindus. Further, the practice of "minorityism" by the Government, they claimed, had added insult to the historical injury suffered by the Hindus at the hands of the Muslim rulers.

Throughout its campaign, the RSS-BJP combine tore facts out of their historical context, gave them a communal twist, wrapped them up in highly emotive imaginery and kept embedding them as sticks of dynamite in the community's consciousness. As the appeal was all along to emotion than to reason, and it pandered to the target group's ingrained prejudices, it imperceptibly seeped into the minds of their co-religionists.

Consequently, not many Hindus bothered to question that if the people living in America were Americans and those living in Japan were Japanese, the people of Hindustan or Hind or India or Bharat should be Hindustanis, Hindis, Indians or Bharatis. By what logic do you call them Hindus, thus converting national into religious identity? Conversely, every Hindu does not automatically become an Indian. For generations Hindus have lived in Sri Lanka, Fiji and Mauritius and they are Sri Lankans, Fijians and Mauritians and not Indians.

Similarly, most Hindus have come to believe that the Muslims were all along pampered at their cost. But they have seldom paused to think that this premise flies in the face of objective facts. The share of the Muslims in Government employment is not even one-third of their population percentage. They are nowhere in evidence in the top rungs of industry, trade, commerce or financial institutions of the country. In view of these stark facts, what sort of special patronage have they received from the State?

The most provocative instance of 'minorityism' is supposed to be the inability of the Government to bring the Muslims within the purview of a Common Civil Code. The Indian State has, indeed, grievously defaulted in this matter. But how does it hurt the Hindus? The losers are only the Muslims, as their womenfolk are deprived the benefit of enlightened legislation. When no Muslim gets provoked at the practice of untouchability or the instances of dowry deaths among the Hindus, why should the Hindus get so worked up at the failure of the Muslim community to provide succour to their Shah Banos?

The extent to which logic and reason have got short shrift in this Hindutva onslaught is shown by the manner in which the people and the media speak of the "Hindu backlash" after the demolition of Babri Masjid. Here is a case where the U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] Chief Minister gave solemn written undertakings to the highest judicial authority of the land to protect the Mosque, where prominent leaders of the Sangh parivar earnestly assured Parliament, the National Integration Council and the

nation that no harm will come to the "disputed structure," and only a symbolic kar seva will be performed at the site. Yet all these assurances and promises are treated as so much dirt and the demolition of the mosque is hailed as a great heroic deed.

And the explanation offered to this phenomenon is that it was a "Hindu backlash!" But in what sense? If the Muslims had destroyed an ancient Hindu temple, a Hindu backlash was understandable.

What really matters here is not the blinkered view of some bigoted communalists, but the ease with which their ideas and ideology have come to prevail among the ordinarily normal and rational people.

The only ray of hope in this gathering gloom is that revolutions, fascism and fanaticism eat their own children. Hate, and, to a lesser extent, love, wrote Rochefacauld, need to be constantly fortified to be kept alive.

But any emotive agenda relying on repetitive reinforcements soon starts giving diminishing returns. Also, such a programme does not follow a pre-determined course. The Hindu sants and mahants whom the BJP used to serve their ends, are now turning around, wanting to get into the act themselves. They are raising loud protests against the "anti-Hindu Constitution" and a Constitution committee headed by Swami Muktanand has issued a draft of the proposed changes.

One may tend to dismiss these trends as the quixotic delusions of a lunatic fringe. But one cannot be too sure. The VHP [Vashwa Hindu Parishad] and the Bajrang Dal have already stolen the initiative from the BJP, and one can never tell if the increasingly visible conclaves of sadhus and acharyas, backed by the authority of Dharma Sastras, will not steal their thunder. And through a nasty quirk of history the BJP may finally realise its dream of ushering in the Ram Rajya in India. It will, of course, not be the Ram Rajya of Goswami Tulsidas, but that of Dharam Sansads and Sant Sammelans, as viewed through the prism of medieval obscurantism. And, in the process, both Ram and the BJP may be wholly marginalised.

Definition of Nationalism Seen Changing

93AS0330C Varanasi AJ in Hindi 16 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Dr. Devendra Singh: "The Changing Form of Nationalism"]

[Text] According to Hose Combe nationalism is a feeling of collectiveness and a desire to be together, or a sense of mutual compassion. This feeling is associated with one's own nation. This emanates from parental memories whether they are sweet or bitter. In an atmosphere of nationalism one feels like a specific unit and finds oneself surrounded by the common bonds of language, literature, thoughts, traditions, etc., different from other congregations. From the very dawn of human civilization, the feeling of nationalism in its developed, but confined form, was always present. Now, because of a generation gap and the concept of a universal family, guided by timely changes, nationalism is ready to embark on the international arena. Unification of East and West Germany and the eagerness to remove the northern and southern boundaries in North and South Korea are clear examples of this phenomenon. For India, such is an ideal only.

India is a land of numerous religions, communes, castes, creeds, and traditions. These depict numerous differences, but in spite of this diversity India is a united nation. It has geographic, historic, sentimental, cultural, national, religious, linguistic, economic, and political unity. Like other important countries, India has a distinct status. From time immemorial India has had a passion for nationalism. The mantras of Rig Veda contain descriptions of the fundamental principles of nationalism. The nationals were enthusiastic for living an organized life, and worshiped their motherland like a god. For them this land of theirs was not only their motherland, land of their birth, land of worship and joys, but also a land of piousness. The Indians had hoped to bring all their fellow countrymen together by relinquishing their differences. As a result of this unification, various tribes, such as the Parthians, Sinthians, Sakas, Hunas, etc., intermixed with the Indian society and became a part of it. But in keeping with the changing times, the widespread context of the nationalism was subjugated to the influence of regionalism. This subtly transformed the concept of nationalism to a narrow and restrictive connotation. A clear example of this change is embodied in the Rajput India. During this period the popular context of nationalism totally disintegrated. This disintegration proved fatal for India, and the country was taken over by Muslims. With the passage of time, India witnessed enhanced activities during the British Empire. As a consequence, the British gradually occupied the entire country.

After centuries of foreign rule, conditions changed, and at the inception of the 19th century Indians experienced an awakening. Although the primary objective of this awakening was religious and societal, while it alerted us about our rights, it was also subtly instrumental in rousing our nationalism. This precipitated the armed revolution of 1857, popularly known as the National Revolution or Fight for Freedom against the British rule. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was a clear indication of the revival of nationalism, whose sole goal was the attainment of freedom. A.R. Desai has written that, "after the establishment of the Indian National Congress, its objectives changed slowly. The Congress, as a result, turned into an organization with a sweeping objective of attaining absolute freedom. As such, the British had to leave our country."

In 82 years of struggle for national freedom, once religion or communalism struck a serious blow to the widespread compassion for nationalism. In 1906, after the birth of the Muslim League, the concept of segregation became very much alive. During the Muslim

League's Annual Convention of 1930, held in Allahabad, Mohammed Iqbal demanded that, "the Muslim demand for a Muslim India is fully legitimate.... I would like to see the creation of a state with the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh, and Balochistan." The nationalist Mohammed Ali Jinnah of 1910, separationist in 1916, had fully converted into an orthodox communalist by the year 1940, and demanded in the Lahore Convention that, "India should be divided into two independent states, as two separate free nations." Several attempts by the Congress members to achieve unity did not bear any fruits. At last in 1947, the British divided the Greater India that once was, into two free nations, India and Pakistan.

With the changing demands of the time, it is the supreme duty of every person to impart progressive convictions to his thoughts. Taking a lesson from the unification of East and West Germany, we should make every possible effort to unite those portions of earth which were separated. Our national leaders should cooperate in such an effort. If we do not change the basis of our views, it will not be possible to maintain the unity of our country. If we do not revolutionize our current views, it is obvious that our nation will be disintegrated. In the event that such happens, not only will we be assaulting the feelings of those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the country, but also be clearing the way for our own doomsday.

Muslim Leadership Opposes Secularism

Muslim Relation to Secularism Viewed

93AS0427A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 11 Jan 93 p 6

[Article by Shashi Shekhar: "This Is Also A Pathway For Muslim Thought"]

[Text] Amidst these dark days of confusion and apprehension there are some signs of hope. Some progressive Muslim young men are challenging the established Muslim leaders to not play the dirty political tricks in the shadow of their dead brethren. Those of us who believe in the spirit of coexistence should help the Muslims reach their goal by a correct and proper thought process. The problem of the minority voters in India revolves around the fact that the politicians have, for their own vested interests, kept them handicapped and never have tried to uplift their cause. To understand this, it is not necessary to acquire an indepth knowledge of the history. There are numerous examples, up until 1857, depicting the Hindus and Muslims together fighting for their country together. Some of our friends accustomed to living in glass houses may not like this bitter truth, but there are several instances to prove that, in spite of the effort of orthodox rulers like Aurangazeb, Nadir Shah, and Ahmed Shah, the citizens of this country had asserted an exemplary coexistence that is unique in the world. The first battle of 1857 is an ample example of this fact. The English brought this awakening under control with the help of Scindia and certain other Sikh rulers. They realized certain bitter facts in so doing. The most bitter fact was the existence of the Hindu-Muslim unity—a phenomenon that took all their energies for almost a whole century to destroy. And due to the selfish nature of some high placed state officials, they were largely successful.The painful division of India was a result of these (English) efforts. It was because of their kindness that a disgusting leader like Jinnah was accepted as the representative of the entire Muslim community. During that period, if any liberal leader dared to rise, he had to face tremendous opposition. The bureaucrats targeted that leader and the government-sponsored conservatives painted him as an agent of either Hindus or Muslims to degrade him in the eyes of the common man. It is noteworthy that the Congress Party, at that time, was regarded as a Hindu party. The universally recognized leader Mohandas Karamachand Gandhi called himself a Hindu, and bringing "Ramraj" to India was his cherished objective. It should also be noted here that Gandhi's effort to bring "Ramraj," and the mullahs' calling the Congress a Hindu party did not aggravate the Muslims. Muslims had known the meaning of what it is to be a Hindu, without attending any school sponsored by politicians in secularism. They also knew this Hindu party is the only party that guarantees the right to live and let live. This was the real reason that the entire Muslim community did not join and support the Jinnah group, even after their enticements. Now, if the common man had a brotherly feeling, the question is: How did it become possible to divide the country? Why was there so much bloodshed before and after the partition? There are two reasons for this: first, the intensive efforts of the selfish religious leaders and the administrators, and second, the haste shown by the powerful Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues. Nehru and his colleagues cannot be spared the allegation that in their eagerness to acquire power, they agreed to such settlements, effects of which are ours to endure today. To accept the proposal of India's division and then the effort to provide various amenities to those Muslims who opted to stay in India, after granting them such permission, were certainly a part of Nehru politics. If you do not believe this, simply try to remember the scenes immediately after independence. The hearts of the cities of India were with the refugees pouring in from Pakistan. The Muslims who had stayed behind here were humiliated at the horrendous acts of their brethren. At that time Nehru and his followers should have helped Muslims in overcoming this embarrassment and should have made them a strong part of the country's mainstream. But this was not done. In the name of giving them security and consolation, certain formulas were invented, which later became famous as "Muslim Trump Cards." Efforts were initiated simply for political reasons to convert the Muslims into a "Vote Bank," instead of maintaining their respectable status as the carriers of coexistence. All this proved to be far more dangerous and fatal then the policies of Jinnah. The calamities and the ordeal that the country is enduring today are the result of those policies. How is it possible that the majority in a country, whose beliefs, faith, and traditions are constantly hurt or attacked, stay inactive? It is sad that Nehru and his followers continually repeated this practice. This formula of theirs became the secret to the long reign of the Congress. The limited Muslim votes made the Congress win the first six times. But what did it give to the common Muslim of this country? His standard of living and education did not substantially change. The leaders who gained by his vote made no effort to uplift him. And why should they have done so? Their voter was an uneducated, victim-of-circumstances, and poor Muslim. If he had become enlightened and delivered, how would their "Vote Bank" be sustained? This caused two specific losses to the common Muslim. One, he stayed backward in the race to progress, and two, he stayed devoid of any generally accepted political leadership. This vote business provided opportunity to various communal leaders in their lust for power. This is the basic reason why the Muslims in this country are not able to raise a common voice in the right direction. It was natural for the majority to react to the policy of providing amenities and unwanted incentives for Muslim contentment. Such disciplined bodies as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] were already working with them. The responsibility for the demonstration of anger by Hindus was first taken by the Sangh and then by its political associates, the Jan Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. How surprising is this? The people in power could not evaluate the extent of the reaction by the Hindus and the growth of the Sangh influence. Their childish acts to safeguard their

"Vote Bank" made the reactionary process far stronger. The case of Shah Bano is an example. Rajiv Gandhi had averted the decision of the Supreme Court on the issue of "Khandpeeth" based on the power base of his party in the Parliament. The entire country was surprised at this maneuvering to retain the Muslim votes. Not only the Hindus, but the educated Muslims reacted vigorously. Arif Muhammad Khan's resignation from Rajiv Gandhi's administration is proof. The leaders of the Congress, even with this episode, did not realize the gravity of the situation. They kept on following the legacy of Nehru. The time had, however, started to change. The Ayodhya happening of 6 December, last, is an example of the changing times. What can be done with the Congress? It cannot leave its path just like the curse ridden "Ashvashthama." This path has been erased with the passage of time. It seems that this historically successful party has become accustomed to following a particular direction. It keeps on following that direction without realizing that full destruction awaits it there. This reminds one of an old historic saying that, "The desires of the people are not always slaves to the desires of the politics or political leaders." Such is happening with the Indian Muslims. They have started self-examination. They are trying to understand who caused them the greatest losses. Is it those people who treat them as "Vote Banks" and not as a community, or is it those religious leaders who, according to the edicts of the religion consider themselves their leaders? Or are there any other social or economic reasons for this? The Muslims want to come out of the four walls of the restrictions. This is why the young Congress Muslim leader Kamil Kidvai from Uttar Pradesh, asks the Muslims to open their eyes and challenges Imam Abdullah Bukhari not to continue his leadership based on the Muslim corpses. News of opposition to the unyielding religious leaders has started pouring from other parts of the country too. It is obvious that the Indian Muslim has started to search for constructive development. Help him do so. This is essential for the long life of our tradition of coexistence.

Muslim Leadership Termed 'Pathetic', Unsecular

93AS0437J Bombay SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 8 Jan 93 p 7

[Article: "Privileged To Interpret Islam in a Secular Society"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] To appreciate the real enormity of the damage that was caused in Ayodhya on December 6, I think it will help a lot if Hindus and Muslims alike were to recognize that what was destroyed was not a mosque but a national archaeological monument.

I wish the Muslims had earlier taken the stand of handing over the Babri Masjid to the Center with the demand that it be declared a national monument. Had the kar sevaks still gone ahead and demolished it the way they have now done, it would have been crystal clear to the entire nation that it was our precious common heritage which had been razed to the ground.

In my view, Hindus were none the worse off minus a Rama Mandir in Ayodhya, nor the Muslims any better placed with the Babri Masjid intact. It is a fact of life that in lots of places in Indian mosques are today located where mandirs once stood.

Equally well, a lot of temples presently occupy spots where earlier their were Buddhist monasteries. We might as well ask ourselves then, how far we are prepared to go back into history while on the verge of entering the 21st century and becoming part of a Global Village.

Why doesn't someone now suggest the pulling down on the Taj Mahal as well. Can Hindus really wish away the fact of Mughal rule in this country by destroying archaeological monuments? At the same time, it won't help if Muslims were to see these monuments as reminders of their lost glory.

Our present day problem arises primarily from the fact that there has been the breakdown of a national consensus which once existed. In the existing vacuum it must be said that whether we agree with it or not, the sangh parivar is quite clear about the kind of society it wants to turn India into.

But it is not at all clear what the others want. Democracy, socialism and secularism may be fine words but they are a bit too abstract. In our multicultural society, we need to give some clearer definition to these words in a way that they correspond with the emotions and aspirations of people. The last time such an exercise was undertaken was during the Avadi session of the Congress in 1956.

I have no quarrels with the word 'Hindu' (we were earlier referred to as 'Hindivani') if we are talking merely of a geographic identity and the word Hindu refers to all those people who inhabit a specific geographical location. But if Hindu is going to be defined on the basis of religion, I definitely have some problems with such a notion. And those who talk about Hindus, what do they plan to do with 110 million Muslims in this country? The same thing that the Nazis did to the Jews in Germany?

But I will also say that maybe the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has a point when it talks about the appeasement of minorities. I don't believe Muslims have fared better than even Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Independent India. In that sense appeasement of minorities makes no sense.

But maybe there is a point when the BJP talks of the appeasement of minorities when it refers to the continuance of the practice of a special status being given to Jammu and Kashmir or to the amendment of the Indian constitution in the context of the Shah Bano case. If the affairs of any particular community cannot be solved through the mechanisms devised by the community, why shouldn't the state intervene? Isn't that what Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code was all about?

To be honest, the Muslim leadership in this country is pathetic. We have had in this country a Muslim leadership of two kinds. The first kind is what I refer to as sarkari Muslims. In this category I include leaders of the community who have a certain position and status because of which they are in a position of doing something concrete and beneficial for their community.

But this leadership shies away from highlighting the genuine problems of Muslims for fear of being dubbed Muslim communalists. I do not believe that a leader becomes communal simply because he talks of the legitimate constitutional rights of his community. The problem arises only when you demand extra-special rights. Because the first kind of Muslim leaders have failed to take up the legitimate demands of Muslims, the community is left under the tutelage of half-baked maulvis. What can the poor maulvis offer to his followers?

I also think that as a community the Muslims have to come to an appreciation of what living in a secular society means. It's a pity that Muslims in India have lost a great global opportunity of re-examining and reinterpreting Islam in a way which is consistent with the demands of modern-day living without having to abandon their faith.

Indian Muslims were in a privileged position to do so for two reasons; First, because of their large number their word and deed would have had global consequence; second, because living in a secular set-up they needn't have worried about the sword of the ulemas hanging over their heads in the fashion it does in Islamic countries.

I would say that it is still not too late for the Indian Muslims to re-think their religion, and fight for their legitimate rights in this country without allowing politicians to exploit them.

But more than anything else, I wish the Muslims would do something urgently to cure themselves of this foot-in-the-mouth disease. Take for example, the negative reaction of some Muslim leaders to the plan to make the participation of people in the political process conditional on their practice of family planning.

Or the ultimatum given to the government of India by students of the Aligarh Muslim University and other Muslim leaders that the re-construction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by January 26, or else. What a fine sense of timing! Do they really believe they are going to help their community by such utterances.

As for recipes to restore peace, I think the Muslims will help their cause a lot by maintaining their dignity and taking a position that they have no desire to build a mosque at a place where sacrilege and desecration has been committed by some Hindus. By this show of magnanimity, they are certain to add to the Hindu's sense of shame over what has happened in Ayodhya. And the next time there is any attempt to break another mosque, Hindu public opinion will turn in favor of Muslims.

Besides, what is urgently needed is for secular forces to create mechanisms whereby Hindus and Muslims can enter into direct dialogue with each other instead of letting the politicians speak for them. And on a very individual plane, by his or her good neighborly gesture every individual Hindu and Muslim can help clear the poison which has spread in our environment.

Muslim Leaders Seen Responsible for Secularism's Failure

93AS0510C Madras THE HINDU (Supplement) in English 31 Jan 93 p 1

[Article by Dr. Zaheer Ahmed Sayeed: "Towards Real Secularism"]

[Text] Parliamentarians, political pundits, economists, stock brokers and others of their community are least likely to forget the past year. Despite the illegal proclivities, the bank scam proved that our intellectual capabilities of manipulating the money markets are second to none. The fall-out fell short of what the situation deserved but then an Oxcam economist would, with a tongue in cheek attitude, give significant credit in a negative sense to our capability as manipulators. A similar consummately construed crime, out west in earlier days would have witnessed the fall of a reigning government. The times have changed. Neither did John Major's Government in the U.K. [United Kingdom] fall asunder with the clearest implication of Bank of England in the BCCI [Bank of Credit and Commerce International] affairs by the investigating committee of the House of Lords. By comparison we pass muster with our bank scam as very capable manipulators. Add to this the unresolved Bofors issue and we come out on tops without an equal.

The end of the year 1992 saw the fall of the Babri Masjid which politicians are unlikely to forget in a hurry. After quarter of a century of haggling, the domes were demolished. Facts should not worry us. Respectable archaeologists and scholars of history should shelve their handouts, since facts and truth have no meaning to our polity, sants and moulvis. That there is not a shred of evidence pointing to the masjid having been built on the remains of a temple (THE HINDU, Jan. 10) is an irony of irrelevance notwithstanding the single point reference to the Supreme Court. The thought that some scholars believe that Rama's Ayodhya probably existed as far away as in Afghanistan is irrelevant. What is relevant, is that to counter every historian's and archaeologist's find, the friends in the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] and the holy men of Bajrang Dal have generated convenient implantations as evidence pointing to the masjid having been erected on the ruins of a temple. Probably it is still not too late. Portions of the destroyed masjid could be submitted to the famous houses of England, instead of the British museum as suggested in THE HINDU (Between You and Me, Jan. 11), for absolute carbon-dating the antiquity of the structure concerned, lest we forget future financial implications of smuggled out

antiques. This would probably be more definitive than the single point reference to the Supreme Court. Our history teachers point out that Babur came to take from us our riches. What is relevant today is that the masjid has been demolished. Inclusive of atheists, commentators in the media will agree that a house of God has been brought to ruins. In an uninvolved moment, away from their socialite evenings, they would also agree that mandir or masjid, both are houses og Gods. What is important is that the political pundits of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], and the VHP failed to convince with concrete evidence the AIBMAC [All India Babri Masjid Action Committee], the Muslim community, the judiciary, the historians and the archaeologists that the masjid was in fact built on the ruins of a temple. Instead to demonstrate their sheer might of numbers they had the masjid destroyed by Kar sevaks.

Intolerance

Leaders of the Muslim polity also joined hands in a negative sense, when in fact the old masjid could have been handed over, lock stock and barrel, to Hindus in the greater interest of the country as the post-Dec 6 events have shown. However, condoning the act of destruction of the masjid, comparing it with the Israeli deportation of its subversive elements portends a grim future for secular India. That human intolerance constituted the birth pangs, which still continue, in the creation of the states of Israel and Pakistan, should be an adequate reminder to all of us. To convert modern India into a similar single religion oriented governance like Israel as implied by some should be feasible but portrays an intolerant mind-set in an Orwellian matrix (Animal farm) as exemplified by the problem of Punjab at home and the Bosnian massacre abroad. Genocide, physical or otherwise, of a 120 million population of Muslims to make India assume similar colours as Israel would even exceed Adolph Hitler's megalomania. Such genocide should be beyond the realms of possibility let alone feasibility in the modern world.

Secular India does not live only in the drawing rooms. Neither the ivory towers of erudite intellectuals house it. Secular India lives in the narrow streets of Chandini Chowk in Delhi, Triplicane in Madras, footpaths of Mahim, the kuppams and the single roomed flat hovels of Tamil Nadu. In this secular India, religion becomes secondary to feeding and clothing oneself and the family, like anywhere else on the surface of the earth. The real secular India became unsecular with the incursion of the political pundits who brought along with them the imams, sadhus, moulvis and sants. Till these brand of humans stepped into our ever overflowing single roomed houses, thatched huts, and unventilated tinroofed sheds, all of us lived together quite happily, the Mussalman next to the Hindu, the masjid next to the temple. Meat and sharbat went across on Idd days to the Hindu neighbour and similar profusion of laddus and barfi on Diwali, Dassara, and Pongal to the Muslim household.

How Trouble Started

With the entry of the political and religious combine all of us suddenly started worrying about the azan and temple bells. Till this time our Hindu brethren sidestepped their Muslim brothers in sajda on the road in silence on Friday afternoons, and the Muslim did not as much [as] open his mouth when crossing the mandir. This is the real secularism which exists or existed in India for centuries until the likes of Advanis, Singhals, Joshis, Singhs, Dalmias, Owajsis, Sulaimans and the Imams entered the scene. Political entry of these gentry was not to preserve the secularity and Indianness of our citizens but to get to the power house in Delhi. Now we come to the troubled spot. Our political ilk neither has the capacity nor the insight to grapple with our innumerable problems. Lacking issue-based politics the only article of currency they cash in on is one's religion. This again is not for the private schooled, highly educated upper and middle class, the so-called socially conscious white collared intellectuals. The religiosity rather is directed at the vast masses of our country. After all it is they who will seat them in their gaddis. If this does not ring true then the need for rath yathras, the sudden emergence of huge processions in celebration of milad, and puja to Lord Ganesh appear totally unnecessary. Neither the vedas nor the prophet decreed such behaviour. Thanks to the writings of people in the BJP, and pronouncements of the Muslim clergy the most talked about topic today in the drawing rooms is perhaps the emergence of the Hindu-Muslim divide. The recent ordinance acquiring the Ayodhya site is to be welcomed if not for anything else, for the opportunity to house the idealogues of the BJP-VHP-Bajrang Dal combine and those of AIBMAC and IUML [Islamic Unity Muslim League], together. Surprisingly, despite the "Hindu India-Hindutva" theocracy being spread so aggressively, the ordinary Indian living inside one room hovels, jhuggis and/or sidewalks mercifully cares two hoots for it.

Today we are indulging in religion for religion's sake or using it as a ladle to scoop out mountains of power for ourselves. The polity of our country should have the answer. Erudition of the written word should be admired, but when it is used, however, to blow out of proportion "Satanic verses-Aligarh University—Mushirul Hassan—Pakistan embassy episodes" (which essentially are aberrations concerned with personal misgivings) to shake the roots of our secular foundation it requires the high handed scrutiny of the editorial pen and deserves the shelves of unpublished scurrilous material.

The call to boycott the Republic day, retracted in the media later, has similarities to the death rattle of an organisation which has lost its ability of clear thinking and is totally devoid of progressive concepts. Does the Muslim polity think that 120 million Muslims of this country are just about to migrate to the frozen reaches of the Himalayas or drown themselves into the ocean waters surrounding the Indian peninsula? The boycott

call was sufficiently provocative to deserve the attention of the legal arm of the Government. With even misquoted utterances of this kind, the point has been reached when the demand for abolition of religious boards in secular India appears valid.

Common Law

Such abolition would foresee the emergence of a new era where a uniform common civil code of laws applies to all ilks of religiosity. After all we the Indians need to be governed by Indian law. It would be an act of courage if the Mulim intelligentsia and polity sat down with the BJP and their likes, and present to the country a uniform civil code of laws which the judiciary could use. Perhaps this would require revision of our Constitution. So be it. To hand the sword of Damocles of divorce and accompanying penury with the recent changes in the Muslim Personal Law on the Muslim woman, and to have denied the right of inheritance of her parents estate until recently, to the Hindu female, and to beat the Muslim male with his quadruple freedom of simultaneous conjugal rights, has no bearing on the social and economic postulates of a modern secular India. Inherent native common sense, tolerance, goodwill, coupled with logic and sensible thought should placate those of my Hindu and Muslim friends who fear the uniform civil code will conflict with their personal law. In some areas it will. But then, none forces us to approach the court of law. We are all free to settle our disputes, ourselves using whatever religious code we choose but with the clear thought that when the court of law is approached justice will be rendered by norms of the uniform civil code. If the Muslim community takes the lead in such a direction it would be considered an act of courage and a historical landmark.

The other day a respected sant of the VHP lay claim to Jama Masjid in Delhi and some others over the masjids in Varanasi and Mathura (FRONTLINE, Jan. 29). A queer thought! Why does not the Muslim community give all of these masjids away without hesitation, to the "Hindu India-Hindutva-BJP-VHP-Bajrang Del" combine to be destroyed and mandirs to be built—of course with two provisos. One, during the destruction process of all these structures, the Muslim community will be allowed to sit in peace and protection and indulge in reading their scriptures in mourning silence, witnessing the abrogation of their heritage and the sahadat of their masjid which earlier was built on the ruins of a temple. Acceptance of such a concept by the BJP appears unacceptable since such a bold step by the Muslim community, would leave no tiger's tail in the BJP's or VHP's hand to be twisted around.

But so long as Islam remains in the hearts of those concerned, there is no danger to its survival, notwithstanding the building or destruction of a masjid.

The need of the hour appears to be the emergence of effective articulate, Muslim leaders with sufficient modernism and moderateness to make an example of secularism in our country which the world can emulate. None is in sight. The Muslim intelligentsia should put their heads together and proffer such leaders. The ulemas, the moulvis, the imams and the present Muslim polity will have to wait for a second renaissance since for the present, their ineffectiveness has too well been documented to be ignored.

Muslim Leadership Blamed for Communal Divide

93AS0510F Bombay SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 24 Jan 93 pp 11-12

[Article by Haku Israni: "Muslim Leaders to Blame for Ayodhya Imbroglio"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The blood recently spilled on the streets of Bombay, whether it is Hindu or Muslim blood, it is Indian blood. It is blood of the children of Mother India.

It hardly needs to be said that a mother is hurt whenever her children's blood is spilled irrespective whether their name is Rahim or Ramdas. Those who claim to love Mother India, need to appreciate this simple fact.

However, it must also be said that those who are advocating the cause of Babri Masjid and opposing Ram Janmabhoomi temple are really supporting a foreign invader, Babar, over Lord Rama, the most illustrious son of Mother India.

Those who are opposing the construction of Rama Janmabhoomi temple need to understand that it is no longer an issue for only a few hundred or even a few million Hindus. All the opinion polls clearly show that it has the broad support of hundreds of Hindus not only in India but all over the world.

Recently INDIA TODAY magazine commissioned MARG (Marketing and Research Group), a leading independent market research company in India, to conduct a nationwide opinion poll after the demolition of the disputed Babri at Ayodhya. The poll showed that if the elections were held now, Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] could get as many as 170 parliamentary seats and all the parties including Congress, Janata Dal, communists and other leftist parties would get less than the number of seats they have in present parliament. It may be recalled that in 1984 elections BJP got only two seats, in 1989 elections 86 seats, and in 1991 elections 119 seats.

The above and other opinion polls should be an eye opener for those indulging in relentless Hindu bashing. The issue, which may or may not have started for construction of a Rama temple by a handful of sadhus and Hindus, has now become a symbol of reversing a wrong done by Bakar and a focal point of the frustration of the common Hindu who rightly or wrongly believes that Muslims enjoy more than equal rights in India and there is a constant appeasement of Muslims by various political parties including Congress and Janata Dal. By default, the BJP has become a sole beneficiary mainly because it is being perceived as the only political party

which would protect interests in Hindus and lead them in the present political struggle.

This issue provided Muslims a perfect opportunity to achieve Hindu goodwill. Instead of showing gross contempt and disdain for the deep religious sentiments of Hindus over the Ram Janmabhoomi and taking a highly arrogant and very belligerent attitude, if the Muslim leaders had risen to the occasion and negotiated to offer the site to Hindus, it would definitely have thrown wide open all the flood gates of Hindu goodwill. The atmosphere in India would have been surcharged with a communal harmony.

If the Muslim leaders had gone a step further and offered to raise funds for the construction of the temple and also join in kar seva, it would have certainly ushered in a new era of Hindu-Muslim relationship.

It is well known that the epic 'Ramayana' is very popular in Indonesia. Once a prime minister of Pakistan asked foreign minister of Indonesia the reason for Ramayana's popularity in his Islamic country. The foreign minister gave a response which every Indian Muslim should hear and understand. He replied, "We have changed religion and not our ancestors. Rama is our ancestor."

If Indonesian Muslims can consider Rama as their ancestor, why can't Indian Muslims consider the Hindu deity as their ancestor especially since ancestors of the present 99.9 percent of Muslims in India were Hindus?

Here was an opportunity for Indian Muslims to proclaim the simple fact that their ancestors were Hindus and Rama is as much theirs as of Hindu. It was a perfect opportunity for Muslim to join the mainstream of India. A historic opportunity of Himalayan proportion has been lost.

By any standards, it is a national tragedy. Had there been an enlightened Muslim leadership, the Ayodhya incident would not have taken place. The inept leadership of Muslims and Congress has complicated the issue.

Even from the angle of pure politics, it would have been a bold and master political stroke for the Muslim leaders. The adamant attitude of Muslim leaders toward Ayodhya issue has united Hindus for the first time since Independence and given stunning electoral successes to BJP.

If Congress party had not been under an inept leadership, it could have grabbed this opportunity to beat the BJP on its own ground. Fortunately for the Hindus, the present unimaginative, old and worn out leadership of the Congress procrastinated and remained paralyzed. Instead of being proactive, it became reactive.

Before December 6, the Congress under-reacted. But after December 6, it madly over-reacted by arresting various top leaders, banning various Hindu organizations, and dismissing the state governments of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. This overreaction was too much for even Hindus to digest, despite their initially condemning (unwittingly) the demolition of the structure. The Congress actions generated a Hindu wave which is now sweeping India and propping up BJP with it.

The Congress stands naked before the people of India by banning Hindu nationalist organizations, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, while continuing its coalition with anti-nationalist and ultra-communal Muslim League in Kerala.

The Muslims should face the established fact that just as the United States is overwhelmingly a white and a Christian country, India is an overwhelmingly Hindu country and only a goodwill of the majority community could provide them the protection and security they need to prosper. In the long run, a constant bitter confrontation with majority is never in the best interest of any minority in any country. When push comes to shove, a 12 percent minority is definitely no match for an 82 percent majority in any democratic country.

As the latest incidents in Bombay clearly demonstrate, with every blow Muslims deliver to Hindus, the margin of their own safety could get narrower. They need to calmly reflect over this observation in light of what recently happened in Bombay.

The Muslims who were attacked in Bombay could go back to the safety of their villages. The Muslims in India need to ask themselves where they will go if the entire India becomes like Bombay? It would be naive for them to assume that it can never happen. If it could happen in the most cosmopolitan city of India, it can happen anywhere in India. Let them make no mistake about [it].

On December 9, 1992, Imam Bukhari of Jama Masjid, New Delhi visited Pakistan High Commission. The people of India have right to know why he went there and what he discussed. It is being alleged that the idea for the recent march in Ayodhya led by Naib Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid for offering namaz at the site of the demolished structure was mooted by the Pakistan High Commission.

It is disgusting to see that whenever there are any communal problems in India, these Imams, Maulvis, and Mullahs run to Pakistani officials. It is time that they stop looking toward Pakistan for guidance and support.

The general Muslim population need to ask themselves how their community benefitted from the very inflexible, highly arrogant and incredibly belligerent stand of their self-styled Muslim leaders on a dilapidated structure in Ayodhya in which no Muslim had even offered namaz since 1936. It would not be exaggeration to say that if the structure had been quietly torn down before 1985, probably they would not have even noticed it for a long time.

It is time for common Muslim to ask himself whether his self-styled leaders have served him well by staking his and his children's safety and future on such a disputed structure.

Ask this question to the Muslims from Bombay, who lost a family member or who had to give up their livelihood and return to their villages to face hardship and unemployment. Did they pay too high a price for a decaying structure?

Sometimes good can result from a bad situation. If the demolition of the structure on December 6 has become a spark which continues to ignite the fuel within the dormant Hindus, then the day may go down in history as the day which finally awakened Hindus of India and the world.

The dust raised from the demolition of the structure in Ayodhya will continue to swirl throughout the length and breadth of India. All indications are that it is not likely to settle until the day a true nationalist government takes over in New Delhi.

Muslims Increasingly Alienated From Mainstream

Polarization Between Hindus, Muslims Said Increasing

93AS0438A New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 15 Jan 93 pp 56-57

[Article by Harinder Baweja: "A Saffron Surge"; italicized words, quotation words as published]

[Text] *If it was the mandal or mandir vote that dominated the '91 elections in Uttar Pradesh, post-demolition, it is the Lotus which seems to be blooming. Even in areas which were Janata Dal strongholds. An extensive tour through Bulandshahr, Badaun and Moradabad—districts that tend to reflect the mood of the Hindi-heartland—reveal a disturbing polarisation between the Hindus and Muslims and a perceptible swing towards the Hindutva ideology.*

In Guretha village in Moradabad district in a tiny, yellow-painted temple and Pandits prepare to recite the Ramayana to a crowd that has gathered. As the evening progresses, the prayer meeting turns into a discussion on the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The mood is clearly victorious as people righteously justify the act of desecration.

In temples right across the three districts, similar scenes are being enacted. The mood and tone for Hindutva were in fact set on December 6, soon after news of the demolition filtered into the villages. In Nangla, 60 km off Bulandshahr, residents gathered at the temple for a night-long *bhajankirtan* session. Sanjarpur, a sprawling village on the outskirts of Badaun, sported an air of festivity as the women got together to light earthen lamps outside their homes. And in Pakwada, 40 km away from Moradabad, villagers danced the night through.

Post-Ayodhya, in most villages, you are either at Hindu or a Muslim. There seems to be no third category. And on both sides, there has been a hardening of stands. Religious fervour has overtaken all else. The BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] promise of a Hindu rashtra has burgeoned from just a vote-catching device to almost a *dharma*. L.K. Advani is now *Advaniji* and is spoken of with great reverence.

Sanjarpur, a dusty, Thakur-dominated village with a population of 12,000, is evocative of the mood. Just outside the temple courtyard, 75-year-old village elder Bhagatji is holding forth. He has actively worked for the Congress(I) all these years but has now shifted his loyalties. Says he: "Why doesn't Rao arrest those who are trying to divide the country on caste lines? Instead he has put the representatives of Ram in jail." Meanwhile, a 100-strong crowd has gathered. Babul Lal, a young farmer, says: "We are ecstatic and are now waiting for the day when darshan will start. Truckloads of us are waiting to go." Meanwhile, Hari Swarup, who has been busy reading the local daily DAINIK JAGRAN, suddenly draws the attention of the crowd to a small report in an inside page: *"Dekho, dekho,* 600 temples have been destroyed and no one is talking about them. One masjid comes down and leaders are thrown into jail."

Significantly, there are few, if any, reminders of the caste factor which played such an important role in the Uttar Pradesh elections in June '91 where the contest was basically between the BJP and the Janata Dal with the Congress(I) coming a poor third. Like the rest of the state, in Bulandshahr and Badaun too, the Janata Dal came a close second while it ended up as the winner in the Moradabad parliamentary seat. Its candidate Haji Ghulam Mohammed defeated Ashok Singhal's brother, V.P. Singhal by approximately 30,000 votes. The Mandal slogan also helped it win four of the 12 assembly constituencies, while the BJP bagged seven. The Congress(I), caught between mandir and mandal, could win only one.

After the demolition, however, there are enough indications to show that the BJP vote banks are swelling at the cost of the Janata Dal. This is mainly because the backward castes are now reacting as 'Hindus.' Villages in Moradabad district where 50 percent of the voters comprise Jatavs, there is a complete change in mood. "*Ab toh hava sirf mandir ki hai* (now the only wave is for the mandir)," says Sri Ram of Amarpur Kashi, a Jatav-dominated hamlet, echoing the feeling of those who backed V.P. Singh's slogan for Mandal. The reservation issue seems to have taken a back seat for the villagers who consider it a crime to oppose religion. And since religion and the BJP have become synonymous, there is reason enough for V.P. Singh to worry.

While the Hindus are busy celebrating the demolition, the Muslims are in mourning. Manakpur and

Sheikhupur bordering Badaun, can be identified as Muslim majority villages just by the overpowering silence that envelops them. Afraid to speak freely, it takes them time to start talking even in villages where their number is equal to or more than that of the Hindus.

The heightened sense of insecurity, and fear for their safety is overriding, but has drowned under the voices of the celebrating Hindus. All of them want the mosque to be rebuilt, as has been promised by the prime minister but are sceptical about false assurances. "Rao said he would find a solution in three months. Was this his solution?" asks Dr. S. K. Khan, a private practitioner in Manakpur who believes, like many others, that Rao was a party to the demolition. "Why did he take 40 hours before sending in his forces?" We want Rao to tell us by when, where and how he will rebuild the mosque," is the refrain in every village. There is no talk relating to elections and votes as safety is their foremost concern. The militant mood of the Hindus worries them.

Although the barriers between the two communities have clearly been erected on the mandir-masjid issue, business links between the two still continue as before. They continue to work in each other's fields and buy goods from each other's shops. But Ayodhya is discreetly left out of any conversation. It is almost as if nothing happened there. It agitates one and excites the other but both refrain from starting a discussion for fear that it may lead to violence.

In the cloud that has enveloped the rural areas, the only silver lining is the desire, on both sides, not to allow the mood to boil over and affect their livelihood. And that seems to be the sole pointer to sanity.

Muslims Seen Failing to Identify With Nation's Roots

93AS0429G Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 26 Dec 92 p 8

[Article by Meenakshi Jain: "We Are in the Same Boat, Brother"]

[Text] The demolition of the Babri structure at Ayodhya has brought to a head the bitter struggle between the westernised English speaking intelligentsia on the one hand, and what has been colourfully described as the "new, lumpenised India." Though the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] are the principal players in the struggle, it would be simplistic to view them as representative of the two rival viewpoints.

It is well known that the Congress began its long career as the spokesman of Western educated Hindus under the British raj. Thereafter, though it sought, and indeed succeeded, in incorporating people of various denominations and faiths, it broadly remained a party through which the Hindus sought to come to grips with the new world shaping around them. So much so that the Congress has been described as Hindu society in miniature.

Despite the compulsions of electoral politics, the Congress retained its Hindu face in the post-independence period as well. And befitting its status as the first nationalist party to attain office in New Delhi, it set about the task of establishing a just, equitable society which would incorporate all groups hitherto outside the pale for whatever historical reasons. Though the Congress failed to attract a significant section of the Hindu vote, the bulk of the Western educated Hindu intelligentsia in politics, academia and the bureaucracy remained sympathetic to its goal and aspirations.

The pressures and pulls of political life inevitably took their toll. In recent years, as the Congress struggled for a balance between its secular and Hindu identities, the latter more in tune with the changing ground reality, its stock among the Western educated elite began to decline. And today it is under attack from both fronts.

Left-inclined politicians, academicians and almost the entire English press have turned on the Congress government with a unanimity rare in the history of independent India. The BJP, on the other hand, has accused it of appeasing minorities and betraying Hindu interests. The Congress, not wholly on either side, has ended up displeasing both. Leftists have emerged as the principal champions of secularism, the BJP as the voice of Hindutva. The Congress is left stranded in between.

The battle is not between the Congress and the BJP. The warring sides are the westernised left-oriented groups and the BJP representing, by and large, the vernacular educated, provincial based Indians. The gulf between the two is wide. Few Indians falling in the latter category would for example condone the description of a kar sevak at Ayodhya as "a lumpenised urban male youth," or of a sadhu as a "power monger."

Only a group totally cut off from society would have failed to comprehend the depth of emotion the Ayodhya issue had aroused among large sections of their countrymen. Lord Ram as the embodiment of steadfastedness, righteousness and virtue has had a devout following in the numerous towns and villages of India. The immense popularity of Ramcharitmanas, written by Tulsidas in the mid-16th century, is a tribute to Ram's standing. For centuries the festivities associated with Ram's homecoming after 14 years in exile have remained the single most important event in the Hindu calendar. To have missed the deep faith involved is to have missed a great deal.

All this is not to say that the Muslims do not figure in the picture. As the preeminent political power in northern India for 500 years and as an important constituent of Indian society thereafter, their place in the system is secure. But it is not easy to define their relationship with society. Percival Spear's assessment is that during the long history of Hindu-Muslim coexistence in India, "the principle of repulsion has been more obviously at work than the principle of attraction." Professor Aziz Ahmad

has also concluded "the divisive forces have proved much more dynamic than the cohesive ones."

It is now being increasingly conceded the long period of Muslim rule in India witnessed a stalemate between the two cultures. The Hindus failed to Hinduise Islam just as Islam could not win over the Hindus. The Hindus "kept themselves severely aloof to save their purity against unclean aliens" while Muslims, petrified of the assimilative pull of Hinduism, were determined to retain the original, foreign character of their faith. What lay at the root of this mutual attempt at exclusivity?

Marxist historians' attempt to rewrite the history of Muslim rule in India notwithstanding, the fact remains that the widespread prevalence of idol worship, which remains central to Hinduism till today, exercised a deep negative influence on every Muslim invader from the time of Mahmud Ghazni. And the reason for this is not far to seek. As a leading scholar of India Islam argues, "Muslim econoclasm in India was conditioned by an underlying equation of Indian image worship with idolatory in pre-Islamic pagan Arabia. This parallelism supplied them with the religious and moral argument for destroying Hindu temples in times of war."

Just as the practice of idol worship impressed itself deeply on the Muslim mind—it was taught to view such practices with abhorrence—the large scale destruction of temples and idols remain the most vivid memory of Muslim rule for most Hindus till today.

But like all statements this too needs to be qualified. Though idol bashing was among the favourite sports of Muslim rulers, it is also true the large majority of native converts to Islam continued to observe Hindu rituals and practices in their daily lives. One can quote any number of studies to show as late as the 18th century, the beliefs and behaviour patterns of rural Muslims were no different from those of their Hindu brethren; among matters of common faith were "intercession at the tombs of the saints, consultation of Brahmins, even vegetarianism and aversion to the remarriage of widows."

Some scholars have tended to view this as a transitional development during which Hindu practices were gradually replaced by Muslim ones. Perhaps it is also possible to argue, as Jawaharlal Nehru did, that Mother India clung to converts to Islam as she does to all her children. Such sentiments certainly articulated the genuine Hindu belief, shared by most leaders of the nationalist movement, that India remained the original and only homeland of the Muslims of this country.

The dual pressures of politics and modernisation may have forced them into a certian line of action. But given time, their Indian face would be visible again. Nor did this assessment prove very wrong. For minimal guarantees of non-interference in their internal affairs and personal security Muslims provided a vital pillar of stability in the first three decades of India's independence. Today, once again, positive action by them can be a major source of peace and stability in the country.

Muslims Seen Safe in Hindu Nationalistic Society

93AS0511A Jalandhar PUNJAB KESARI in Hindi 19 Jan 93p 4

[Article by Ejaz Ashraf: "Hindus Are Very Tolerant and Muslims Are Very Safe With Them"]

[Text] Although the Indian Muslims may have felt angry and vulnerable after the 6 December incident at Ayodhya and the events that followed it, they still consider themselves an integral part of this land. They consider this country and its diverse social structure their own community. They are still optimistic. Except for a few fundamentalist Muslim leaders, the Muslims here understand the Hindu sorrow over this cycle of events. We are presenting below the opinions of various Muslim communities.

Maulana Mujahidul Islam Qasimi, general secretary of All India Milli Council (AIMC), was telling us the other day about his organization's plans to protest against the razing of Babri Masjid while leaning on a pillow on a wooden platform in his house in the relatively prosperous Jamia Nagar in Delhi.

He was telling about the plans to organize a protest day on 23 December. He said that on the night of 22-23 December 1949, someone had planted the statues secretly in the now-torn down Babri Masjid.

Maulana Qasimi is the respected head judge of Patna's Imarat Shari'ah which is highly revered in the Muslim society. The AIMC is an organization composed of Muslim religious leaders, religious scholars, and mullahs. It was organized early last year to protect the religious and spiritual interests of the Muslims.

These days the leaders of AIMC are focusing on the destruction of Babri Masjid. They perhaps know how to take advantage of the situation created by the hurt Muslim feelings. Many groups are trying to capitalize on the rising Muslim emotions resulting from the 6 December incident in Ayodhya. Keeping this situation in mind, this writer asked Maulana Qasimi, "Will the situation not get worse with the 23 December demonstrations?"

At that time, Maulana Qasimi replied, "There will be no demonstrations or slogan raising. The Muslims will fast that day. I have already expressed my resentment over the Ayodhya issue to the prime minister."

When asked why they decided to fast on the protest day, Maulana Qasimi said, "Fasts strengthen your self-control and self-discipline. The anger that the Muslims are feeling should not be expressed openly. They should learn how to control it."

(This meeting with Maulana Qasimi took place before 20 December).

This can be called the new "political language" of the Muslim community developed in response to the

strategy followed by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Maulana Qasimi is not alone in using this kind of language. Khawaja Hasan Sani Nizami, head imam of the Sufi shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Olia, has also expressed similar feelings.

He said, "When Chandra Shekhar was the prime minister, he called a meeting of various religious leaders to discuss the Ayodhya issue. I told the prime minister that this situation had deteriorated to this point because of the failure of religious leaders. Now the time has come for us to ask ourselves whether these leaders are really our leaders."

Nizami said that, even though Sufism tells its religious leaders to stay away from politics, the time has come for religious leaders to play an effective role in public life. He expounded further, "My father told me to stay away from politics; however, persons like me have to show the right path to the people." Nizami said that the wall of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims was not raised suddenly. It was raised by an organized plan increasing bitterness by distorting or changing the history. Nizami asked, "Do the Hindus not come to the shrines with faith and respect?"

His eyes showed the deep pain he felt about the present situation.

In Darbhanga, hundreds of miles from Delhi, Mohammed Javed Chishti, who is the caretaker of Khawaja Mohammed Hussain Salish Faridi's shrine, is respected equally by the Muslims and the Hindus, and is known as "Pir Baba," says, "I pray that the chasm of hatred that has been created between the Hindus and the Muslims be eliminated soon." Pir Baba looked very distressed at the chasm of hatred created between the two groups that have lived like brothers. It seemed his heart was crying over this situation.

Some Muslim leaders' comments may be biting at time. One thing is clear—that many Muslim leaders have adopted self-control and patience while responding to the 6 December incident. Even some traditional Muslim leaders have adopted this attitude. This changed tone was noted in the statements issued by Maulana Bukhari during the curfew imposed in Delhi after 6 December.

It is said that many Muslim political leaders had advised Imam Bukhari to encourage the people in Old Delhi to take such confrontational steps as breaking curfew. Imam Bukhari, however, did not accept this advice.

The Muslim community is angry but also is contemplating. The truth is that the idea of self-control in the Muslim community has emerged because of their experiences. The Muslim community would have come into the streets after Babri Masjid was torn down to express its anger, as happened in a few places. The serious and tolerant leaders of the Muslims knew what would happen if such steps were taken and did not approve protest demonstrations. Had they agreed to demonstrations, there would have been serious and destructive results to this community and the country.

One reason for the Muslim silence is their anger. However, their self-control and patience has benefited the Muslim community. Amidst this feeling of insecurity and separation, the Indian Muslims also see a ray of hope. They know that the secular forces of this nation will win in the end. Still, the Muslims feel that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao has humiliated them on purpose.

Even a non-political person like Darbhanga's Pir Baba says, "I am not accusing the RSS, the BJP, the VHP, or the Bajrang Dal. They did exactly what they have been saying for a long time that they were going to do. They repeatedly said that they were not going to follow the Supreme Court decision."

Maulana Qasimi also said, "The Muslims have lost faith in the prime minister. When everyone was expecting something to happen in Ayodhya, why did the prime minister not feel it? Either the prime minister was in cahoots with the RSS and the BJP or he was unable to comprehend all this."

The people living in Nizamuddin area in Delhi were angry at the prime minister and the Congress Party. Some went as far as to accuse the prime minister of being a member of the RSS and sympathetic toward it. The people are repeating the story that Narasimha Rao was influenced by Guru Gololkar when he was a young man.

Such impressions about Mr. Rao are spread not only in Delhi but also in Bombay. Aslam Bhai, a watch repairer on Shuklaji Street in Bombay, says, "We did not expect the BJP to give up its course; however, we are hurt at the fact that the prime minister has betrayed us. He could not fulfill the assurances he had given us." Tariq Farooqi, a student at Maharashtra College, said that he has lost faith in the Congress Party now.

The people in Dharvi, the largest slum in Asia, said that the prime minister failed to protect the mosque, therefore, he should resign from his position. According to the news published in the Urdu press here the people believe that the Central Government did not act over Ayodhya in time and let the mosque be torn down and a temporary temple be built.

As a reaction to this cycle of incidents, the Muslim leaders in the Congress Party are finding themselves ineffective. They are facing a dilemma.

Unity is not totally destroyed: The intellectuals and those who are concerned and conscious about the present situation were worried that the Muslims would feel unprotected after Babri Masjid was torn down. The Muslim community could shrink into its already-limited sphere. The Muslims could move the Muslim-majority areas.

Mr. Koshre Lal, a Delhi Janata Dal leader who is considered to be close to traditional Muslim leaders, said

while expressing the opinion cited above, "If one more Ayodhya-like incident occurs, our country would face a very dangerous situation."

Balwant Singh, a snackstand operator near Mirzapur Chowk Gurudwara in Darbhanga, expressed his internal revulsion and pain in these words: "We do not understand why such angry feelings are prevalent in our society. The people who came to my shop to eat snacks and drink tea with so much love and those who had learned to eat the hated onion right in my shop are telling me to move away. You have to tell me how I can leave this place and where I can go? My emotions and my roots are in this land."

Similar feelings of insecurity were found in other people also. They are perplexed as to what to do. Iqbal Hussain, a barber in Allahabad's Minhajpur area, said, "I do not consider myself safe in this city anymore. You tell me, how I can leave the country that is India? How can I give up this city with which I am so emotionally involved?" For him, his feelings of being an Indian are more important than his safety!

Jumrati, a tea vendor in this city, "If the situation in Uttar Pradesh worsened, I will move to my village Vaishali in Bihar." He said that India is his motherland and his roots are here.

Chowdhery Badruddin of Lucknow is very optimistic. He said, "The Hindus are much more tolerant than the Muslims and we feel ourselves a lot more safe."

Changes in Hindu-Muslim Relations Viewed

93AS0421A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 20 Dec 92 p 6

[Article by Dr. Churamani Gopal: "National Religion and Hindu-Muslim Brotherhood"]

[Text] The history of our country would have been very different if the people here had identified themselves with our country, and if they had given "love for nation" a higher priority than they gave factions, religions, state, and language, and if they had not raised walls among themselves. Unity and the feeling of esprit de corps were what this nation needed more than anything else. This need is still there and will be in the future. India has been a world leader in science, knowledge, arts, and religion, but it still is a backward country, because its citizens never have made love for the nation their top priority. Instead, they have given more importance to their narrow circles. The viewpoints have not changed yet. Even now, this nation is asking its citizens to put their faith in India and to put this faith above their religion, be it Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, or Sikhism. The main reason for the problems in this country has been the peoples' considering religion above everything else.

The fire that is raging in the whole nation angers and saddens us. The disputed mosque was torn down in a senseless manner. The whole nation has condemned and expressed disgust over this action. Even Hindus have criticized it. It was an embarrassing act (because, this could have been resolved peacefully, if we had been patient). However, more embarrassing and more condemnable is the Muslims' retaliation by destruction of temples and their rampant violence in the whole nation.

The most important steps in dealing with this difficult and sad situation would be to establish peace and help establish harmony and unity in India. Both the Hindus and the Muslims have to rise above their narrow mentality. The Hindu religion is very vast, broad-minded, and kind. That is why, even after this nation was divided into two parts over religion, it embraced the Muslims and made its Constitution secular. It went so far as to give special rights to the minority religions and changed citizens ethics code. Does this prove without any doubt that the Hindus have made sacrifices for establishing harmony?

At this point it is important that our Muslim community also show some amiability. It is their duty to relinquish fundamentalism and make love for India their first religion and try to make some concessions to the other religion.

It is also true that this country cannot make progress without Hindu-Muslim unity. No living religion is left uninfluenced by the country and the period. It is important for lasting goodwill and peace to rectify the mistakes made in the past on our own and look for new ways to progress. If the Muslims were successful in leaving some very ugly marks of fundamentalism on the history of the Mogul period, they can also leave marks of a new benevolence in modern India. We hope to be able to write that our Muslim brothers vindicated themselves of some Mogul-era sins. It would not be out of order here to mention that Ram, Krishna, and Shiva have the same place in Hindu religion as the Prophet Mohammad has in the Muslim religion. Krishna's birthplace Mathura, Ram's birth place Ayodhya, and Shiva's birth place Kashi have the same importance in Hindu religion as have Mecca, Medina, and the Ka'bah in the Muslim religion. How wonderful it would be if the Indian Muslim society were to become broad-minded and able to show respect to the Hindu religious feelings that have been hurt for centuries and leave those temples. In turn, the Hindus should do kar seva for those mosques and write a new golden history of cooperation and brotherhood. I see some rising broad-minded Muslim leaders in India and feel confident that the day is not far when this dream will come true. Then we will have the real beginning of love and fellowship, and India will become a world leader.

It is time for the Muslim to think hard. Is the religion of Islam endangered when in Islamic countries many mosques are torn down for beautification or broadening roads? Do the Muslims of the whole world come out in the streets over it? Cannot the Muslims of India give up an old mosque to make the future of our country beautiful? Why did we exaggerate this incident by taking it to the whole world? Our Muslims have torn down so

many temples, killed so many Hindus, and made people homeless in Kashmir. Why did the Muslims here and abroad not object to that? Are not actions such as Imam Bukhari's running to the Pakistani embassy, not having time to listen to the prime minister, and declaring that Islam gave India culture and language all instigatory? Was this a country of nomads before Islam arrived here? Our language, culture, knowledge, and science have never depended on Islam. Is the act of leaders, such as Shahabuddin's taking the internal affairs of this country to the international level, appropriate?

We should think and decide whether it is the duty of Hindus to keep pacifying the Muslims. Love, esteem, and mutual harmony increase by sharing. No relationships can be improved by practicing double standards. If the Muslims consider themselves Indians, which is a fact since most of the Indian Muslims were converted from the Hindu population, they should consider Ram their hero more than Babar. We must understand it completely and also explain it to the world that the Indian Hindus and Muslims are one. The mosques and temples in this country are our own affairs and we can resolve these by sitting down together. The Indian Constitution is different from that of all other countries and follows the path of secularism. Therefore, broad-mindedness, permanent peace, and goodwill will start in our country!

Sikh Response Mixed, Indecisive

Sikh Leadership Seen Divided Over Challenge to Secularism

93AS0437E Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 20 Jan 93 p 9

[Article by Gajinder Singh: "Leading Them Up the Garden Panth"; italicized words as published]

[Text]

The failure of the Akali leaders to take a united and cohesive stand on Ayodhya has confused the Sikh community and indicates their inability to comprehend politics, argues Gajinder Singh.

The Sikh leadership has failed the community once again. December 6, 1992 proved the Sikhs, during times of crisis, are left rudderless by the Akalis, self styled "saviours of the *panth.*" The most damning indictment of the Akali leadership's recent failure is that for the first time in independent India, they have given the community an identity it never felt before—minority.

Neither the army assault on the Golden Temple in June 1984 nor the anti-Sikh riots which followed Indira Gandhi's assassination made Sikhs feel left out of the national mainstream. But after Ayodhya they do.

A feeling that is attributable to the inability of the leaders to explain to the community where it stood in post-Ayodhya India. In fact, they have done precisely what they did when Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's murder squads were operating from the precincts of the Golden Temple: left the community to fend for itself.

What the leadership needed to do is to make a united stand on the Ayodhya issue. Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann is of the opinion the Sikhs should stand beside the Muslims. A faction of the Prakash Singh Badal group sent kar sevaks but Mr. Badal himself has asked for tough measures against the Bharatiya Janata Party. The most colourful and the least meaningful statement has come from Mr. Gurcharan Singh Tohra. He has asked for an end to "brahminical tyranny."

It is impossible to find any coherence in this gaggle of voices. To make matters more confused for the average Sikh, the *sangh parivar* considers his community to be a part of the Hindus. Moreover, try as he might, he cannot but compare Operation Bluestar to what happened in Ayodhya.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh- [RSS] Bharatiya Janata Party- [BJP] Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] combine does not accept Sikhism to be a religion different from Hinduism. Even in the face of grave provocation they have stood behind the Sikhs and ensured communal riots do not occur in Punjab. It is a credit to both the Sikhs and Hindus that communal amity still reigns supreme in Punjab. The decision of the Punjab chief minister, Mr. Beant Singh, not to ban the RSS-BJP-VHP combine is an indication of the fact how much these organisations have contributed to the peace process in the state.

A section of the Sikhs feel the Congress and the BJP are working towards establishing Hindu hegemony in India. The fact the Central government did not use the army to try and flush out kar sevaks from Ayodhya on December 6 as they did to put an end to the murder raj in Punjab in 1984 will perhaps continue to haunt the Sikh community for years to come.

Why was the army not used to stop the destruction of the disputed shrine? Why was such a huge contingent of paramilitary forces moved to Ayodhya if it was to look the other way when the shrine was being razed to the ground? If the army could be deployed in Punjab on June 2, 1984 to stop all kinds of movements, including that of even a cyclist or a bullock cart in Amritsar, why could the same not be done to prevent the kar sevaks from reaching Ayodhya? The answer is simple.

When the Golden Temple was stormed by the army, Sikh soldiers got such a severe shock that a few of them went berserk. Most of those who deserted their units started for Amritsar. For a handful of Sikhs in Pune to imagine that they could get to the Golden Temple almost 1400 miles away without being stopped showed they had lost their mental equilibrium due to the emotional shock that tore their minds asunder.

That the army action of Harmandir Sahib was a blunder is indisputable. Using the army to flush out the frenzied and religiously overcharged kar sevaks who had gathered

for the construction of a Ram temple would have resulted in a mutiny of a much larger scale. It would have plunged the nation into chaos. Perhaps Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, realising what army action did to Punjab in 1984, refused to fall into the trap once again. The country, after all, is still paying a price for the destruction of the Akal Takht.

There is no doubt the majority community is largely sympathetic to the saffron brigade. Just like the army action on the Golden Temple was a blunder, so was the arrest of Mr. L.K. Advani on December 8. The Sikh psyche is yet to be healed. The parallels between the two instances are frightening. In 1985 the Akalis won handsomely. This time it seems the BJP will follow suit.

The reaction of the Akalis to what happened in Ayodhya has been mute, to say the least. Perhaps, it reminds them of their role in ensuring the rise of militancy in Punjab. Ayodhya was, it is true, a symptom of confusion on a major scale. The same can be said about the Akalis.

Many Akalis suggest the failings behind the Indian notion of secularism has been exposed. But equally exposed has been their claim of Sikh tolerance and justice. Very few Akali leaders have the inclination to comprehend the enormity of what has happened and is likely to happen.

Hindus had learnt to accept the Muslim community as a fact of life. Now with so much hate generated between the two communities, even the most liberal of the Hindu leaders—Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, for instance—may find themselves helpless to stem the tide of rising communalism. Will the Akalis for once also accept Hindus as a fact of life in Punjab and ensure the militants are also told that? The two communities cannot exist by living separately.

The Sikh leadership invariably relies on historical references which, though inspirational and educative, have little legal or constitutional bearing. Of late militancy has based its legitimacy on the *Guru Granth Sahib* which these leaders believe holds religion and politics as one. The concept is not unique as Muslim states and medieval Christian kings ruled on this basis.

However, modern democracies have separated the church from the state except on specific issues like abortion (Ireland) and turban (Canada). Though the BJP-RSS-VHP combine realises it, it will become increasingly difficult for them to separate religion from politics in times to come. Murmurs are already being heard in the sangh parivar on the need to separate the two. But the reality is different.

In 1947 the Sikh leadership failed to understand the post-colonial world. No more could a general with a small army occupy and rule over vast alien territories. Instead of framing clear proposals on what kind of a political system they wanted, Sikh leaders wavered on every issue and also demanded a sovereign state which defied contemporary reality. The British could not concede minority rule over the majority.

If in Punjab Sikhs form a majority today it is due to the division of Punjab into three states. And the division leading to *"Khalsa ka bol bala"*—rule of the Khalsa—was due to the efforts of a Hindu government. Had Jawaharlal Nehru decided otherwise Punjab would never have had been a Sikh majority state today.

What is happening in Punjab is not a Hindu-Sikh war but that of continuing injustice to the state by the Centre. Pakistan, Sikhs must understand, will do them no good even if Khalistan comes into existence. The wavering of the Akalis to come clear on the Ayodhya issue will spell disaster for the community. Akalis at the moment cannot stand neutral. They have to take a stand for in that lies their salvation and future.

If Akali leaders are not to be the pawns in games politicians play, if they are to play an important role which is rightfully theirs in India, they must modernise their politics. A first step in that direction will be to analyse Indian politics as it stands now. Delusions of grandeur must go. Akalis cannot do it on their own. The important question is which major political group will best serve the community's interest? The divided and politically immature Akali leadership must show a hitherto absent sense of purpose and astuteness and answer this query. They will be playing for high stakes—the future of the community.

Sikhs Said Assisting Hindu Revivalist Movement

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[Article by Seema Goswami and Reeta Sharma: "The Saffron Unity"; italicized words as published]

[Text]

What accounts for the Sikh presence at the kar seva in Ayodhya?

Study any photograph of the *kar seva* at Ayodhya on 6 December. Among the *trishuls*, Ram-naam headbands and the orange triangular flags of Hindutva, you can see the odd saffron turban. Beneath it is a bearded face, and a sturdy Punjabi frame clad in a kurta.

Yes, this particular *kar sevak*, who arrived in Ayodhya chanting, *"Mandir wahi banayenge,"* is a Sikh.

In the week leading up to Black Sunday, Awtar Singh Hitt, president of the Delhi unit of the Akali Dal's Badal group, announced that his party would send a group of *kar sevaks* to Ayodhya "for the construction of the Ram temple." Hitt was as good as his word. Soon, Karsevakpuram was playing host to a group of Sardars, whose full-blooded cries of *"Jai Shri Ram"* put even the Hindu volunteers to shame.

At one level, this Sikh presence made little sense. The Akalis have spent the last decade waging a war against what they term the Hindu desire to subsume the Sikh identity. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale routinely used to refer to Mrs. Indira Gandhi disparagingly as "that Brahmin woman." And such Akali leaders as Simranjeet Singh Mann are currently fighting for a Sikh state—Khalistan—the grounds that their *quom* (community) has nothing in common with the Hindu majority and is, in fact, being persecuted by it.

So, why were Akali volunteers present in Ayodhya on that fateful Sunday, all geared up to build a temple to Ram?

The answer to that question lies further back in Sikh history.

Traditionally, Sikhs have had more in common with Hindus than they did with Muslims. In Punjab, as recently as a decade ago, it was customary for many Hindu families to make the eldest son a Sardar. Intermarriage was common, and both temples and gurdwaras were visited by the two communities. Before the Akali agitation changed things, at least half the pilgrims at the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar were Hindus. And such Hindu shrines as Vaishnoo Devi in Jammu were centres of pilgrimage for Sikhs as well.

The Granth Sahib, which all Sikhs regard as their guru (spiritual teacher), is riddled with references to Ram and Krishna (Kathak dancer Uma Sharma recently announced a tour in which her performances would draw on the images of Krishna in the hymns of Sikh gurus), the verses of such Hindu saints as Namdev are included in the Sikh holy book, and Guru Gobind Singh was known to pray to Chandi, the female Hindu goddess, before he went to battle against the Mughals.

The Khalsa, the Sikh army, was formed to protect the Hindu faith from the marauding attacks of Islam. And Guru Arjun Singh died a gory death—being burnt on a hot metal plate and beheaded—because he refused to give in to the Mughals.

More recently, in the riots following the Partition in 1947, Sikhs and Muslims found themselves on opposing sides. And the wounds that resulted from the massacre that took place during the exchange of populations drove a wedge between the two communities.

It was politics that brought them together again: Akali politics, whose basic premise was that Sikhs were, like Muslims, a disadvantaged minority in India. And Pakistan's support to the Sikh terrorists gave a new face to the newly-forged Sikh-Islamic unity.

Religious sanction was soon found for this new alliance: the concept of monotheism that the Sikh faith is based upon, is drawn from Islam; such Muslim fakirs as Farid are featured in the Granth Sahib; and like Islam, Sikhism is opposed to idol worship.

It, thus, made perfect sense for Sikhs to make common cause with Muslims.

So, why were Akali volunteers helping Hindi *kar sevaks* bring the Babri Masjid down?

One explanation is that racial memory is stronger than political will. That the communities have too much in common for attempts to drive them apart to succeed. Sikhs, who have fought for centuries on the side of, and for, the Hindus, cannot turn against that community only because some opportunist leaders ask them to do so. And that the Sardars who were present at Ayodhya were only continuing the battle that Guru Gobind Singh had begun against the Mughals—after all, the *masjid* had been built by a nobleman, Mir Baqi, from the court of Emperor Babar.

The other theory is that this was simply a political miscalculation. Prakash Singh Badal's failure to react to Hitt's statement on sending volunteers to Ayodhya seemed to suggest that the Akali leader was in favour of participating in the *kar seva*. The Congress' enemy, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the suggestion was, had to be a friend of the Akalis.

It was only after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December that Badal changed tack. He issued a show-cause notice to Hitt, asking him to explain why he had made such an important decision without consulting the party president.

Badal then went on to make this a minorities issue, making common cause with the Muslim community, and comparing the demolition of the *masjid* to the destruction of the Akal Takht in Operation Blue Star in 1984. "We (the Akalis) condemn the demolition," he said. "It is an outright attack on the minorities of India and on the fourth estate. If all political parties that are secular in nature agree, we will join hands in the reconstruction of the *masjid*."

Simranjeet Singh Mann took this opportunity to declare his clairvoyance. "I had warned all Islamic countries," he said at a press conference, "that the Babri Masjid will be demolished. It is a secret conspiracy of the Congress, the BJP, the judiciary, the administration and the police against the minorities in India."

The visit of Anees Ahmed, the president of the All India Muslim Youth Welfare Association, to Ropar to attend the *barsi* (death anniversary function) of an alleged hard-core militant. Sher Singh Doomchheri, further bolstered the minority alliance of Sikhs and Muslims. Addressing the gathering, Ahmed declared: "If Muslims had stood by Sikhs on the issue of the demolition of the Akal Takht, we would not have had to face the demolition of the Babri Masjid."

But the Akalis and such Muslim leaders as Ahmed aren't the only ones fighting for the support of the Sikh masses. They face tough competition from the *sangh parivar*,

which is trying to envelope Sikhs in the folds of Hindutva. It is no coincidence, for instance, that Sadhvi Rithambara's speeches are peppered with references to the various Sikh gurus and exhortations to Sikhs to join the Holy War against the depredations of Islam.

The Sikh presence at Ayodhya seemed to indicate that this call had not gone unanswered.

But will the *sangh parivar* continue to get the support of the Sikh community, or at least, a section of it?

The local answer, in the post-demolition context, is no. The Akali leadership cannot countenance any movement that condones the destruction of a place of worship; the parallels with the demolition of the Akal Takht in Operation Blue Star are far too disturbing. And if Sikhs are to present themselves as yet another disadvantaged and persecuted minority, as the Akali political strategy envisages, then they can't adopt any postures that are anti-Muslim.

But logic doesn't always prevail in politics. And leaders don't always manage to keep their supporters in line. If the Sikh leadership's efforts to dissociate the community from the events in Ayodhya fail, then the face of Akali politics could well change in the next couple of fog years.

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