

# **Ethnic Conflict in South Asia**



Edited By  
**Asghar Ali Engineer**

# **ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA**

**ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER**

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## PREFACE

The ethnic conflict in South Asia has assumed menacing proportions and it is necessary for the scholars to study this phenomenon, its specificities and differences as carefully as possible. It is with this view that we have tried to collect relevant material in this volume on ethnic violence in different regions of South Asia. We have chosen India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for this purpose as these three countries have been mainly affected by ethnic conflict. In Bangla Desh and Nepal it has been largely absent so far or has not surfaced in violent form, if not altogether absent.

An attempt has been made to present representative cases of ethnic conflict from different regions though these cases can by no means be claimed as comprehensive. However, the material collected here can give fairly good idea of the ethnic conflict in these regions. The Institute of Islamic Studies is committed to promotion of communal harmony through proper understanding of the problem and hence this volume has been prepared on its behalf with a view to make people aware of this problem and its scientific understanding and consequent resolution of this conflict both on ideological as well as material plane.

I am extremely thankful to all those papers, magazines and organizations whose material has been used here which we have duly acknowledged.

—Asghar Ali Engineer

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## INTRODUCTION

Today the whole of South Asia—Sri Lanka, India, Bangla Desh and Pakistan—is faced with acute ethnic conflict. The Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Sikh problem apart from other ethnic problems in India, Chakma problem in Bangla Desh and Pathan-Muhajir riots in Karachi, Pakistan, have attracted world attention repeatedly. In the modern era of rapid transportation with pockets of high development, no country can escape the fate of being multi-ethnic or multi-religious or multi-lingual society. In such a situation, the forces of development and change generate pressures for ethnic conflict, the degree of pressure depending on the degree of inequitous distribution of the fruits of development.

Either there has been no honest effort to solve the problem or the pressures have been such as to defy any solution. The problem of ethnic conflict has persisted in all these countries of South Asia. In the case of India the ethnic problem particularly between the Hindus and Muslims has, apart from present developments, historical roots though of course the Punjab problem is of recent origin. Nevertheless it has erupted with volcanic gusto. The Tamil problem too is of recent origin and has erupted with no less violence. But the Karachi riots between the Pathans and Muhajir took the whole world by surprise both for its unexpectedness as well as for its degree of violence and brutality.

What are the roots of this ethnic conflict? Is it rooted in the developmental processes in the third world? Or, can

its roots be traced in ethnicity itself? Or, does this conflict owe its origin to human psyche or the combination of all this throws up this problem in all its intensity? With differing opinions the problem would continue to be debated, both among laymen as well as experts. It may be difficult to reach definite conclusions but then the debate is necessary. It certainly helps achieve clarity on a number of complex issues involved.

It was perhaps with this purpose that Colombo, the Centre for Ethnic Studies, organized a three-day workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal, on ethnic conflict in South Asia. The choice regarding Nepal was deliberate. It is so far free of such ethnic tensions—at least they have not surfaced there so far—and also because it is neutral in respect of ethnic violence in other regions of South Asia. It was an apt choice, anyway. The workshop took place from 15—17 February and noted scholars from Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan took part in well-structured discussions. Unfortunately no one came from Bangla Desh.

The workshop, though very well-structured, was quite informal in a way. There was no formal inauguration, no formal speeches and no rhetorics. We got down to serious discussions right away. Many papers were circulated in advance, but some were not. There were 15 participants in all and all the participants attended every minute of the discussion. As the group was small and compact, there was better rapport among the participants. The discussions began with the problem in Sri Lanka, the southernmost country in South Asia.

Michael Robert from Sri Lanka was the first to begin on the 15th, the morning session. He spoke on Moors (Muslims) of Ceylone—Image of Shopkeepers. He particularly referred to the riot of 1915. Muslims are around seven percent in this country and they are found in the eastern province as well as along the west coast. The Muslims in the eastern province are by and large rural in composition whereas those along the west coast are traders, some of them being quite rich.

It is interesting to note that the riot in 1915 began, like that in India before independence, on the issue of music before the mosque. The riot started in Candy and later spread to other

parts. In all 17 mosques were burnt and 86 damaged, 25 Muslims lost their lives while more than 4,000 properties were damaged. It is equally interesting to note that rumours like those in India played significant role in spreading the violence. It was rumoured that Muslims were about to attack and that they had gathered arms in mosque. It was also rumoured that the Muslims were indulging in inhuman atrocities. They beheaded a Buddhist priest (who was named) and that his head was packed in a fish crate. Later on the priest was found alive and was produced before the public. It was also rumoured that several Sinhala children were done to death.

Analysing the causes of riots Michael Robert said that the Sinhala aggressiveness could be ascribed to religious revival which began in 1860. A strong sense of nationalism coupled with anti-westernism and anti-mimetism emerged among the Sinhalis. It also assumed strongly anti-Christian character. Some of the novels with these themes had roaring sales during that period. The anti-colonial struggle tended to become chauvinistic in the majority community. Among Muslims too, there emerged the revivalist trend. Both the revivalisms reinforced each other. The 1915 riot should be seen in this backdrop, Mr. Robert argued. His presentation was followed by discussion.

Dr. Akmal Hussain of Lahore said that in all riot situations the rioters draw upon orgiastic emotional structure of the people which is generally very deep rooted. They use signs and symbols rooted in people's emotions. In Pakistan drums are used beaten at certain rhythm on a saint's anniversary to gather large number. It became so alarming that the government had to ban beating of drums.

Veena Das of Delhi University said that there is nothing like South Asian way of reacting to rumours. People in America reacted the same way. There it is generally rumoured that a black has raped a white woman or that a blackman was lynched by the whites. The reaction is the same. Asghar Ali Engineer from Bombay said that the technique of rumours is used in all Indian riots as well. In fact some stereotype rumours are widely used in all major riots. Poisoning of water source by the minority is one such rumour. From Jamshedpur to



Hyderabad, this rumour is found to be commonly spread in a well planned manner. He also pointed out that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century religious revival among the Hindus and Muslims in India also played an important role in fomenting communal trouble. Here too, novels with chauvinistic overtones like *Anandmath* by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, became highly popular and caused communal tension.

Farida Shahid from Pakistan pointed out that in the Karachi riot the administration did nothing to counter baseless rumours. Pathans were told that the Muhajirs were gathering arms to launch an offensive which was baseless. But the administration just looked on. Dr. D.L. Seth from Delhi was of the opinion that communal conflict was used for renegotiating the status of the communities involved and riot leaders projected themselves as the protectors of their respective communities. He also felt that lumpenization and criminalization of politics was also greatly responsible for increasing conflict. Prof. Bashir Ahmad of Delhi pointed out that criminals are in a way quite secular and use riot situation to their advantage. It is communalism for secular ends. Ashis Nandy drawing from American experience said that during Vietnam war the blacks were not discriminated in recruitment to the army and whites were allowed to dodge the draft freely. This was American way of making blacks victims of Vietnam war. Sudhir Kakkar, a psychologist, drew the attention to the fact that role of paranoia was important if we want to understand why rumours are easily believed. They also provide relief to collective frenzy.

Mr. Sunil Bastian from Colombo (International Centre for Ethnic Studies) presented a paper on the July 1983 riots in Sri Lanka. It was essentially anti-Tamil violence. Tamilians killed 13 soldiers and the backlash started in Colombo. He maintained that in the beginning the urban elite was hopeful and adopted rational polity and modernization as important ingredients of nation-building processes. However, this ideology failed to look at the reality of the political processes and at the ethnic situation. Rational polity and modernization for whom and at what cost? What would be the share of ethnic minorities in this process? These are some important questions which need to be taken into account.

General elections took place in 1977 and genuine grievances of Tamilians were accepted. However, violence broke out two months after the last date for application of citizenship by the Tamil plantation worker in 1983. Next day Sri Lankan papers carried in banner headlines the news of killing of 13 soldiers but nothing about what happened in Jafna. Anti-Tamil violence was well organised. Systematic rumours about poisoning of water source by Tamilians were spread. Even President Jaywardhane said that it was the legitimate expression of Sinhala aspirations. As for the Tamil violence it was described as an attempt to overthrow the Government any many opposition leaders were removed from the parliament and arrested. These riots took place mainly in the urban areas.

Prof. Bashir Ahmad began comments on Sunil's paper. Use of proper language is very important. How to describe a conflict situation? As a communal disturbance as the British used to do or as a pogrom? When one community is at the receiving end, it should be described as a pogrom. Sunil describes violence against Tamils as pogrom. If it is riot it is aberration, but not the pogrom. It should also be born in mind that the emergence of UNP in 1977 elections was an assertion of Sinhala nationality. This assertion came through its support for Buddhist institutions and Sinhala language. This is the process through which all multi-ethnic societies have to pass. The ethnic communities try to find their equation of existence. The July 1983 riot was an attempt to stop the UNP Government from changing the equation already established by Bandarnaike Government.

Even after the Sinhalese became dominant they feel insecure. Mutual adjustment in a developing situation cannot remain static. Terms are continuously reopened for negotiations. In our country Punjab is a good example. He also pointed out that the logic of society is different from the logic of society. Logic of society is rational polity and nation-building whereas the logic of society is changing equations among its different ethnic constituents. Peace is disturbed when different ethnic sections begin to assert themselves in a developing situation.

In this regard Michael Robert also referred to various Islamic fundamentalist groups becoming more and more aggres-

sive. They too wish to renegotiate their position vis-a-vis society at large. Farida Shahid referred to the role of state and the role of state apparatus and its composition. State, she maintained, increases legitimacy of violence by using it itself. This is what is happening in Pakistan. State often uses violence against its own citizens.

Ashish Nandy disagreed with Bashir Ahmad that the logic of state differs from the logic of society. It would mean, he said, that logic of state is rational and logic of state is pathology. It is a dangerous distinction to maintain. Veena Das also thought it is not proper to say that the logic of state is rational. Bureaucracy, in the name of rationality, often erodes human rights saying that people tend to be passionate. D.L. Seth, on the other hand pointed out that the kind of minority and size of minority are also important while talking about the logic of society. It is often the logic of majority which becomes rationality of state. Its symbols are universalized and when a substantial minority refuses to accept these symbols the conflict starts.

Akmal Hussain pointed out yet another dimension of the problem. It is important to understand, he said, whether communal riots are mere episodes or part of political processes. One has to take ideology of nation-state which was evolved in Europe by the Utilitarians of the 19th century. The ideology of nation-state became acceptable there primarily on account of homogenization of culture due to rapid industrialization and its welfarism. But in developing countries due to slow process and inadequate industrialization no such homogenization is possible. It leaves out large sections of population from its benefits and hence sub-national assertions emerge on the surface. Thus it assumes the form of ethnic conflict. Mr. Engineer also pointed out that there is nothing like an abstract concept of rationality of state. It is important to understand who constitutes the state and what are their perceptions or perceptions of their interests. The rationality of the state would depend on these perceptions. In certain circumstances even fascism might become the rationality of the state.

In the afternoon session Radhika Coomaraswamy of ICES, Colombo, presented a paper on "Ethnic Conflict in Eastern

Province—Tamil-Muslim Conflict”. She threw detailed light on the role of the state in a conflict situation. The state can also use or misuse the powerful instrument of ethnic identity to play one ethnic community against the other. It also showed how state understands the dynamics of human passions. She maintained that the western theories of state polity do not come to grips with these problems. She also threw detailed light on the composition and nature of Muslim population of Sri Lanka in Eastern Province and along the West Coast and as to how their perceptions change and how they react to their differing situations. In the present situation in Sri Lanka the Muslims hold a decisive position in deciding the Tamil question. It is for this reason that the state tried to divide Tamils and Muslims.

Mr. Ashish Nandy at this stage raised the pertinent question what is the meaning of Tamil and Muslim? Do Muslims not speak Tamil and are they not Tamils? Did a distinct sense of separate identity among Muslims exist since long? Why then this conflict now? Did they share a common customary law with other Tamils or not? It was pointed out that the Muslims took to western education much later and that the Muslim leaders used mainly traditional idiom to represent their aspirations. It was also pointed out by Prof. Das that the distinction between little tradition (native Islamic tradition) and great tradition (original Islamic tradition) is false and is a western notion. Muslims took their native tradition as authentic Islamic tradition.

Mr. Engineer commented that it is wrong to maintain that Muslims in general took to western education much later or that there is something inherent in Islam which creates resistance towards western education. It all depends which class of Muslims we are referring to. In U.P. the Muslims of feudal class or the ruling elite took to western education without any resistance. Sir Syed met with resistance from the lower middle classes and artisans for whom western education did not make any sense anyway. One must discuss concrete categories, not abstractions, as Marx also rightly pointed out. Similarly neither Muslims nor Tamils are “fanatics”. It is a response to a particular situation. Fanaticism too should be seen in relation

to a concrete situation, not as an abstract quality *per se*.

It was pointed out by a Sri Lankan participant that Muslims are well placed in Sri Lankan society. Presently there are 11 M.P.s, 4 deputy ministers and one Muslim Speaker. Foreign Minister is also a Muslim. Two-third Muslims live along the western coast and they are comparatively quite prosperous. They try to identify themselves more with the Sinhalas. In eastern province they are mostly agriculturists and are much closer to Tamils and have contributed richly to the Tamil literature. They have formed a separate political party. However, the clashes between Tamils and Muslims are not of recent origin. There has been conflict in the past too on the land question. The Muslims did not support separate Tamil state as two-third of the Muslims live outside eastern province, i.e. in Sinhala majority areas and hence their perception is quite different.

Here there also arose an interesting debate on the question of identity. Mr. Sudhir Kakkar maintained that fluidity is contradictions in terms. Identity cannot be fluid. Identity is defined more by contrast than as an autonomous concept. It is, in fact, one's expression of inner continuity in contrast to that of others. Veena Das, however, maintained that fluidity of identity is a valid concept. Religions at one stage or the other differ but ancestry is common. Despite this commonality of ancestry, religious identity changes. Mr. Engineer also maintained that there may be a sense of continuity in identity but it cannot be deprived of need for change with changing situation otherwise identity would be always resistant to change. While maintaining a sort of continuity with the past, it must have a future dimension too.

In the afternoon session Mr. Michael Robert presented another paper on "The Anti-Colonial Response and Sinhala Perceptions of the Self through Images of the Burghers in Sri Lanka". Burghers are Eurasians and are 1% of the Sri Lankan population. In Colombo they are 5% and hold key positions in various professions. It was interesting to note that the stereotypes of the Sinhalas about the Burghers are very similar to those of Hindus in India about the Muslims. Some writers like Dharmapala hold even westernised Sinhalas in contempt and treat them as a separate ethnic category. Commenting on the

paper Veena Das said that the paper was quite rich and shows that even structure of abuses is very important. The ethnic boundaries are treated as sacred and the use of language beyond these boundaries changes.

### **Riots in Karachi**

The next session on 16th was devoted to Pakistan. Farida Shahid of Lahore, Pakistan, read a paper on the Karachi riots. She was of the opinion that the Karachi riots cannot be seen in isolation from the socio-economic developments and political processes. Legitimacy of the state depends on sub-state structures. Landowners, saints like Pir Pagaro and others wield lot of influence and provide legitimacy to the state. Similarly, another sub-state structure is constituted by the tribal authorities in the Khyber pass agency area. The common citizens are left high and dry. They never become integral part of decision making processes.

Industrialization in Pakistan has been concentrated in Karachi and Punjab thus causing emergence of strong regionalism. The state apparatus is dominated by the Muhajirs and Punjabis. However, the Muhajirs are losing their hold over administration. The Pathans are demanding that the name of their province be changed from NWFP to Pakhtunistan which no government has accepted so far. While sub-state nationalism is growing stronger, the government has failed to evolve proper institutions to solve the people's grievances. It has even failed to provide basic necessities like water, transport etc. in urban areas like Karachi. What is worse, sectarian and regional conflicts like anti-Qadiani riots, Shia-Sunni conflict or Pathan-Muhajir violence are treated as mere law and order problem.

The Sindhis are being increasingly marginalised. Muhajirs themselves are not monolithic community. They are also divided against themselves. Gujaratis, Biharis, Khojas, Bohras and Upites are divergent groups. Pathan-Muhajir conflict is one of the manifestations of the failure of the socio-economic processes on the one hand, and, political processes on the other. Sindh-Urdu riots earlier and anti-Ismaili riots later, are the other manifestations. Due to resentment against Punjabi domination the question of nationality is becoming increasingly sharper.

Akmal Husain, also from Lahore, Pakistan, provided, in his paper, more details about the Karachi riots. These riots were the most violent ones since partition. Klashnikovs were openly wielded. People were shot dead without any compunctions, their bodies burnt and properties looted. The Governor of Sindh was alleged to be in league with the mafia and was allegedly receiving Rs. 2 crores per month. He was in Sri Lanka when Karachi was rocked with violence. His absence was not coincidental, but deliberate. He did not return for eight days.

Akmal Husain also provided some details of the course of rioting. He said that Pirabad mosque near Muhajir Settlement was used for giving call to the Pathans. It was said on the loud-speakers that if they (Pathans) do not attack Muhajirs they would loose their right over their wives, something considered highly insulting by the Pathans (being *namard*, impotent). Hundreds of Pathans came downhill from Sorabgoth charging the Muhajirs as in a war. The police remained inactive and the I.G. is reported to have said that let them kill each other. The Muhajirs also counterattacked and violence spread in different areas.

Mr. Husain maintained that ethnic conflict is manifestation of crisis in a civil society as well as the crisis of the political state. He also discussed the concept of an over-developed state in the third world context. The civil institutions are comparatively less developed and political state acquires total hegemony over the civil society. He also discussed subsidiary causes like monopoly of transport system by the Pathans, high lease rates for mini-buses, reckless speeds to make maximum rounds and high rate of accidents causing deep resentment among the people. Drug mafia and land-lease racketeers in *kacchi abadis* (slum areas of Karachi) were of course among the most potent causes. Because of these mafias Klashnikov culture has pervaded the whole society. In Karachi a Klashnikov can be hired for Rs. 250/- a day, thanks to the arms trading by the Afghan refugees. The 3.5 million strong Afghan refugees are instrumental in inducting massive inflow of arms.

Giving some statistical data Akmal said that in Pakistan today only 16% have access to piped water, in 81% of housing units there are 7 persons per 1.5 room and 45% of

population is unable to afford 2300 calories per day. People have no faith in the government. It cannot even provide basic security to the people, let alone basic necessities.

Commenting on the paper Bashir Ahmad said that Pakistan is facing multiplicity of crisis today, crisis of nationalism, crisis of modernisation, emergence of crime etc. The process of polity has been distorted. State there has developed complete autonomy and has become physically very powerful. The civil institutions are, on the other hand, weak and helpless. Asghar Ali Engineer commenting on both the papers said that the question of nationality has acquired greater urgency in Pakistan than the question of religion. The concept of 'Muslim nationalism' as developed by Jinnah has proved unviable. Despite one religion ethnic conflict in Pakistan is as sharp as in any other multi-religious state. Socio-economic justice is highly necessary to maintain ethnic peace. Religion is not the fundamental cause of conflict, it is rather sense of deprivation and injustice which provides the powder keg. Territorial nationalism, despite multi-religious structure can be more viable and peaceful, if socio-economic justice is evenly spread among all the communities.

Sudhir Kakkar underlined the psychological and emotional processes, not merely political or socio-economic factors, as far as riots are concerned. Imagery and symbolism used have their own significance. Paranoia is also responsible for our aggressive behaviour. Sunil Bastian said that psychological factors are also important but the question of emergence of ethnicity and ethnic conflict must be understood in all its complexity. The question of the nature of state is also quite important. Mr. Robert on the other hand pointed out that clustering is not merely territorial, it is also ecological—a caste or community monopolising certain kind of jobs, causing, as if, ecological imbalance. It reproduces fragmentation and we must learn to live with fragmentation, rather than always opposing it. We must devise new forms of tolerance from those of the medieval period.

Dr. D.L. Seth pointed out that there is problem with the question of fragmentation. No religion expelled or sought to expell other religion completely. At one stage there is fragmen-



tation and at other there is a sense of inter-relatedness. A new concept of state must evolve. The homogenization model of state would not work. In such a model the ontogenic caste and communal structures would strongly reassert themselves.

### **Indian Situation**

The ethnic situation is no less precarious in India. Mr. Asghar Ali Engineer now took floor and spoke on Hindu-Muslim problem with reference to the situation in Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

Mr. Engineer referred to the Ahmedabad riots since March, 1985, as a case study. He said that there are number of factors to be taken into account as far as the Hindu-Muslim relationship in post-independence India is concerned. Religion is not the only factor. It is only one among others. Apart from ideological, empirical factors are equally, if not more important. He maintained that in modern India communal violence was taking place mostly in urban areas whereas rural areas are more prone to caste violence. Among urban areas also those areas which had Muslim population of more than 15 to 40 per cent tend to be more riot-prone. It is primarily because, in a ballot-box oriented democracy, minorities with decisive votes tilt the balance and thus arouse lot of hostility in a section of majority community. Economic competitiveness in urban centres also becomes one of the factors.

Mr. Engineer also maintained, drawing upon the experience of investigation of major communal riots in post-independence India, particularly in Ahmedabad that to understand sociology of urban growth is equally important to understand the causes of communal violence in urban areas. In this connection he pointed out that it is important to note that the communal violence in Ahmedabad was mostly taking place either in the walled-city or in the labour areas on the periphery of the walled-city. The walled-city remains quite congested firstly because of its importance as the commercial centre and secondly because of continuous influx of people of lower class origin from the rural areas. The political pressures generated by the influx of population from rural areas is immense often assuming the communal form. Also, in cities like Ahmedabad

politicisation of crime and criminalisation of crime plays great deal of role. He then proceeded to throw detailed light on the communal conflict in Ahmedabad starting from 18 March 1985. In this respect he took the role of bootlegger and slumlords into account who had political linkages at different levels and played quite an important role in rioting. He also mentioned the role of media in this respect.

Dr. D.L. Seth thereafter presented the paper on caste violence in Gujarat on behalf of Prof. Baxi of Delhi University who could not come. Prof. Baxi had dealt with great detail the factors responsible for the caste violence in Gujarat both in 1981 and in 1985 sparked off by the question of reservation. He maintained that it was essentially the caste way of fighting class war. In fact reservation was not the main issue. It was merely a proxy. Gujarat is being rapidly industrialised. It is now next to Maharashtra. This industrialisation has thrown up various forces. Low castes are seen as an obstacle in the process of industrialisation. Raising reservation issue was described by Prof. Baxi as 'symbolic politics'. The upper castes and classes want to maintain their political hegemony through this kind of politics of symbolism.

Both the papers evoked considerable discussion in which Farida Shahid, Veena Das, Michael Robert and Ashish Nandy took part.

The next paper was presented by Dr. Ashish Banerjee from Allahabad. The title of his paper was "Comparative Curfew: Changing Dimensions of Communal Politics in India". He threw detailed light on the new emerging factors which were responsible for fast communalising of situation in recent times. Communal sensitivities have been so aroused that now whenever a mosque is refurbished, construction of a new temple becomes a must. Another important dimension of the problem is that Muslims are treated as a monolithic community and manipulated for votes. The Shah Bano controversy is its most recent instance. He pointed out Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi's pro-Hindu, pro-majoritarian policy in the last phase of her life as another new dimension of the communal problem. He also said that cultural Hinduism has given legitimacy to rising communalism in India. The Hindus are developing greater and

greater propensity for their rich ancient culture which they want to re-appropriate. It is anti-minority and anti-Harijan.

Prof. Veena Das of Delhi University then read a detailed paper on a case-study of anti-Sikh violence in November 1984. She had studied the case of anti-Sikh violence in a locality of Delhi and had interviewed some Sikh women whose near and dear ones were killed in the riots. She said there was clear evidence that the riots were systematically organized. The police was also clearly involved. Notorious murderers were employed to kill. She pointed out a most pathetic case of a Sikh woman who even sent out her daughter in the crowd so that her son could be saved. Another Sikh woman was made to go away as the crowd wanted to kill only her husband. She lived with great sense of guilt and ultimately committed suicide. Many survivors kept on searching for the bodies of those killed in nearby nullahs or wherever they heard about floating body. They could not reconcile to the disappearance of dead bodies.

The paper had given highly moving account of the grim tragedy that befell the Sikhs in Delhi. It had very detailed and carefully constructed account which brought out various dimensions of this human tragedy. All the participants were moved. Ashish Banerjee while commenting on her paper described the atrocities of the police on Muslims in Allahabad. He also referred to the determination of many Muslims to have encounter with the police and die rather than face the humiliation in jails, torture and abuses of the police.

Ashish Nandy from Delhi then presented his paper on "The Politics of Secularism and the rediscovery of Ethnic Tolerance". He pointed out that a sort of imperialism of categories has been established and under such imperialism a conceptual domain is sometimes hegemonised by a concept produced and honed in the west. In his paper he attempted a critique of western notion of secularism and how our modernists use it mechanically. The modern Indians project the ideology of secularism into the past, to say that Emperor Ashoka was 'secular', they forget that Ashoka was a practising Buddhist. He based his tolerance on Buddhism. He felt that modern India and its cosmopolitan intellectuals have lot to answer for. They have failed to be

respectful to the traditions of tolerance in Indian society. This tradition may have become creaky but so has our secularism. The religious violence, paradoxically enough, is quite secular in motives. Anti-Sikh riots of November 1984, or anti-Muslim riots of Gujarat in 1985 or anti-Hindu riots of Bangalore they were all associated not so much with religious hatred as with political cost-calculations and/or economic greed. The secular politics too has now begun to produce its own version of 'religious riots'.

Sudhir Kakkar lastly dwelt with some unconscious aspects of ethnic violence in India. Kakkar is a psychologist and hence he was concerned solely with psychological factors of ethnic violence. It was quite an interesting paper as psychological aspect of ethnic violence is no less important.

Thus this interesting workshop on ethnic violence in South-Asia ended with this paper.

—Asghar Ali Engineer

## THE CRISIS AND PROMISE OF SOUTH ASIA

*Ponna Wigana Raja and  
Akmal Hussain*

Four decades after the end of the colonial period, South Asia is in the midst of a crisis that threatens not only some of the existing state structures but the very fabric of society. There are three interrelated dimensions of the present crisis:

1. The growing polarization of society along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines. Associated with this, the undermining of social values through which diverse communities had lived together in a pluralistic society.
2. The perceived failure of highly centralized structures of political power to give effective political representation to all strata of society, and the growing militarization associated with the use of coercive state power to quell resurgent sub-nationalism.
3. The collapse of the approach to development adopted in the post-colonial period in South Asia. The growth process associated with this approach has generated endemic poverty, growing interpersonal and interregional disparities, erosion of the ecological environment and, finally, growing dependence on foreign aid in the case of a number of countries in South Asia.

In this short article we will place these dimensions of the crisis in the perspective of the potential of South Asia: The potential to reconstruct both the consciousness and political/economic institutions through which stable state structures and

viable regional cooperation could be achieved for the benefit of all the peoples of South Asia.

### I. Unity in Diversity—Potential under Threat

Since the Vedic period, the region of South Asia has been a crucible in which diverse civilizations and ideologies have cross fertilized.

Over the centuries, the continuous interaction between diverse peoples and cultures has inculcated two apparently contradictory sets of personality traits: *First*, there is a deep rooted posture of tolerance, a highly evolved humanism, and an ethos in which any particular linguistic, religious or ethnic group can tolerate and appreciate the creative elements of another. These traits are manifested in the folk literature and through which South Asian communities apprehend their fundamental traditions and experience the well springs of their creative identity. Consider, for example, the 19th century Sufi poet, Mian Muhammad:

Demolish the Temple, demolish the Mosque,  
demolish all that can be demolished,  
but do not injure the heart of people,  
for that is where God resides.

Mian Muhammad

At a time when the emergence of the market and material possessions were beginning to influence social values there was a re-affirmation that one's fulfillment and knowledge lay in the transcendence of the ego through a human relationship with the other:

The distinction between the body, the  
heart and property was apprehended  
only when I set to light my hut.

Bulleh Shah

Here the 18th century Sufi poet, Bulleh Shah and the tradition he represented proposes overcoming the tyranny of property as a means to true knowledge. In the same vein, we have Shah Hussian in the 17th century suggesting that fulfillment

and joy lies in transcending the ego, and experiencing the other human being within one's self:

You are the woof and you the warp  
You are in every pore  
Says Shah Hussain Faqir  
I am nothing, *all* is you.

Shah Hussain

The ability to absorb diverse religious, linguistic and ethnic forms within the social fabric, and the experience of unity in diversity is expressed in the following lines:

In every form I see my beloved,  
My heart is lost in my beloved.

Baba Farid  
[13th century]

A remarkably similar mood is expressed by Guru Nanak, the great 17th Century saint of the Sikh community.

In whichever garb you find your beloved,  
That garb you should don.

Guru Nanak  
[17th Century]

The awareness that there are shared aspirations and common denominators in spite of having very different religious/ethnic norms was reinforced in more recent times during the Nationalist Movement against the British Raj. The struggle for Independence in the different parts of South Asia shared two common convictions:

- (i) That the British colonial rule in some sense constrained the full cultural and religious development of the peoples of the region, and
- (ii) That national independence within separate states would allow the people of all communities to achieve greater material welfare than was possible under colonial rule.

A careful consideration of the natural resource base in the South Asian region suggests that if these resources are collectively exploited at a South Asian regional level, each of the

independent states within the region would benefit from such an enterprise.

Yet in spite of the powerful material basis for cooperation, deep rooted cultural propensity for tolerance and an overarching humanism within which a pluralist society could flower, South Asian history has been marked occasionally by violent explosions of communal conflict. During these moments, the violence has gripped large sections of society, and an enlightened human perspective has narrowed to an obscurantist religious/ethnic identity, where mere difference of religion or ethnicity has induced individuals to kill or get killed. Such outbursts of communal violence are associated with a suspension of the link with the civilizational identity of individuals, and their coming under the sway of more proximate impulses of fear, insecurity and aggression. Such impulses are unleashed when a linguistic, religious or ethnic group perceives a real or imagined threat to its existence as a community—to the cultural *forms* through which the individuals express and apprehend themselves. At such moments, the specificity of *form* takes hold and, at a psychic level, the individual is displaced from the common humanist consciousness underlying the diverse cultural *forms*.

The above argument suggests that there is a civilizational consciousness amongst diverse communities that can be the basis of a humane and tolerant society. This is the potential to achieve unity in diversity. At the same time, such a potential is threatened by the tendency to lose the civilizational perspective, and come under the sway of fear, insecurity and obscurantism. The attempt to establish stable state structures within South Asia, just as much as the attempt at achieving regional cooperation between states, must come to grips with this dialectic. The challenge lies in creating a polity and economy which allows the deep rooted but dormant civilizational consciousness to constitute a contemporary valuational framework: A framework within which diverse communities can develop in creative interaction within stable states, and different states can come together in regional cooperation.

## II. The Perennial Conflicts

The attempts at forming administrative/political units beyond



the village have frequently been inspired by an impulse to impose an artificial uniformity and unrealistic centralization of political power. Political centralization and a spurious cultural homogeneity has been an imperative of capital accumulation and the process of appropriation of surplus value by the ruling elite. Both these interrelated processes require an integrated market within the state, and the progressive concentration and centralization of both economic and political power in the hands of the elite.

The process of centralization of economic and political power has accentuated the economic disparities between regions and social groups. The growth process within the framework of the world market system, while it has induced an increasing income to filter *up* (and out) to the metropolitan countries, has failed to filter *down* to the bottom 40 per cent of the people of South Asia. Thus, poverty has become endemic to the system. A map of poverty, when superimposed on a map of ethnic groups and regions in South Asia, would show that certain regions and religious/ethnic groups have a greater proportion of their population below the poverty line than other regions and ethnic/religious groups. Thus, it is not only the *fact* of continued poverty but its disposition across various political strata that has fuelled ethnic, religious and regional conflicts.

At the same time, to contain incipient resistance against these conflicts, the ruling elites have politically manipulated one community against another, and used coercive force. Such administrative/political initiatives have over a period of time induced an insecurity amongst the people with cultures or religious/ethnic identities different from those of the ruling elite. Invariably the protective response of the oppressed community has been that its local elite has engaged in a *selective mobilization* of linguistic, ethnic/religious characteristics as a device to articulate a militant sub-national identity. When the universal common denominator among all communities in South Asia (i.e. tolerance and free cross fertilization) has been threatened, the reaction has often worn the psychic clothing of the oppressor: aggressive intolerance.

### III. The Contemporary Crisis

In the post-colonial period, parliamentary models of the Westminster variety were inherited by fragile elites with access over coercive colonial state apparatuses. The process of economic growth instituted by these elites occurred essentially within the framework of private enterprise. The capitalist growth process in the post-colonial period in South Asia had the following three characteristics which were to have a profound impact on the relationship between the state and civil society:

1. The domestic economy became increasingly integrated with the world capitalist economy through the market mechanism. Given the structure of these economies that had been inherited from the colonial period, they were essentially exporters of primary products with a dependence on foreign capital. Under these circumstances, continued integration with the world capitalist system meant large resource transfers (in the form of declining terms of trade, monopoly prices of imported technologies and profit repatriation) to the metropolitan economy, i.e. a large part of the fruits of growth in the domestic economy was lost to the metropolitan economy simply through the market mechanism.
2. The growth process, since it was predicated on an existing unequal distribution of productive assets, accentuated interpersonal and interregional income inequalities.
3. The process failed to have a significant impact on the bottom 40 per cent of the population which continued to be deprived of the basic necessities of adequate food, housing, health and education. The state, since it had an inadequate amount of surplus available due to (1) above, and given elite interests, had an inadequate political will for domestic resource mobilization and was unable to deal effectively with the poverty issue.

The Westminster model of parliamentary democracy inherited by the newly independent states of South Asia from the colonial period essentially centralized political power in the hands of the elite. This was problematic in a society

marked by diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious groups, and endemic poverty.

A centralized political system under these circumstances effectively denied large sections of society participation in the decisions that affected their economic, cultural and social existence.

After three decades of unequal development, and in the absence of a politically viable national alternative, the deprived sections of these societies responded by seeking the proximate sources of mobilizing militancy and political pressure: i.e. the assertion of linguistic, ethnic or regional identities. The growing polarization of society along sub-national lines so charged the political atmosphere that in a number of cases the relatively affluent sections of society also began to assert their religious or ethnic identity against the onrush of the deprived sections. Faced with this crisis, the elites of these countries failed to act within the perspective of strengthening fragile democratic structures by decentralizing political and economic power, and failed to create an environment of freedom to practice religion and culture among diverse communities. Instead, these elites responded by strengthening and using the coercive power of the state to preserve regime interests against resurgent sub-nationalism. At a political level, the ideologies of the ruling elites became increasingly narrowed (Sinhalese nationalism in the Sri Lankan elite, Hindu nationalism in the Indian elite and an obscurantist version of Islam in Pakistan's ruling elite).

In terms of our argument in Section I, it can be suggested that, in the present situation, large sections of the society are gripped by the proximate impulses of fear, insecurity and aggression. What was required to overcome the crisis was tapping into the civilizational consciousness of tolerance and an overarching humanism; to devolve political and economic power to those sections of society which felt deprived. Instead, the ruling elite themselves have come under the sway of proximate impulses and, while using coercive force against sub-nationalism are simultaneously narrowing the cultural and philosophic basis of their own political ideology.

As state structures in a number of South Asian countries

are threatened by internal upheavals, in a number of cases their elites are forming alliances with superpowers outside the region, as a means of acquiring political and economic support for regime survival. As a consequence they are supplied with economic aid, the technology and tactics of crowd control and counter-insurgency from powerful countries outside the region. As superpowers get drawn into the crisis, it accentuates the momentum of violence and fragmentation.

The ruling regimes, unable to find a fundamental solution to the problem of poverty and inequality, unable to provide a political framework and an Intellectual vision within which the diversity of culture, language and religion can enrich, rather than undermine society, tend to show a knee-jerk reaction to the crisis. The knee-jerk reaction consists of seeking an external bogey, and on the basis of this fear, seek to mobilize and unite their own people. This is a major inhibiting factor to the search for regional cooperation in South Asia.

Sustainable regional cooperation must be based on a restructuring of ideological political and economic systems in each of the countries of South Asia. At the level of ideology, the deep rooted civilizational consciousness of tolerance, humanism and freedom of belief must be tapped. At the level of politics, what is needed is a decentralization of power, and the emergence of local institutions through which the individual, whatever his social status, can participate in the decisions that affect his immediate economic, cultural, and ecological environment. At the level of economics, a development strategy which combines self-reliance, equity, and a balance between man, nature and growth, is required. It is when a more rational and humane social system emerges in South Asian states, can the promise and potential of regional cooperation be fulfilled. So long as the internal crisis of the state persists in these countries, regional cooperation for the governments can only be a pious declaration, and for the peoples of South Asia, a distant dream.

## COMMUNALISM—ITS THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS<sup>1</sup>

*Asghar Ali Engineer*

### I

It is indeed my pleasure to address you today. You are not only participating in this 1½ month Seminar, but I am told that most of you are engaged in research on this particular subject, and you have also been doing some field work. It would, therefore, be a great pleasure to share some of my thoughts with you and perhaps we can mutually learn from each other and clarify our concepts further.

Today, in my first lecture, I would be talking to you about the genesis and growth of communalisms, and in my second lecture tomorrow, I would talk more about concrete instances—case studies—so as to elaborate the methodology of investigating communal riots.

Most of us know that communalism is a modern political phenomenon—not a religious phenomenon. This is to be underlined. Professor Bipan Chandra must have elaborated this aspect, but I am emphasising it and reiterating it because this is the most fundamental thing to know about communalism. Most of the lay people, and sometimes even learned scholars, make the mistake of thinking communalism as a religious phenomenon. Now, as I put it, religion is only an instrumental

1. This is the text of the extempore talks given at a Methodology Seminar on Communalism held by the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh held in August 1986.

cause. Religion plays an important role—not that religion does not play any role—it does play an important role, but more of an instrumental role, i.e. politics is the fundamental cause, or even socio-economic and political factors are the fundamental causes, whereas religion is an instrumental cause. So, we should not confuse between fundamental causes and instrumental causes.

It is also a medieval phenomenon. That is also to be clearly understood.

In this connection, I would like to say that we must distinguish between religious consciousness and communal consciousness. These are two very different things. We do have religious consciousness. That does not necessarily mean that we also have communal consciousness. We might. It is not that one who has religious consciousness will have communal consciousness, or *vice versa*. There are various shades of it in all of us, but on a conceptual plane, it is very necessary to distinguish between religious consciousness and communal consciousness.

Now, in the medieval period, the predominant consciousness was religious consciousness—not communal consciousness. Communal consciousness is a modern phenomenon which began with the introduction of British rule in this country, i.e. it is a 19th century concept necessarily. But in the medieval period, before the introduction of British rule in this country, the predominant form of consciousness was religious consciousness.

In this connection, we should also bear in mind the distinguishing features of the medieval period—of human consciousness—where the concept of loyalty—loyalty to the King, loyalty to the masters, loyalty to the rulers—loyalty was one of the most fundamental concepts in the medieval period. You know the very famous phrase in Hindi—*Maine namak khaya hai uska*—until yesterday we were very often used to say it—many people still use it—but it is getting slightly outmoded. But in those days loyalty was a very important element of one's consciousness. Today, as opposed to that, human right and human dignity, individual right and individual dignity, are more important. Loyalty does play its role within certain

organisational structures, but as far as any political processes are concerned, in our century we no longer emphasise loyalty, but we emphasise our rights, and this does make a lot of difference. I am not digressing from my subject: all this has an important bearing on why communalism did not take root in the feudal era, in the medieval era. There, this concept of loyalty to the rulers, loyalty to the master or to the King plays an important role and prevents communal consciousness from being born, and it remains predominantly religious consciousness.

Another thing is that in the medieval age the emphasis was on fate and destiny. As opposed to that, in our period the emphasis is on efforts, on intellect. These are emphasised, not fate and destiny. The most common form of thinking was, "This is my destiny", "This fate has been decided for me". Not that these concepts do not exist today: they do very much, but they are not functional in the sense in which they were in the medieval age.

Another thing we have to understand is that in the medieval age we were used to theologise; today we theorise. We should also distinguish between theologising and theorising. In theorising it is rationalism and intellect which play the part; in theologising, it is revelation which plays the part. All these ingredients of consciousness in the medieval period and political consciousness in the modern period have to be borne in mind to understand modern political processes.

During nineteenth century, with the introduction of British rule, structural changes took place in our socio-political system. Not that capitalist system becomes predominant with the introduction of British rule: it was a slow transformation, but a certain transformation—slow but certain transformation. Feudal system begins to change to capitalist system. It was, kind of colonial economy and there have been theorists who mainly ascribe communalism to colonial form of economy because full development is not allowed by colonial masters and slow development results in fighting for crumbs and that gives birth to communalism. This has been a very powerful trend among some scholars who ascribe communalism mainly to colonial form of economy. But, according to me, it is much

more complex and cannot be ascribed to one single cause. Of course, colonial economy did play a very vital role in promoting communalism and in giving birth to communalism, but to maintain that it is the only cause would be rather over simplification. We have to take various other factors into account.

As I said, the predominant form of consciousness during the medieval period was religious consciousness, but there is always a danger that religious consciousness can be transformed into communal consciousness: not necessarily, but if conditions change. Religious consciousness can be transformed into communal consciousness, and there have been various instances of this. There are also instances where religious consciousness could not be transformed into communal consciousness because of the factor of personal integrity and personal conviction,

I would like to give some examples to elucidate what I am saying. Let us take Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani who belonged to Jamiat-ul-Ulema. He was a very respected theologian. Nehru and others had great respect for him. He was an *alim*: a divine personality and his main form of consciousness was religious consciousness, because he was an eminent theologian who had deep faith in his religion which happened to be Islam. Until the country was partitioned, he not only remained loyal to the Congress ideology—or rather, I should say nationalist ideology—and to the concept of composite nationalism, but he also resisted the demand to divide the country. Now, nobody could doubt Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani. He was a great theologian; he was an 'alim and he had deep faith in religion'. Still, his consciousness was not transformed into communal consciousness, so much so that the Muslim League goondas attacked him several times. This has been fully described in the biography on Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani. At one time, in 1945, Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani was touring throughout India to plead for composite nationalism and for opposing the idea of partition: once he was coming out of the railway station near Moradabad, and Muslim League goondas threw *keechar* (marshy water) on him. There was a *ganda nallah*; they took the water from that *nallah*—it was sewage water—and they threw it on



Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, but despite all such attacks, he remained very steadfast, and he never budged from his idea of composite nationalism.

Even a person like Iqbal, the eminent Urdu poet—he was no doubt the most important poet Urdu poetry produced in the twentieth century—he was a great mind no doubt, but I have serious differences with his mode of thinking—Iqbal was against the concept of nationalism, and he entered into a debate with Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani. That has been published a few decades ago in Urdu—QAUMIAT KA SAWAL. There was a fierce debate between Iqbal and Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, because the Maulana in the mid-thirties had made a speech outside the Juma Masjid in Delhi in which he emphasised the concept of nationalism, and he said that we must distinguish between *Qaum* and *Millat*. *Qaum* in Urdu, or Persian, was rather a modern concept. The word *Qaum* is a much disputed word; in respect of the Punjab problem also the word *Qaum* is being used. In Urdu, the modern meaning of the word *Qaum* is nation. Nation is translated as *Qaum*. *Millat* is a religious term, i.e. community of Muslims. So, the word *Qaum* was used by Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani in his speech: He said, ‘We must distinguish between *Qaum* and *Millat*. *Millat* is international community of Muslims, and we must remain loyal to that international community of Muslims; but we should, at the same time, not forget—you know, he was talking against the two-nation theory, in that respect, he said we should not forget that we belong to the Indian *Qaum*. He said, “If I go to England, or if I go to any other country, and somebody asks me ‘what is your nationality?’ I would not say, ‘I am a Muslim’; I would say, ‘I am an Indian’; but if somebody asks me ‘What is your religion?’, I would say, ‘I am a Muslim’. So, you must distinguish between *Qaum* and *Millat*.” He said that being proud of our *Qaum*, i.e. our nation, does not necessarily mean that we are degrading the concept of *Millat*. He said, “I am equally proud of being a Muslim and a member of the international fraternity of Muslims, i.e. of *Millat*.” He said, “I am equally proud of being an Indian and I am equally proud of belonging to *Millat-e-Islamia*, the international Muslim community.” Some Urdu papers, as usual, distorted it, and they published in

bold headlines that Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani attacked Islam and the Islamic concept of *Millat*. Perhaps, Iqbal read what appeared in the new papers and wrote a very strong letter to Maulana, in which he said, "I am surprised that a theologian of your stature cannot understand what harm the concept of nation can do to humanity, and you are de-emphasising the internationalism of Islam."

Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani gave a very reasoned reply to Iqbal. That whole debate is very interesting. In that Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani quotes a number of verses from the Holy Quoran and says that Quoran has also used "*Qaum*" in a geographical sense, not in a religious sense, and he says that Quoran even goes on to say that *kafirs* and Muslims belong to the same territory. He said that *Qaum* is a territorial concept. Let us not forget this. *Kafirs* do not come into existence after the birth of Islam. In Quoran *kafir* is used for those who opposed the previous Prophets—those who opposed Moses; those who opposed Christ; those who opposed Abraham—they are all termed as *kafirs* in Quoran. This is also an important thing to remember. Unfortunately, we think that only those who are not Muslims in the technical sense are all *kafirs*. It is not like that. In Quoran, *kafir* is one who opposed any Prophet. Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani quotes verses in which those Prophets address their opponents as 'fellow-nationalists'. The word 'nation' does not exist in Quoran but *Qaum* does. So, he said that even Allah is not opposed to territorial unity and territorial aspect of *Qaum*.

Then he goes on to cite the example of the Prophet himself. He says that when the Prophet went to Medina—when he migrated from Mecca to Medina—there were very few Muslims. It is in course of time that the Arabs went on embracing Islam, but when the Prophet went to Medina, there were hardly a few Muslims—those who migrated from Mecca with him and some of those who had been converted in Medina. So, Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani says that the Prophet entered into a pact with the people of Medina, who belonged to various religious groups and various tribal units. There were Jews; there were Christians; there were Pagans, i.e. those who did not believe in any revealed scripture or in any revealed religion, and

there were Muslims. There were four categories: Jews, Christians, Pagans and Muslims.

The Prophet drew up a pact between all these communities, because there was a common link, and that was a territorial link. They all belonged to one territory, and that is why the Prophet entered into a *moahida*, a pact, and gave equal rights to all. No superior rights were assigned to Muslims in that pact. All were given equal rights, and it was stipulated in that pact that if any dispute arose within one religious community, then that dispute would be solved, not according to Islamic principles, but according to the principles of that religious community. That was clearly laid down in that pact. So, Maulana Madani said that the Prophet of Allah entered into such a pact even with *kafirs*, not merely with Christians and Jews, but even Pagans, which meant *kafirs*; so, what is wrong with common nationality in India?

I am putting all this before you so that we should understand what is the concept of nationalism as far as Islam is concerned and how there have been differing schools of opinion among Muslims themselves and how eminent theologians like Maulana Hussan Ahmad Madani have stood with all conviction for territorial nationalism. Not that territorial nationalism is the last ideal in the world; it is an empirical reality which one has to accept. Perhaps, internationalism—according to me—is a much better ideal, but given the conditions today in the world, you cannot have that kind of internationalism. Even Islam—let me say it very frankly—failed in establishing internationalism. It gave that ideal, but it failed to make the Muslims behave according to the idea of internationalism, because in Islam only for thirty years there was one Caliphate which was accepted by all Muslims, but thereafter it was converted into dynastic rule and so many different rulers claimed to be the Caliphs, so that internationalism was shattered within thirty years of Islamic history.

And let me also equally frankly say that even communism failed to establish that kind of internationalism. Islam in that respect failed earlier; communism failed later. Of course, the Islamic concept was purely idealistic whereas the communist concept of internationalism was based on certain materialistic processes but precisely because material equality could not be

established throughout the world, communist internationalism failed. Remember, internationalism can strike roots only when all nations are equally balanced; then and then only. If resources are unevenly divided, if development has taken place unevenly, some nations will remain in commanding positions and other nations will remain in subordinate positions and that can never be congenial for internationalism of the kind we want. So, territorial nationalism is not the last ideal: that is what I mean to say. But it is a reality and one must accept that reality, and that is what Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani was saying to Iqbal. "Well," he said, "I also agree with you that if you could establish internationalism we should, but unfortunately we cannot. So, territorial nationalism would remain; it is very much here to stay; and Muslims must support it, and there is nothing non-Islamic about it, as Quoran itself has accepted the principle of territorial nationalism" and he quoted various verses of the Holy Quoran.

Now, unfortunately, many Muslims themselves do not know what the Quoran has to say and what eminent theologians have to say, and they were swayed by Muslim League propaganda that Hindus and Muslims can never stay together because they are two separate nations. In fact, the whole theory about two different nations was a very unsound theory. It cannot stand empirical examination even for a moment. Now, I would like to ask those who propound this theory what place did they give to the Muslims of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in that? I do not find a single Muslim from Kerala or Tamil Nadu in Pakistan today, and as you know, Bengali Muslims could not stay for a very long time with Punjabi and U.P. Muslims. If you examine the political scenario in Pakistan today, you will see that even Punjabi Muslims and Sindhi Muslims do not feel compatible with each other; the Punjabi Muslims and the Baluchi Muslims do not feel compatible with each other. The Sindhis, Baluchis and Pathans in the North West Frontier Province strongly feel that their culture, their identity, is sort of being undermined, and it is only the Punjabi Muslims who are dominating. So, it was a very unsound theory that as Muslims can unite together.

Yes; they can unite together for certain other purposes; emotionally they can unite: there is no doubt about it. Not only

Indian Muslims, but Muslims throughout the world, if some religious issue arises, unite. You may see that unity, but that unity will be purely emotional unity, and it will be temporary unity. Muslims united for Shah Bano agitation also. We know that. Many Muslims were boasting, '*Allah ka shukr hai is faisle ki wajah se sab Musalman ek ho gaye*'. This was pure nonsense. They used to feel very happy: Shias, Sunnis and Isma'ilis they united, and after that, they have forgotten it. They were united—for how many months? It was an emotional upsurge. It was an emotional issue, and all Muslims got united. Similarly, if something happens tomorrow say, the *Ka'ba* is invaded by the Americans or the Israelis, you will find that unity throughout the world. During the Khilafat Movement we saw that unity throughout the world, but that was temporary and highly emotional.

Now, emotional unity cannot be real unity. The moment that issue is over, they stand divided, and this division would be on lines of region, on lines of language; it could be on lines of culture or for that matter, on any line which is a dividing line for any other community in the world. So, to say that Muslims of diverse cultures can unite is fallacious; they may unite for socio-economic purposes, yes. Despite the best possible efforts, even Libya and Egypt could not unite. Even Bahrain and Kuwait could not unite. They are very close to each other. They share the same region, in fact: the Gulf area—and yet they cannot unite. It is a difficult thing even between Bahrain and Kuwait. Even Palestinians living in Kuwait—they are in a very large number in Kuwait—even Palestinians are not granted citizenship. So, it is not only Indians who are driven out from there or Pakistanis are driven out from there or South Koreans are driven out from there even though they are Arabs, they speak the same language and they follow the same religion. They are Sunnis also: so even Shia-Sunni difference is not there between Palestinians and the Kuwaiti Muslims. But even then Palestinians are not nationals in Kuwait. They are treated as foreigners; they enjoy only the status of foreigners. What better integration can there be because their language is the same but they are not nationals in Kuwait any more than any Indian Muslim or Pakistani Muslim or Filipino Muslim or any other

Muslim for that matter. So, one must understand these realities. Those who talk of Islamic internationalism or Islamic unity must understand on what plane and on what issues that unity is possible. That is very important.

Now, nation itself is a very modern concept. When we say that communalism is a modern phenomenon, we must understand that nationalism is also a modern concept and communalism arises within a national framework. It can exhibit itself, it can manifest itself, within the national framework of India as different religious groups fight against each other, and they assert their different identities. Because we accept a national framework and because nationalism itself is a modern phenomenon, communalism is also a modern phenomenon. In medieval age, there were no such nations, but different territorial rulers of one particular dynasty, because that dynasty happened to overpower people of other regions. We know, at one time Burma in the east and Afghanistan in the west were part of India, because Moghul rulers had sway over Burma as well as over Afghanistan.

Nationalism comes into existence because of certain commonly accepted principles and concepts, and those principles and concepts do not relate to any theological consideration, or for that matter, any other religious consideration, but they relate to socio-economic and political considerations. Nationalism is a political phenomenon, and that itself shows that religion cannot become an effective binding force for the existence of any territorial nationalism, because the considerations of territorial nationalism are very much different from religious considerations. Spiritual requirements are very much different from the material requirements. We may share some spiritual values and spiritual concepts with an American, but we will not like to share the Indian material resources with an American, or vice versa. Though they may accept *Hare Krishna* or they may accept Islam, or an Indian version of Islam, but this would be sharing spiritual concerns and spiritual concepts, not material wealth and that is why even Arab nations do not unite together. Kuwait is not prepared, or Saudi Arabia is not prepared, to share its rich material resources with any other country.

Today, after Pakistan came into existence, even if I visit

Pakistan, I would be as much a suspect in the eyes of the Pakistani rulers as any other Indian would be, because I belong to the Indian nation and I would go there as an Indian national. They may think that I might do something which might benefit my nation, and which might harm the Pakistani nation. Similarly, even if a Hindu, a Sindhi, comes to India from Pakistan, he may be welcome for a couple of days, but the Government would like to keep an eye on a Hindu Sindhi also because he might spy on our Government or our nation; so they would like to keep an eye on him. Therefore, in communalism these issues are basic, and we must grasp all the issues.

Since pre-partition days we have inherited some history, and in dealing with that history, let me say that I am not going into the history of the medieval age; I am taking the history of modern India after British rule was established because we are trying to understand the genesis and growth of communalism. Now, I would like to give one example here why this tussle started between a section of the Muslims and a section of the Hindus, because neither all Muslims nor all Hindus believed in two-nation theory. There were very large sections of both the communities, or for that matter of all the communities in this country, who stood for composite nationalism, but, nevertheless, some sections arose within the Muslims, within the Hindus, within the Sikhs and others who thought on separatist lines. One example is quite interesting in this respect.

You know Sir Syed Ahmad was a campaigner for modernism, and a campaigner for education among the Muslims. When Britishers introduced the Local Self-Government Act in certain northern provinces, Sir Syed made a very prophetic speech. Of course, I totally disagree with his views: what he said in his speech. But it was prophetic nevertheless because what he foresaw is precisely what happened. He said that democracy does not suit India because people of diverse religions and diverse language groups exist in this country and, if you introduce democracy here, all these communities would fight against each other because each community would like to have more and more share in power, and that is why, he said, "I would advise the British Government not to introduce, at least

for a few decades, any democratic process in this country.” Now, I totally disagree with his view that democracy ought not to have been introduced, or local self-governments ought not have been formed. I totally disagree with him there, but in what he was saying he had a point—that the moment democratic processes were introduced and the moment all of us realised that, after Britishers, there will be no foreign rule in this country, all of us started asserting ourselves for our share, and that is where communalism takes birth, because I want more and more share in power.

Now, how do I claim that share? In a backward country like India which is not conversant with any democracy, which has no concept of nationalism at all, naturally we will claim it on the basis of our religion, or language, or culture, and the fight would start and communalism would be born. That is how communalism was born in this country.

Now, Sir Syed represents the elitist point of view. He belonged to noble gentry. His father and his maternal grandfather held important offices in Moghul administration. So, his outlook was an elitist outlook: *ashrafia* outlook he had. Even, he had hatred for Bengalis because he thought that these low caste Bengalis are learning the English language and are claiming equal status with the Rajputs. He tells Rajputs in one of his speeches that the Bengali who, at the sight of a sword, would hide himself under the table, is becoming our ruler: how can you swallow this insult? So, he had purely an elitist point of view—the point of view of upper class Muslim, and he was much closer to the Hindus of his class. He was very close to many eminent Hindu figures of that century, and even then split takes place ultimately on the question of language, because some Hindi writers and intellectuals of that time started saying, when Britishers wanted to replace Persian as court language—naturally, Persian could not have continued as a court language after Moghul administration was gone—so, either English at certain level and/or local languages at other levels—they wanted to introduce Urdu in place of Persian—at that time these people started a fight on this question: some Hindus said that it should be written in Devnagari script, whereas Muslims said that it should be written in Persian script. This



controversy became very bitter, and Sir Syed felt that this was the beginning of division in India, and he pleaded with the British Government that either don't replace, or if at all you replace, retain Persian script.

Again, the question arises: why this insistence on Persian script? Again, it should not be connected with religious sentiments; otherwise, it becomes a very dangerous trend in our thinking. Muslims perceived that if Persian script is replaced by Devnagari script they will lose all their jobs because Muslims held a large number of jobs in British courts. Now, a British scholar David Lelyveld has written a book entitled *Aligarh's First Generations*: it is a very interesting book. He gives a lot of statistics on this issue: how many Muslims held jobs in British courts. Muslims perceived that if it is replaced by Devnagari script they stood to lose their jobs, or they had to learn Devnagari script.

Today we have a language controversy: we know how Tamil Nadu opposes Hindi because Tamils think it as unfair that they should learn Hindi to hold government jobs, whereas Hindi-knowing people do not have to learn Tamil; so that Tamils feel they are at a disadvantage. Suppose Tamil is introduced as the national language, what resentment would it cause among Hindi-speaking people because they will have to learn another language, and they will think that the Tamils will be much more in an advantageous position because they already know Tamil. Similarly, Tamilians feel upset about Hindi. The same sentiments were there at the time I was speaking of, and slowly, with all such disputes, or with all such controversial issues, communalism acquired sharper and sharper edge.

As we know, Muslim League was born in 1905. A debate goes on whether the Viceroy had invited certain prominent Muslims, or it was the initiative of the Muslim elites themselves. Whatever it may be the fact remains that Muslim League was born and the memorandum which was submitted to the Viceroy in Simla in 1906 had not a single demand which was a religious or which had even religious orientation. This is very important. The birth of the Muslim League is not on any religious issue, because nobody had interfered with anyone's religion. Britishers neither interfered with Hinduism, nor Islam, they pretended

to remain neutral. Of course, they had their subtle ways, but strictly technically, legally speaking, they were maintaining a neutral position: they were not interested in imposing Christianity on others. So, Muslim League could not have been born on any religious issue—that is, “Islam is not free in this country,” or “Muslims should be allowed to pray,” or “Muslims should be allowed to follow their doctrines”—that could not have become the issue: simply, there was no ground for that. So, the very birth of the Muslim League on secular demands shows that communalism is all about secular issues and it is not based on any religious issue.

If you take the whole history of Muslim League struggle, you will see that throughout not a single religious issue was raised by it. It is only in 1940, they swayed Muslim sentiments, because Jinnah had realised his isolation. In the 1937 elections, the Muslim League was hopelessly routed. It could only capture a few seats in different regions, and in Muslim minority areas also it lost heavily and in Muslim majority areas it had simply no roots. Jinnah realised his isolation, and he raised the slogan of Islam, saying that Hindus Muslims constitute separate nations. This he propounds in 1940, though he remains quite secular in his outlook. He does not demand a theocratic State. He made it very clear in all his speeches that Pakistan will not be a theocratic State; Pakistan will be a secular State. But he uses Islam as a weapon, as an instrument, and as I said, in communalism, religion is an instrumental cause. He uses religion as an instrument to realise the demands for Muslim elites. This is also to be underlined.

Communalism never benefits masses of any community: it always benefits the elite—we should remember this. Whether it is the campaign of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or whether it is the campaign of the R.S.S. or whether it is a campaign of the Muslim League, it is always the elitist point of view. Even the assertion of identity—Muslim identity or Hindu identity or for that matter any identity—is always by the elite of a community. They use this religious identity, or linguistic identity, or cultural identity, to realise their own ambitions, not the aspirations of the masses. Whenever such communal issues arise, they are always all about the elite. So, the demands which the Muslim

League raised pertained to the Muslim elite. For example, they wanted a certain share in the Central Legislature. The Muslim League emphasised that the Muslims should get 33% representation in the Central Legislature, though their population was 25%. Their argument was that Muslims are a very important, significant minority in this country and, therefore, their aspirations cannot be satisfied with proportional representation in the Central Legislature: This was one of the very important demands of the Muslim elite, but now if you get representation in the Central Legislature or in the State Legislatures, who will get that representation? Naturally elites of the community, not peasants or workers of the community: only the elite

So, if you analyse all the 14 demands of the Muslim League you will see that they all belong to the Muslim elite. So, communalism, after British rule was introduced, was nothing but the fight for certain secular benefits for the elite of a particular community and the sharper the awareness of these demands, the greater the degree of communalism. So, this also very clearly shows that communalism is not a religious phenomenon, but it is an expression of the aspirations and ambitions of the elite of a community.

Now, any elite of any community cannot express its aspirations and ambitions purely in secular terms, because that would appear selfish and earthly, and it will not arouse the emotions of an entire community. So, they couch those demands in an idiom which would arouse the emotions of the whole community and that is precisely why it becomes communalistic. This again must be borne in our minds: that such demands are couched in an idiom which is community-oriented, and with a view to arouse the emotions of a particular community.

For example, if we take the majority communalism today in India, the leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad tell the Hindus, "Look here! You are besieged, you are being surrounded by aggressive minorities; so, you better be on your guard; otherwise, you will be over-powered." Immediately, it appeals to the emotions of the Hindus. Now, no empirical evidence goes to prove that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the R.S.S. is working for the masses of the Hindus. I do not think any such empirical evidence exists. Otherwise, it would work for the uplift of the

Harijans. When embarrassed, they might talk about the welfare of the Harijans, but the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the R.S.S. or any Hindu communal organisation for that matter has done much for them just as no empirical evidence can be produced to show that Muslim League worked for the Muslim masses.

In fact, in 1937, Iqbal wrote his famous letter to Jinnah in which he said—Iqbal was the President of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League—"I am sorry that Muslim League leaders have not paid adequate attention to the poverty and misery of Muslim masses, and so it is rightly isolated among Muslims." Iqbal was saying it in 1937. The Government of India Act was passed in 1935 and elections were held in 1937, and when Muslim League fought the elections, what Iqbal was saying was proved. So, the President of a Provincial Muslim League himself admits and writes in agony to Jinnah that Muslim League is failing in taking up the problems of Muslim masses. It never took them up. Not that Iqbal's writing a letter to Jinnah was effective: not at all. Rather, Iqbal was dropped from that position of Presidentship of the Provincial Muslim League. It, in fact, worked the other way round, because if Muslim League had taken up the genuine problems of Muslim masses, it would have gone against the very *raison de etre* of Muslim League, and it would have lost the support of all feudal lords, of all upper class or middle class Muslims. The middle class Muslims also played a very vital role in promoting Muslim League.

Now, what Hamza Alvi in one of his recent writings says is that it was the Muslim salaried class which became the backbone of Muslim League, and I think this is right, because middle class Muslims were aspiring for bigger and bigger share of jobs and they saw they could not compete equitably with their Hindu counterparts. So, they opted for Muslim League, and if you examine the migration pattern after partition, you will see that big merchants, big feudal lords and those holding important jobs in Government migrated to Pakistan because they saw greener pastures there. The poor Muslims did not perceive any advantage in migrating to Pakistan. That is why the Muslim peasantry never migrated from U.P. or Bihar to Pakistan. It was either those who belonged to middle class or those who belonged to propertied classes, including zamindars, who migrated. Those

people went and claimed evacuee properties from Pakistan. They had to show that they held so much property in India; then only they could get it. They could, of course, bluff, how much? An illiterate Muslim peasant cannot go to Pakistan and say, "I owned a mansion there," or "I owned a big house there". He could bluff that way, but a middle class or upper class propertied man could easily support his claim, and they did get their claims. Those who owned a few houses here got huge mansions in Pakistan.

Similarly, middle classes could get quick promotions. An Under Secretary could become a Secretary, or a Sub-Inspector of Police could become a Superintendent of Police, because the new State required more hands. So, these were the advantages they saw, and that is why they backed up the Muslim League.

All this evidence clearly shows that communalism was all about secular demands of the elite of a particular community, and it is these demands which give rise to the phenomenon of communalism, and when it acquires a certain degree of sharpness, it results in violence. We have to reiterate this fact again and again because the whole phenomenon has been very much misunderstood. That is why in the beginning I said that religious consciousness should not be confused with communal consciousness. Communal consciousness can never become religious consciousness. For example, members of certain Muslim League organisations, e.g. the Indian Union Muslim League, are today all secular elites: whether it is Sulaiman Sait or Banatwala. Now, Banatwala is not a theologian; he does not have a religious consciousness at all. He is a Muslim no do doubt, but his consciousness is essentially communal consciousness not religious consciousness, as opposed to Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani's consciousness, which was religious consciousness or Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was, again, a very eminent theologian of international standing, whose commentary on the Quoran is quite a significant contribution to *tafseer*/ literature. He always remained loyal to nationalism. Such an eminent theologian remaining loyal to nationalistic ideology clearly shows that communalism is not all about religion. Otherwise, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani should have been the leaders of Muslim League and

Jinnah, Liaqat Ali and others should have been leaders of Indian National Congress. It is not like that. We see these eminent theologians being leaders of Indian National Congress, and secular leaders like Jinnah and others like Banatwala being Muslim League leaders. So, communal consciousness must be distinguished from religious consciousness. Similarly, you examine the entire pattern of R.S.S. leadership or Vishwa Hindu Parishad leadership—how many of them are temple priests? How many temple priests are there in the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, although, may be, there is some exception here and there, but it is not the rule : no top leader of R.S.S. or Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and no one belonging to the middle cadre of R.S.S. or Vishwa Hindu Parishad, is a temple priest.

## SECOND DAY'S TALK—SOME PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS

### II

Theoretical aspects of communalism as to what, according to my humble understanding, communalism is and what was its genesis in modern India and how it grew due to various factors we have already analysed. Today I propose to speak to you about communal violence, communal riots, how they take place, what are the factors involved and how communal riots could be fruitfully studied.

As I told you yesterday, I would like to reiterate, basically every social phenomenon is quite complex and communalism and communal violence are equally if not more complex. So whatever aspects we deal with there would always be some aspects which would be left out either due to our ignorance or due to lapse of memory or lack of time. We can bring out those aspects which are left out during the course of our discussion. Or, may be I am ignorant about certain aspects altogether and I could be enlightened by the participants on those aspects which I do not know. Debate and discussion are always quite fruitful.

According to me, there is a continuity between those factors which were responsible for communal violence in the pre-partition period and in the post-partition period. But in addition to that many new factors have emerged and those factors are very important for our purposes. Because the present-day communal situation cannot be properly understood and

its manifestation in the form of communal violence cannot be grasped unless we take these new factors into account. It is no use repeating those factors which were responsible for communalism and communal violence in prepartition days. We would rather examine those factors which emerged after partition, especially in the last two decades. Because according to me the end of the sixties, that is, with the riot in Ahmedabad, or even if you go a little back, it would be more proper to say that the onset of the sixties is a watershed. The riot in Jabalpur in 1962 followed by many riots in Ranchi and parts of West Bengal, Jamshedpur and elsewhere, and then with a bang came the riot in Ahmedabad in 1969. It is very important to understand why this happens. Many of us had thought, may be naively or may be out of ignorance, that we have solved our communal problem by partitioning our country and in the remaining India there would be no Hindu-Muslim problem or problem between the Hindus and other communities. I think that was a very oversimplified notion. We became aware of the complexity only when the process of development started.

When India became free we adopted five year plans and the process of economic development started on the one hand and the deepening of democratisation began on the other. When India became free we adopted our Constitution giving franchise to all adults in India. That did not mean that the entire adult population of India became quite aware and conscious of their rights. Because this a matter of process. Our whole consciousness was rather feudal. We were used to authoritarian forms of government. In a feudal socio-economic culture loyalty is a very important criterion, loyalty to the zamindar, loyalty to the king and so on. So when adult franchise was granted by our Constitution, which was undoubtedly a great revolutionary step, perhaps unique in history, that suddenly you wake up one day to find that you have a right to cast your vote which you did not have a day before, this kind of revolutionary step does not change your outlook suddenly. It does not change your ethos suddenly. It is a matter of process and that process lasts for a few decades in many cases. So when universal franchise was granted all people did not exercise their



franchise according to their individual understanding, their individual democratic consciousness, but they exercised those votes as the zamindar in the village wanted or as some Congress bosses or some other political party bosses wanted in certain areas. It is a well known thing that in certain rural area the votes are in the pocket of Mr so and so who happens to be a big landlord or a big political boss. Invariably one happened to be a big political boss because either he had the following of the landlords in that area or was himself a landlord. Therefore, there was not much of a problem. That man would say you exercise your vote in favour of that party and all individuals in that area would exercise their votes accordingly. So it did not create much of a problem. But when socio-economic development went further, when democratic consciousness was deepened and slowly and gradually we became aware of our rights then troubles began. Because now we, either as individuals wanted to exercise our rights according to our democratic consciousness and according to our understanding and expectations and aspirations, which party fulfils them according to its economic programme, or we begin to exercise our votes according to our caste and community.

Let us not forget, whatever is true in theory is not true in practice. We urban elites may eulogise. I would say here that our perception is not necessarily the perception of all others. The whole trouble begins when we impose our perception on others. We think that our perception should be the perception of everyone, the universal perception. It does not happen. Perceptions vary from individual to individual. Similarly, perceptions vary from culture to culture, from one religious community to another, from one caste to another. We urban elites fall in love with rationalism suddenly and begin to analyse (break).

The problem of modernisation and change, for example, is taken for a break-up. Essentially it is the perception of the urban elite because modernisation and change benefit. If there is new technology it benefits us. If there is computerisation it benefits us. If there is more industrialisation it benefits us. But a peasant in a rural area or an artisan in some urban area, a weaver

or somebody else, his or her perceptions are entirely different. For example, if you set up a big textile mill in an area where thousands depend on traditional patterns of weaving, we urban elites would say 'why not a textile mill, it increases production and profit, it brings new technology, the West has achieved this and that, why not that new technology for us?' An artisan would resent it because he loses his job, his livelihood. He is suddenly uprooted from his socio-economic position. Similarly, if you want to construct a dam, we would say, why not? We require hydroelectric power, more industries and for more industries we need more electricity, we want airconditioners to be installed in our houses, we want fans and fridges in our houses, if there is no electricity how am I going to get a fridge, or an airconditioner in my house? So there must be a hydroelectric dam. But a tribal or a peasant says, if this dam is constructed all our villages would be submerged and so we do not want this dam. Any way when more electricity is produced it is not going to benefit that peasant, that tribal. So his perception is quite different. So we should realise that our perceptions depend on our socio-economic situation. There is no perception which could be universal, which could be accepted by all. The whole trouble begins because we begin to think that our perceptions are universal perceptions. When we logically argue out things we employ very neat logical categories, we pay homage to reason and what reason has achieved in the world and then we think how is it that this peasant does not understand it, why does this tribal fail to realise what is going to happen in our country with more dams and more textile mills, why these fools, these ignorant masses do not understand anything. Had we been in that position we would not have paid homage to reason, homage to superiority of technology. After all every man decides according to his interest. Let us not forget reason is fundamental in certain senses, for certain intellectual inquiries. It is a must because without its help you cannot properly understand or analyse things. But we should also understand the limitation of reason. I am not asking you to turn into mystics. I am only trying to point out certain things which we ordinarily tend to forget. Reason is fine, very important. No change or progress would

have occurred in this world without the help of reason. But let us also not forget that reason after all is an instrument, which can be used either way, like a matchstick which can be used for setting fire and can also be used for lighting an oven to cook our food or to derive warmth. So reason also can be used for progress, change, universal good, human dignity end what not. But let us not forget that reason can also be used as an instrument of one's own interests. In 99 out of 100 cases this is what happens. At one level a scientist uses reason to discover new areas of empirical truth, facts, and at the other level the same scientist uses reason for advancing his personal interests. So when we become fully conscious of this distinction about the role of reason we would begin to pursue many things which would not disturb our peace. But unfortunately this is what we do. We think our interests, our perceptions are universal. That is the beginning of the whole trouble. Nothing which is enforced against the interests of a community or a caste or any other unit would ever lead to any benefit in the society, it would only lead to strife and conflict and tension. When we talk of communalism or communal violence this concept becomes equally important. This must be emphasised again and again. It is very important.

We were talking of socio-economic development. Let us come back to subject. The socio-economic development took place in such a way that it tended to benefit certain castes in our social structure and certain communities and certain regions. Certain regions developed much more than or at the cost of other regions. Certain castes developed much more at the cost of other castes, certain communities developed much more at the cost of other communities and that created social tensions. So any process of socio-economic development, let us not forget, would be at the cost of some group or the other. That group could be economic in nature, that is class group, or it could be religious, that is, a caste or community group.

This is precisely what happened. A few castes benefited much more than other castes, a few communities much more than others and a few regions much more than other regions. Naturally, those who were left behind or were deprived—after

all socio economic development, modern technology, reduce distances, bring communications at our doorstep widen our horizons, sharpen our consciousness and that is why Harijans became more and more conscious of their rights. Religious minorities like Muslims, Christians and Sikhs began to be more conscious of their rights or what they perceived as their just share in the whole process of socio-economic development. Nobody could have stopped this. Of course a lot of hypocrisy was used. For example, all our rulers always talked of socialism, of distributive justice, equal rights of all whether one is a Muslim or a Hindu or a Sikh or a tribal or whatever. But was its operational aspect? The kind of demagoguery which was being used, the phraseology was very fine, very appealing. That is why we urban elite often fall victim to that kind of phraseology and we think that everything is fine. We become aware of things going wrong only when deprived people assert themselves.

The caste problem became very much sharpened after 1965. Untouchability has been there in this country for centuries. Harijans were always insulted and hated but they were not being burnt alive, not being brutally killed. That kind of violence against them was not there. But suddenly after 1965 we see violence against Harijans and it began with the burning of fourteen Harijans alive in a village in Tamil Nadu. A few landlords were prosecuted. The judge said in his judgement, "How can these gentlemen commit murder, it is unthinkable." He released all of them. But we knew what those gentlemen essentially were, how ruthless, how brutal they could be. They did burn 14 Harijans alive and injured many more.

Why did this happen? The green revolution took place in Punjab, in certain parts of UP, in certain parts of Tamil Nadu. Naturally the landlords benefited most. They used new technologies, fertiliser, hybrid seeds, etc. and they wanted to employ landless labourers who happened to be Harijans at dirt cheap price, and Harijans began to assert themselves. When the landlord is getting so much why should we work only for this pittance? They demanded more. That is why our gentleman landlords became so aggressive and the whole thing was fought out in terms of caste. Economically speaking, it is not a caste

question. Essentially it is a socio-economic question. But as I submitted before you yesterday, religion or language or culture is used because it has great mobilising power. So caste was used because if you want the support of all your caste fellows your whole idiom has to be caste-oriented. 'My caste is in danger, so I must act; my community is in danger, so I must act.' So always caste idiom, religious idiom are used for such purposes. But behind it is naked economic interest and only perceptive students of social scene or economic scene can understand these processes behind it.

My whole submission is that communal and caste conflicts will get more and more sharpened as and when social awareness, political awareness increase among the downtrodden castes and communities.

Similarly, communal violence also acquired a new sharpness after the early sixties, specially after the mid sixties because minority communities also became aware of their rights, their political weight, and became aware of injustices which were being done to them in this country and they through their leadership began to articulate their grievances. The majority communities immediately reacted by saying, "Here there is danger of another partition." A number of times whenever those grievances were articulated by the minorities immediately this was stated because this had very potential emotional power. Anyone talking of the genuine grievances of the minorities was accused of appeasement. As I said, any social phenomenon is very complex. When such terms are used we have our connotations. We can pursue the problem only when we can understand one fact, that connotations are according to our emotional make-ups, our interests. For example, the concept of appeasement. Generally the Jana Sangh accused the Congress of following an appeasement policy. There are both truth and falsehood in this. True in the sense that the Congress said all that—or any ruling party for that matter, because since 1967 other parties came to power in other states and those parties also followed a similar policy. There is falsehood in it in the sense that these ruling parties promised heaven to the minorities or to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, just to get their votes. They never meant to solve their genuine grievances. They wanted votes and they

promised heaven to them and got their votes. In that sense it was correct to say that it was merely an appeasement policy. But it is wrong in the sense that by using the concept of appeasement you are denying the genuine grievances of the minorities. When all the time you go on saying that it is an appeasement policy and that policy increases their aggressiveness, it is wrong in the sense that you are ignoring all the genuine problems of those minorities. You refuse to take note of them by using the blanket term of appeasement. Again the argument that appeasement would only increase aggressiveness of the minority groups and scheduled castes and tribes, is wrong on one level, it is right on another level.

Appeasement in the sense when it is operationalised, say, you begin to take their grievances more seriously and want to resolve them. I am sure and empirical evidence can be given to support my contention that at the general level of the masses it will not increase aggression but it would resolve the problem. After all when you have certain grievances and they are solved even partly you will be happy certainly. But a section in that community or caste might begin to demand more. In that sense one can say appeasement leads to some kind of increased aggression or increased assertion. But that section can be isolated if by appeasement we mean red solution of the grievances of the people in general, This is precisely what does not happen. As said, ruling parties and groups never solve the problems of the minorities and downtrodden castes and tribal groups. They are only vocal, verbal, nothing more than that and they took full benefit of their votes in a ballot-box-oriented system.

In fact that is what led to aggression in the whole community rather than in any small section. There are the elite in all communities and castes. Harijans are the worst sufferers in this country but there are the elite among them. Now there are even tribal chief ministers. We know that in a state like Gujarat. So the elite would always tend to be more assertive, more aggressive because due to dynamic situation their aspirations keep on increasing and so they will keep on demanding more. But the only genuine solution of isolating the elite is to cater to the real grievances of the masses in general. I do not know whether you will agree with me or not, within the present

capitalist structure of our economy genuine grievances of the minorities and lower castes and tribal groups cannot be resolved because that means taking away a big chunk from the elite and distributing it to the masses. That is why this kind of conflict cannot be successfully resolved in the society. I have been predicting this for the last one and a half decades and I stand by that prediction that caste and communal conflict will go on sharpening in our society. The greater the degree of socio-economic development the sharper this conflict would tend to be.

It may sound gloomy but I do not think this is a gloomy forecast. I call it realistic prediction rather than being a prophet of doom. We have to be ruthlessly realistic at certain stages. Otherwise we will be deluding ourselves. If I say, let us strengthen the secular forces and everything would be resolved, I would be talking in the abstract. Secularism is an antidote of communalism but it cannot be a successful anti-dose of communalism merely on paper. You have to find the roots in the society, how genuine secularism can work, not verbal secularism. Can it work while at the same time you are perpetuating the worst unjust policies? How can it be? If you simply keep on telling the deprived sections in the society that we stand by secularism repeatedly, will it minimise communal and caste conflicts in the society? It will never. That is why I have come to the conclusion that within the present capitalistic framework these grievances cannot be solved satisfactorily and from both the sides of the fence, that is those who are deprived will also become more and more aggressive about their rights and their grievances and those on the other side of the fence, the privileged castes and classes, will also become more aggressive to defend their privileges. Hence, these conflicts in the society will go on sharpening.

If you take the Ahmedabad riots in 1969, again I would like to submit to you that I am not in favour of reducing any phenomenon vulgarly to any single factor. I am not saying that only socio-economic development and social transformation is hundred per cent responsible for all this. It is playing a vast important role, no doubt, but I do not want to reduce it to the single factor. There are many other factors at superstructure

levels, cultural, religious, and these factors have their own autonomy. I am quite aware of that. But still we have to take note of certain predominant trends in the society. Whatever I would be placing before you now would be in that sense, not that is the only explanation for caste and communal violence.

Before the 1969 riot in Ahmedabad a split takes place in the Congress, Indira Gandhi wants to assert her position and she uses a very powerful weapon to establish her leadership, that is, with a stroke of the pen she nationalises all the important banks in the country. This is a very important backdrop of the communal violence in Ahmedabad, according to me. When she nationalised the banks she did not do it just because she fell in love with socialism suddenly and suddenly realised that she must do justice to the downtrodden masses in the country. No. She had her own political reasons and compulsions. She wanted to override the other section in the Congress and establish her leadership. She could do this only by taking some much measure which would electrify the political and economic scene and the masses would come to her side. She succeeded in that. When she took this step, she won massive support, but among the elite she got isolated and immediately a slogan was raised that she is taking this country towards communism and so let us fight it out. The right took the whole thing very alarmingly, that this is a step towards communism and must be stopped. That could be done only by raising the communal bogey and preparations were made for riots in Ahmedabad and some other parts of the country just to communalise the whole atmosphere. The whole country was discussing nationalisation, how it will be beneficial or harmful, the whole discussion was on economic lines. Those in favour argued that only fourteen families were having access to the huge funds deposited in the banks and now the middle classes and even the lower classes would have access. Directions were given to not only rickshaw pullers but even to shoe menders. It was a political gimmick but it was tried out. All of us were discussing how it would benefit the masses. Those who were opposed said it was only a gimmick. Such loans will be given to shoeshine boys and rickshaw pullers and again the same pattern were re-established. One may agree with this



point of view or that, but such discussions would have really been harmful to those who opposed any economic change in the country. Those who were not in favour redistribution of resources opposed it and they realised that the most potential weapon to oppose this was to create a communal situation, and they eminently succeeded in their attempt. Suddenly when we were discussing the economic situation in the country, everyone began discussing the communal situation, whether the Muslims were responsible for those riots, or the Hindus were responsible; according to our situation, our perception, our prejudices in the society, we took one position or another and everybody did so. If you see the articles in the newspapers and magazines of those days, as Punjab is the dominant problem today and communalism also in other states, a similar situation prevailed in 1969. Everyone was talking about what went wrong in Ahmedabad. Many national newspapers attempted analyses. Of course most of them tended to blame the Muslims for what happened in Ahmedabad. Certain incidents were picked up, like a Muslim sub-inspector kicking the Ramayana, stopping a Ramayana discourse, stoning of the Jagannath temple, all these incidents were highlighted as if these incidents were the sole cause. Then bang came the Bhiwandi riots where a massacre took place, followed by a chain of small and big riots in different parts of the country.

So this factor, though not the only one, was a very important factor in the beginning of a series of new riots in the late sixties. Since then there have been phases of lull. For example, in mid-seventies again we see the minimum number of communal riots. During the emergency also there were very few communal riots. The whole struggle was directed against the government. There was reason for that. But again from 1977 onwards, a series of riots began under the Janata regime. Moradabad, Jamshedpur, Aligarh, all these three major riots took place under the Janata regime. Even Jana Sangh was a constituent power. They cannot say that their government was following a policy of appeasement. But still communal violence continued. Because it is not the policy of appeasement which leads to communal violence. For that you have to search for roots in socio-economic development and con-

ceptions and perceptions of benefits of those developments.

Then again Indira Gandhi comes to power. Perhaps the Muslims thought that there would be relief; and bang came the Moradabad riots in 1980. Again these riots became another watershed as the Ahmedabad riots were one watershed in the late sixties. From 1980 onwards her perception of the political situation completely changes. She was depending on minority and Harijan votes. If you want to understand the current phase of riots in the country this is important, according to me, that her whole perception of the political situation in the country changed. She came to the conclusion that she can no longer depend on Muslim votes, no longer depend on support from the South, which was also an important conclusion, because at that time N.T. Rama Rao came to power. You would remember that immediately after the emergency she fought the elections from Andhra Pradesh and won. She was most unpopular in northern India during emergency but she retained her popularity in the South. She was thinking, therefore, that she had good support in the South. But with N.T. Rama Rao coming to power she came to the conclusion that she could no longer take the South for granted because regionalism asserted itself there, both in Karnataka as well as Andhra Pradesh, both of which were her strongholds. Her regional perception changed, and rightly so because regionalism asserted itself in the South and she lost her base there. So on the one hand, her regional perception changed and on the other her communal perception changed, that she could not rely on vote from the South and she could not rely on Harijan votes and Muslim votes. So she switched her policy over to another direction.

Now she seeks support from the Hindus. By the Hindus we mean the Hindi belt because if you want to get Hindu support you have to get support from the entire Hindi belt. That is why I again call Moradabad as a watershed. Until the riots in Moradabad, if you dig out old issues of newspapers and magazines, Indira Gandhi was very vocal in condemning the RSS for all the riots. Any major riot took place, she gave statements directly or indirectly condemning the RSS and Hindu com-

munal forces. But if you analyse her statements after 1980, specially after the Moradabad riots, you will not find any direct or indirect condemnation of the RSS. Mind you, she had taken strong action against the RSS during the emergency. RSS was banned and the entire RSS cadre was in various jails in the country. The same political person switches over to another extreme and in a very subtle way—no prime minister of a country can do it overtly, it could be done only covertly—she starts pleading for or seeking Hindu votes. The Meenakshipuram incident came as a god-send to her. Because you will see that the Viswa Hindu Parishad becomes very strong only after the Meenakshipuram incident. Again there is empirical evidence to show that in a very subtle and covert way she supports the campaign by the Viswa Hindu Parishad. Of course when there was an onslaught against her by CPI and CPM and others, publicly she had to retrace. In a number of places the Viswa Hindu Parishad constructed temples and she inaugurated one temple in Mathura and one was to be inaugurated by the President of India. He had to cancel that programme and she also had to retract publicly because she came under attack by the left forces in the country. But her covert support for the Viswa Parishad continued. So much so—this is my position, you may not agree with it—that partly—I am using words very cautiously—partly she was responsible for the Punjab problem. So, all told, she created such an atmosphere in the country that the Hindus had to look to her for support. I do not condemn or uphold the entire Hindu community as such, because every religious community is divided into various interest groups. There are certain perceptions which are valid for the entire community and there are many other perceptions which are valid for one section or another of the community. So there is no religious community in India or anywhere else in the world which could be described as monolithic. Generally it is said that the Muslims are always one, they will always stand together, they are monolithic. It is far from true. It is a highly superficial understanding of the phenomenon. No religious community in the world could be monolithic. You begin empirical studies in the field and you will realise that there are deep differences in perceptions

and approaches. I am saying this on the basis of several empirical studies that I have conducted, that it is totally wrong to maintain that the Muslims are a monolithic community. As I said, yesterday on certain emotional issues they might unite. Similarly, the Hindus might unite, the Christians would unite, but that would be momentary and emotional unity, not real unity. When it comes to that, they are all divided into various interest groups, various classes. The class division also does not adequately describe the reality. They are divided on the basis of perception of their interests.

So she created partly the Punjab problem and created such a situation in totality in which the Hindus began to perceive that she could be their saviour. If her speeches are carefully read and analysed, not that she would take categorical positions, it is impossible,—even if a diehard communalist becomes the prime minister he or she cannot take categorical positions, because that would lead to very explosive problems, so they will have to take very subtle positions—if her statements are carefully analysed, we can find evidence for the shift in her policy. Since then, for many riots in this country the Viswa Hindu Parishad had been instrumental. I am talking of riots in the Hindi belt, in Central India, in Western India, in parts of Southern India. For example, the riots in Assam cannot be ascribed to the Viswa Hindu Parishad. In Kashmir valley, for one riot the Jamait Islami was responsible; for the second riot which later took place there, the Jamait was not directly responsible; some Congress elements and others were responsible. So the situation would vary. The subcontinent is such a big geographical territory that no one single concept would be valid throughout its length and breadth. So we will have to take macro factors as well as micro factors in analysing the communal riots. What I was talking then was the macro factor, the general climate, the general community and class-wise perception in the country.

But then there are micro factors which are also very important. By micro factors I mean local situations. It could be municipal politics, the role of anti-social elements, some local incidents. Let us take two major riots, or rather a series of

riots, I should say, in one localised geographical area, Ahmedabad and Baroda and a few other smaller towns in Gujarat. Let us analyse some of the micro factors.

I have tried to evolve some general theory of these macro and micro factors. (Break) Compared to Karva Patels (Lowa) Patels are playing a much greater communal and caste role. All the shades must be understood. It is very important. In that sense I do not call it only Hindu-Muslim strife but also strife in other forms where other material factors play a very important role.

So these Patels, Harijans and Muslims live together. When anti-Harijan took place, it was the same situation. Patels used to throw stones. They installed pulleys in the terraces, lower buckets, fill them with stones, pull the buckets up and throw the stones. We were shown a number of pulleys on the terraces. Then they set fire to (Lowa) structures and huts, with rags soaked in petrol or kerosene. A number of Harijans and Muslims complained to us that this is a regular pattern and they were helpless, because if they had to throw stones they had to throw against gravity and it was very difficult to hit and if at all they succeeded in throwing stones they would only smash glasses, nothing more than that. But when the people from above threw, the structures were set ablaze and they being very often semipucca the roof was pierced through and people inside them were hit, and so they always had to lie low, they complained. So the structure of the city, the various locations and the composition of the population are very important in understanding the logistics of communal riots, though not their genesis.

As these people migrate from towns and rural areas, the richer people leave the old city and settle down in posh suburbs. Our thorough investigations show that the posh suburbs are hardly affected by communal violence. When there is curfew, when people are being killed and burnt alive, you will find the activity in posh suburbs quite normal. You will not feel that anything is going on in the city. So the rich tend to migrate to posh suburbs and those areas remain unaffected because in posh suburbs it is not possible to have that kind of violence as you can have in the old part of the city. It is very

difficult to set fire to the pucca, concrete flats in the posh suburbs. People can easily take refuge within. The roads are wide and the police can easily chase the offenders. Another sociological feature is that in those posh suburbs generally you find upper caste Hindus with a sprinkling of a few rich Muslims, say, Boras, Khojas, Memons which are the trading communities among the Muslims, very few. So the communal structure is also such and also the caste structure that communal or caste violence has no meaning there. Only people belonging to one community or one caste live there whereas in the old city all these problems exist and clashes are possible.

In the labour areas the population may be mixed. Hostility is aroused mainly because of job competition. If you see the composition of the population in the labour areas of Ahmedabad, specially textile labour, you will find that a lot of Hindus from Eastern UP have migrated there. They are locally known as bhayyas. I do not know what they are called here. I do not mean to use any derogatory term. This is how they are known there. A large number of them have migrated to Ahmedabad in search of jobs. They constitute the political base of BJP and formerly Jana Sangh. Textile labour has a large number of Muslims. So there is acute competition between the Muslims and these bhayyas. Many Muslims are also from UP, mind you, they are not all Gujaratis. For example, in Bapunagar, which was worst affected by communal violence from 11 to 22 May, five hundred houses were demolished in three days. They were pucca houses built by the housing colony, of course ground structure only, not multistoreyed. They were completely demolished as if they had been bombed [from the air. I visited the area. There was a mass of rubble. Row after row had been reduced to rubble. These hostilities are aroused because of job competition and that is taken advantage of by communal forces.

Another factor when I talk of sociology of urban growth. In these labour areas on the one hand and the walled city on the other land is becoming more and more expensive. So the builder lobby becomes quite strong and it develops political linkages.

Are you very much tired? If you want we can have some

break. I wanted to cover these points. I can go on speaking. After all there is a limit. (Voices not audible).

We were talking about the sociology of urban growth and various other factors in understanding the logistics of communal violence. In cities like Ahmedabad, because of their continuous growth, industrial as well as commercial, the builders' lobby also becomes very strong and establishes very deep political linkages and they get interested in getting certain strategically located plots of land. Taking advantage of communal, regional and caste prejudices they incite trouble in very devious ways. They would never be seen on the caste scene or communal scene directly. Only a lot of investigation would produce certain empirical evidence how such lobbies are involved. But in many cases they play an important role from behind the scenes. The Bapunagar area, for example, is a labour colony and the population continuously increases. So the value of land has been skyrocketing. There is one slum lord living nearby Bapunagar, who was very much interested in this land. The local Congress (I) Councillor who belonged to the Solanki lobby was in league with this slum lord. His Congress (I) legislator, most of the Muslims in the Bapunagar area, clearly identified him, was instrumental in inciting communal violence in that area. The Congress (I) fellow is not supposed to talk communalism publicly, from a public platform because it goes against the secular ideology. But this man was openly inciting. He was seen doing so by so many residents of Bapunagar and they very clearly told us, identifying him by name, his party, etc., because that Congress (I) Councillor was in league with the slum lord and this he did because the latter could mobilise his muscle power in ensuring votes. He needs political protection and these politicians need votes and sometimes money also for the election funds and all that. We hold Solanki very clearly during the one hour dialogue with 'There is incontrovertible evidence that Mr so and so belonging to your party faction was involved. Why are you not taking action against him?' How can he take action, tell me. He belongs to his faction, he mobilises votes for him. So arresting him is out of the question. Solanki at that stage, mind it, was desperate about solving this communal problem

because the communal violence was going against him. At one stage it is said that he gave this turn to the situation but I could not find any clear evidence of that, and no body has clear evidence, it is only a conjecture that Solanki tried to give it that form. But even in that desparate situation where communal violence was going against his interests he was unable to stop it precisely because those very persons belonging to his faction were involved in that and he cannot take any action against them.

So you would see that in most of the communal riots the culprits go unpunished because those culprits belong to one or the other political party, or if they are not members of this or that political party, they are at least their supporters and they cannot take action against their supporters. Even suppose some honest police official arrests them there will be a hell of political pressure to release them and even honest persons are helpless.

Similarly, most police officers also tend to become dishonest and communally motivated because they know that no action can be taken against them. If any honest politician dares take any action they can raise a hue and cry on a communal basis and he will have to retract. That is why the police is becoming very bold these days and playing a very active part in communal violence. In the whole caste agitation in Gujarat the police officers publicly displayed their caste hatred against the Harijans and the tribals. They were so ruthless in beating the Harijans in all those localities, setting fire to their houses and all that. The press referred to police brutalities in the earlier stage when they felt that the police was going against the upper castes and supporting Solanki. You know the whole case of Gujarat Samachar. Ultimately the police people burnt it. It is an open secret. They did it because it was writing against them. So much so, they caught a prostitute, because she can easily accuse anyone that she was raped or molested without having any social consequences. This prostitute was interviewed by us and she confessed that she was made to make these allegations. The allegation was that the police stripped her and paraded her naked in the streets. This was just to incite the upper class Hindus against the police. The police was so enraged because



Gujarat Samachar was doing all this mischief and ultimately burnt the office of Gujarat Samachar.

The same thing happens in a communal situation. You do content analysis of vernacular papers. The English papers might do it in a sophisticated way but take Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu papers. Then you will realise the naked form of communalism, how they put it and how they incite. The common man who takes newspaper reports as gospel truth has no time to investigate. Moreover, it is according to his emotions also. So he would immediately believe whatever is published in the newspapers.

I will give you example of one incident in Ahmedabad. One family was living in a relief camp, the Amanpura relief camp near Bapunagar, because their house had been burnt down and they had to live there. They had a four-month old daughter. She died. If it is a small child they do not use a coffin. They wrap it in a cloth and take it for burial. Eleven persons went for this burial. When they were returning after burial two policemen came and attacked them with lathis and they were joined by three municipal councillors. The father of the girl was killed on the spot. His brother was badly injured and the remaining people ran away. This is what took place. The next day there was a report in Gujarat Samachar, which was copied the next day by the Times of India, because I read it in Bombay in the Times of India, and I got interested in that incident and went and investigated along with others. The news was that a coffin full of lethal arms was being carried and the police came to know it in time and seized the arms. You can understand the mischief potential of this news. The Times of India published it, not out of mischief, but just copied it from other newspapers. It can happen, that a coffin full of arms might be there. In the Times of India it was under the news of communal riots in Ahmedabad, it was not headlined, but in Gujarat Samachar it was headlined. The common people would read Gujarat Samachar, not the Times of India. Even the Times of India news was damaging enough. But when it appears in headlines you can understand what mischief it can cause, how much hatred it can generate. I interviewed the mother of the child. The husband was dead. I interviewed a few others in the relief

camp to verify the claim of the mother. Even the police could not contradict it later on. Contradiction did appear in newspapers, a small piece somewhere on the inside page which would be hardly noticed.

I have done a thorough investigation of this and that is why I am saying that the media really play havoc. The common people's prejudices and stereotypes get so much reinforced by this kind of selective news that it becomes very difficult to control them. It was not only caste or communal hatred, in the case of Gujarat Samachar. It was being motivated for its animosity with Solanki because Gujarat Samachar is owned by an individual and he was expecting his wife to be taken in the ministry or given some important political position, which Solanki did not do. So Gujarat Samachar saw an opportunity to settle scores. During the caste violence also it played a similar role as during communal violence, just to embarrass Solanki. Day after day it was publishing very inflammatory things, so much so the press delegation which went also passed strictures against the Gujarat Samachar saying that it is playing a very unworthy role, a newspaper should not do that. I think Mr. Malhotra was there from the Times of India, Kuldeep Nayyar. That report was well publicised in newspapers. You also might have read it.

Another micro factor in a developing city or area. When the working class population increases and you know the stresses and strains in their lives very well, they feel a need for liquor. In Gujarat there is prohibition which is a big farce. I tell you prohibition is responsible for this mad violence to a great extent. I am talking of the situation. It may not be valid elsewhere. In both Ahmedabad and Baroda, the worst affected centres of communal violence, I would say 75 per cent of the role is being played by the liquor kings. They manufacture illicit liquor which flows like water. There is no problem whatsoever in obtaining this liquor in a state where strict prohibition exists on paper. When there is a continuous influx of the working class population they need more liquor and this is provided by the anti-social elements who become very powerful. When we investigated the Baroda riots we were told that a gang known as the Shiva Kahar gang was alone selling liquor worth a lakh of

rupees every day in Baroda. There was another powerful Muslim gang. Its business might be slightly less but certainly not less than fifty thousand. We could not get the figures but these figures are my guess. It means that the Shiva gang alone was selling worth Rs. 365 lakhs per year, which is not a small sum. It means a lot of money, part of which was going to the Solanki faction. These antisocial elements developed their political linkages. There was a clash between the Shiva Kahar gang and the Muslim gang. At one stage Shiva Kahar was arrested by the police and jailed. His Muslim rival was writing letters to the government saying that Shiva Kahar was getting this facility and that in the jail. Ultimately the government had to stop all the facilities to him. So Shiva Kahar was bent upon taking revenge. When he came out of jail he took a vow to teach this man a lesson. Moreover he was his business competitor. So a fight to finish is started between the two gangs. They wanted to involve their respective communities. An antisocial element, when he accumulates money and becomes very rich he develops political aspirations, not only political linkages without which he cannot exist. He has to buy peace by paying money to the police as well as political forces. But they also acquire political as well as social aspirations. How to fulfill them? They must establish their caste or community base. That they do by not spending a lot of money on religious festivals by which all his sins are washed. This fellow is spending so much money on Ganesh Chaturthi, this fellow is spending so much money on Moharrum tazias, how much he loves his religion! For the same region he wants to appear as a very faithful Hindu or Muslim. Take Haji Mastan, for example. He is doing all sorts of things to appear as a very faithful Muslim. He is always more than generous to give money to Anjuman-i-Islam, other religious organizations of Muslims so that his sins are washed. Similarly both the gangs try to put a lot of money in religious festivals. Shiv Jayanti is never celebrated in Gujarat. Shivaji is never seen as a hero by the Gujaratis. He is a Maratta hero. Shiva Kahar belongs to a Maratta caste because it was a Maratta state ruled by the Gaekwards at one time. This is actually a fisherman caste and also carrying kahars, palkis. Shiva belongs to that caste. He started celebrating the Shivaji festival and in

the year in which the riots broke out Shivaji's sword was worshipped. He wanted to establish a base among his caste. He also started the Ganpati festival in Baroda. This is also unknown in Gujarat by and large. To outdo them the Muslim gang started celebrating Muharram with more fanfare, with higher and more grandiose tazias and the whole dispute started on the processions, tazia procession or a Durga procession or something like that. Why do they do that? Because they want to appear as defenders and heroes in the eyes of their community. If you are able to get you with a Durga procession or a tazia procession you can say among your community that you defended it. So they very shrewdly communalised the whole issue. It was basically a fight between the Shiva Kahar gang and the Muslim gang but it became communal. The clashes started with the clashing of the processions and for whole one year there was communal violence in Baroda. Then the Jaspal Singh incident and all that which you must have read in the newspapers. Jaspal Singh developed some political aspirations and tried to fulfill them through this. He also tried to become a hero among the Hindus. Similarly, in Ahmedabad the Alam Zeb gang and a number of Patel gangs, the clashes between them became notorious. (Voice) Yes, police officer, Jaspal Singh. Ultimately he resigned his job and joined BJP. The clashes were because of trade rivalry between the gangs. Alam Zeb and the Patel gangs both wanted to monopolise the trade in illicit liquor. While in 1969 the whole situation was political, this time the predominant factor was the role of the antisocial elements. (Break) They wanted to monopolise the liquor business. In each and every lane in Daryapur and Kalupur there are bhattis and gambling dens and the poor innocent residents dare not raise their voice. When we interviewed them, all of them unanimously said, "Get rid of these antisocial elements and the problem will be solved." But neither the government nor the police wants to solve it because both benefit, the police getting their haftha and the politicians their money and muscle power. Moreover, with such potential demand for liquor in the market arising from the continuously rising population, as long as they are there they will fight among each other and deep on giving it a communal or caste orientation. Even in caste riots these

factors were very predominant. The Patels were most instrumental in teaching a lesson to the scheduled castes.

Most of the Muslims are carriers, not owners of bhattis and joints, and the owners are Patels. Clashes often break out between them on the question of payment. The Muslims will always collect all the money at the shop level because they are the carriers and there will always be disputes that the business was so much but they were paying only so much or they have not paid at all. Sometimes the Muslims would say that the police took away the money.

On 18 March 1985, when the communal riots started in Ahmedabad it is generally known that it started because of a fight first between the Patel owners of liquor dens and the Muslim carriers. Suddenly stoning began from Patel houses on the Muslim locality which was infested with these carriers and it immediately took a communal turn. A number of persons whom we interviewed in the locality said this. These liquor kings fight ruthlessly.

For the same reason Alam Zeb became a great hero for all the Muslims. Muslim perceived him to be their defenders. He became a legendary figure in Ahmedabad. When he was finally killed by the police in Surat, because he had his own animosity with certain police officers, and his body was brought to Bombay the procession was worth seeing. There were not less than 50,000 Muslims, according to me, in the funeral procession and most of them were carrying placards saying 'shahid-e-millat Alam Zeb.' This plaque was put on his grave.

So you can imagine how these antisocial elements create their base and how the whole thing becomes so emotional. Could anyone have argued with those walking in his funeral procession that he was a liquor king and how millat and Islam and liquor go together? Emotions were so powerful. That is why I say that empirical reality is so much different from religious precepts and teachings. Nothing works there. The only predominant feeling was that he is a shahid-e-millat. For the Gujarati press he was the greatest culprit and they praised the police sky high for killing him. The Hindus saw him as being responsible for all communal violence in Gujarat. The perceptions of the two communities were so different and it

came out strongly when we talked to people on both the sides, how the Hindus and the Muslims viewed Alam Zeb. It was a very rich experience of how perceptions vary from community to community, caste to caste, situation to situation.

So what I was trying to say was that when socio economic developments take place in certain towns, the demand for liquor goes up on the one hand and with the increase in the volume of black money the demand for smuggling goes up and smuggler gangs come into existence. If there is more black money in circulation, the craze for foreign goods will increase, colour TVs, videos, good quality clothes, gold, and what not, and specially the range of electronic goods. The whole trouble in Verawal town in Gujarat was because of these smugglers, a clash between smuggling gangs. When our researchers visited Verawal, when the riots had not taken place and there was only tension, every common citizen there was saying that communal violence was a matter of days, and within a month it broke out. The researchers of our Institute came back and told me that there is a very high degree of communal tension there and it would break out any time, and within one month we heard that riots had broken out there. So today many towns in Gujarat which are in the coastal area or nearby are seething with communal tension because of smuggling. So socio-economic development has these consequences also, which are of course indirect, not direct consequences, that black money would come into existence and generate a demand for smuggled goods, the working class population would increase due to dynamic development and liquor demand would go up. Similarly, demand for drugs will go up because the children of the affluent families, alienated from their parents—you know there are so many psychological explanations of drug addiction—the student communities, particularly those of the upper and rich class families, are taking more and more to drugs in urban areas. They shift the golden triangle from Burma, Thailand and Laos, to Pakistan-Afghanistan border and India being a channel has its own consequences again.

So all these factors put together increase the number of criminals and antisocial elements, and these elements develop their political linkages and the whole scenario is complete.

Take for example, the growth of the Shiv Sena. Everybody knows that at the base of the Shiva Sena structure is the underworld of Bombay and at the top the middle class Maharashtrians. The leadership is in the hands of this middle class, again belonging to particular castes of Maharashtrians. That is also very important because to study the caste structure of a communal party is also a rewarding exercise, why only particular castes take to that kind of politics. The underworld consists of notorious criminals, bootleggers, notorious smugglers, matka dens, all such elements. Of course with the withdrawal of prohibition the liquor problem has become secondary in Bombay, through it continues because there are bhattis which sell liquor cheap, selling a pavva for a rupee or two, and that is what a worker wants at the fag end of the day. The price of a bottle of country liquor marketed by the government is Rs. 18 or so, and that too, even if he can afford that, he cannot take home, he has to drink at some joint and government does not provide any such joints. For the upper classes, there is any number. Apart from five star hotels, there are any number of hotels in Bombay, restaurants where you can have liquor and beer. The middle class people go there because one would not like to drink before parents or the wife. The working class cannot afford this. The bhattis are there though not in such numbers as during prohibition. I was a municipal engineer in charge of demolition of hutments in certain areas and I have seen what a liquor menace there was in Bombay.

So the very base of Shiva Sena consists of criminals. There is not a single political party in Bombay which at one time or another did not take the help of the Shiva Sena. The Shiva Sena has begun to play an important role in the Bombay Municipal Corporation where it is the single largest party, and the entire administration of the Corporation is today controlled by it. It did not get all the seats just in fluke. There was careful preparation and it was the result of a planned operation of the last three or four years.

The Bhiwandi Bombay riots of 1984—I have produced a book on that, it was kept here yesterday—were the starting point for their winning the Bombay {Municipal elections. Those riots were very carefully planned. They began with a certain

incident. There is a yellow Urdu journal known as Akbar-e-Alam whose editor left All India Radio and started publishing it. He wanted to be rich overnight and he sensationalised all such mess. Bal Thackerey made a speech, which, to be very objective, was not offensive. He talked something about the Prophet. It is very difficult to verify what he actually said but collating all the reports and talks, my final impression is that he said something like this, that the Prophet was such a humane person, never considered himself super-human, always projected himself as an ordinary man and when somebody urinated in the mosque he personally cleaned it. This is what he said. This was sensationalised by the editor of Akbaar-e-Alam. A very sensational heading was given. This was a spark, not that this news is responsible for the communal riots, for which the Shiva Sena was already preparing. This became a spark and the sentiments of the Muslims in that area were inflamed. A meeting was held in Bhiwandi in which senior Muslims urged people to go cautiously, we have seen what happens in communal riots. But there were some younger elements among the Muslims who said, we must take revenge, how long can we tolerate an attack on our religion, etc. On Shabbarath they tried to hoist a green flag near saffron flags and the incidents started from there. What a disaster it was ! We visited every locality from Bhiwandi up to Colaba. Everywhere Shiva Sena hordes with swords and lathis and gupties—these were the three main weapons—specially in the slum areas, the houses of Muslims were reduced to a rubble. Rickshaws were burnt, sewing machines were smashed to pieces. household utensils smashed up if not taken away. Everywhere they went with these three weapons, not firearms. Where did they get these weapons from ? You cannot produce them overnight. Preparations were going on. These localities on the fringe of Bhiwandi were completely finished, absolutely nothing was left, no utensils, no clothes. Our organisation called the Committee for Protection of Democratic rights, produced a film on that. We have made a cassette. We interviewed a large number of persons in Bhiwandi and shots have been shown on what happened, houses demolished, and so on.

This paid rich dividends to the Shiva Sena. When all this



was happening Vasantdada Patil was a helpless spectator because he needed Shiva Sena's help for two reasons. One was that his faction in the Congress (I) could become strong only by winning one Rajya Sabha seat and this can happen only if two Shiva Sena MLAs voted for his candidate. Members of the rival faction wanted to defeat the Vasantdada candidate. See the political delicacies. He refused to take any action against Bal Thackeray. He even said he did not know of any speech given by Bal Thackeray. That speech was not offensive, as I said, but it was wrongly sensationalised by Akbaar-e-Alam. But normally when any such speech is delivered by a leader, Intelligence either records it or notes it down. He could have easily procured the report of the Intelligence officers and published it but he was afraid of doing that because he did not want to offend Bal Thackeray in any way. When the riots were taking place, Rebeiro was the Police Commissioner. When riots were taking place, Vasantdada literally touched Bal Thackeray's feet—photographs were published in Bombay dailies—requesting Bal Thackeray to ask his party members to vote for his candidate. A Chief Minister who is so abjectly dependent on the leader of the party which is responsible for communal violence, tell me how he can take any action.

Communal violence stopped. The next month was the month of Ramzan, in which the last Friday is very important for the Muslims. Again the city was gripped with tension, that on the one hand the Muslims are preparing led by Haji Mastan, and on the other Shiva Sena is making preparation for another showdown. This second showdown was not to the advantage of Vasantdada Patil because he was embarrassed enough in the first phase, by the kind of naked dance of Shiva Sena hordes. Then he told Rebeiro not to tolerate any nonsense. Rebeiro sent out a circular that if communal violence broke out in any area of any police station the inspector of police of that area would be suspended. Believe me, nothing happened. Forty notorious Shakh Promukhs of the Shiva Sena were put under arrest and not an ant was killed. The same Rebeiro was there in both cases. In the earlier case, communal violence went on for fourteen days' with news everyday of firing, stabbing, people killed, houses burnt, with the worst incidents

taking place in Govandi, one of the largest slums inhabited by the Muslims and scheduled castes. The story of Govandi is very interesting but we do not have time to go into details. It also throws light on how collusion between the police, anti-social elements and politicians works. Those instructions by Rebeiro could have been issued in the first phase itself but they were not. Not that Rebeiro was communal, but he was helpless; without orders from the cabinet he cannot take action on his own. He was asked to look the other way when things happened. But when he was told not to tolerate any nonsense he put it down very efficiently. Nothing happened.

The Shiva Sena followed the same policy in other areas. It has been openly saying that if there can be N.T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh, Ramachandran in Tamil Nadu, why not Bal Thackerey in Maharashtra? Why should we not assert our regional identity? Here it is not merely regional identity, it is regional-cum-communal identity. It is a well known fact that Bal Thackerey was an RSS activist in his earlier days. Earlier the Shiva Sena was confined to Bombay. Now it is trying to establish its branches all over Maharashtra. The first thing they do before establishing a branch is to stage a communal riot. From 10 to 18 May there was a fresh bout of communal violence in Maharashtra, Nasik, Panvel, Aurangabad, Nanded and Umapur of which Umapur saw indescribable atrocities committed: I investigated Nasik, Panvel and Nanded. It was the same pattern in all the three places. They contested the municipal elections last time, they could get only one or two seats. Now they are determined to capture sizeable number of seats if not the majority. The easiest thing for them is to win over a section of the Hindu population by inciting communal feelings. It happened this way in Panvel where communal riots broke out. I think my paper is here on the fresh outbreak of communal violence in Maharashtra. I will be leaving it here and you can go through it. The same thing happened in Nasik but in Nanded the Shiva Sena was not involved, it was RSS and Muslim League fighting. But Panvel and Nasik are major growing towns. Many of the factors which I described in Ahmedabad and Bombay exist there because both are industrially growing towns. But Umapur is a small town,

or a big village you can say.

In Nasik, Panvel and Umapur there is neither the Muslim League nor the Jamat-e-Islami, and the Muslims maintain such a low key of existence that they are afraid of even leaders of these organisations. They always say we do not want any trouble here. Even if Muslim League and Jamat leaders visited their area they would politely ask them to go away from there. This has been the psychology in these two places, Panvel and Nasik. But after these riots the Muslim League and especially Jamat have become quite active and it is being welcomed. You will be surprised that there was no trace of the Jamat in Gujarat. Now each town in Gujarat with a sizable population of the Muslims has a branch of the Jamat-e-Islami. It did a lot of work in providing relief. Similarly Nasik, Panvel, Umapur, Aurangabad, everywhere it is very active in providing relief. You know in Maharashtra a section of the Muslims is quite affluent, specially the Memons, Khojas and Boras being Shiyas are not as enthusiastic about this. Of course, they are getting greatly affected now. In Panvel and Nasik it is mainly the Boras who suffered, all their properties were destroyed. But in terms of relief Memons are very active, being Sunnis. These are the things which must be taken into account to understand a communal riot thoroughly. Memons are rich and they are rendering a lot of relief in Ahmedabad today, a lot of money from Bombay goes to Ahmedabad. Benatwala is a Memon from Bombay. Most of the relief is being channelled through either the Muslim League or the Jamat. The Jamat is a much more organised and cadre-based organisation. Where Jamat succeeds the Muslim League does not succeed to the same extent. I checked with most of the relief camps and everywhere I was told that Jamat is doing wonderful work, more and more Muslims becoming its followers in those areas.

So communal riots ultimately benefit political reactionaries from both sides, Hindus as well as Muslims. There are a number of Gandhian and Sarvodaya organisations in Ahmedabad. I asked them very pointedly whether they could not organise relief on secular lines. As followers of Gandhi, I said, it was their duty. At least they could have

gone to some Gujarati industrialists and compelled them to pay for the relief of the affected Muslims and that could have won them over again. In the whole of Bhiwandi, Bombay, there were hundreds of relief camps, all of them either Jamat or Haji Mastan and Haji Mastan was particularly popular in all relief camps because he even went to the extent of arranging biryanis twice a week or so and the inmates were overwhelmed by this gesture. And regular food every day. sabji, roti/chawal, and biryani twice a week, and pairs of clothes and pairs of utensils and all that. There also no secular relief. Nobody was moved to think that these helpless victims deserved some relief on secular lines. I think that is much more dangerous in a post-violence period. Relief organised on communal basis is quite disastrous. Of course there were a few leftist youth organisations in Bombay which did very good work. But youth organisations, and that too belonging to left parties, cannot have much resources. They appeal to people for old clothes or waste paper which they can sell and convert into money. How much can all this make? But they showed the spirit and came forward and rendered relief, specially in Bhiwandi.

I would end by drawing your attention to one very sad thing. We believed in and idealised mixed living as that would help build bridges between the Hindus and the Muslims. But unfortunately, these riots in Gujarat and Maharashtra have widened the gulf so much that even very sensible people among the Muslims are insisting that they must leave these areas and go and live with their community. This trend is specially more in Ahmedabad. After what happened in Meghaninagar, again, where five members of a Muslim constable's family were burnt alive, this trend will become an avalanche, I think. Any Muslim I talked to in Ahmedabad said he would shift from his present place. There were distress sales of property and Amer Singh Chaudhury had to issue an ordinance banning distress sale of property. You can imagine what is happening in Gujarat. I do not know how that ordinance could be effective but it had to be issued.

So it is very sad that whatever little trend there was for mixed living, specially in upper class, in helping to build

bridge does not seem to be there. Even among the upper class Muslims the tendency now is to go to Muslim areas. So we would be further receding in our communal ghettos and this was symbolised during caste riots. As I said, the Patels, the Harijans and the Muslims live together in the walled city. The walls were three or four feet high. Now they are at least ten to twelve feet high so that one does not jump into the other locality to commit crimes. This is not only raising walls physically but it is raising mental barriers. The walls are a physical manifestation of that. I was so pained when I saw those walls raising in height. This is how the gap is widening between the various communities in India.

I have already taken so much time. Still there are so many things in my mind, so many other incidents, other riots which I investigated. But I am quite aware of the fact that I have taken a lot of time already. So I finish my presentations here.

**INDIA**

# قوم وارانہ فسادات میں ۱۲۲ افراد کی ہلاکت

۵۳۸ کروڑ روپے کے مالی نقصان کا تخمینہ۔

تھکے دھکے ۶ نومبر۔ ملک بھر میں پانچوں ریاستوں میں ہونے والے فسادات کی خبریں پڑھ کر دل ہلکا ہوتا ہے۔

یہ گولی طر پر ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے تھے۔

مگر ات میں ۹۷ افراد کی اموات کا شمار کیا گیا تھا۔

انگرا جارجھان میں ۱۵ جنوری سے ۱۷ جولائی تک جاری رہنے والے فسادات میں ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

جن میں ۹۷ افراد اور ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

ان دنوں ہلاکتوں کے

مذکورہ بالا معلومات اور سرکاری رپورٹوں کے مطابق

پہلے ہی ۲۷ مئی کو نواد میں ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے تھے۔

جس کے بعد ریاست حکومت کا کہنا ہے کہ ان میں سے بہت

سے زیادہ افراد ہلاک ہوئے ہیں۔

سورج پور کے مہلے میں ہونے والے فسادات میں ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

۱۹ اور ۱۷ اگست کے درمیان ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

۵ اور ۱۷ اگست کے درمیان ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

۵ اور ۱۷ اگست کے درمیان ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

۵ اور ۱۷ اگست کے درمیان ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

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۵ اور ۱۷ اگست کے درمیان ۱۲۲ افراد ہلاک ہوئے۔

# Eight killed in Amravati, riots continue

AMRAVATI, November (UNI).

THE death roll in the Amravati riots has risen to eight with 12 incidents of arson being reported this morning despite the dawn-to-dusk curfew.

One person was killed and two were seriously injured when the police opened fire on a violent mob in the Chunabhathi area today. Incidents of arson and looting con-

# Amravati riots claim 8

By A Staff Reporter

The death roll in the three-day violence at Amravati in Vidarbha region rose to eight on Tuesday with four more persons killed. The situation in the trouble-torn town was reported to be tense but under control.

The curfew, imposed in the town following large-scale disturbances on Monday, has been extended till Wednesday evening.

The State police reported on Tuesday evening that while two persons were killed in police firing, six others died in stabbing incidents. At least 24 persons were injured, one of the seriously.

One person was killed and two were seriously injured when the police opened fire on a rioting mob at Chunabhathi locality in the town on Tuesday morning. The bodies of two persons with stab injuries were reco-

vered from a nullah in Mahajanpura locality, while another person, said to be a rickshaw-puller, was fatally stabbed at Dahisath.

Last night, two persons were stabbed to death and another was killed in police firing in incidents of violence in various parts of the town. Police fired at least 15 rounds to quell the rampaging mobs. At least 22 police personnel were injured in violence.

The disturbances were reported to have been sparked off by a quarrel between two groups at a gamblers' den at Nagpurigade area on Sunday. According to State police, 19 incidents of arson were reported. The arson incidents included burning of a petrol pump, an oil mill, a medical store and five houses.

Meanwhile, additional reinforcements have been rushed to the town from the neighbouring districts. Special Inspector: General of Police D. Ramachandra, left the State capital for Amravati on Tuesday evening, to review the law and order situation there.

UNI adds: According to official sources, the trouble started in the town after an assault on a member of a minority community and registration of a criminal complaint against some gamblers.

Violent mobs then took to the streets with spears and swords, setting houses on fire.

The mobs also attacked places of worship, sources said. Anti-social elements took maximum advantage of the situation.

The riots occurred barely three weeks after the communal clashes at the tehsil town of Warud in the district, in which three persons were killed.

All incoming and outgoing buses have been cancelled in view of the disturbances.

## **THE COMMUNAL HOLOCAUST IN AMRAVATI —An Investigation by the Ekta Team**

*Asghar Ali Engineer*

EKTA (The committee for Communal Unity), Bombay, sent its team to Amravati for investigation of communal violence of November 2 and 3, 1986. The investigation was done by Mr. Vijyander Acharya and Ling Mathias. This report is based on their investigation.

Amravati is an important trading centre in Vidarbha, Maharashtra. The most important trades are of cotton and film distribution. The trading in cotton is controlled by both state cooperatives and private cooperative societies. The film distribution is in the hands of private individuals and companies. Not only this, Amravati is also a centre of gambling in this region. The gambling dens are controlled by powerful underworld elements. Thus Amravati, a city of around 4.5 lakh inhabitants, has quite a disproportionate dose of anti-social elements in its population.

Why did communal violence so suddenly erupt in this Vidarbha town? Could it be ascribed to anti-social elements only as is being done? Or could there be more fundamental reasons for it? What is more significant to note in this case is that Amravati was free of communal virus for long, despite its substantial Muslim population of about 20%. A town with large Muslim population generally tends to be the hotbed of communalism. But Amravati had the merit so far of being completely free of such virus. One reason for this is that Vidarbha generally



has been a traditional stronghold of single party, i.e. the Congress, now of course the Congress (I). Even today out of 9 MLAs of this district, 7 belong to the Congress (I) and all the three M.P.s too belong to this party. Muslims, Dalits and Sindhis, three important minority communities, have generally voted for Congress. Not only opposition parties have not thrived here, the communal parties too have drawn almost blank. The BJP and the Muslim League have nominal presence.

Not only this. There seems to be no serious competition between the Hindus and the Muslims for elective posts. All the 7 MLAs and 3 M.P.s are non-Muslims. In fact the Muslims, Sindhis and Dalits are quite poor and backward. While the Sindhis have some small trade in their hands, the Muslims and Dalits either serve, do odd jobs or own pan shops, tea stalls or take to hawking for their survival. Such a situation is not 'ideal' for communal politics. It is, therefore, not very surprising if Amravati was by and large free from communal virus, so far. Communalism thrives where members of different castes and communities resort to those feelings for capturing votes.

The important question then is why visitation of this curse on Amravati so suddenly? Can mere presence of large number, or even increasing number of anti-social elements, as has been suggested, explain this spurt in communal violence? Though the role of these elements is undeniable, it cannot be explained only by that. The whole matter must be viewed in larger perspective. Both micro as well as macro factors have affected the situation there. First, we shall deal with the macro factors.

The country as a whole is under the thickening fog of communalism. Caste and communal forces are multiplying for variety of reasons which we need not analyse here in detail. Suffice it may to say that uneven distribution of economic resources, caste and communitywise, on the one hand, and, large-scale mobilization of votes on these lines, on the other, have significantly contributed to the growth of these forces. Also, the conflict in Punjab, Ramjanam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy as well as the Shah Bano agitation further communalised the situation. The communal and fundamentalist forces from both the sides spared no efforts to fully exploit narrow and parochial sentiments on these issues. The secular political

parties also vie with each other for exploiting such sentiments one way or the other. New issues like Krishna Janambhoomi etc. are being raised by the communalists to strengthen the communal sentiments. The old RSS theory 'Hindus under siege' in its new garb and the 'religio-cultural identity of minorities under threat' are finding ready acceptance among the Hindus and Muslims and other minorities. Every nook and corner in the country is coming under the spell of such propaganda. Amravati could not have remained unaffected for long. And the inevitable happened there too.

As far as micro factors were concerned there were several of them too. Amravati, as pointed out above, is an important film distribution centre in the whole of Vidarbha. Several hundred people are employed in this trade. The recent film-strike in Maharashtra had a great impact on the employment situation there. Many were thrown out of jobs, some of whom did fall into the hands of anti-social elements. Even the auto-rickshaw business was seriously affected due to the closure of cinemas.

Secondly, the present police boss Mr. Sharma had started an unrelenting campaign against the gambling dens and Amravati is a centre of gambling dens, as already pointed out. Many den-lords were frustrated and were waiting for an opportunity to wreak their revenge. Communal violence could certainly give bad name to Mr. Sharma. There is no denying the fact that the anti-social elements played a great role in looting, burning and stabbing incidents. Those unemployed also seem to have found an opportunity to loot and grab.

Also, and it is quite significant, the Amravati Municipality has been converted into corporation and though presently under the administrator, elections are soon expected to take place. The Shiv Sena which so far had failed to establish its toe-hold in this region, is determined at least to register its presence now and get an entry into the Amravati Corporation. The best way to get such an entry, as it has learnt through its experience in Nasik, Panvel and other towns of Maharashtra, is to incite communal passion and get a sympathetic hearing at least among a section of Maharashtrians. The Shiv Sena, as is widely known, after its success in Bombay Municipal Corporation, is trying to get into various Municipalities in the State and easiest thing to

do this to take recourse to communal and parochial sentiments in the present climate in the country.

At present the Sena has very precarious existence in Amravati and also it is difficult to find a direct evidence of its involvement in the communal flare-up. On this basis some have questioned the Sena's involvement in it. Well, one can press only inferences into service. The Warud incident on 15 October when the Durga procession is alleged to have been stopped due to somebody falling on the drum near a mosque did have its effect on the situation in Amravati. Three persons were killed in that town. Mr. Bhujbal, the Sena leader and former Mayor of Bombay visited Warud and also Amravati. It must be noted that the riots in Nasik in May 1986 also followed Mr. Bhujbal's visit and for similar reasons. In Nasik too, Municipal elections were due and the Sena had the ambition to capture some seats.

It is also important to note that anti-social elements by themselves cannot start any riot by themselves. It does require involvement of some political forces. Without the involvement of the latter it remains merely skirmishes between two goonda-gangs. Only those gangs, or gang-lords with political connections and linkages are able to give it a communal turn, albeit for their own reasons. We have seen this in Baroda and Ahmedabad riots also. Shiva Kahar of Baroda was connected with a faction of the ruling party in Baroda and same was the story in Ahmedabad too. Here in Amravati if the anti-socials had their designs, the Sena had its own motives too and it seems to have become an 'ideal' combination.

One can never be sure but these seem to be the factors contributing to the situation in Amravati. Our investigators feel that after the riots the Shiv Sena has acquired some political clout and it is now more likely to register its presence. The hold of the Congress is weakening to some extent in this region due to economic discontent. Sharad Joshi's Shetkari Sangthana is making in-roads and the communal organizations too are making their bid on local level. The riots in Amravati must be seen in this backdrop.

The trouble actually started on the night of November 2. The triggering incident in this case was a petty quarrel over

playing of cards near the Kholapuri Gate area by some Muslims. It is interesting to note here that like other places like Ahmedabad the trouble mainly erupted in the walled city and remained confined there. Again, like Ahmedabad, there are narrow lanes and by-lanes within which the Hindus, Muslims and Dalits, mostly poor, live cheek by jowl. There houses are low and built of cheap and inflammable materials. It is easy to loot and set them afire. Moreover economic and social tensions are aplenty in such poor, crowded shanty towns. In such a situation it is not only houses and petty shops which go up in flames, the hearts and minds of people too, on the slightest pretexts. One can hardly expect restraint when human minds are tense due to abundance of socio-economic problems. The mental tension soon pour out into physical arson and looting.

Coming back to the events following the Warud incidents in which three Hindus were killed in the police firing a call for Amravati Bandh was given by the Shiv Sena on 23 October. The Muslims and Sindhis refused to down the shutters. This further raised the level of communal tension in Amravati. It was followed by Ghyaneshwar Karole objecting to five Muslim youths playing cards outside his house. One of them assaulted Karole with razor blade and a minor scuffle followed. The police was called and the DSP Sharma maintains that he managed "to diffuse the tension". However, the same evening a Dalit girl was allegedly molested by a Muslim youth. A number of Dalit and Hindu women marched to the police station demanding action against the culprit. This further enraged the Hindu feelings which were already inflamed due to the Warud events.

As already pointed out a number of youth on both sides were out of jobs due to film-strike (black marketeers, cycle rickshaw pullers and others due to theatre closures) and also due to crack-down on gambling dens (owned by Kailash Solanki, Ahmad Jabbar, Tarabai and others). So in the night of November 2, looting and burning started in the crowded localities. In the face of allegations and counter-allegations it is very difficult to establish who did it first. The Hindus maintain that the Muslims attacked Hanuman Nagar shouting slogans like "Hindustan Murdabad", "Allah Zindabad" and the

Muslims say that the slogans of “Jai Shivaji” rent the air whole night when their houses were being attacked. Many Muslim and Hindu shops just outside the Kholapuri Gate were also looted. The administration puts the total loss to around 1.75 to 2 lakhs. The total number of deaths are said to be eight (official figures are seven dead while unofficial figures put it around nine, all told) of which six are Muslims.

The Muslim residents complained that the police looked on while their houses were burning and that adequate police force was not deployed. But it appears unlike other places the role of police here was not communal although it may have been hampered due to inadequate number. A police inspector said what could two policemen do in front of a frenzied mob. However, the DSP maintained that we could control the riots within 16 hours. It is true that the riot was under control after 3 November. The police arrested in all 537 persons of which 300 were released on bail by 15 November. Jabbar and his three associates have been detained under the NSA.

Human suffering in the riots was intense. Most of the two-room houses in the crowded localities of Haiderpura and Hanuman Nagar looked as if they were deserted months ago. Many houses had their doors smashed and their tiled-roofs completely broken. Abdul Sheikh, a cycle rickshaw driver not only had his house destroyed but even his source of livelihood burnt to a skeleton. Sheikh had a wife and three children to support.

Sakinabi Mirza used to stitch clothes while her husband Fakhruddin drove a cycle-rickshaw to look after their five children. But both her sewing machine and his rickshaw have been burnt. She pathetically remarked ‘GHAR BHI JAL GAYA AUR DIL BHI’ (house was burnt and heart too). Ghaffar Shah Kochak, his wife and four children had fled with the help of a Hindu neighbour but returned to find only their feet of debris in place of their house. The utensils, Diwali bonus and food items stored in the house were looted. They could only wring their hands in despair.

Similarly, Damodar Mahande, an employee in the Fire Brigade was arrested by the police when he was standing outside his house. Later his house was looted. His wife was pointing to

the bare house wherein her three children were eating from an aluminium plate. All other utensils, tube lights, fan and other things had disappeared. Such was the fate of the houses of Babu Hirudkar, Prahald Agmere, Shahade Kisan Supase and Manikrao Walsare. All of them lost everything they possessed.

But the Muslims as well as the Hiudus insist that we suffered at the hands of the goondas, not at the hands of each other. Many of them said that goondas from outside attacked, not our neighbours. They did not know them. Many sheltered each other breaking the barriers of communities. Though bitterness was not absent the divide did not seem to be very deep. Some incidents however, were quite deplorable and clearly showed the nature of mischief. Some people were forcibly applying gual and shaving the hair or beard of those refusing to allow its forcible application. In one case the mischief makers forced their way into the house of an AVM College teacher Mr. Zillur Rahman Ansari living in the staff quarters in Gadge Nagar and tried to apply gual to him and forcibly shave his beard. His Hindu colleagues saved him with difficulty.

It must also be noted that though there was an incident of eve-teasing of a Dhor girl, the relations between the Dalits and Muslims were not considerably strained. Dada Shende, a Dalit trade union leader even seemed to be little sympathetic to the Muslims for their sufferings. It must be remembered that the rumour of a Dalit girl having been molested had spread like wild fire and was used to incite Hindu passions just before the riots started. In general, rumours as usual played a large part in inciting communal passions and even causing panick among the Hindus and Muslims.

According to the district collector, Mr. Subodh Kumar, the main cause of communal flare-up was large-scale unemployment in the area and tendency of petty crime to increase as a result thereof. This tends to take communal colour. He also refuted the argument that as there was communication gap between the police and the administration, the riots broke out. He felt timely action was taken to curb the violence. He did not deny some nexus between the police and the gamblers but maintained that the police handled the situation effectively and did not spare any trouble-maker. He also felt that religion is still far

from being a personal matter and is often exploited by the vested interests. He also maintained that relief measures were undertaken without any discrimination.

The M.P. of the region Usha Tai Chowdhary strongly maintained that it was not a communal riot at all but was a war between the goondas. Amravati she maintained, has never been a centre of communalism. Maulana Mohammad Safdar, Gen. Secretary, Amravati Muslim League also was of the opinion that the police raids had stopped the gambling business and that anti-social elements were waiting for an opportunity. He also felt that the Shiv Sena leaders like Bhujbal and others had a role to play and they incited riots here taking advantage of the Warud incidents. The riots, according to him were pre-planned and started with "Jai Bhavani, Jai Shivaji" slogans. Also, Matedors and cars never seen before in Amravati were seen to be running around. He also alleged that the police fired on the Muslim mob killing three persons whereas the Hindu mob was not fired upon. According to him there was no need to fire as the mob could have been dispersed by other methods. He also maintained that no Hindu shop was burnt or looted. He also said that further mischief was done in Sirala where a pig was slaughtered inside a mosque. (Siralas is about 20 km from Amravati). Yet no action has been taken against anyone so far.

Mr. Karmarkar, Secretary of the BJP said that Anil Modak, a ruling partyman openly shelters gamblers. A memorandum was also submitted to the Government but no action was a spontaneous outburst of emotions. There was stone throwing, according to him on the peace march after the Warud incident and this angered the Hindus. In fact there is no existence of Shiv Sena in Amravati and the riots cannot be blamed on them.

Mr. Madan Bhatt of the Janata Party blamed the Congress (I) politicians for sheltering the matka kings and according to him it is this goondaism which is mainly responsible for what happened in Amravati. However, no Shiv Sena leader was available for comment as the Shiv Sainiks were either underground or in jail.

The Amravati riots once again prove how petty politics is inextricably linked with communal riots and how politicians leave no available opportunity to exploit religious and similar

other parochial sentiments to gain some ground among one or the other community. The politics in India today is neither value-oriented nor issue-oriented, nor programme oriented. It is such crass opportunism that on the one hand common man suffers intensely from economic hardships with quality of living deteriorating from day to day and on the other, he has to pay occasionally with his life and property, for this kind of opportunistic and communalistic politics. It is the poorest who suffered and would continue to suffer in all such riots.



## AN ANGER RISING FROM INSECURITY

*Anita Pratap*

There is no doubt that the Muslim anger in Karnataka that culminated with the death of 16 persons in police firings was provoked by the short story defamatory to the Holy Prophet that was published in the Sunday magazine section *Deccan Herald*. But the intensity and dimensions of the reaction of the Muslims indicate that it was more a reaction to the far deeper and growing malaise that has been besieging the community.

The violence stemmed from insecurity and not from aggression as it would seem *prima facie*. The short story was the proverbial spark that ignited the frustration of Muslim insecurity which has become more pronounced over the last few years.

Since the beginning of this decade there has been a tremendous spurt in Kannada chauvinism. The Gokak agitation of 1982, sought to give Kannada dominance which was resented by the minorities, particularly the Muslims and the Tamils living in Karnataka. In 1983 the state government decided to introduce a Kannada language test for Class III and IV recruitment. This was again deeply resented by the minorities and following strong Muslim representation it was decided that the language test to judge proficiency in Kannada would be conducted about a year after recruitment. But the government went back on this decision, buckling to the sentiments of the Kannada lobby. The Karnataka Education Bill that followed was also resented by the Muslims because it

# 4 die in police firing in Bangalore

From Our Staff Reporter

**BANGALORE, Dec. 7** Four people were killed and at least 50 injured when the police opened fire to control a mob which attempted to attack a newspaper office, loot business places and damage public property in Bangalore on Sunday.

The trouble started when news of a short story, described by the aggrieved party (Muslims) as inflammatory, spread in the afternoon soon after the prayers in the mosques. People collected in large numbers at Shivajinagar and pelted passing vehicles with stones.

Large scale violence broke out in the Cantonment area with the members of a community upset over the publication of an article in a local daily, *Deccan Herald*. Police opened several rounds of fire both in the air and on the

mob at several places.

The violence escalated as Muslim leaders decided to take out a procession to the newspaper to demand an apology. Police first lathi charged and tear gassed the crowd. Then they opened fire, first on Mahatma Gandhi Road on which the newspaper office is located and also at Shivajinagar.

The police said one person died in the police firing on Mahatma Gandhi Road, one person in the firing on Broadway Road and two others at the Shivajinagar area. Four persons, including two police officers were among the seriously injured in the violence.

The Police Commissioner, Mr. R. G. Halarnka, said the police had proposed action against the newspaper for the article. "I expected trouble," he spoke to the editor, in the after-

noon and expressed my resentment over the publication of such articles. We started moving our forces even as the crowds were collecting."

Even as trouble broke out, the publishers of *Deccan Herald* tendered an apology and police said it was broadcast over TV and radio. But it had no effect and with nightfall trouble escalated.

Members of the Muslim community of Shivajinagar area in a statement to the press said "a short story by P. N. Nambodiri published in the *Deccan Herald* today has created anguish among Muslims. Though this story was given by the writer how the newspaper published this article is what we want to know."

The statement said "We appeal to all people belonging to different communities not to get involved in the violence."

the Hindu, 8-12-81

deprived the institutions run by the minorities of a number of privileges they earlier enjoyed.

While Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde has won kudos for his fine balancing act, the impression has gained currency among the minorities that in a crunch, when it comes to making a choice, he will always act in the majority interests. Even his harshest critics will not accuse Mr Hegde of being communal. He cannot be accused of being pro majority and anti minorities. His secular image is in fact still intact.

But the point that has been repeatedly driven home is that when the interests of the majority community are in direct conflict with those of the minorities, and when a decision has to be made, Mr Hegde bows to the interests of the majority community. This could be seen in his handling of the Belgaum border agitation and the Kodagu agitation where the locals deeply resented the Muslim migrants of Kerala, the government's antimigrants attitude and promotion of the Kannada world conference. It is not communalism that explains the pro majority slant in Mr Hegde's decisions. It is the exigencies of politics. In view of the intractable caste politics of Karnataka, Mr Hegde has very little option other than to please the majority community on sticky issues. Again, with Kannada matinee idol Raj Kumar lurking in the corner to whip up Kannada chauvinism, Mr Hegde has to necessarily appease this sentiment—even if it is merely to keep Raj Kumar at bay. To an extent the minorities in Karnataka are aware that he has his compulsions—but that does not solve the problem.

No one has perhaps perfected the balancing act as Mr Hegde. He makes skilfull gestures of goodwill to the Muslims—announces handsome compensations, appoints a Muslim as the director general of police and so on. But the deep-rooted insecurity of the minorities cannot be cured by these cosmetic gestures. Their confidence and self-assurance can be built up only if they are made to feel that they are equals.

Communal harmony in Karnataka has also been vitiated by the growth of religious fundamentalism in the last few years—be it Hindu or Muslim. According to political observers, the rationale of the rise in Hindu fundamentalism is the

growing belief among the Hindus that their tolerance and endurance is being exploited by the minorities. Whether it is insecurity that has led to the growth of fundamentalism or fundamentalism in one community that has provoked a similar reaction in the other is very much like the chicken and egg problem. The point, however, is that for all these reasons communal riots have been on the increase in Karnataka in the last four years. And there has been a sharp increase in communal clashes in the last one year alone—for instance, riots have taken place in Bijapur, Gulbarga, K.R. Nagar, Belthangady, Bagalkot and Ramnagaram. It is again for this reason that any agitation, be it the Kodagu problem in Coorg or the Mysore incidents, soon acquires a linguistic or communal colour.

The scale of the Muslim reaction over the story which most of the rioters would not even have read and which even Muslim leaders admitted had not been published in bad faith, has had its repercussion on the Hindu community. There was a Hindu backlash in Mysore and the spread of this backlash cannot be ruled out in future. Prominent Hindu leaders have not taken kindly to the extent to which *Deccan Herald* went to apologise for the careless publication. "They did not have to bend over backwards like that," said an annoyed leader. Yet others drew attention to the open-mindedness and tolerance of the Hindus. After all in the same story the village prostitute is named Sita, they pointed out. There was no Hindu reaction to this. There is also a feeling among some sections of the Hindu community that the Muslims in protesting against the publication had gone too far. The recent riots have once again precipitated the feeling among the Hindus that their endurance is being exploited.

Mr Hegde worded his appeal for calm the day riots broke out in Bangalore city precisely to avert a Hindu backlash. He merely described the story as "unfortunate" and regretted that the persons hurt by the story should have resorted to violence to protest. He said, "Perhaps some other methods could have been used which would have been equally effective."

It is just as well that there is someone as able as Mr Hegde

at the helm of affairs in Karnataka. Suddenly this peaceful state of sandal and sculpture has more than its share of burning problems—the Belgaum border problem in the north, the Kodagu agitation in the south, linguistic riots, communal clashes, and farmers' agitations. It is a tribute to Mr Hegde's dexterity that while issues have been cooking in various parts of the state, he has managed to prevent them from boiling over. He is playing a brilliant game of brinkmanship, but in these troubled times, any little spark is enough to set off a fire.

There is no doubt that the Muslim outburst was spontaneous. In interviews with *The Telegraph*, both Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde and Director General of police, Mr. A.R. Nizamuddin admitted as much. News of the short story spread like wildfire by the word of mouth. By 4. p.m. a mob of about 5,000 angry Muslims had gathered before the *Deccan Herald* office. However, investigations by *The Telegraph* reveal that the subsequent spread of the agitation in Mysore, Tumkur, (where the police had to open fire) Bidar and Kolar was fanned by Congress (I) politicians who acted on their own their own. For instance, wherever the Congress (I) politicians were active, the passions of the community had been so dangerously aroused that the police had to open fire. In Bangalore, Tumkur and Mysore, local Muslim leaders belonging to the Congress (I) party are largely to be blamed for the violent turn of events that culminated in police firings.

In Bangalore, the role played by former Congress minister Ibrahim has been flayed by both press and public. A rabble-rouser to the core, Mr Ibrahim was at the spot shortly before all hell broke loose in front of the *Deccan Herald* office on December 7. Having represented the Shivaji Nagar constituency of Bangalore city, Mr Ibrahim does hold some sway over this Muslim dominated constituency. There can be no justification for his call for a prayer before the *Deccan Herald* office. Not only Mr Ibrahim but his brothers also have very unsavoury reputations—one brother Khader was accused in the Bhadravathi murder case, another named Sadiq was also arrested with Mr Ibrahim for the incidents on 7 December in Bangalore. Two years ago Mr Ibrahim was accused of playing

agent provocateur in the riots that broke out in Shivaji Nagar following the death of a local Muslim resident in the lock-up.

At a press conference, Mr Ibrahim stoutly defended himself and with a sense of outrage denied that he had been an agent provocateur. But demagoguery comes naturally to him and even at the press conference he got worked up and made some emotional comments. It was very clear that Mr Ibrahim was enjoying himself. A man who thrives on controversy, Mr Ibrahim was clearly happy that he was receiving a lot of publicity. For a man starved of publicity, any news is good news.

Senior police officers told *The Telegraph* that in Tumkur a former Congress MLA and a prominent local leader, Mr Shafi played a crucial role in whipping up the sentiments of the public. Mr Shafi decided to hold a procession though a prohibitory order was in force. The police officers had repeatedly urged him to abandon his plan and Mr Shafi, even as he was assuring them that he had given up the idea of the procession, was making full arrangements to go ahead with it. The procession turned violent and the incitement had in Tumkur the processionists attacked the police in the most brutal fashion. The condition of head constable Ranganath who was savagely attacked by a chopper is still serious. In Tumkur the police had to resort to firing twice, but fortunately there was only one casualty.

In Mysore, Congress (I) MP, Hajee Sait did instigate his followers, senior police officers told *The Telegraph*. In fact most of those arrested in connection with the incidents of arson and rioting were known supporters of Hajee Sait. However, it was most unfortunate that in Mysore the disturbances acquired a communal colour. Even now it is not entirely clear how and why the problem became communal, but according to knowledgeable sources Raj Kumar's association allegedly played a role in the turn of events. It must be pointed out that the Bharatiya Janata Party and the RSS fortunately kept a low profile during the spate of violence.

Senior Janata Party members castigating the Congress (I) elements for exploiting a turbulent situation for their own selfish political gains said the main purpose behind the

instigation was to damage the reputation of of the Hegde government in view of the upcoming Panchyat elections. Some even went to the extent of saying that the Congress (I) was stoking the trouble so that the Panchayat elections could be delayed. While there is no doubt that individual Congress leaders fanned the riots, it cannot in all fairness be said that the entire Congress machinery had been used to exploit the situation.

Unwittingly, the *Deccan Herald* triggered off a spate of violence in the state. But it was commendable that the newspaper had the courage and good sense to accept full responsibility for the reaction the short story provoked. Perhaps it could be argued that the objectionable title of the story did not refer to the Prohet. But the newspaper wasted not time in quibbling or making feeble attempts at justification.

It was refreshing that in his interview with *The Telegraph* the young proprietor and editor-in-chief of *Deccan Herald*, K. N. Hari Kumar made no attempts to mitigate the paper's carelessness. He said, "The Muslims were outraged. If it was mere instigation that caused the havoc how is it that such incidents did not take place earlier? The story did wound the sentiments of Muslims. In fact in the morning itself I received many telephone calls from various Muslim leaders protesting against the story." He pointed out that objections were raised regarding the title of the story, the last line and the names of the characters of the story. The story had in fact been cleared a year ago but had been held back due to a backlog. Hari Kumar said no decision had yet been taken on what was to be done with the magazine editor who, however, has proceeded on long leave.

The newspaper has paid a heavy price for the story. Its godown with stocks worth Rs. 1 crore was completely gutted. It has announced compensation of Rs. 25,000 to the kind of the persons killed in the police firing and a lesser amount for the injured. As Mr Hedge said, "The *Deccan Herald* management responded to the situation as they should."

—*The Telrgraph*

## A MOMENT'S MADNESS IN THE CITY OF PALACES

*V.N. Subba Rao*

Six weeks ago Mysore went through the trauma of its first ever communal holocaust. Nobody in the somnolent city of gardens and palaces is inclined to forget the week-long riots—the shock and shame wham which they inspired in the city remain.

Nearly 200 vehicles—a majority of them two-wheelers including bicycles—were burnt down, more than 200 shops were either looted or set on fire, and more than 400 private homes were looted or burnt or damaged. These sins resulted in over 800 arrests: This is the bleak balance-sheet of the riots which have also left four dead and 250 injured. Among the injured are 75 policemen of various ranks, and the total loss of property is worth Rs. 83 lakh.

To compound the acute embarrassment of this city, which otherwise has an impeccable record of peace and communal harmony, most of the trouble was confined to areas in which the poor or the lower middle class live. What startles the abject observer is the fact that, whether the victims are Hindus or Muslims, they are comrades in poverty and privation. But not even this common bond deterred them from going at each other's throats in the name of religion.

The most poignant feature of the riots, which threw normal life in the city out of gear for three full days because of the unprecedented round-the-clock curfew, was the savage fight between the Harijans and the Muslims, the best of neighbours other-



## Arson, looting continue

# Indefinite curfew in Mysore

Times of India News Service

MYSORE December 10:

**A**n indefinite curfew was declared on Mysore today following continued arson and looting for the third day.

Except for the stray incidents the dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed yesterday passed off peacefully.

This morning shop-keepers opened their shops, people came out to buy provisions and autorickshaws, skeleton city bus services and mofussil KSRTC services began to operate.

But, as the day advanced, arson and looting were reported from different parts of the city. Acid bottles were thrown on people and houses in one mohalla. A car and a carpet shop were set on fire. A textile shop in Chamundipuram was ransacked. A cycle shop, a garage, and a vulcanising shop on Narayana Sastry road were also the targets of miscreants.

As the situation went out of control, around noon curfew was reimposed. Autorickshaws went off the roads, shops pulled down their shutters and mofussil bus service were suspended. By about 1 p.m., the city wore a deserted look.

Mr D. N. Muni, rishna, superintendent of the police, said no firing had been resorted to by the police today. And no deaths were reported.

About 140 persons, who were arrested yesterday, were produced before the court today. They have been remanded to judicial custody till December 23. The bodies of the four victims who died in the police firing on Monday have been identified.

A stabbing case was reported on Eklamma Temple street this afternoon. The victim has been hospitalised.

All the educational institutions remained closed today. Officers have been directed to close their office by 5.30 p.m. to enable people to return to their homes before 6 p.m.

In an attack and assault incident, four persons, including one Mr Rame Gowda, an agricultural assistant, have been injured. One car of the Visrant Tyres and a lorry were set ablaze at Yadavagiri. Despite imposition of curfew, and intensive patrolling, situation in Kailasapuram, Soppinabeni and Gandhi Nagar are still tense, it is stated.

The home minister Mr B

Rachaiiah, and the rural development minister, Mr Abdul Nazir, and the former Union minister, Mr Jaffer Sharief, spoke on the situation in Mysore and Bangalore.

### KSRR PLATOONS

Ten more platoons of the state reserve police, (KSRR) including two platoons with additional wire-sets, are expected to arrive here to strengthen the hands of local police. Mr Sridharan, special inspector general of police (COJ and CID), told newsmen tonight.

The additional force would be employed to maintain tight vigil during night in Mysore. This would also help in covering the by-lanes and rounding up miscreants, and strengthening pickets whenever necessary.

He described the situation as "fairly incident-free" and there was no confrontation between the two communities. About 3,000 passengers

left in the KSRTC bus-stand stand in specially arranged convoys. About 400 women who were taking shelter in a Rama mandir in Kailasapuram had been given police protection and sent back to their homes.

The train services between Mysore and Bangalore and other places continue to operate as usual.

The chief minister, Mr Rainakrishna Hegde, phoned Mr Nazir, rural development minister, and enquired about the law and order situation in Mysore. Mr Nazir told the chief minister that the situation was more or less peaceful.

The deputy superintendent of police, Mr Khatawkar, arrested an ex-convict and notorious sandalwood smuggler today. He is alleged to be one of the key figures behind the disturbances in the city.

Some of the major factories, including Ideal Java and Vikram Tyres remained closed today.

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wise, in Gandhi Nagar, one of the most miserably backward localities of Mysore. The name of the locality is perhaps unintentionally symbolic since the father of the nation, after whom it is named, lived and fought for these very communities.

Most of the 750-odd huts in the sprawling slum are owned by the Harijans and tenanted by the Muslims. None of them had the faintest idea of what controversial short story in the *Deccan Herald*, "Mohammed the Idiot", which had sparked off the violence in Bangalore the previous day, was all about. But still they looted, destroyed and burnt down each other's humble homes. The shocking score in this locality: 240 huts either ransacked or demolished or burnt down.

The Muslims of course, have suffered more than the Harijans in the insensate encounter. Women and children took the brunt of the midnight swoop on their hutments. "Most of the men were taken away by the police earlier in the day in connection with riots in the city centre and we were left to fend for ourselves," say the women. "We ran for our lives as hordes of attackers set upon our homes. We ran to the adjoining A.J. Colony in search of friends and relations. They looked after us for many days. Many of us came back after a fortnight only to find that the marauders had made a clean sweep—there was not a pot to cook the day's food in. What greeted us was total devastation."

An old handicapped man found that Rs. 250 and the humble bridal attire he had tucked away for his daughter's marriage had been looted. In another hut, a widow found that the princely sum of Rs. 2'000, her entire life's savings stored by her in a wooden box, had been burnt to ashes. All that the hysterical woman recovered were burnt pieces of two rupee notes into which she had decided her fortune. Outside another burnt hut an embittered woman cried: "I was sleeping with the children a dead of night when they started pounding on the door. I was too scared to collect my belongings and my first impulse was to run to safety with the children. So I ran and ran, without even thinking." The next morning she found the hut virtually non-existent with every little bit of her belongings consumed by the fire.

A full 40 days after the outrage, we saw the remains of half

a dozen pushcarts twisted out of shape and damaged beyond repair. They meant everything to their owners who earned anywhere between Rs. five and Rs. 10 a day by carting vegetables and fruits to town. One old man lost his only asset—his tonga which cost Rs. 600, from which he earned around Rs. 10 a day. Now he doesn't have the money to feed his horse since he hasn't earned a paise since the riots. He cannot buy another tonga till the long-awaited compensation arrives but the authorities are too busy with the state-wise Panchayat election to attend to his problem!

The same sordid tale is related in many other poor parts of the city—Manji Mohalla, K.T. Street, Sawday Road, Kailasapuram, Ramanuja Road, Nanjumalige, Kumbarakoppal, Kesare and K. G. Koppal, to name a few. No religion can lessen the misery of these helpless people. Yet, they were the people at the forefront of the riots.

However, the more affluent areas of the city were not totally free of trouble. Scores of two-wheelers awaiting repair in roadside workshops and belonging to people of both communities were pulled out and burnt down.

Why was there a communal flare-up in a haven of communal peace and harmony? This is a question which remains unanswered. Everybody seems to be groping for an answer but can find none.

"I wish I had not lived to see this shameful episode," says 65-year old Azeez Sait, Member of Parliament and former minister. He recalls how the benevolent former ruler of the erstwhile Mysore state, Krishnaraja Wodeyar, had built a firm foundation of communal harmony in this beautiful city. Several other prominent Muslims of the city—politicians, academicians, social workers and retired officials—share his dismay and disbelief. "It hurts my conscience deeply when I am tempted to ask an autorickshaw driver before I get into his vehicle whether he is a Hindu or Muslim," confesses an enlightened Muslim professor. "Things shouldn't have come to such a pass in this town."

A striking feature of the unfortunate incidents is that every prominent Muslim admits that the lumpens of their own community should take the blame for triggering off the trouble.

"The prophet will not approve of this," was the common refrain, though the same Muslim leaders also said that police high-handedness and the exploitation of the situation by anti social elements on either side from the third day onwards were responsible for the escalation of violence.

The police, in fact, seem to have been slow starters, but once they swung into action, they seem to have over-reacted, flushing out those who sought refuge in the bungalows and even poorer homes of innocent people. In Bangalore, on the previous day, they went about dealing with anti social elements quite ruthlessly and even police circles admit that there might have been some wrong arrests. But even the Muslim leaders who allege police high-handedness absolve DIG Dr. Ramanujam, SP Munikrishna and Special IGP Sridharan (who came down from Bangalore to take overall charge of the operations) of blame. "It is the lower level officials who unleashed a reign of the terror on even the innocents," complain the detractors. But the truth seems to be somewhere in between the harshness of this allegation and the customary projection of the injured innocence by officials.

What seems to have happened is that the additional superintendent of police, Mysore district, who has relentlessly pursued smugglers and bootleggers in the city and is reputed to have virtually broken their back, has become a target of attacks from these "anti social elements". There was a determined bid to ambush the rather fragile police party led by him on the day the trouble started. The other senior police officers had to use all their force to break into the almost impregnable cordon of demonstrators. The police force was apparently inadequate and unprepared to handle the situation. The situation did not improve till Bangalore rushed reinforcements which arrived a little too late to avert the first day's police firing which killed four persons on the spot.

A question which everyone is asking in Mysore, and which will inevitably loom large before the judicial commission, is whether the police were right in allowing the massive procession of around 15,000 people to be taken out on 7 December, when a similar procession of a much smaller size had triggered off police firing in Bangalore just the previous evening, killing

eight persons.

Mukhtar Unnissa Begum, the Congress (I) MLA representing the Mandi Mohalla region where much of the trouble in Mysore was concentrated, has some pertinent questions to ask : Why were the known roughnecks in the city not rounded up the moment trouble flared up in neighbouring Bangalore ? When none of the responsible MLAs or MPs were available in town, on whose assurance of good conduct did the police allow the Muslim procession to be taken out ? Could not the minor politicians who approached the authorities for permission to take out the procession have been handled more tactfully ? When just a couple of months ago, anti Venkataswamy commission agitators had gone on rampage for almost two weeks on the highways of the state, throwing normal life completely out of gear and the government had not thought it fit to raise a finger to help, how was it so eager to open fire in Bangalore and Mysore at the slightest sign of trouble ? And why were the demonstrators fired at a close range and above the knee, disregarding all rules ? And which senior police officer ordered the firing in Mysore ?

These, no doubt, are questions that will be studied by the proposed judicial commission, but there are many who feel that condemning the police outright might amount to over simplification.

Azeez Sait, an acknowledged Muslim leader, does not hesitate to blame three *moulvis* "imported" from the north and belonging to a sub-sect which was only marginally represented among Mysore's Muslims for triggering the unprecedented violence by their inflammatory exhortations, "I don't mind going on record with this charge," he said, adding emotionally : After all, somebody must speak the truth." He was also surprised that the procession was allowed at all by the police. Sait himself was away from Mysore when the trouble started. His only consolation was that no right-thinking person on either side was responsible for the trouble.

A number of properties in Mysore have been the subject of dispute between the Hindus and Muslims for many years. While the Hindus are sure that two Muslim mausoleums were not removed by the authorities though a couple of temples were razed to

the ground when the prestigious D. Devaraj Urs Road was built some time back, the Muslims have a grouse that they were discriminated against when unauthorised structures were demolished. There is also a running war between tenant and landlords, with many landlords waiting for an opportunity to ease out their tenants either for non-payment of rents or refusal to pay higher rents. This appears to be more in evidence in the area of Gandhinagar. In some areas, local grudges also appear to have surfaced, to the detriment of communal peace. The fact that neither side showed lack of preparation in terms of weaponry or tact might go to prove that behind the facade of harmony were hidden areas of articulated conflict.

Fanatics on either side, obviously, were waiting for an opportunity to vent their spleen and the previous day's trouble in Bangalore over the *Deccan Herald* short story provided them with as good an opportunity as they needed. It is, however, difficult to pinpoint the exact organisations on either side which pushed themselves into the forefront of the trouble. The agitations were leaderless and there was apparently no method in the madness.

For the past few days, in many of the troubled areas in Mysore, saffron flags of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) have been seen in thousands—on housetops, on autorickshaws and at street corners. Activists of the VHP, however, deny any deliberate move on their part to provoke the Muslims. The flags had gone up because of Sankranti, a major Hindu festival observed on January 15, they explain. They also point out that not more than two of the 800 persons arrested in connection with last month's disturbances were Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) workers. The complicity of either the VHP or the RSS was, therefore, a canard, they assert. But such flags should not be hoisted in a sensitive situation like this.

Even during the worst of the mindless looting, arson and assault, there were countless cases of the Hindus and Muslims rushing to each others' aid when it was most wanted. That is the most heartening feature of the otherwise gruesome happenings. For instance, Narasamma, a poor Hindu woman, stood surety for as many as 25 Muslims arrested in connection with the disturbances and, similarly, two Muslims bailed out a

number of Hindus incarcerated by the police.

It is also significant that there were very few stabbing incidents throughout the one week of trouble, and hardly any case of a direct engagement between a Hindu and a Muslim—the situation would have been far worse if such incidents had taken place. The very absence of them shows that it is still possible to retrieve the situation.

As a consequence of the wide-spread violence and intimidation, an informal, but quite effective, fiat has been issued to Muslim women to avoid going to cinema house. A couple of local Urdu papers have even carried advertisements to this effect, so much so that theatres showing Hindi films have reported a sharp drop in collections.

Both sides are now licking their wounds and while there is a lurking willingness to resume normal relations at the individual level, inhibitions and suspicions still remain in some areas. The peace committee do not seem to be working with alacrity and the official machinery has been too preoccupied with the Zila Parishad and Mandal elections to attend to the settlement of compensation claims. The only compensation received by the victims so far is what has been generously paid by the *Deccan Herald* management. Now that the elections are over, the authorities would do well to give compensation without further delay.

The elderly State Home Minister, B. Rachiah and Rural Development Minister Abdul Nazir Sab did commendable work in going to the troubled areas and counselling restraint and order even at the height of the trouble. The fact that, despite these efforts, it took a full week for the trouble to die down, tells its own story. But it is now clearly upto opinion-builders on either side to take over the responsibility of restoring harmony.

—*Indian Express*

## **PUNJAB ACCORD AND AFTER: OPPOR- TUNITY TO GO INTO ROOTS OF PROBLEM**

*Balraj Puri*

Rajiv-Longowal accord has not resolved all the problems of Punjab. No accord was ever expected to do that. The Prime Minister rightly claimed it to be just a concrete step towards a solution of the problem.

Series of what were called as conciliatory gestures by the Government of India, preceding the accord, on the one hand, and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal's categorical assertions of faith in the integrity of the country, Hindu-Sikh unity and peaceful means, on the other, had marked a breakthrough in the situation in Punjab.

The terrorists suffered their most serious reverse when in gross miscalculation of the Sikh mood they responded to the official gestures by letting loose a wave of bombs on innocent men, women and children in the capital. The Sikh community also shared the world wide revulsion against the suspected terrorist hand in exploding the Air India Jamboo Kanishka.

Thus ended a self-sustaining vicious circle which was formed by events like killings of innocents by the terrorists—about 400 till June 1984, Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's assassination, anti-sikh violence thereafter, decoration of army officers for their action on Durbar Sahib, glorification of relatives of the alleged killers of Indira Gandhi and so on. In this chain reaction, each event was sought to be justified in terms of the other.



Positive features of the Indian democracy played their own part in breaking this vicious circle. The press, the civil liberties movement and the opposition deserve credit for their contribution. But a change in the attitudes of the Government and Akali Dal towards the terrorists, too, is of crucial importance.

One could suspect an element of connivance on their part. Perhaps the ruling party found in terrorists an excellent instrument in breaking the back of the Dal which was its principal rival in the field of elections and tussel for power in Punjab. Perhaps the Dal did not like to open a second front and hoped that the Government would bend to them under the extremist pressure. Whatever be the considerations and calculations on both sides, their strategies misfired and recoiled.

A change in the Akali stance on extremism and terrorism was matched by a similar change in the official policy. Elimination of the Akali Dal from the political scene of Punjab was no more its chief objective. The Dal was recognised as the authentic spokesman of the community and its leader was considered worthy of a summit agreement.

It should, therefore, not be much surprising that negotiations remained deadlocked in 1983-1984 when the number of disputed issues was small but agreement was quick when the issues had been magnified and complicated mainly on account of the aftermath of the Blue Star and Indira's assassination. The reason for this may be found in the change of atmosphere, attitudes, moods and motives rather than in the terms of the agreement or the skill of the negotiators.

The memorandum of settlement does contain clauses that had symbolised the prestige of the Akali Dal. But its real strength lies in its impact on the minds of the people inside and outside Punjab. Similarly, most of the apprehensions are not directly related to the clauses of the settlement but no long term prospects of the problem. Citing past experience, many Hindus ask, what is the guarantee that the present concessions would not whet fresh Sikh demands? Or the moderates would be able to hold ground in Sikh politics for long? Many Sikhs likewise are not reassured about the prospects of what they call honour and dignity of the Panth.

The atmosphere created by the settlement offers the right opportunity for a frank debate on these apprehensions and of going to the roots of the problem. The goodwill generated by it must be used to promote better understanding between the communities and view points.

A forum much wider than the secretariat of the New Delhi would be needed to debate the fundamental question of Punjab politics, viz. how far aspirations of the Sikh community are compatible with and can further the national interest and how far Indian nationalism is capable of inspiring and satisfying these aspirations.

Hindu mind is in reality not hostile to the Sikh aspirations. It is ignorant. It does not lack sympathy but understanding. Many well meaning liberal Hindus ask in sincere bewilderment. What do the Sikhs really want? Why are their ambitions insatiable? Why they are discontented despite being almost the richest community of India? Why a community which sacrificed so much for the freedom and security of the country got so much alienated? Why a community supposed to be specifically created for the protection of the Hindus with its roots in Hindu culture become so hostile to it?

The simple answer to the questions would be the Sikh urge for a distinct role which is rooted in history. The Hindu recognised it; as a movement for reform and dissent, the British recognised it; as a martial race with a pride of place in the imperial army. Free India promised it as makers of green revolution and a sword arm of the country. As long as their distinct role was recognised, the Sikhs were friendly and loyal to those who did it; even if it involved service, sacrifice and suffering.

Three modern factors have sharpened the identity urge of the community. First, it is the only religion of the world, shrines of which are run by its representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise, which ensures active participation of the community in its religious affairs. As religion and politics are based on a common electorate, the Sikh identity develops a sharper political dimension also.

Second, during negotiations on the transfer of power, the British recognised the Sikhs, alongwith the Hindus and Muslims, as one of the three claimants. As they did not constitute a majority

in any part of the subcontinent, their identity could not be given a territorial base. But while throwing their lot with India, they got lewish, though vague, assurances about their status in free India from the national leaders, which increased their sense of self-awareness and self-importance.

Finally, politicisation, education, communications, development and other processes of modernisation inevitably promote identity consciousness among all communities. In India, on account of these processes, religion and region have emerged as the two most powerful bases of identity formation. The Punjabi Sikh is no exception.

Origin of Sikhism was in a way a religious manifestation of the emerging Punjabi nationalism seeking to assert its autonomy from the central authority of the Mughals. Religious and regional sentiments of the Sikhs are mixed and are inter-changeable. In fact most of the campaigns of the Akali Dal have been for regional rather than religious issues. But for two reasons, regional identity of the Sikhs gradually receded into the background. Firstly, no regional forum could substitute the mobilizational power of the gurdwaras. Secondly, the centre and the Hindus were more sceptic about the role of the Punjabi identity.

Thus when Master Tara Singh launched the first powerful movement for a Punjabi Suba in the fifties, Prime Minister Nehru persuaded him to withdraw it by offering to appoint a commission to look into the Sikh grievances. More recently, Indira Gandhi was quick to concede religious demands of the Akalis while being reluctant to compromise on their regional demands. Centre's refusal to concede a Punjabi speaking state till ten years after the rest of the country had been reorganised on linguistic basis, also added a religious fervour to a regional demand.

Two more factors undermined the composite regional identity of Punjab. First, most of the Punjabi Hindus disowned their mother tongue and declared themselves to be Hindi speaking in the census of 1951 and 1961. Second, the Akali Dal, main champion of the Punjabi identity, remained an exclusively Sikh party and thus divided this identity on communal lines.

However, all manifestations of identity consciousness of the

communities, do not weaken a nation. In a pluralistic society, it can be used to add an emotional content to the integration process and release their creative energies for the enrichment of the national life.

In the case of the dynamic Sikh community, green revolution, Indo-Pak wars and migration to the West provided outlets for its creative energies. But soon they were exhausted or proved inadequate for its yearning for a distinct role. But its most frustrating experience was the way it was deprived of an effective share in political power.

Power is the most powerful urge of a self-conscious community. Economic prosperity is no substitute for it. In fact it may stimulate the power urge. In the case of the Sikhs, their share in political power declined in proportion to the economic development in the State and growth of their solidarity.

They had shared power either as members of the Congress or through coalition experiments of the Akali Dal with other parties. But growing communal polarisation made both alternatives redundant. Failure of non-Akali parties to identify with Punjabi or Sikh aspirations also sharpened the process of polarisation.

Eventually this polarisation got consolidated into a coalition of the Hindus and scheduled Caste or outcast Sikhs on the basis of which Congress could mobilise majority of the electorate of Punjab and ensure its return to power. The prospects of perpetual political wilderness even after attainment of Punjabi Suba, in a Sikh majority State, is the principal cause of the frustration of the Akali Dal with the present system. The Sikh mainstream that rallied round the Dal, too, was frustrated accordingly.

This led to a search for new institutional and constitutional arrangements that should ensure preservation of Sikh identity and Punjabi identity as also maximise their share in political power. Anandpur Sahib resolution is supposed to be an answer to that search.

The resolution has been debated mostly from nation versus Sikh angle, which consolidated Sikh support for it and provoked hostility of the rest of the nation. While its session-

ist implications have been magnified, it has not been examined from the angle of its professed objectives.

Its operative part demands restoration of Punjabi territorial identity and enlargement of its constitutional autonomy. But if all Punjabi speaking areas, which were excluded at the time of the formation of the Punjabi Suba in 1966, are restored to the present State, as demanded by the resolution, it would reduce the Sikhs to a minority. For these areas are inhabited by Punjabi Hindus who got themselves excluded from the new State by declaring Hindi as their mother tongue.

Further, if the enlarged State gets more autonomy, with less checks of the federal institutions, it might lead to a repressive rule of the Hindu majority. In order to prevent this eventuality, the resolution wants to ensure *holbala* (the Punjabi word in the original resolution vaguely meaning pre-eminence) of the Sikhs. But it stops short of spelling out precise constitutional or other means to do that.

Rajiv-Longowal agreement finds a way out of these contradictions by taking cognizance of only the latter part of the resolution and avoids reference to restoration of the geographical identity of the Punjabi speaking State.

But in the process Sikh commitment to secular Punjabi identity is further undermined.

Some Sikhs seek a way out of the contradictions and inadequacies of the Anandpur Sahib resolution in a sovereign Sikh State. As a vague yearning, as a way of expressing anger and provoking the Hindus, slogan of Khalistan has a purpose. But its larger contradictions and inadequacies as also more serious consequences for the community remain unexposed as the issue has not been subjected to a debate.

In Vancouver, Canada, where the atmosphere is far less tolerant, editor of the fortnightly *Link* organised a Forum of Communal Harmony and invited all those who did not believe in violence and communal hatred to a dialogue on Khalistan. Indian Consul in the city frowned upon the idea. In a letter to the journal, he expressed surprise how a patriotic Indian could participate in a dialogue on Khalistan.

One hopes, though one is not sure that the incident is not typical of the role of our diplomatic concept of patriotism that

feels threatened by a dialogue ; even within the parameters of non-violence and communal harmony. It is this attitude that by taking the issue of Khalistan out of the purview of rational argument and sparing its protagonists of the responsibility of spelling out its precise meaning, helps in creating a romantic mystique about it and covering up its flaws.

It is true that the Sikhs within India have not taken the slogan seriously. But dialogue on this as also on more relevant issues is as dead here as abroad ; not only between communities but, more tragically, also within the Sikh community itself. For how can a community hope to survive and grow if it is not free to argue for or against various courses of actions at a time when it is at the most crucial cross roads of its history ?

The Sikhs are perhaps as confused as the rest of the nation is about the Sikh problem.

Its understanding should, therefore, be a common objective and its solution a common endeavour.

However, three precautions would help any meaningful discussion of the problem, for its understanding and solution.

First, there is no need to urge the Sikhs to subordinate their interests to national obligations. For it implies a dichotomy between them which is far from axiomatic. In fact it would be seen that the best way the Sikhs could serve the national interest is through the pursuit of their own enlightened self-interest.

Secondly, not much purpose would be served by a campaign to prove scriptural and philosophical similarities between the Sikhs and Hindus, For the problem is due to excess of and not lack of similarities. The Sikhs would acknowledge and emphasize these similarities more readily when their urge for a distinct role is satisfied. Otherwise, they might seek to discover dissimilarities where they do not exist,

Thirdly, it is futile to make recurrent demands on the Sikh leaders to separate religion from politics on the spacious argument that religion is a matter confined to an individual and his maker. Apart from the fact that religion by its very definition is a social phenomenon and its aspirations are, therefore, not merely spiritual but also socio-political, in the case of the Sikhs, as already noted, elected gurdwaras further establish a

close link between panth and politics. However, after the reality of the link is conceded (which was also emphasized by leaders like Gandhi and Azad), its precise form can be debated in which religion inspires and guides politics and is not exploited or subordinated by it. We might revert to the point presently.

More positively, it should be realized that in a democratic and pluralistic country like India, sub-national identities cannot be eliminated and, in fact, can play a useful role.

And more concretely, legitimacy of the urge for Sikh identity, urge for Punjabi identity and urge for power by both of them should be conceded. In reality the Sikhs—like other countrymen also seek to belong to other multiple identities ; from family to nation, class to ideology, profession to recreation, language to culture and so on. The essence of the Sikh dilemma and the Sikh problem lies in the failure of the community to properly articulate and reconcile these diverse urges.

The claim of an urge is limited by two factors. First, where it prevents satisfaction of the other urges of the community. Second, where it prevents satisfaction of the legitimate urges of other communities.

The attempt to maintain a monolithic political identity of the Sikh community, as we have seen, came in the way of its urge for other identities. It prevented the growth of a composite Punjabi identity and prevented the community for sharing political power.

If there is yet no objection—on the name of Panthic unity—to the association of the Sikhs with non-Sikhs in the promotion of class, professional and cultural identities, why should they be inhibited in contributing to building, say, a Punjabi identity.

Much of the confusion has been caused by the controversy about inter-connection between politics and religion which has limited the choice to either their complete separation or complete mergery ignoring the many other possible forms of their relation which are available even in Sikh history.

The concept of peeri and meeri in the Sikh tradition, representing the spiritual and the temporal, clearly implied a duality, symbolised by the swords and two separate forums of Harmander Sahib and the Akal Takhat. After the gurus,

leadership and institutions of the spiritual and temporal became more distinctly separate.

Panthic unity on the basis of an exclusive political identity has two more disabilities. Firstly it can be maintained only at a high pitch of tension which if continued too long, is no good for the health of the community. In practice even an atmosphere of crisis has not prevented disunity in its ranks as also in the Akali Dal.

Secondly, the Dal is not a fit instrument of sharing power with the non-Sikh communities. In the peculiar communal composition of the State it is apt to be outmanouvered in the game of numbers in a fair elections. By its very nature it has almost declared itself out of bound for power. However, if due to combination of some exceptional circumstances, it manages to get a majority, it close the doors of power to the non-Sikhs unless it goes in for coalition with a Hindu Party which may not always be feasible. The Present politico-electoral system virtually provides for a rule by one community over the other which is a very negation of the spirit of secular democracy.

The Sikh leaders have not been unaware of this anamoly. The idea of throwing open the door of the Akali Dal to non-Sikhs or remaining it as the Punjabi Dal, i.e. a regional party of all Punjabi has been mooted from time to time, it would have the logical culmination of the crucial reorientation that Sant Fateh Singh had given to Punjab politics by changing the Pnnjabi Suba demand from a Sikh-demand to a Punjabi demand. He did not live long enough to extend the logic of this change.

Master Tara Singh is also said to have given an assurance to, among others, Asoka Mehta, that after achievement of the Punjabi Suba, a common party of the Hindu and the Sikhs would be formed. The assurance was later confirmed in writing by the Secretary of the Akali leader. Earlier also, the Dal, under his leadership gave up a political role in 1956 when he advised the Sikhs to join the Congress. But as the ruling party declined to concede a Punjabi speaking state, they were soon disillusioned by it.

Akali leaders are free to reject the logic of the situation.



But their freedom must end where it encroaches on the freedom of others. The right and privileges that the Sikh identity seeks for itself must be limited by similar rights and privileges of other communities, including their urge for power.

Major cause of tension in Punjab is the failure of its principal communities of the Hindus and Sikhs to adjust their mutual relations and evolve a mechanism for an equitable share of power. The problem got distorted when the Hindus abdicated the right to assert sub-regional identity—both in politics and culture—and functioned as an agent of the central authority to prove that they perceived to be the national interest. Therefrom, the problem acquired the form of the Sikh versus Nation or the Sikh versus the Centre which was essentially intraregional problem.

Sant-Longowal has taken a welcome initiative in starting a dialogue with the Hindu community. But nobody is articulating the urges of the Punjabi Hindus in a sub-regional identity of Punjab and not as super nationalist custodians of national interest, to respond to the dialogue. Three questions are crucial from their point of view for any understanding with them. First, how to ensure their security from the terrorists once the army para-military forces are withdrawn. Two, if Dal seeks their support for its demands, would they be allowed to become its members so that they could participate in the joint campaign as equals? Third, if the Hindus also respond to the Akali request for the vote in elections and it gets majority, how would the Hindus get any share in power and representation in the assembly and the Government ?

Complete agreement on these or other related issues of Punjab between any set of Hindu and Sikh leaders is today neither possible nor necessary. The art of democracy consists in living together with those with whom we do not agree and converting differences from being a source of tension into a creative stimulant.

Political tensions are not proportional merely to the magnitude of difference but also to the way they are expressed. Separatist movement in Tamil Nadu and the plebiscite movement in Kashmir, for instance, had represented a far greater degree of alienation of the respective communities from the

national mainstream than that of the Sikhs to-day. But if they were resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned, it was mainly because they did not use terrorism or communal violence as their creed or means. Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity was an indispensable slogan at every public meeting during the worst phase of Kashmiri alienation.

Those who preach violent methods for the expression of the Sikh dis-satisfaction do a greater damage to the Sikh interest than to the rest of the nation. For firstly, private violence is no match for the means of violence at the disposal of the State. Secondly violence would brutalise and dehumanise the community using it.

Problem of violence needs a fuller treatment than is possible here. But it is obvious that it got aggravated in Punjab as differences of opinion and struggle for power could not be contained within a peaceful and constitutional framework. It is pertinent to recall that the present phase of the trouble started after the mid term elections of 1980 which disrupted the precarious Hindu-Sikh power equation in the form of Akali-Janata coalition. Ironically the present settlement has been concluded at a time when another elections are due.

As communal situation is more polarised today than it was five years ago, there is no assurance that consequences of elections would be any better. Is the election system not suitable for Punjab? Or communal does not fit into the system?

Basic questions of Punjab politics, discussed above, can no longer be evaded even for taking short term immediate steps. Elections must, therefore, be preceded by a frank exploration of possible permutations and combinations for the sharing of power.

An ideal way to start such an exploration would be under an interim arrangement of an all party Government in the State. Which should provide a sense of participation and involvement to all such forces as do not believe violence and secession. The sole objective of this Government should be to restore a normal civil and civilised life in the State and inspire confidence in all sections of the people for a fair poll.

The experiment of an all party coalition Government is not only likely to undermine communal polarisation in the state

but also the inhibitions that the political parties have developed about associations with one another. It would be argued that it might lead to horse trading by power thirsty politicians. So what? Horse trading is a far better pursuit than trading of human heads and thirst for power is healthier than thirst for blood.

While any lapse in the implementation of the clauses of the memorandum of settlement would cause a breach of trust, the conciliation process must go far beyond them, in diagnosing the roots of the problem, promoting understanding of the basic urges of other communities and initiating an uninhibited dialogue on all aspects of the problem at various levels. The country cannot afford the risk of a possible relapse.

—*The Telegraph*

## HINDU-SIKH FRATERNITY

### Don't Negate History of Five Centuries

Gopal Singh

No other two religious communities are bound together by as many inseparable bonds as are Hindu and Sikh. Both, for instance, believe in *Karma* and transmigration and the end of the earthly life as *Moksha*. Though rejecting the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses and firmly believing in the Vedantic ideal of god-realisation through yoga (*Bhakti*, *Gyan* or *Karma*, though not *Hatha* yoga), Sikhism seems to have imbibed the very essence of the Hindu spiritual *mores*. Though highly critical of the ritualistic *Karma Kanda* and sanctifying secular activity, Sikhism even in its later militant phase always defended oftentimes with its blood, the Hindu rituals, their preferences and even their prejudices. Guru Teg Bahadur's sacrifice of his head to protect the sacred thread and the frontal mark of Hindus is inscribed in the psyche and racial memory of both.

The Sikhs may not have been the worshippers of the cow, but they have never in their history treated it as less than a sacred animal. Both their empire builders, Banda Bahadur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, banned its slaughter. Both the Hindus and the Sikhs form one social organism and inter-marriages among the two have been common. It is a fact of common observance that one brother may be a Hindu and another a Sikh, both living under the same roof, and respecting each other's beliefs as no other two religious orders do anywhere else in the world, on such a wide scale. The Hindu Law applies equally to the Sikhs.

Many of their festivals are common. Our mother-tongue, Punjabi, the common heritage of both, is derived from Sanskrit, and the Sikh names and caste names most often are interchangeable with those of the Hindus.

In turn, the Hindus (and even the Muslims) of Punjab, have imbibed the Sikh spirit in no uncertain terms, and that is how in their outlook and activities, they are as progressive as the Sikhs. But, at no time, have the Sikhs imposed their religion or way of life upon others. They have respected the validity of every faith. Says Guru Gobind Singh: "There is no sin worse than that one commits in the name of religion." (*pap kare parmarath ko, it papan te sabh pap lajahi*).

### **Hindu Bhaktas**

When Guru Arjun compiled the (Guru) Granth Sahib, he included in it the word of the Hindu bhaktas like Sri Kabir, the worshipper of the absolute, Sri Namdeva, the eulogiser of Sri Krishna and Sri Ravidas, the supreme devotee of Sri Ramchandra, besides, Baba Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar, the devout Muslim Sufi. And this holy book is revered by the Sikhs all over the world today as the living embodiment of the Gurus. Thousands of Hindus visit the Sikh places of pilgrimage every day and vice-versa. All the names sacred to the Hindus for godhead (Ram, Murari, Murli Manohar, Girdhari, Prabhu, Ishwar, Parmeshwar, Onkar) are repeated, time and again, in the Sikh scriptures.

The Hindu mythological stories like those of Prahlada, Draupadi, Ganika, Valmiki, Gautam, Rishi Durbasa, Dhruva, Gaja, and many others, are approvingly quoted in the Sikh scriptures and other spiritual texts. The Sikhs do not believe in god being reincarnated, and yet with what devotion and in what superb terms and sublime poetry does Guru Gobind Singh, the birth-giver of the Khalsa, write out the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* under the titles of '*Ramavtar*' and '*Krishnavtar*.' His eulogising the exploits of Chandi or Durga as a superb warrior is there for anyone to read. *Sahjdharis* (Hindu in form, Sikh in belief) have always been considered a part of the Khalsa, from the time of Guru Gobind Singh himself, according to his own *Hukamnamas*.

It is again a fact of history that the Hindus remained the backbone of the Sikh struggle for liberation, whether it was under the Gurus or in the post-Guru period in the 18th century, when the Sikhs were being hunted like wild animals. Even when Maharaja Ranjit Singh laid the foundation of a Khalsa empire, the Hindu generals, like Diwan Chand, "Zafar Jang", Mohkam Chand, Moti Ram and others made a more significant contribution in the creation and consolidation of this empire. The sacrifices and the integrity of the Hindu governors like Diwan Sawan Mal of Multan and his illustrious son, Diwan Mool Raj, who spearheaded the rebellion against the British in defence of the Khalsa Raj, are only recent instances of history.

### Two Conditions

It would come as a surprise to many, to know that two of the conditions which Maharaja Ranjit Singh imposed on Shah Shujah, the then deposed ruler of Afghanistan, before he would help him regain his throne were: (1) Cow-killing will be forbidden throughout Afghanistan; and (2) The doors of the Somnath temple, looted eight centuries ago by Mahmud of Ghazni, would be restored to its custodians! Not only did Ranjit Singh cover the Hari Mandir at Amritsar with gold leaf, he gifted away six quintals of gold also for the temples of Banaras. The golden umbrellas at the Jwalamukhi and Kangra temples are also the gifts of Ranjit Singh. The Vishwanath temple at Banaras was repaired through his munificence, and the jewel-studded icon there was also financed by him. To rescue the daughter of a Brahmin from the Nawab of Kasur, a bitter battle was fought by the pre-Ranjit Singh *Dal Khalsa*, an army of irregulars, and over 500 Sikhs lost their lives in this rescue operation, the Nawab of Kasur also falling in the battle.

The whole of India has been our homeland and holy land. Guru Gobind Singh founded two of the Sikh *takhats* (seats of spiritual authority) outside Punjab. The "Panj Pyaras" came from five different parts of India, most from Hindu pilgrim-stations—Jagannath Puri, Dwaraka, Bidar etc. The word "Punjab" in fact does not occur in the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib, only "Hindustan" does; whatever hurts any part of Hindustan hurts us Sikhs equally, if not more.

The *Namdhari* movement took a violent turn late in the Nineteenth century due to cow-killing having been reintroduced by the British in the holy city of Amritsar. Many Sikhs were blown from the mouth of the cannon for opposing that act of sacrilege. What is happening now in Punjab at the hands supposedly of the few misguided members of the community is, therefore, the total negation of the Sikh religion, tradition and history. However, one should not be surprised if it turns out, by and large, to be the work of some enemy agents, out to disturb the peace and amity in this sensitive border state. It has happened before to provoke Hindus and Muslims against each other. This time it is the Hindus and the Sikhs. But, we must not over-react to such mad and downright abominable acts of crazy individuals, smugglers and confirmed criminals.

Sikhs have suffered for the freedom of this nation as perhaps no other community has. Eighty per cent of those who went to the gallows or were transported for life were Sikhs. The *Ghaddar* and the Akali movements and the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy, in the early part of this century, stirred the whole nation to its depths. The Akali movement was financed and supported by all Hindus, including Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Gandhiji. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru even courted arrest at Nabha. The freedom movement under Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru became a national mass upsurge only after the massacre of Jalianwala Bagh at Amritsar. And, it fell again to the lot of the Sikhs to walk out, wholesale, from Pakistan, because they refused to live under a communal dispensation and opted freely for the secular, democratic state of India, which they had brought about, along with others, with immense sacrifices. History has not witnessed a similar instance anywhere else in the world.

The Sikhs did not rest content only with this. Their hard work, resilience, spirit of suffering and sacrifice and their burning desire to better their earthly lives, have made the once-deficit East Punjab into bread-basket of India. It is still the nation's sword arm as was witnessed only recently in 1965 and 1971. One, therefore, can well imagine why the nation's enemies are keen desperately, to disturb violently the peace of our most progressive and patriotic state. No Sikh in his senses wants

separation from India, which is our only homeland and holy land. The sins of the few madcaps should not be tagged on to the whole community, which is suffering as much in the Punjab as the Hindus, if not more.

### Sacred Places

The responsibility for restoring the peace falls on the shoulders of the government, both state and Central. The Hindus must not, therefore, over-react. Sacred places of both must be protected by both, and religious sentiments of both should be held equally sacred. And, in this, the political parties and news-media of various persuasions must not only condemn such acts of vandalism and murders of the innocents of whatever community, Hindu and Sikhs (which they fortunately have already done), but try also to create an atmosphere in which such mad acts become an impossibility. Grievances, real or imaginary, can be discussed and met or compromised, but the atmosphere of hatred, bigotry, separatism and loose or violent talk, must inevitably lead to the disturbance of peace, no matter what our protestations to the contrary.

Let us all pause and ponder. Talk of retaliation and vicious and provocative writings will only aggravate the issues, to the delight only of our enemies abroad and within. Let us on no account take law in our own hands or break each other's head, and defile our age-old history of togetherness. The present, I firmly believe, is only a passing phase and we shall overcome. Terrorism is not confined to our country alone. Let us take some lessons from some mature and older nations, and deal with it without losing our perspective, or nerve. The terrorists are already on the run, and an isolated lot. Let us not encourage them by over-rating their importance and death-deals.

Let us also remember, each one of us, what injunction Guru Gobind Singh gave poet Bhai Nandlal, his devout disciple : *Khalq khalak ki jan ke, khalq dukhawe nahe, Khalq dukhe jab nand ji khalak kope tahe.* ("Listen, O, Nandlal, all men belong to god, so no one must give pain to another. For, when men suffer, god's wrath is provoked.")



## THE ANTI-SIKH RIOTS OF DELHI

*Ajoy Bose*

After Indira Gandhi, the deluge, many had predicted in the past. It is a devastating communal fire, however, that threatens to consume India today as cities, towns and villages all over the country go up in flames and the scenario of a second partition of the country becomes increasingly a grim reality.

And of all the hundreds of fires raging in this land, Delhi, historic city of yore, and the country's seat of power in the recent times, has burnt most fiercely.

The sheer intensity and magnitude of the orgy of murder, loot and arson in the city that has been witnessed ever since Mrs Gandhi's assassination has dumbfounded most thinking people here as has the complete paralysis of the powers that be—political, civilian and military—to face up the situation.

Yet, the writing on the wall was evident even as doctors battled in the operation theatre of the All India Medical Institute on Wednesday morning to save the prime minister's life. Correspondents and cameramen of various newspapers and periodicals who rushed to the Institute after receiving news of Mrs Gandhi being shot, were astounded to find that they were stopped at the gates of the hospital but a most disreputable looking rabble, many of them dressed in *khaddar*, were let in respectfully. A police inspector said in hushed whispers, "They are from the Youth Congress. We dare not stop them."

At around noon, hours before the prime minister had been declared dead by the doctors, the first incident of assault on a

## Curfew reclaimed in Delhi

# Violence toll 900

NEW DELHI, Nov 3 (UNI, PTI)

**T**HE toll in four days of violence mounted to 900 today although the capital and different States reported a marked improvement in the law and order situation.

This improvement was reflected in a lower toll of 100 reported in the capital and the northern States.

The wave of violence in the capital rose to its crest yesterday when 440 people were killed, mostly in the transit-Jamuna colonies. With 60 more deaths reported today the death toll since Wednesday rose to 560.

With 40 deaths reported today from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, the toll in States rose to 340.

In Delhi the authorities today cracked down with a heavy hand on rampaging mobs as fresh incidents were reported from a number of places, reports PTI.

More than 2,000 people had been arrested and over 10,000 arrested. A dal in Delhi alone which witnessed another carnage in the resettlement colony of Mongolpuri in East district.

More than 30 towns continued to be under partial or full curfew. The indefinite curfew was reimposed on the entire territory of Delhi, after an 11-hour relaxation with the promise that it would be strictly enforced.

The curfew in Delhi was relaxed this morning, except in the worst affected area of Trikalpuri, to enable people to attend funeral of Mrs. Gandhi and pay her their last respect. The strict measures taken by authorities seemed to be having an effect as the situation was improving at most trouble spots.

In Delhi, hit by unprecedented violence, police opened fire at 10 places to quell rioting mobs and armoured personnel carriers rolled in to deter trouble makers. Army 3rd para military forces were intensively patrolling all trouble spots.

Officials confirmed only two deaths in the Mongolpuri incident but unofficial reports said it was comparable to the one in Trikalpuri yesterday, which was officially stated to have claimed 95 lives.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi toured the affected areas and talked to the people. He reassured residents, particularly in the badly affected areas of Trikalpuri, that the Government was doing everything possible to protect their lives and property.

Following Mr. Gandhi's tour, the armoured personnel carriers started patrolling trouble torn areas. Two more Army brigades were sent out at the

disposal of the civilian authorities. Most of these units have been deployed in the fresh trouble spots. By nightfall the situation appeared to be improving.

In addition police reinforcements have been rushed in from neighbouring States.

The newsmen who went round the riot affected areas saw a number of relief camps where the affected people and their families were being given temporary shelter under heavy guard. In other affected areas also large number of families had been shifted to similar relief camps.

Reports from States showed that about 100 towns were under curfew, 38 of them in Madhya Pradesh, 30 in UP and 15 in Bihar.

Troops have been deployed in 28 of them, fourteen of them in Himachal Pradesh where no casualties have been reported and the step has been taken as a precaution.

The situation was today peaceful in Bihar, except for an incident of firing by the Army to disperse a crowd violating curfew at the Ranchi town area resulting in the death of a 12-year old boy, according to official sources.

Home Commissioner N. K. Agarwal told PTI that the death toll mounted to 94 in mob violence and police firing in the past three days in the State. Mob violence alone accounted for 87 loss of lives, he said. Sources said that the Army maintained flag marches at Ranchi, Patna, Jharkar, Dhanbad, Daltongunj and Ranaghat, even as the situation was under control.

The over all situation continued to

## 8 killed in shoot-out

BHOPAL, Nov 3 (UNI)

Eight people were killed when a man today opened fire from his house on a procession being taken out at Garizatganj in neighbouring Raipur district to protest against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination.

According to an official release, two processionists were killed and one injured in the shooting.

Later, when police challenged the killer, he shot dead all the five of his family members and also himself.

Orders have been issued to clamp curfew in the town. With this, the total number of deaths in violence after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination has risen to 84 in Madhya Pradesh.

be peaceful all over Uttar Pradesh today with no major incident reported from any of the affected districts during the past 24 hours.

An official spokesman told newsmen in Lucknow that three minor incidents of arson and an attempt to loot a truck in one of the affected districts were reported last night. Timely arrival of the police, however, foiled the attempts and no damage was caused. The total number killed in violence, but arson in UP since Wednesday last went up to 37 with some of the injured succumbing to their injuries in hospitals, the spokesman added.

The death toll in Madhya Pradesh rose to 13 with the recovery of more bodies at different places, official reports said.

The highest number of 22 deaths occurred at Indore, according to UNI report quoting the death count at Maharaja Yashwantrao Rao hospital there. An official spokesman, however, put the toll at 16.

State Chief Secretary Barahma Swaroop told newsmen that no fresh reports of death in violence or police firing had been received from any part of the State in the past 24 hours. The

worst is over and normalcy is returning, he added.

Dust-to-dawn curfew was clamped and shoot-at-sight orders issued in both the steel and coal townships of Rourkela today as sporadic mob violence took a toll of two lives.

Of the two deaths one was reported from Rourkela and the other from Jhuhanswar.

Official sources said that the district authorities of Sundargarh were forced to impose curfew and issue shoot-at-sight orders in Rourkela as prohibitory orders under Section 147 Cr. P.C. proved ineffective in curbing violence, arson, stabbing and looting.

In Agarala an eight-hour night curfew from 2100 hours was imposed in the State capital for the fourth day today as a precautionary measure against any disturbances, according to official sources.

Arson broke out in hitherto peaceful Jajpur today, while at least three people were injured in stoning at Baniwa in Jhargadh district of Saurashtra region.

Official reports received in Ahmedabad said a wooden cabin was set ablaze on the Ahmedabad-Porbandar national highway near Verava.



The cortege of Indira Gandhi starting from Teen Murti Saturday. — Express Radtopfoto.



Sikh in the present riots in the capital took place. Even as bottles of blood were being carried inside the Institute by Red Cross workers for blood transfusion for the prime minister, a horde of Youth Congress workers, including several women, attacked a Sikh Congressman also dressed in *khaddar* standing near the inner gate of the hospital.

“Throw this bastard Sardar out of here. From now on we are not trusting a single swine in a turban,” the mob screamed as it surged towards the Sikh Congress worker who somehow managed to run away from the scene. Henceforth, no Sikhs except senior ministers coming to visit the hospital were seen inside the Institute compound.

The rabble inside, however, continued to be restless. At one point, a deranged looking man dressed in a doctor's long white coat came on a motorcycle to the institute demanding that he be let into the operation theatre as he knew a special cure to revive the assassinated prime minister. When the police tried to stop him at the gates, a crowd of angry Youth Congress workers rushed to the gate and threatened to break it down if the guards did not allow him in. The police promptly complied. There was trouble again when a Red Cross doctor announced that he wanted some volunteers with O-type blood (Mrs Gandhi's blood group) to donate blood for the prime minister. Almost immediately Youth Congress workers started fighting with each other to be the first to be admitted inside, creating a tremendous hulabaloo outside the hospital. Once again the police were silent spectators.

Just across the All India Medical Institute is a row of *jhuggi jhopri* colonies which have come up in recent years under the aegis of Congress (I) metropolitan councillor, Arjun Das, the former motor mechanic friend of Sanjay Gandhi. As the day progressed, thousands of youths poured out from his colony and crowded around the hospital. They were soon joined by thousands and thousands of people from the adjoining *jhuggi* colonies and by late afternoon on Wednesday nearly 30,000 people had gathered outside the Institute. They were allowed to gather by the police without any interference although the crowds had brought traffic on the roads around the hospital to a virtual standstill.

Although the prime minister had succumbed to her injuries by 11 a.m., there was still confusion through the day about whether she had actually passed away. But by 4 p.m. news spread through the crowd that Mrs Gandhi was dead. Suddenly someone in the crowd shouted, "*Khoon ka khoon* (blood for blood)". Immediately a blood curdling howl went up amongst the sections of the crowd and more and more provocative slogans started being raised. The police still did nothing.

The flashpoint, however, came at 5 p.m. when President Zail Singh along with a motorcade came to the hospital from Palam airport (Mr Singh was out of the country when Mrs Gandhi was assassinated and cut short his visit when he got the news). As soon as the crowd caught sight of the front rider, a Sikh, it turned into mob. Nobody knows who chucked the first stone at the presidential motorcade but within minutes sustained stoning had started. While the President's bullet proof car escaped unscathed, his front rider as well as other cars in his motorcade were stoned mercilessly. Even then the police refused to act.

A police official later said, "That was the turning point. When the crowd saw that they could get away stoning the President's car, it was a clear signal that they could get away with anything."

It was the beginning of mob rule and anarchy in the city. The thousands outside the Institute now spread out into the capital attacking any Sikh unfortunate to come in their way.

The mob spread to different parts of the city but the pattern of their fury remained the same everywhere. Sikhs were dragged down from buses, taxis, cars, auto-rickshaws, two-wheelers and cycles and mercilessly beaten up, sometimes fatally. Their vehicles were burnt to cinders and at some points frenzied mobs threw their petrified drivers into the flames as well.

By nine in the evening the roads of Delhi were lit up by burning vehicles and when Rajiv Gandhi came to fetch his slain mother from the All India Medical Institute to take it back to number 1 Safdarjung Road, he was held up for more than 45 minutes as the police cleared the debris of burnt-out trucks, taxis, cars scooters and cycles on the short route from

the hospital to the prime ministers' residence. The police of course did not bother to clear gutted vehicles on the roads the freshly appointed prime minister did not travel through and they were left as eerie landmarks of the path of devastation wreaked by the mob.

Around midnight people all over the city started getting phone calls from their Sikh friends and relatives that their houses were being attacked. Defence Colony, the posh South Delhi residential area was one of the first to be attacked. The mob followed the simple logic of stoning any house with the nameplate Singh, and many Hindus with that surname had to rush down desperately to show themselves in person to stop the vandals from attacking their house.

The burning of vehicles and attacks on the houses of Sikhs intensified the next day but the unique feature of the day was the organised looting and arson that was witnessed in nearly all the main as well as the small markets of Delhi.

The posh shopping centre of Connaught Place was set on flames by frenzied mobs who started out by setting fire to Sikh shops but seemed indifferent that the flames were spreading to many Hindu shops as well. The entire shopping arcade under Marina Hotel and part of Regal Building lay gutted by Thursday evening.

Flames leapt out from nearly every single market in the old city as well as New Delhi on Thursday. Organised looting on an unprecedented scale went on throughout the day, virtually unchecked as well.

Hordes of slum dwellers descended on markets and shopping centres looting indiscriminately, often regardless of whether the shops they were looting belonged to the Sikhs or not. In Paharganj, electronic equipment shops were cleaned out within hours and street urchins were seen selling Japanese video recorders for as little as three hundred rupees. In Patel Nagar, looters came in tempos to take away refrigerators from a refrigerator shop owned by a Sikh.

A friend sent his servant for bread but he came back with two bottles of jam. When the friend angrily enquired of his servant why he had brought jam instead of bread, the servant said that he had gone to the market only to find that it had

been looted. When he asked for bread, the mob told him that they had eaten up all the bread but gave him two bottles of jam as compensation.

The police in most cases were silent spectators and some actually joined in the looting of shops and markets. In Connaught Place a police constable smiled sheepishly when asked what he was doing brandishing a brand new cricket bat instead of the customary lathi. Not far away was a looted sports goods shop.

Mob fury intensified particularly after they paid a visit to the Teen Murthi House where Mrs. Gandhi's body lay in state. Thousands and thousands of youths from the outlying areas of Delhi trooped to the ancestral house of the Nehrus and raised slogans of hatred and revenge against the Sikhs for the murder of the Prime Minister. The crowds at Teen Murthi got so unruly that the police were finally forced to fire tear gas shells to disperse the mob.

Angry at not being allowed to have darshan of Mrs. Gandhi, the youths vent their fury on whichever Sikhs they could get hold of on the road. Just in front of the information and Broadcasting Ministry, they stopped a taxi driven by a Sikh. The driver left his vehicle and fled into a nearby house which happened to belong to the Lok Dal member of Parliament, Ram Vilas Paswan. The mob first burnt the taxi and then went inside Paswan's house and dragged out the Sikh driver. They tied his hands with his turban and threw him into the blazing taxi.

The mob also attacked Paswan's house and set it on fire. Paswan as well as the Bihar Lok Dal leader, Karpoori Thakur who was with him at that time, managed to escape by the hair's breadth by the backdoor of the house.

At Rekabganj gurdwara, a 3,000 strong mob surrounded the Sikh temple after rumours spread that four Hindus had been dragged inside and cut to pieces. The frenzied crowds got hold of two Sikh youths, one of them a mere teenager and burnt them alive. Panicky Sikhs opened fire from inside killing a Hindu boy and the situation remained tense till the central reserve police arrived on the spot and took over the gurdwara after exchanging fire with some armed Sikhs inside.

By the evening the Sikhs had started retaliating. Like stags at bay, they turned viciously on Hindu mobs who attacked them. In Patel Nagar, a retired Air Force group captain moved down 20 Hindus with his stengun after his house was surrounded by a mob. The crowd fled and the officer later surrendered to the police.

At Lohia hospital on Thursday evening, injured victims being brought in consisted of Sikhs as well as Hindus. Interestingly, while the Sikhs had fractured bones and burn injuries, the Hindus bore gun-shot wounds. The hospital soon closed its gates as the procession of the wounded and the dying trooping in became too long for the doctors and nurses to handle.

Even as the city went up in flames, home secretary M.M.K. Wali told newsmen that the situation in Delhi was under control and that only two persons had died so far in the riots. Right outside the press information bureau where Wali was addressing newsmen, lay ten cars and taxis burning while less than a thousand yards away was the charred corpse of a Sikh taxi driver burnt to death by the mob.

The death toll by Thursday night was close to a hundred and nearly two thousand vehicles and hundreds of shops, houses and gurdwaras had been gutted. The army had been called out and a curfew imposed in nearly the entire city but the murder, loot and arson went on unabated and a tour around the city at night revealed that after 36 hours of continuous rioting hardly a single policeman or soldier was in sight.

Thursday night was the night of wild rumours that spread panic all over the city. At around midnight news spread like wildfire in Delhi that the water supply in the city had been poisoned by the Sikhs. Soon the rumours were confirmed by a special bulletin on the radio warning residents not to touch the water. One hour later the radio in another broadcast assured residents that on chemical examination the water had been found to be uncontaminated and there was no fear of poisoning. Unfortunately the assurance was a bit too late. Long after the second broadcast on the radio, police parol cars kept on announcing through loudspeakers in different colonies that water had been poisoned sustaining the panic till late next morning when people found out the truth.



A more disturbing series of rumours which are yet to be dispelled, related to trains coming in from Punjab with mutilated bodies of the Hindus. With a virtual news blackout imposed on Punjab, wild tales of mass revenge by the Sikhs on the Hindus in Punjab inflamed already high communal passions to a new pitch.

So far the violence that had swept the city was grim enough, but the communal holocaust that consumed colonies of East Delhi from Friday morning was straight out of the Partition Hindu-Muslim riots scenario.

Early on Friday morning, a bleeding man in tattered clothes staggered into the *Indian Express* office. He was shaven but he said that he was a Sikh from Trilokpuri who had shaved his beard to save himself from Hindu mobs who he said were massacring every Sikh male in the colony. "By now everyone there is dead; go to Block 32 in Trilokpuri and see with your own eyes," he told the reporters at the *Express*.

When reporters arrived at Block 32, the massacre had stopped and only the charred bodies remained. Piled one on top of another, more than 300 bodies lay completely disfigured with no way of telling whether they were Hindus or Sikhs. A petrified little girl hiding under one of the bodies till she was persuaded to come out, identified the bodies as the remains of the adult male Sikh population of Block 32. Most of the women and children had fled but the little girl had hidden under the bodies to relate the tale.

Similar massacres perhaps on a lesser scale but equally cruel were reported from other colonies in East Delhi. Just at the foot of bridge connecting the rest of the city to East Delhi which lies across the Yamuna river, lay three bodies, one of them still smouldering, on Friday afternoon. A police picket stood indifferently a few hundred yards away. When the police sub-inspector in charge of the picket was asked about the smouldering body, he simply shrugged and said, "I don't know anything. I think it is a piece of burnt wood."

By Friday night the city mortuaries were full of charred and putrefying bodies. The Subzi Mandi mortuary alone had 200 bodies while the central mortuary had 140 more. Most reporters had lost count of the death toll and the only guess

that one could hazard was that hundred had died on Friday.

The riots continued despite the much publicized and internationally attended funeral ceremony of Mrs. Gandhi. Earlier hopes that the government would be forced to check the riots, if for nothing else than bad international publicity, were dashed and even as the former prime minister's mortal remains were consigned to the flames on the banks of the Yamuna, across the river bloodthirsty mobs roamed the streets of various colonies of East Delhi murdering and burning at will.

There was simply no explanation of why the administration was failing to act decisively. There was simply no explanation to why a single senior ruling party politician did not tour the riot affected areas so far, There was simply no explanation why, despite the fact that an entire division of troops had been deployed in the city to maintain law and order, the situation still continued to be volatile.

There was no doubt that the new prime minister had suffered a grievous personal loss, the Congress party bereft of its one and only leader and the administration rattled by the dramatic turn of events since next Wednesday. But surely an assassin's bullet, even if it has felled the country's prime minister, cannot be allowed to destroy an entire nation.

—*Sunday Observer*

**PAKISTAN**

# Pak cabinet quits over ethnic riots

RAWALPINDI, Dec. 20 (UNI).

**T**HE eleven-month-old Pakistani cabinet, excepting the Prime Minister, Mr. Mohammed Khan Juncjo, today resigned following the week-long ethnic riots in Karachi which left more than 260 dead.

According to an official statement, the ministers submitted their resignations to Mr. Junejo to "enable him to reconstitute his cabinet to deal with the problems facing the country."

The announcement came after the cabinet consisting of 24 full ministers and 13 junior ministers, met here today under the chairmanship of Mr. Junejo.

The cabinet expressed confidence in the Prime Minister and assured him of their "fullest cooperation" in future as well. Mr. Junejo appreciated the services rendered by the cabinet since the country's return to "democracy."

The statement did not say what alternative arrangements were made after the cabinet's resignation.

It said the cabinet had earlier reviewed the law and order situation arising out of riots in Karachi involving Pashtun and Mohajirs.

The cabinet expressed the hope that the situation in Karachi would be brought under control by the government.

Army had been patrolling the streets of Karachi in the past several days during which only a few were clamped in the affected areas of the city.

The other cities of Sind, including

Hyderabad, were also affected by the riots over the issue of the illegal narcotic trade.

The riots, which began on Sunday, were the worst in Karachi's history and horrified the nation. The government came under strong criticism from opposition politicians and the press for failing to prevent ethnic bloodshed.

Critics have charged that warnings of an explosion of the tensions between the rival Pashtun and Mohajir communities were ignored. They saw a major operation to stamp out drugs

and arms-trafficking in the city of more than seven million was mishandled and the police were slow to rush to trouble spots.

Political analysts have said the riots, which also injured several hundred people, were a blow to the credibility of his governments and showed an inability to keep order.

The opposition leaders, led by Ms. Benazir Bhutto, say the Junejo government has no legitimacy and are campaigning for immediate new general elections.

The cabinet had been sworn in in April 1985. Radio Pakistan said the ministers had resigned to allow Junejo to form a new cabinet to tackle the problems of the Islamic republic.

Business leaders had been pushing for a cabinet reshuffle so that clearer economic policies could be formed. Some businessmen say the current economic cabinet had limited experience in foreign trade and industry.

New York (UNI): A large group of Mohajirs living in New York demonstrated at Pakistan's consulate protesting against the "genocide" of fellow community members in Karachi.

The demonstration was staged by the International Council for Repatriation of Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh.

The protesters demanded resignation of Sind governor Mr. Jahangir Khan and repatriation of Mohajirs from refugee camps in Bangladesh.

A spokesman for them suggested that the Karachi killings had been deliberately engineered to provide the Zia regime an excuse for refusing to allow Mohajirs to return home from Bangladesh.

## Results elude Indo-Pak talks

By V. T. JOSHI

The Times of India News Service

**L**AHORE, December 20: The talks between the home secretaries of India and Pakistan began on a frank and cordial note today, yet appeared to be far from smooth-going because of the most ticklish issue relating to Pakistan's alleged encouragement to Sikh terrorists.

From all indications, the six-hour inconclusive deliberations are not to result in concrete proposals which the Pakistani interior secretary had yesterday said the two sides would endeavour to frame.

The Indian side, led by the home secretary, Mr. C. G. Somiah, is believed to have done some frank talking. Mr. Somiah pointed out that he was "not a diplomat". The talks are to continue tonight and spread over tomorrow.

## THE PROFITS OF DOOM

*Arif Hasan*

*Operation Clean-up and its aftermath have confirmed some basic facts: the ruthlessness of the mafia and the ethnic smokescreen behind which it operates; the corruption and callousness of the administration and its cordial links with the underworld; the ineffectiveness, ignorance and opportunism of political parties; the cruelty of a leaderless people bent on revenge, and the abject helplessness of an incompetent government, which has sold its country to foreign interests. Given all these factors, it is difficult to see an early end to Karachi's malaise: the city's "ethnic" riots will not only continue, but spread.*

*"Let us not complicate things. It is really very simple. If you control the poppy fields, Karachi, and the road that links the two, you will be so rich that you will control Pakistan, army or no army."*

*Orangi shopkeeper, November 1986.*

The Sohrab Goth operation, the Aligarh Colony massacre, and the ensuing "ethnic" riots in Karachi, have exposed the real faces of the actors in Karachi's urban drama. Certain facts can no longer be questioned: the ruthlessness of the mafia and the ethnic smokescreen behind which it operates; the corruption and callousness of the administration and its cordial links with the underworld; the ineffectiveness, ignorance and opportunism of political parties; the cruelty of a leaderless people bent on revenge and the abject helplessness of an incompetent govern-

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ment, which has sold its country to foreign interests. Given all these factors, it is difficult to see an early end to Karachi's malaise: it is certain that the city's "ethnic" riots will not only continue, but grow to engulf the entire country.

The events following the commencement of the Sohrab Goth operation have made it clear that the heroin and arms mafia controls the transporters, the land-grabbers, the slum landlords and the "thekedars" who operate the Karachi job market. It is also clear that this relationship is institutionalised and a clear chain of command exists. Consequently buses, taxis and rickshaws went off the street; thekedar-controlled labour did not show up for work; abadis where slum landlords operate remained relatively peaceful, while the old katchi abadis came under attack, and paid a heavy price for standing in the way of complete mafia supremacy. It also became obvious that without the control of these other mini-mafias, the arms and drug mafia cannot bring the city to a standstill, nor negotiate with the administration from a position of strength.

The manner in which the mafia seeks an ethnic cover, and the meticulous planning which precedes its actions, were also clearly demonstrated in the massacre at Aligarh Colony. Pathans have lived in Aligarh Colony for the past decade, and many of them own shops in the market. Their relations with the non-Pathans have always been cordial. In the past few months outsiders were settled at the entry points to the colony and in certain strategic lanes. When truckloads of armed outsiders burnt the shops and houses in the area, and began a massacre of its residents, Pathans' shops and homes were spared and the newcomers to the colony provided armed cover to the intruders and kept their exit points open. As a result, the cordial relations between the Pathans and non-Pathans of Aligarh Colony have been replaced by hatred, and the mafia operation has acquired a Pathan/non-Pathan colouring. Similarly, there is evidence to show that during the November riots the burning of minibuses in large numbers was resorted to by the transporters' mafia itself, so as to enable it to promote ethnic conflict.

The purchasing of strategically placed property through strongarm tactics in Aligarh Colony a few months earlier, and the fact that the armed intruders were able to identify Pathan

and non-Pathan homes and shops accurately, point to the fact that this operation had been carefully planned some time ago, and was not a spontaneous reaction to the Sohrab Goth operation, as we have been led to believe by some quarters.

There has never been any doubt in the minds of the residents of the katchi abadis that the Karachi administration is corrupt, inefficient, and a paid employee of the various mafias which operate in the city. This conviction is now shared by the relatively more affluent areas as well, as there is no other way in which the administration's indifference to the situation can be explained. It was seven long hours after the massacre began, that the administration intervened in Aligarh Colony, and then only to teargas and contain the affected population.

The mafia guns from the K-2 and Pirabad hills continued to fire on the abadis below for another eight days. They have still not been removed; it is only the uneasy peace that has silenced them. In the May 1985 riots, the people of the abadis had attacked these hills armed only with molotov cocktails, and had thrown back the aggressors. However, the police raided these abadis the night before the Sohrab Goth operation and confiscated manufactured molotov cocktails and the chemicals that produce them, thus disarming the population and rendering it defenseless.

The wisdom of the Sohrab Goth operation has been questioned in the non-government media. It has been pointed out that Sohrab Goth was just a symptom of the heroin and arms trade, and that its demolition will not make any significant difference to mafia operation. Irrespective of whether the operation was wise or not, the mafia knew it was coming, though the middle echelons of the administration did not. As a result, two days before it was launched, a large number of families from Sohrab Goth, along with arms and heroin-manufacturing units, are said to have been permitted to move to Natha Khan Goth on the national highway. It is rumoured that they will move back to the superhighway, this time on the thirty-fourth mile from Karachi, where the Khadeji and Mol rivers meet to form the Malir naddi.

The role played by the official media during the riots has served to promote ethnic conflict rather than subdue it. Instead



of exposing the true face of the mafia by tearing away its ethnic mask, the media has constantly appealed to both communities to maintain peace, thus accepting that the conflict was nothing more than an ethnic one. If the events at Aligarh Colony had been properly explained to the people, and if media propaganda had played upon the contradictions within the mafia and build them up, then the nature of the riots may well have been different. Whether the media is just incompetent, or is also a party to the conflict, is a million-dollar question. In either case, its role is inexcusable, and it must shoulder a major part of the blame for the burning of Pathans that followed the Aligarh Colony massacre and the mafia raids on the old abadis.

It is significant that the burning of Pathans occurred only in mohallas where there was no effective local leadership. It is also significant that effective leadership in the katchi abadis is invariably in conflict with the local administration. People in the affected colonies insist that if councillors Sherza Khan and Ishaq Khan of Pathan and Frontier Colonies had wanted, they would have kept a sizable number of their wards out of the conflict. Because of the leadership of councillor Mohammad Ahmed, the pact formed during the last riots between the Pathan and non-Pathan populations of Rahim Shah, Afridi, Hanifabad and Merajunabi colonies in Orangi Township remained intact, in spite of the fact that some of these colonies were constantly fired upon from the K-2 peak. Here the ethnic mask of the mafia was torn away by the people, while the media and politicians hid behind it.

The national political parties have shown by their statements and inactivity that they are either irrelevant to the Karachi situation (and hence to the national situation as well) or can only help to endorse the ethnic colour it has acquired. Certain important parties have declared that the riots are the work of foreign agents who have been smuggled in to dismember the country, while others have fanned parochial feelings. The more progressive parties have stated that the present situation is the result of partyless elections, which have promoted biradaris and clans, and that, therefore, President Zia must go. All these "lines" mean very little to the affected or to thinking people, who do not see in them any solutions to the problem. One

would have expected political leaders to offer the public an analysis of the situation in which the role of the mafia in national politics is clearly identified. It is obvious even to a layman that the heroin and Kalashnikov culture is a gift of our involvement in the Afghan war, and that billions of dollars made out of the heroin trade not only benefit the economies of other countries, but create for them a powerful client organisation within Pakistan.

This client organisation has succeeded in destroying the progressive politics of the NWFP, in making the once discredited system of bonded labour respectable again, in purchasing the administration, and in turning Karachi, which is the key to Pakistan, into an inferno. Although this client organisation has not managed to stabilise the status quo, it has certainly made the institutionalisation of change impossible. One does not know whether it is ignorance, opportunism, or simply contempt for the people that keeps the political parties silent on these key issues. However, one does know that the people of Karachi, Pathan and non-Pathan alike, have paid a heavy price for their silence, and that the worst is still to come. People in the affected areas repeatedly tell social workers that they need arms for survival, and not the food and clothing that they are being offered. Posters and handbills inform them that owing a Kalashnikov is more important than owing a VCR, a motorcycle or a television set. More guns will now come into the city, increasing the mafia's circle of influence and, with it, the intensity of the conflict.

There are, however, some positive factors which have emerged from this conflict. The people of the affected areas have shown that they can organise themselves for relief work, defence and redevelopment of their ravaged abadis. There is a cold determination on their part to struggle for their rights, and not to give in to mafia terrorism. For the first time in Karachi's history the more affluent areas of the city have taken an interest in the problems of the katchi abadis. Young men and women have donated blood, organised relief work, and are currently involved in helping area tanzeems in surveying the damage done to the abadis. There is also a growing realisation among the business classes that perhaps peace in the city's

excreta-infested slums is as important for their survival as connections in the red-carpeted corridors of power. However, these positive factors need to be cultivated, supported and sustained. This is possible only if the involved people come together, only if there is a dialogue between various groups interested in Karachi's welfare and only if painful questions are asked at both city and national levels. Failing this course of action, the involvement of Karachi's citizens with their city's problems will disintegrate, and after the next round of violence, people will be forced to think in terms of their mohallas as that alone will guarantee their survival.

Keeping the above factors in view, what is the solution to the Karachi conflict? The only real solution is a long-term one. It involves questions of foreign policy, of Pakistan's relations with its neighbours and the great powers, and the institutionalisation of the enormous social and economic changes that have taken place in the country. It involves the elimination of poppy growing, whose real benefits go to the mafia middlemen and the international dollar market, and not to the grower.

However, these aims cannot be achieved just by the holding of elections on a party basis or by one or another political party coming to power. These can only be achieved by explaining the situation to the people in terms that make sense to them, thereby mobilising them for political action. Coming to power through an election is, in itself, far less important for a solution to our problems than the factors that make the holding of an election possible. Given the bankruptcy of Pakistan's political parties, and the nature of the government in power, it is clear that, for the foreseeable future, the mafia, its foreign masters and its local collaborators will decide the fate of Pakistan's politics.

Solutions at the Karachi level have been suggested by various people involved in the katchi abadi drama, by public leaders and by members of the administration. These include the deployment of more government buses on the Karachi roads, with a phasing out of minibuses; immediate regularisation of katchi abadis, so as to free the people from the clutches of middlemen; new strategies for land-development for the poor, so as to make shelter affordable to them, thereby eliminating

the role of the land mafia.

Given the power of the underworld, its links with the administration, and its involvement in land and transport, these solutions are unlikely to work. The government transport system which replaces the minibuses will not be allowed to function. Regularisation of katchi abadis will not be permitted to take place smoothly, and the new strategies for development will result in speculation by middlemen and state officials. These proposed solutions and the underworld's reaction to them will generate new conflicts, which is just what the mafia wants.

However, these strategies can be made to work, provided the people of the abadis are involved in their planning and execution and a link between the mohalla tanzeems and the administration is established on equal terms and institutionalised. A government and an administration which is terrified of the power of the people can only adopt such a course of action if the new awareness in Karachi's affluent areas forges a unity with the katchi abadis. If this does not happen the Karachi violence will continue, and the abadis, both Pathan and non-Pathan, will become independent fortresses. The establishment's hold will weaken, and the new awareness that has asserted itself will die of helplessness and frustration.

Sensing the turmoil that is to follow, a large number of settled Pathan families are leaving Karachi, the city they had made their home, and to whose development they have contributed with their sweat and blood. The roofs of the Mingora-bound buses are no longer carrying TV sets and electronic goods, tin-sheets, charpais and items of daily domestic use. Meanwhile, their non-Pathan neighbours lick their wounds, and arm themselves for the next round that is bound to follow in the not-too-distant future.

—*The Herald*, Karachi

## SOHRAB GOTH—THE UNTOLD STORY

*Nasser Brohi*

As a cause of the recent ethnic riots, in which about 150 people were killed and many more injured, "Sohrab Goth", one of Karachi's most thickly populated areas, hit the headlines of the national newspapers and also got extensive coverage in the international Press.

Karachi is surrounded by dozens of villages called in Sindhi language as "goth", serving as supply bases for its rapidly growing requirements for milk, vegetables and other agricultural products. These include small as well as big centuries-old settlements, some older than Karachi city itself which was built out of small fishermen's village, mostly during the one hundred years of the British rule in Sind, since early 1843, following the defeat near Hyderabad of over 35,000-strong army of Meer rulers at the hands of General Charles Napier with only 27,00 British and Indian soldiers.

The Karachi suburban "goths" include among others, such villages as Jam Goth, Memon Goth, Jam Kando, Malir, dozens of Baluch goths in addition to those of Jokhias, Pallaris, Burfats, Gabols etc. Sohrab Goth, Baqar (Bakhar) Goth and Siddiq Pallari Goth are also among those settled since the olden times at Zero Point along the banks of Layari river and inhabited mostly by local milkmen and vegetable growing agriculturists.

The Press recently projected "Sohrab Goth", generally as one of the city areas totally populated by Pakhtuns, both Pakistani as well as of Afghan origin. But that is not the whole story. Sohrab Goth, originally Sohrab Gabol Goth, Baqar Gabol Goth and Siddiq Pallari Goth, retaining their old

rural Sindhi features with an overwhelming majority of Sindhi and Baluchi-speaking population, still consist of straw-covered hutments and kachcha dwellings and remain unaffected by the massive developments taking place all around. Located along both sides of the busy Super Highway, connecting Karachi city with the upcountry, the population of these goths is not disturbed by the heavy influx of men and women from the northern areas of the country, who have settled along the highway near the three villages. Actually, these Pakhtun settlements are now described as Sohrab Goth, because of their closer location to the three old villages.

The influx of Pakhtuns into Sind is an old story, beginning with the Ghaznavid and Ghorid era of early Muslim period in the Asian Continent. It was, however, after Nadir Shah and his General Ahmed Shah Abdali's (Durrani's) invasions in 1740 and afterwards that their Pakhtun army remnants began to settle down mostly in the upper Sind, consisting of Jacobabad, Larkana, Shikarpur and Sukkur districts. This process, however, gained further momentum after Maded Khan Pathan (the terror) of Qandhar (former capital of Afghanistan) over-ran Sind, killing and destroying everything coming his way.

It were actually the Qandhar rulers during the Kalhora and Meer periods in the eighteenth century and till the British conquest who were the real masters in this area, barring some very brief intervals in case of abrupt changes in the Afghan capital or some extraordinary weakness of an Afghan prince because of some royal family feud. Thus Qandhar became no less a terror for Sind and the basis of a popular Sindhi saying "jadheen, tadheen, Sindhri tokhay qandharran jokho", i.e. danger to Sind, is always from Qandhar. It is strange but a historical fact that it were the Qandhar rulers who first introduced the infamous system in Sind of taking hostages for ransom. Nadir Shah took as hostage two sons of Kalhora ruler, Mian Noor Mohammand Khan—Mian Muradyab Khan and Mian Attar Khan—to ensure regular annual payment of a tribute of Rs. 20 lakh imposed by him on the Sind rule. Later Mian Noor Mohammad's third son Ghulam Shah was also taken as hostage by Shah Tahmasap, all the three escaped only when the Qandhar rulers fell fighting among themselves.

However, the early Pakhtun settlers in the upper Sind, the Durrani and Pathans of Shikarpur and Garhi are Sindhinised to the extent that most of them have forgotten their original Pakhtun language. Their contribution in social welfare, education, culture and even in political sector is no less than that of their local brethren in Sind.

### Background

But the growth of Pakhtun population here, during the past one-and-a-half decade has altogether a different background.

It was after the construction of the all-weather Super Highway in early seventies, connecting Karachi with the upcountry and reducing the travel-time by about 30 per cent between Karachi and Hyderabad that Sohrab Goth generally known as "Sohrab Goth" came into prominence. Thus Sohrab Goth actually became the (land) gateway to Karachi from upcountry. It was, therefore, easier and much safer for drug traffickers from the upcountry to dump their goods somewhere here for onward distribution to various city centres. Soon unauthorised structures and other encroachments came up on a massive scale near Sohrab Goth, Baqar Goth and Pallari Goth at Zero Point along both sides of the Super Highway.

The Super Highway, thus, had provided a safer and an alternate route to the drug traffickers. Besides, the strict vigilance of the checking staff at Kotri railway junction forced the carriers to discontinue their journey as Jamshoro railway station and easily catch a highway bus for Sohrab Goth, thus avoiding possible checking at various places before and after entering Karachi city. This further led to the expansion of 'bara' and the drug and arms trade in the area.

Thus the underworld business continued expanding along the Super Highway, near Sohrab Goth.

However, the old villages along both sides of the Super Highway remain completely neglected till this day. They are devoid of basic civic facilities, although cemented roads have come up around these villages and water, electricity and gas are available in abundance in the area around here.

Although these villages are well within the town now and nearer to the city centres in comparison to New Karachi,

Orangi, Korangi, Qaidabad, Malir, Model Colony, Shakra-e-Faisal and other newly developed colonies, yet no cemented road has been constructed within the three goths. Similarly, schools are non-existent and not a single basic health centre has been provided so far. Mostly, the hutments, kachcha and semi-pucca houses are without electricity, not to mention the provision of gas for domestic consumption. House to house water connection here is out of question, even public taps are insufficient. The people here are no better off than other fellow citizens mostly living in areas frequently hit by water shortages, caused on account of various manageable and unmanageable factors.

—*Dawn*, Karachi



## THE AFTERMATH OF SOHRAB GOTH

*M.H. Askari*

Despite unending expression of horror and profusion of conjectures about the causes of the unprecedented ethnic violence that erupted in the aftermath of Sohrab Goth in December, several questions which are pertinent remain inexplicably unanswered. Why was the carnage allowed to continue unhindered by security forces in localities like Orangi, Qasba and Aligarh Colony for something like five to six hours? Why do the authorities continue to feel that a judicial inquiry is not necessary? Does the Administration now have some sort of a contingency plan to deal with a similar occurrence in future, for the rumblings of the storm can still be heard?

Popular reaction to the tragic happenings has ranged from fear to despondency to anger and its reverberations have been felt in all corners of Pakistan. There is almost a consensus that there is no knowing when trouble might recur. Even minor incidents which continue to occur in and around the affected localities instantly lead to blocking of traffic and stoning of vehicles. Localities not directly affected and otherwise free from ethnic and sectarian tensions also seem to be developing the "Orangi syndrome" and live in the fear of some crime like dacoity or murder not unknown in the so-called posh residential areas building up into an uncontrollable conflagration.

### **Morale of People**

The death toll, according to the Federal Interior Minister, was 172, in the recent disturbances in Karachi and Hyderabad;

unofficial estimates indicate a much higher figure. Although one likes to believe that the Government is alert to the situation, the fact is that the morale of the people has been badly bruised. Individuals and organisations such as the Coordination Committee for the affected people of Aligarh Colony, Qasba and Orangi, Motamar-i-Islami and Foundation For Development Through Moral Revival, headed by the former Naval Chief, retired Admiral Chaudhri, are repeatedly demanding a thorough probe into the problems of Karachi. Corruption in the higher echelons of the Administration is too often mentioned as a persistent evil. However, the presence in Karachi of ambassadors of peace such as the retired General Azam Khan (who is himself a Pushto-speaking Pathan and had developed an almost uncanny rapport with the people of former East Pakistan when he was Governor there), Sattar Edhi and Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan is looked upon as a blessing and about the only sign of hope.

A panel of eminent public figures convened by Admiral Chaudhri, representing almost all segments of society, developed a set of specific recommendations designed to involve the individual in the national task of fighting corruption and ridding society of its politics of hate and parochialism. To date, however the Administration has not taken the public into confidence with regard to its immediate and long-term plans to deal with the root causes of unrest and trouble in Karachi. There is no knowing whether a contingency plan exists to handle the kind of emergency that occurred twice in the recent weeks. Like justice which should not only be done but should also be seen to be done, effective administration not only has to be there, but also has to be visible.

When the Senate resumed its sitting a week before there was an immediate demand from various sections of the house for a full-fledged discussion of the situation and the authorities were repeatedly castigated. Even a known protagonist of the Government warned that the frequent use of the Army for maintaining law and order had "tarnished" its image. A young Senator from Karachi in a hard-hitting speech resorted to what were described as strong adjectives about the "failure of the government machinery" and went on to maintain that the casualties in the affected localities were in fact higher on Dec. 15 when the

area was supposed to be under curfew and troops patrolled the streets.

### **Sense of Shock**

In the National Assembly, the proceedings were no less acrimonious. The interior Minister, while promising a full-dress debate later on, expressed his own sense of shock at what had happened. Former Speaker Fakhr Imam was visibly anguished by what he had seen in Karachi when he said: "The blood that smears the atmosphere and pollutes the environment of Pakistan will keep on haunting them." At the same time the Assembly gave a lamentable display of callousness when its proceedings had to be prematurely terminated because of a lack of quorum. At one stage it had its own moments of frivolity which to any one with any grain of humanity must have seemed nothing less than macabre.

Predictably, Karachi has become a recurrent theme with political elements of various denominations—right, left or centre. Certain leaders in power, including the Chief Minister of Sind, have spoken of the possibility of "foreign hands and elements who never reconciled with the creation of Pakistan" as having been behind the trouble. Many others have brandished their own favourite formula for restoring sanity. The Federal Interior Minister, speaking to newsmen in Islamabad on Jan. 5, reportedly stated that the Government was "morally convinced" that what had happened in Karachi was the result of "international conspiracy" and hoped that the "hidden hand" would be unearthed (sic) soon. Foreign "conspiracies" and "hidden hands" many be active in Pakistan but that cannot explain everything that has happened—and may happen again!

There is reason to believe that the powers-that-be tend to look upon Sohrab Goth as a one-time "explosion" and not part of some international drug mafia which is known to operate in many parts of the world and sometimes proves even stronger than governments. Trafficking in drug is a multi-billion dollar business and people in places of influence and political clout the world over are said to have a stake in it. It is even conceivable that the so-called leakage of the proposed clean-up operation in Sohrab Goth, which ostensibly gave the operators time to shift

their goods and weapons in advance, was in fact some sort of a cleverly devised advance warning system, too sophisticated for the local authorities to locate. The massacre in Orangi and other localities may then have been diversionary tactics and a chance to get even with a certain community which was supposed to have come out on top in the earlier rounds of ethnic trouble.

Statements made by the leaders of the National Awami Party in Peshawar have by no means been helpful. They can only lead to polarisation between ethnic and provincial groupings which later on may become irreversible. But the ban placed on the entry into Sind of Wali Khan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Begum Nasim Wali Khan and Mir Ghous Bux Bizenjo can also not lead to anything positive ; on the other hand, it may even become a source of provocation. Wali Khan has vehemently denied that he had ever given any threat of a tribal lashkar raiding Karachi. What he wished to impress, he told a protest rally in Peshawar on Jan. 10, was that "if they failed to restore peace in Sind, an ugly situation might develop in the Frontier Province", and that a tribal lashkar of 10,000 Mahsuds was "ready to go to Karachi" because three of their tribesmen had been killed in the riots.

In the meantime, a somewhat positive development in Karachi has been the decision of a group of leading intellectuals, layers, politicians and labour and student leaders, who held a meeting last week, to hold a peace march on Jan. 21. In the days of the British Raj, officials posted in the administration of a troubled locality used to move out of their headquarters and pitch their camps in the heart of the affected areas to take care of the situation on the spot. Nothing of the sort ever happens in Karachi which is the epicentre of recurrent trouble.

In language ominously reminiscent of what leaders of former East Pakistan used to say in the period 1969-1971, the Qaumi-Mahaz-Azadi leader, Mairaj Mohammad Khan, has chosen to speak of the present situation in Sind, and the economic deprivation suffered by the Sindhis, particularly in the agricultural area. He says that in parts of many newly developed talukas of Sind "90 per cent of the lands do not belong

to the Sindhis” and have been given away “at throw-away prices” to the non-Sindhi, ex-Servicemen and bureaucrats. He has not defined as to who living in Sind is a Sindhi (and who is not), but is strongly critical of the dismally low percentage of Sindhi employees in public sector corporations and industry.

### **Alarm Bell**

However, what really sounds like an alarm bell is Mairaj Mohammad Khan’s proposed “five measures” to reverse the situation. Like what the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his partymen did in the pre-Bangladesh phase, he has made a strong plea for setting up of “true autonomy” in the provinces, with only Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Communications staying with the Centre. (This really was the substance of the late Sheikh’s six points). Mairaj Mohammad Khan also believes that the Senate should be directly elected and that “all executive decision” affecting a given Province must be passed by the Senate and the relevant provincial assembly, and the Senate should control the Defence budget. Mr. Mairaj Mohammad Khan by no means represents the majority of the people of Sind, but that does not necessarily mean that he may not be articulating what many other sections of the Sindhis may actually be thinking.

Meanwhile, the 90-year old Red Shirt leader Mr. Ghaffar Khan, who was ‘exiled’ from Karachi on his arrival on Sunday, used disturbingly strong language when he said: “Jinnah’s Pakistan has finished and if we want to build a new Pakistan we will have to sit together, talk and concede each other’s rights.” Statements such as these undoubtedly outrage the sense of loyalty of the average Pakistani. Or so at least one would hope. Nevertheless, weren’t there references to “a new Pakistan” not so very long ago ?

While ethnic and economic deprivation generate their own backlash, the absence of a sustained political system that can give people a sense of participation in the handling of the state of affairs can potentially result in a vacuum which may then not be possible to fill with improvisation or expediency. It is altogether without logic to suggest that martial law which had

been in force for about nine years and which has been succeeded by what appears to be non-representative (as it is non-party) government, might have put people's sense of national commitment to too severe a test ?

*Dawn, Karachi*

## SOHRAB GOTH : CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

At long last, a paramilitary operation has been initiated to liquidate the dens of illicit arms and drugs in the Sohrab Goth township. This action follows widespread expression of concern that the criminal underworld dealing in sophisticated arms and heroin has established a sanctuary in the area and fed, undisturbed, the repeated bouts of disorder in Karachi. Even though the seizures of unlawful arms and heroin made in the first two days of the operation conducted under a curfew have not been highly dramatic, initial discoveries are quite revealing. In the first place, the operation has been vindicated by whatever seizures of arms and heroin have been made. This should not be surprising because the use of the Sohrab Goth township by the underworld as its base of operations was common knowledge and the absence of any decisive action against those conducting the traffic in heroin and illicit arms from there was intriguing and exasperating. Hence, the 'Operation Clean-up' has come rather late in the day, after endless procrastination on the part of the authorities. Meanwhile, the citizens of Karachi were agonisingly protesting against the immunity from legal action that the mafia apparently enjoyed. But now that the machinery of law has been set in motion, the operation must be continued until the Augean stables of Sohrab Goth have been completely cleansed. For lack of action over long years, this has certainly become a Herculean task. And this may also be the last chance. The action has been prompted by a massive public outcry and severe disruptions in civic

life. It must be carried forward to its logical conclusion. Sohrab Goth must never be allowed once again to become a launching pad for death-dealing criminal activities that it has been in the past. The removal from the township of those engaged in anti-social and illegal activities will help redeem the position of the majority of its residents who are decent citizens and have nothing to do with the mafia or its influential protectors. Failure to accomplish the mission after such a demonstrative and huge enterprise will undermine the credibility of the Government, Federal as well as Provincial.

In fact, the operation must not conclude with the cleansing of only Sohrab Goth. As some observers have pointed out, the tentacles of the crime mafia are spread far beyond Sohrab Goth. Many influential people, belonging to different groups and regions, serve as the allies and patrons of the underworld. Evidence found in the Sohrab Goth should help uncover the links that go up to the so-called big guns. After all, sophisticated arms and heroin do not originate in Sohrab Goth. It is only a transit point and an outlet. Both arms and heroin come from a long distance, across the plains of the NWFP, the Punjab and Sind. It is another failure of the authorities that the traffic is successfully being conducted on a totally exposed and vulnerable route. To remove suspicion that even the NLC trucks might be involved in this traffic immunity provided to the NLC vehicles from checking by various police agencies and narcotics control staff should be withdrawn forthwith. The Pakistan Narcotics Control Board officials should be allowed to inspect the suspected NLC trucks. This lucrative business cannot be contained only by arresting the middlemen who have their base at Sohrab Goth, and Sohrab Goth is not the heart of the mafia operations. This is important to realise also in the context of the ethnic colour given to Karachi's disorders. We have repeatedly stressed that crime has no ethnicity. At this same time, some criminals will be only too happy to use their ethnic affiliation as a smoke-screen for their activities.

It is significant that the 'Operation Clean-up' has ignited some fresh turmoil in Karachi. If there are any misgivings that the drive against the crime mafia is directed against any particular group or community, the authorities should promptly



explain the logic and rationale of the present campaign to the Pakhtun elders and even seek their assistance in identifying and locating the real culprits. Most discerning observers now know that civic unrest born of genuine grievances is diverted into channels of ethnic, sectarian or factional confrontation by the vested interests. Apart from using every means at its disposal to maintain law and order, the authorities should guard against any attempt that the crime mafia might make surreptitiously to create an ethnic flare-up by exciting the passions of simple people vulnerable to the appeal of rabble rousers. If the authorities quickly follow up with action in other directions, the use of this ethnic cover will become transparent. Special care should be taken that the innocent people living in Sohrab Goth do not come to harm. Socially committed lawyers should form legal aid committees to assist those who may have been trapped in the net without any legal warrant. Law-abiding citizens of Sohrab Goth should be made to understand that the drive is specifically against criminals and they should not identify themselves with them or harbour them. Once the criminals have been flushed out, the authorities should take steps to integrate the locality with the city and not leave it to remain as a tribal patch on the urban fabric. After all, Sohrab Goth is a genuine kachchi abadi and it cannot be left to its own devices. All new encroachments have to be removed and reports say that this task has been undertaken by the KDA as part of the paramilitary operation.

So far, there has been no official briefing on how the operation has proceeded and what kind of clues have been found to get at the mafia bosses. Discovery of concrete cellars and tunnels on Saturday would indicate that there might be many secrets yet uncovered. The seizure of arms in the first two days does not match the reputation of Sohrab Goth as a market for sophisticated weapons. Either more arms are buried in some undiscovered hideout or they were shifted to some other locations before curfew was imposed and the area surrounded. The truth will be revealed when all the facts are made public. However, suspicions that many Afghan refugees were living in Sohrab Goth have been certified by the fact that, already, about 5,000 Afghan refugees have been transferred to a makeshift camp five

miles from Sohrab Goth. This is a very serious matter and must be fully explained. There is no stated official policy to allow the refugees to leave their camps in and near the tribal areas and engage freely in trade and other activities across the country. Instead of shifting them to a camp near Karachi, they should be immediately sent back to their designated locations and the Government obviously has the means to do that. Otherwise the new camp will achieve some kind of permanence and could become an alternative Sohrab Goth. It is felt that Afghan refugees have also infiltrated some other localities in the city and some of them may be in the forefront of the arms and drug racket. This and other ramifications of the 'Operation Clean-up' should be seriously borne in mind. That hundreds of heroin addicts were left without their supplies because of the operation is also a bleeding reminder of what happens when such activities are allowed to go on unchecked for a number of years. Surely there would be other points of supply of deadly heroin but the ones who depended on the Sohrab Goth outlet are in a dire situation, such is the nature of dependence on this drug. At least three hundred addicts have been shifted to a centre run by the Edhi Trust. They should be properly treated and looked after with sympathy. A focus on these addicts would indicate the colossal damage done to society by the spread of heroin. Their number has evidently grown with the indifference that the authorities had shown in dealing with the criminal underworld in Karachi, and Sohrab Goth is only one, though the most prominent centre of its operations. After Sohrab Goth, thus, there are many more battles to fight. And the venue of these battles will be outside the Sind province. In that sense, the 'Operation Clean-up' cannot be called off even after it has won its battle in Sohrab Goth. The war against the crime mafia is still to be waged and won.

—*Courtesy Dawn, Karachi*

## A SURVEY OF ETHNIC SITUATION IN SIND

*Kamran Khan*

After weeks of frenzy and unimaginative crisis-management, ethnic tension between the Pakhtuns and the Mohajirs has subsided slightly but a majority of citizens and a new-faced Sind administration are still finding it difficult to restore complete peace and harmony in the province.

Most of the independent observers in the country's largest city of Karachi are of the view that the recent reconciliatory moves by the Sind Chief Minister Syed Ghous Ali Shah, aimed at the majority Mohajir population and about 1.5 millions Pakhtoons living in Sind, won't help much if he fails to arrest the rampant corruption within the Sind government and in his staff at the Chief Minister's House. Shah, the much debated Sind Chief Minister, got full control of the law and order situation in Sind; only five weeks bled Pakhtoon transport runners say that they desperately want to see peace in this city of 8 million inhabitants. Officials do not confront their position. But none of the two have yet been able to identify miscreants who had been trying to shatter peace once again in the localities where the residents are divided into Pakhtun and Mohajir population. Senior police officials in Karachi have no hesitation in conceding the fact that they have not been able to identify any of the gangs on jeeps which regularly break the silence of the night with gun-shots in the back when the Prime Minister finally decided to bring in a civilian Governor in the province.

The vital change, which saw the induction of Karachi industrialist Ashraf Tabani as the Governor of Sind, came after

the worst communal riots in Karachi and Hyderabad, which left about 300 people killed and more than a thousand injured. No one in the Provincial Government or the politicians here are ready to say that such a situation can't erupt again.

A large section of the people in the worst affected Orangi and the trou-localities where Pakhtun-Mohajir tension is still running high.

After weeks of the bloody street battles, both Pakhtuns and Mohajirs have finally agreed that there is no basic clash of interests between them. "We do the boot polishing petty labour and bus driving. If the Mohajirs want a quota from it we're ready to surrender," said Mr. Sohrab Khan, a Pakhtun lawyer practising in Karachi. There are less than three dozen Pakhtoon lawyers in Karachi. Altaf Hussain, the founder of Mohajir Qaumi Movement, said soon after his release last month: "The Pakhtoons have all the right to do business in predominantly Mohajir areas."

Despite this agreement at the top, between the two communities, and Thana-sponsored peace committees comprising the members of both communities, the relationship remains fragile. Reason: continuing traffic accidents by the mini-bus drivers, mainly driven by the Pakhtuns of Karachi. All the events of violence after "Black December" last year, were related to traffic accidents in Karachi. There exist almost no traffic laws in this biggest city of the country, where the traffic police officials are considered to be the wealthiest policemen in the country. No less than three of them are related to the top authorities.

There is a general agreement, both here and in Islamabad, that before going into the roots of the problem in Sind, the administration in this volatile province should be handed over completely to the locals. Last month, after Prime Minister Junejo replaced the Sind Governor with a Karachiite, it was strongly suggested to him both by his advisors in the ruling Muslim League and the country's security agencies that a new Chief Minister be brought in Sind to save the image of the government. The Prime Minister not only turned down the suggestion, but also okayed a number of political and administrative moves initiated by Chief Minister Shah. These moves definitely

irritated many in senior official and party circles.

As an initial step, three key Punjabi bureaucrats were sent packing and they were replaced with those having large experience and stay in Sind. The first to go was the Chief Secretary Mr. Masood Nabi Noor. His change was closely followed by an important replacement, when the services of the Home Secretary Pervaiz Ahmed Butt were put at the disposal of the Federal Government, and for the first time in a decade, a Sindhi was appointed as the Home Secretary. The new Home Secretary, Abdullah J. Memon, is a former pupil of the University of Karachi and so is the new Commissioner for Karachi, Shahid Aziz Siddiqui. Dissatisfied with the performance of the network of internal security, Shah put in another Karachiite, Fayyaz Ali Khan, as the DIG (Special Branch). The previous DIG Mr. Mohib Asad would report back to the Punjab police after completing a course at NIPA.

In a careful balancing act the Chief Minister has decided not to bring major changes at the top level in the police, where most of the officials are from the majority province. The IPG (Sind) Salman Khaliq got more of Shah's confidence last week when he produced the three kidnapped servants of Ms. Benazir Bhutto, after having successful negotiations with hardcore Sindhi nationalists such as Amir Hyder Shah, son of G.M. Syed.

The administrative changes came with the political concessions. First to be benefited by them was Altaf Hussain and some other leaders of MQM. The Pakhtoons arrested for crimes other than those related to drug offences, were also released. The release of Altaf Hussain will not only help Shah in strengthening his administrative moves which aims at bringing locals into the important posts, but also in revamping of the police set-up. Altaf Hussain's MQM is also the biggest danger for the rightist Jamaat-i-Islami, which has now pledged to topple the Chief Minister. The Jamaat-i-Islami has already joined hands with the Haroons and Independent Opposition Group members of the Sind Assembly in the biggest campaign against the government, overtaken since the government of PPP was toppled in a military coup.

Political observers here are baffled as to why Sind has been selected for launching a well-organised campaign against the

political representatives of Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo. It appears, they say, Jamaat-i-Islami doesn't want to see, whatever the representative system is, to flourish in the country.

"We don't want western democracy here." "Pakistan had been created only for the rule of Sharia." so chanted hundreds of veiled Jamaat women as they 'gheraoed' the Sind Assembly building the previous month.

Next week Jamaat-i-Islami would try to make life more difficult for the Sind Chief Minister, when it will float a shadow administration for Karachi. Jamaat insiders say that in the later stage of the campaign, for which thousands of posters, handbills and pamphlets have already been printed. The Jamaat groups among students, labourers and religious schools would mobilise street demonstration against the Sind Chief Minister. The powerful student group of the party, the Islami Jamiat-i-Tulba, has selected Karachi for the main protest rally of the country against three-year old ban on student organisation.

"They want to blackmail me, I won't bow down to their pressure tactics," said Chief Minister Ghous Ali Shah, when asked to give his point of view on Jamaat-i-Islami's stance against his government. For the Chief Minister, the Jamaat is pressurising him for surrendering the entire motor vehicle tax collected from Karachi to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, where the Mayor belongs to Jamaat.

"After all, I have to look after the interest of the whole province", asserted the Chief Minister.

"Yes", he confirms, "I have given plots to the members of the assemblies and the Senate. Which government hasn't done it?" He challenges the Jamaat and all critics to substantiate the charges of corruption for personal gains.

The Chief Minister is now making no secret to his plans to give more opportunities to locals, particularly, important assignments in his administration.

One can't deny the fact that the tense Chief Minister has made major advances towards creating a lobby among the Mohajirs and Sindhis both. He was helped most by the popular Mohajir leader, Altaf Hussain, who has not even once demanded his resignation. The previous week Shah's aides contacted yet

another imprisoned Bihari leader Karachi MNA, Afaq Khan, Shahid. Sources said that the Sind Government had no objections on Afaq's release and it was promptly communicated to the jailed leader, when the officials contacted him at Karachi's Central jail the same week.

The Sind Government which held the unidentified drug mafia responsible for Karachi's carnage is now making highly publicised statements that it will not allow drug dens to operate in Sind. A week ago police escorted bulldozers, which demolished at least 16 houses in a predominantly Pathan locality of Quaidabad. The place was frequented by the heroin addicts. Life is going to be difficult for the drug-den runners in Sind, as both the Chief Minister and Altaf Hussain are issuing statements which are widely publicised against drug-pushers. Both Shah and Altaf Hussain have undivided support on this particular issue from the people.

By all accounts the emergence of MAM has helped the Sind Government in what seems to be a long-drawn battle against Jamaat-i-Islami and the 11 independent opposition members, led by Hussain Abdullah Haroon. The influential Haroon didn't get along with Shah right from the word go. Differences between the two deepened further a year ago when Shah unseated Haroon from the Speakership of Sind Assembly through a majority vote. Haroon and his supporters in the Assembly charge Ghous Ali Shah of corruption and mismanaging important crises. Sources close to the Independent group claim that the days of Ghous Ali Shah can be counted on finger tips but they don't say as to when they will be in a position to table a no-confidence motion against their political adversary.

The members of the ruling party are, however, confident that any such move in the Assembly would face the worst defeat. It seems correct because most of the members of the Assembly have gone into business after being elected. Investigations show that at least 40 of them bought brand new Pajeros in the last six months. Many of the members who came to the assembly on second hand cars are now the owners of brand new Hondas and Mitsubishis.

"Yes government contracts, permits, plots and appointments have helped them vastly," said a senior official. A number of

them will have to wait for a long time for a possible inclusion in the Cabinet. It is expected that the Chief Minister would hold this card with him as long as he can. So the chances of unseating the Chief Minister through a no-confidence vote are minimum.

The most strong political group in the province—the Pakistan Peoples Party—has made it clear several times that it'll fight its battle in Islamabad. For obvious reasons, Ms. Benazir Bhutto is aiming at Gen. Ziaul-Haq in her war of wits and propaganda. In an unprecedented gesture of goodwill towards the government in Sind, Ms. Bhutto thanked the Sind Government for making hectic efforts in the recovery of her three staff members last month. But the PPP leaders in Karachi were caught on the wrong foot previous month, when its women staged a demonstration along with JI's women outside the Sind Assembly against the provincial Chief Minister. Several eyebrows had raised when both the groups of women raised identical slogans. But the officials and members of the ruling Muslim League believe that they face no threat from the PPP. For the last several months the Chief Minister has also avoided to make any remarks against Ms. Bhutto.

But all is not well for the Chief Minister, a disciple of influential Pir of Pagara. The growing popularity of the separatist elements in the interior of Sind is causing a major challenge for his authority as well as for Islamabad. Both his party members and the administration have shown immense weakness in dealing with such elements. The tactless handling of the situation stood exposed in G.M. Syed's village of Sann the previous month, when, thousands gathered to chant "Pakistan-no Khappi" (We don't want Pakistan).

Both federal and provincial security officials here strongly believe that the separatist movement, particularly the Jiye Sind Movement, gets both financial and ideological support from India. Fresh evidence provided to Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo was the basis of his charge last month that India was assisting separatism and anarchism in Sind.

"We have no doubt that the elements seeking a separate Sindhu Desh are getting money from India," charged Ghous Ali Shah, the Chief Minister, in an interview with "The



Muslim" in the previous week. The Chief Minister who made an abortive bid to block the holding of the 84th birthday of the Jiye Sind founder G.M. Syed in Dadu in the same week, is now acknowledging that the separatist movement is attracting a small section of youth in Sind's educational institutions. The birthday of the aged Sindi leader was used last month to raise slogans for a separate state for the Sindhis.

The Police and administration which had earlier failed to bring G.M. Syed to Karachi before his birthday faced another embarrassment when the most wanted SBPF leader Abdul Hafiz Pirzada made a dramatic appearance during the birthday celebration. Pirzada disappeared after delivering a hard-hitting speech against Punjab and the army. Within the next few days both the S.P. and D.C. of Dadu district were asked to pack up.

This was the signal to all officials that anybody seen dealing with the Jiye Sind elements lightly would not be spared. The interviews conducted with security officials recently found them confused about the official line of action to deal with the separatist elements. Interestingly very few of them recommend harsh administrative action as most asked for a political solution.

Leadership from Jamaat-e-Islami, JUP and JUI recommend a strong watch on minority students in Sind, a view shared by the security officials. A recent survey interestingly showed that at least 50 per cent of seats in professional educational institutions in Sind, except Karachi, go to the minority students who constitute less than 15 per cent of the total population. What makes the security officials more suspicious about aid from across the border for separatist elements is the fact that students from that particular minority are most active in those separatist organisations. The rich among the students from the minority are financing some poor students, who later turned out to be hard-core nationalists.

Official sources said that two years back, when it had been decided to face the separatist elements through Islamic ideological propagation a pro-Islamic organisation named "Tanzeem Fikro Nazar" had been floated in Sind through official support. Later, the organisation, which held an elaborate function at Karachi's Sheraton Hotel failed to account for much of the

money provided to block the propagation of separatist and atheistic ideas in the interior of Sind. The experience to counter the separatist challenge through religious propaganda thus failed.

Leaders from Pakistan People's Party hold the Martial Law regime and then the non-party polls responsible for creating such a situation. Both Ms. Benazir Bhutto and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who are for strong federation, believe there is still some time left before the situation reaches a point of no-return in Sind. For Jatoi, Bhutto and leaders of other political parties, the solution lies in immediate polls on party-basis.

Police officials with short-term objectives in mind are recommending that the admissions in Sind's educational institutions be granted according to rules followed elsewhere in the country. They say that students from the minority be given admission according to the quota reserved for them and they should not be allowed to have admission through open merit.

Both the officials and opposition politicians agree, that the ruling Muslim League is in no position to counter the grave challenge from the Indian backed movement. PML members of Assemblies from the interior Sind are seen most of the time in Sind's Secretariat pursuing bureaucrats for permits, licenses and plots. Others are awaiting a berth in the provincial Cabinet. Except a couple of public meetings which were addressed by the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister, none of the Assembly members or Senators could hold a single public meeting throughout Sind since the lifting of Martial Law 13 months back. "There are two in a hundred Assembly members who approach us with collective problems relating to their constituency," said a desperate bureaucrat in Karachi,

There seems to be a lull in kidnappings for ransom, dacoities and highway robberies which had hit the province soon after the Sukkur jail-break. Police officials concede here that the lull would not continue for a long time as 20 of 33 condemned criminals who had broken the high security Sukkur Prison last year are still absconding. Units of Pakistan Army, which had been inducted with para-military and police for the biggest dacoit hunt, have been withdrawn for the time being because of the border situation.

As the crime graph is showing a little downward trend, public complaints are on the rise against the police. In riot-torn Karachi, some people have unchallengeable proof to establish that policemen were involved in looting a cloth market in Liaquatabad before setting it ablaze. This correspondent has seen photographs showing policemen looting houses and shops during a search for rioters in the Sectors 14 and 15 in Orangi Township a month ago. In these two sectors, police in its search also resorted to indiscriminate firing resulting in the complete impairment of the legs of two women. An old woman was shot in the hip as she was returning after closing her doors. Naeema Bano, a 14 year old Liaquatabad girl, lost her eye as Eagle Squad opened fire in Liaquatabad. One of their bullets hit Naeema's right eye while she was walking on the balcony of her house on the first floor. The other day policemen raided a fire-brigade station in Nazimabad as they fired a number of teargas shells and a round of automatic fire to take revenge from a fire-officer who had misbehaved with one of the policemen.

These and numerous other such incidents have further widened the vast gulf between the police and the people, and as a result attacks on police stations are on the rise. Hatred against police, particularly in Karachi and Hyderabad, is assuming most dangerous proportions. It was ironic to note during the interview with officials that they had no idea of this dangerous trend. Most of them are not ready to talk on the subject, but the few believe that it is due to the behavior of the local police having no sympathy with the people here.

Not a single politician challenges this assertion. There are signals that top authorities also have the realisation that only local police could help improve the situation in the volatile urban Sind. Chief Minister Shah has already constituted a Cabinet sub-committee which will give its recommendation to revamp the police set-up in Sind.

The next few months would be important as they will decide whether the present Chief Minister can handle the drifting political turmoil in the province or Prime Minister Junejo will have to find a new face to run the province, where the whole so-called representative system is at stake.

## ALTAf EXPLAINS MQM OBJECTIVES

*Muhammad Ali Siddiqi*

KARACHI, 3 Feb Mr Altaf Husain of the MQM was ill when I met him on Saturday in the afternoon at a party worker's home in Dastagir. A pack of anti-biotic tablets and a bottle of red mixture testified to the state of his health. However, it seemed to be largely a case of fatigue for the night before he had had a hero's ride through the lanes and bylanes of Liaquatabad, his constituency in every sense of the term.

Despite the tiredness writ large on his face, he seemed flushed with success, though no newspapers reported his Liaquatabad tour the way this ebullient student-leader turned politician would have wanted it.

Sections of the people in Karachi and Hyderabad had been hearing his name for a decade or so. But the "breakthrough" in his political career came with the much publicised "march" to Hyderabad and the subsequent firing, riots, deaths and curfew on 31 October last.

The bloody events of 14-15 December finally invited everybody's attention to the leaders of the two "sides" involved. While the Pakhtun Action Committee successfully retained its character as a collective, the leadership of Mohajir militancy seemed to be largely monopolised by one man—this 31-year-old section of a family from Agra.

He is a controversial figure. By no means do all Mohajirs accept him as their authentic spokesman. Some religious parties especially abhor him. But some young Mohajirs look

tohim with what their elders consider to be misplaced hopes.

Many Mohajirs suspect he is taking them on a path that ends in a blind alley. Many also say openly, "Oh that Altaf! He is responsible for the death of 300 Mohajirs!" I told this to his face.

Altaf reacted with perfect self-assurance. "If the Mohajir Qaumi Movement is responsible for the death of 300 Mohajirs, then the (All-India) Muslim League was responsible for the death of two million Muslims. Well, that was the price the Muslims had had to pay for asserting their identity and for achieving Pakistan.

"If you want me to tell you what the MQM has achieved, it is this—we have given them the consciousness of their rights, the awareness that they constitute Pakistan's fifth nationality—and we have brought them on one platform."

*Question* : But can one have two nationalisms side by side on the same stretch of territory? Can Sindhi sub-nationalism and Mohajir sub-nationalism co-exist?

*Altaf*: Why can't there be two nationalities within the bounds of the same territorial unit? It is the denial of rights that gives people the consciousness of its rights and the desire to unite and assert its identity. In united India, Hindus and Muslims had been living together for a millennium with identity. But when the British took over and the Indian Congress and the British Government began acting in concert against Muslim interests, denying them their legitimate rights, then as far back as the 19th Century, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who was termed a 'loyalist', began to speak in terms of two nations. Finally, when the Muslims realised there was no way they could protect their rights, they developed their consciousness as a separate nation within the same geographical boundary called India or Hindustan. Ultimately, this led to the creation of Pakistan.

"The same way things developed in East Pakistan.

"Let us not forget that in the struggle for Pakistan and in the evolution of Muslim nationalism, the Bengali people played the most prominent part. However, when after Pakistan's emergence they realised that they were not getting what was their due within the framework of a united Pakistan, they developed the theory of Bengali nationalism and ultimately seceded.

“The same situation is developing in Pakistan. All nationalities are asserting their identities. The Mohajirs have been forced to think in terms of a fifth nationality, because objective conditions so dictate. Everywhere the Mohajirs find the doors of employment, education and other opportunities closed to them. All that the MQM has done is to give them a sense of direction and leadership. It is all a question of achieving the Mohajirs’ rights.

*Question* : Does it mean the Mohajir nationality exists only because its rights have been denied and that the moment it gets its rights it will dissolve and disappear?

*Altaf* : Please, do not isolate the Mohajirs. If all of Pakistan’s nationalities feel satisfied and think and act in broad national terms, the Mohajirs will do the same. The point that must be noted is that it is not Mohajirs alone whose rights have been denied. The Sindhis, the Baluch and the Pakhtuns, too, think that way, and so does the vast majority of the Punjabi people who live in poverty and want.

“All these nationalities have been denied their rights by the civilian and military bureaucracy which unfortunately comes from the Punjab that gets the blame, even though the people of the Punjab are as much victims of the misdeeds of the bureaucracy as any other nationality.

*Question* : What is the solution to this problem?

*Altaf* : Talk to the people who genuinely represent these nationalities. You can’t solve this problem by accusing me and others of sedition and treason. Talk to us, listen to our grievances and remove them.

*Question* : But what is the institutional solution to this problem?

*Altaf* : The people of every province must be ruled by the local people. How can people have a sense of participation in national and provincial affairs when Martial Law officers down to the level of SMLAs and below come from one particular province, when from Chief Secretary and DIG down to the level of Inspectors and SHOs you do not have persons drawn from the local people. Aren’t the local people qualified even to become SHOs?

*Question* : When I asked you for an institutional solution,

I thought you would suggest rule of law, democracy and regular elections.

*Altaf*: I am one hundred per cent for democratic government, rule of law and regular elections. But what have elections given to the Mohajirs? In the aftermath of elections, Governorships and 'DIG-ships' and 'SHO-ships' do not go to the local people,

*Question*: But can't Muhajir interests be best served if the Mohajirs throw in their lot with the mainstream national political parties?

*Altaf*: The political parties have done nothing for the Mohajirs, even though they made tall promises. Everybody knows what role the Mohajirs played in the people's democratic struggles. The movements in 1968 and 1977 were spearheaded by the Mohajirs, and it is the Mohajirs who rendered the greatest sacrifices for democratic causes. But the political parties did nothing to improve the Mohajirs' lot. The PNA parties especially, let down the Mohajirs badly. There were several PNA parties which joined the Zia Government, but they did nothing for us. That's why the people have flocked to the MQM banner. I still say if some political parties are ready to guarantee Mohajir rights, the MQM is ready for a possible electoral alliance.

*Question*: But was it essential to have a fight with the Pakhtuns? In what way does this fratricide serve Mohajir interests?

*Altaf*: We have nothing against the Pakhtuns, and we didn't initiate this unfortunate fratricide. I don't want to go into the details of the riots. But we were not the ones to provoke clashes on 31 October or 14-15 December. Actually these riots were engineered to divert the Mohajirs' struggle.

*Question*: Whom do you think that engineered these riots?

*Altaf*: I hold three parties responsible for these riots—the bureaucracy, the drug mafia and a religious political party. All of them combined to convert the peaceful Mohajir struggle into a Pakhtun-Mohajir confrontation.

*Question*: How do you think the Sindhis look at this situation?

*Altaf*: I think the Sindhi response has been positive. Where-

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Organisation served as the nucleus of what later was to become MQM, we were the targets of attacks from other student parties. When we decided to go out of the campuses and form MQM, we organised ourselves on peaceful lines. For nearly nine years we spread out to every hook and corner of Sind, and there never was any violence by us against us. It was in October last that violence was initiated by the vested interests to turn the Mohajir struggle for their rights into an ethnic clash.

### **Background**

Altaf did his B.Sc. from Islamia College in 1975 and wanted admission to B.Sc. Pharmacy when he found admissions closed. Altaf alleged that here was an anomaly in the admission process and that the university administration should have begun enrolling students after B.Sc. examination results had been declared. He formed an action committee and was initially quite close to the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba but later fell out with it.

On 11 June 1978 the All-Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation was formed, with Altaf as Chairman and Azim Ahmad Tariq as General Secretary.

—Dawn, Karachi

## ETHNIC DIMENSION OF SUBCONTINENTAL MUSLIMS

*Balraj Puri*

The ethnic riot in Karachi in December last—the worst of its kind since the birth of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan—above all tellingly underlines the peril of ignoring ethnic identities which are as powerful as religious identities. Its intensity has no doubt been aggravated by ‘Kalashnikov culture’, the role of the drug mafia and the state of law and order and democracy in that country. But essentially it was an ethnic violence which erupted for lack of other avenues of ethnic expression.

The term ethnic is here used as a broad non-religious identity based on race, culture, region, etc. Both the urges—religious and ethnic—provide the most vital clues to the political behaviour of the people of the sub-continent, including the Muslims. Islam has nowhere inhibited the ethnic-cultural-nationalistic urges of its followers. The fact is evident from the existence of over forty sovereign nation states of Muslims in the world. The Quran itself recognised the ethnic identities of the Muslims when it said : “We created you in the form of tribes, so that you could be identified.”

While Muslims, like any other community, have multiple identities, which identity becomes pronounced at a particular time depends upon the situation at that time and which of them is perceived to be threatened. Thus Bengali Muslims, who asserted their religious identity in 1947, asserted their ethnic-linguistic identity in 1971. Kashmiri Muslim asserted their twin

identities in reverse order : ethnic-linguistic identity in 1947 and Muslim identity around 1953.

Urdu speaking Muslims of the undivided India, who had once formed its ruling class, felt a threat to their religious identity from the possible domination of the Hindu majority after the withdrawal of the British. Their quest for a homeland became the genesis of the Pakistan movement and they comprised the vanguard of the movement and the Muslim League. Muslim communities in other areas where they were in a majority or had pronounced regional characteristics, particularly in areas which now comprise Pakistan, did not respond enthusiastically to the League and its demand for Pakistan.

It may be an academic exercise to speculate whether partition of the country could have been avoided if the Congress and Muslim League had shown better awareness of the real urges of the Muslim masses. But even now such an awareness on the part of the rulers of the subcontinent may help them to maintain peace within their countries as also between them.

It was, in any case, a fatal under-estimation of the ethnic urges of the Muslims by the Pakistan leadership that offended and alienated Kashmiri Muslims in 1947 and Bengali Muslims in 1971. For the same reason, the other four remaining ethnic communities of Pakistan have to be held together through a dictatorial regime.

The Urdu-speaking Muslims from north India, who migrated to Pakistan in search of a Muslim homeland, soon discovered that other Muslim communities had retained their ethnic identities, which stimulated their urge for self-identity. Explaining this fact, Khalid Sultan, a leading member of the Muhajir Qaumi Mahaz, said, "When Pakistan was made, we all meant it to be one nation. But when our parents came here, they found Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans and Baluchis. The only Pakistanis seemed to be the Muhajirs." But ethnic assertion of others made them aware that "we have a separate cultural, historical and linguistic identity from the other nationalities of Pakistan".

Most of the Muhajirs had believed in the paramountcy of the religious identity and, therefore, used to be the most loyal followers of the Muslim League and its ideology as they were

before partition and migration. Later they also became the most loyal followers of the fundamentalist upsurge represented by the Jamait-e-Islamic. But as their ethnic identity was sharpened in response to assertion of other ethnicities, they demanded a separate homeland within Pakistan which they called Urdu-Pradesh. The preference for a Hindi-ised name against Urdu Suba indicated how powerful was their nostalgia for UP, the land of their origin.

Nothing happened in Pakistan to make them give up their roots. As eminent representatives of this community, Rais Amrohi, the noted Urdu poet and columnist, asserted in his writings its right to own its past and descent. He said, "No people in the world feel ashamed of the land of their origin. So why should we? We are proud of the fact that our ancestors gave to the sub-continent one of the greatest civilisations of the world. We are the inheritors of the immortal Indo-Islamic culture. We are proud of the delta land between the Ganga and the Jamuna on which flourished the great edifice of the Indo-Islamic civilisation. If four other nationalities like Punjabis, Pathans, Sindhis and Balauchs can claim their homelands in Pakistan, Rais Amrohi asks "What is wrong in the demand of Pak-Indians (as he prefers to call his community) for recognition as the fifth nationality of Pakistan and having its own homeland?"

A confidential survey conducted by the central government of Pakistan quoted by the daily *News* of Karachi had revealed that All-India Radio broadcasts were heard in over 90 per cent of Karachi homes. Asked why they were switching on to the 'enemy radio', some of the listeners replied that "this is the only source of correct pronunciation of Urdu for their family members, specially children".

The refusal of Pak-Indians to give up their ethnic identity and roots led to unmerited aspersion on their loyalty among a section of their compatriots. It provoked the Sindhi Daily *Hilala-e-Pakistan* to describe them as "virtual Indian Agents who should be sent to India". A Sindhi PPP leader, Pir Ahmed Bux, retorted that if "Urduwallahs had their way and India was willing to admit them, Karachi would overnight be denuded of 70 per cent of its population".

The Urdu-speaking community became the most persecuted community after the emergence of ethnic identities in Pakistan. One manifestation of this emergence was the split of Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh. The Biharis, as the Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh is called, were the worst sufferers. Even now over two lakhs of them are rotting in refugee camps whom neither Bangladesh is willing to rehabilitate nor Pakistan is willing to accept.

The Muhajirs were mostly settled in and around Karachi. They outnumber the Sindhis, the Pathans and the Punjabis in the city. About 8 lakhs of Bihari migrants are concentrated in a single township of Orangi which was the scene of recent massacres. The hostility the Muhajirs had faced from Bangladeshis and Sindhis has now been excelled by the brutality of the Pathans.

The Pathans are another ethnic community of Pakistan which has not fully reconciled to their status in the country and the domination of Punjabis over them. In fact, a large number of them led by leaders like Khan brothers had their reservation about the very idea of Pakistan. The Muhajir-Pathan conflict dates back to 1965 when Field Marshal Ayub Khan supported by Pathans, woo the presidential election against Fatama Jinnah, supported by the Muhajirs. Since then tension between two estranged communities seeking dominant position in Karachi city, has recurred often leading to violent clashes. The Muhajirs have been increasingly at the receiving end, particularly on account of their alienation from other Pakistanis also.

India cannot remain unconcerned over their fate. A human tragedy of this magnitude within the sub-continent must concern it. But what is being overlooked is the fact that it also concerns the largest community of the non-resident Indians (NRI) settled abroad. While the type of interest India is taking in the Tamil problem of Sri Lanka and the intervention it made in what became Bangladesh are ruled out in the case of the Muhajirs, should they be totally excluded from the category of NRI simply because they are Muslims? Circumstances in which they migrated to Pakistan may be different from those under which other Indians migrated to other lands, but are their pangs of nostalgia and alienation much different? In any case, a deeper understanding of their problems will be valuable not

only in shaping our policy towards Pakistan but also for knowing our own Muslim community better.

Indians and Pakistanis are found to be far friendlier at ethnic-linguistic levels than at the national level. Punjabi, Sindhi and Urdu languages have been acting as emotional bridges between the two countries as Bangla is between India and Bangladesh. Similarly Pathan and Baluch ethnic leaders were either former stalwarts of the Indian freedom movement or have close affinity with its values.

A better appreciation and empathy for the ethnic urges of the people of Pakistan should help in developing cultural relations with them and in winning over their friendship which should inevitably be reflected in governmental relations as well. In the case of the Urdu-speaking Muslim community of Pakistan, India's interest has to be special. For they once belonged to it and have blood relations with a large number of its citizens.

The plight of the Urdu speaking community in Bangladesh and Pakistan has also a direct bearing on the minds of its mainstream living in India. Its sub-continental affinities continue to exist. While these never amounted to extra-territorial loyalty, the community can no more look for emotional, moral or intellectual support across the border. In fact, a reverse process has already become noticeable.

Meanwhile, all outside sources of inspiration of Indian Muslims had also gradually collapsed. The idea of Khilafat or Pan-Islamism is dead once for all. The much expected Arab renaissance did not take off. The Khomeini revolution proved too brutal. Pakistan's failure to satisfy the urge for freedom and ethnic identities of its people, particularly the treatment meted out to the kith and kin of Indian Muslims in Pakistan, compounded their disillusionment with other Islamic countries. Indeed, after the split of Pakistan, Delhi is in a far better position to aspire to the status of the geo-historical centre of the sub-continental Muslims. For the essence of the concept of Islam dominant in the other two countries was evolved in the Indian part of the sub-continent, by sufies like Chisti to Ulama of Deoband and other institutions of Islamic learning and its secular practices were shaped by the imperial rulers of Delhi, symbolised by the Red Fort and Taj.

The realisation of these facts has definitely encouraged a process of indigenisation of Indian Muslims and search for roots within their own country; some of them discovering their ancestry in times of the epics and beyond. They are also becoming aware of their intellectual and cultural superiority to the Muslims anywhere else in the world.

It does not, however, follow that Muslim alienation from the national mainstream has completely ended and that Hindu-Muslim relations have been restored to their ideal best. But it does follow that factors other than extra-territorial loyalty and transnational affinities of Indian Muslims might be responsible for the communal tangle. Indeed the growing assertion of the Muslims may be related to their awareness of their roots and rights in the country.

Moreover, the Hindus, by and large, remain ignorant of the impact of the partition and developments in Pakistan on the Muslims of India and are still reacting to their pre-conceived perception of a monolithic Muslim mind of the pre-partition days. Intriguingly, emulative interest among the rest of the countrymen in Pakistan is proportional to Muslim disillusionment with it.

The Sikh militants, for instance, seem to be directly inspired by what Muslim separatism is supposed to have achieved. But they do not realise how much damage the Muslims of India have done to their own interest by getting the country divided. If, God forbid, they succeed in their objective of a Sikh homeland, the community might suffer a far worse fate.

Similarly, there is little realisation in this country of the fact that refusal of Pakistan to recognise ethnic identities and its insistence on imposing a unitary form of government on a multi-ethnic nation have led to the demise of democracy and ethnic violence in that country. Far from avoiding Pakistan's mistake in this matter, there are indications of second thoughts at the highest level in India on the wisdom of linguistic states and federalism. The panic that assertion of any sub-national identity creates among the national elite of India is qualitatively not much different from the attitude of the Pakistan rulers towards their ethnic identities.

A retreat from pluralism inspired by panic—which in turn

is borne out out of ignorance of the urges of sub-national identities – would not only undermine the basis of Indian unity and its democratic polity but also its role as a model of unity for the countries of the South Asia and as a source of inspiration for their ethnic identities. India's fitness as a mediator on the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, might have, for instance, been compromised by its grudging faith in the rights of its own ethnic identities. Similarly, ethnic discontent in Punjab and Kashmir undermines effectiveness of India's Pakistan policy.

Language, culture and region which comprise our definition of ethnic identities are the only potent rival of religious identities and hence the most powerful secularising influence on the Indian polity. But instead of encouraging a community like the Muslims to get integrated with other communities at regional level, where they not only share a common language, culture, history, heroes and other symbols, they are expected to merge into an elusive mainstream and conform to an arbitrarily fixed standard of nationalism.

By ignoring the ethnic dimension of the Muslims, they are being forcibly monolithised. Kashmir is usually treated more as a Muslim problem than a Kashmiri problem. Promotion of Urdu is treated more as a concession to the Muslim community than as a cultural need of a vital ethnic identity of which it is the mother tongue. And when attempts at monolithisation of the community are accompanied by attempts at its homogenisation with the majority, communal tensions are bound to develop.

Policy towards the minorities in India has often oscillated between 'toughness' and 'appeasement'. As long as these policies are not based on correct understanding of their urges, neither can succeed. What is needed is a more intelligent policy with a view of finding out the extent to which the urges of the minority are compatible with those of the majority and the national interest.

Muslim urges include urges of multiple identities of the community: partly shared with others and partly exclusive. What should be the legitimate field and degree of autonomy of an exclusive religious identity in a secular country is a question which would be more fruitfully debated and decided with greater self-assurance if it is informed with the knowledge that 'Indian



Muslims are, emotionally or intellectually, not dependent on any other country and have the potentiality of becoming a source of inspiration for Muslims elsewhere. In fact, the whole question of transnational identities should be treated as an opportunity of opening bridges of friendship and understanding with neighbouring countries. In any case, a policy for dealing with the urges of such identities should be a vital component of the defence policy of the country.

The current ethnic turmoil in Pakistan is an occasion for fresh thinking on a wide range of problems in India including its Pakistan policy, Hindu-Muslim relations, role of ethnic identities in national integration and opportunities and challenges of transnational identities. The occasion reminds that ideological, cultural and moral components of the nation's power are as important as physical might. And that while neither the urge for religious identities should be underestimated nor should the fears about it be exaggerated, no people, including the Muslims, live by religion alone.

*Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay*

**SRI LANKA**

# '6,000 Tamils killed since July 83'

MADURA, Oct. 6 (UNI).

**T**HE Tamil Information Centre has collected documentary evidence which show that at least 6,000 Tamils were killed in Sri Lanka since July 1983 when ethnic violence broke out in the island nation.

Mr. V. Varada Kumar, Director of the Tamil Information Centre in London, told UNI, in an interview here, that the actual number of Tamils killed by Sri Lankan army-men and Sinhala hoodlums could even be four-folds, as the centres the world over took into account only those killings which were supported by evidence in the form of photographs, films and other documents.

Saying that the figure was "conservative", Mr. Kumar, who controls the information centres and their 2,000 and odd "points" in more than 55 countries, said the figure was arrived at after sifting information given by their sources in Sri Lanka, who could report hardly 10 per cent of what was happening in the island. The Centre has 65 "main points" in Sri Lanka, to each of which many "minor points" were connected.

Mr. Kumar said there were more than 3,000 confirmed incidents of rape. It was difficult to establish individual rapes as the victims were reluctant to give information on the outrages.

He said all the cases and information given out by the information centres could be supported and the Sri Lankan Government could be easily countered with enough evidence on each incident.

The Centre, he said was in touch with religious organisations, like churches besides human rights organisations.

Mr. Kumar said the Centre would soon computerise its operations and make use of the developments in the communication system to enable

faster communication and for translating messages from one language to another.

Mr. Kumar, who resigned from lucrative job in a textile mill in Colombo and went to London for further studies, established the Tamil Information Centre in London in May 1983, moved by the pathetic condition of the Tamils. The Centre has two branches, one at Madras and the other at Madurai.

He said if the various Tamil groups united together, they could easily achieve a separate Tamil Eelam, which would be viable, both politically and economically. "The land is fertile and the people are hardworking and we can easily establish a state which is economically sound."

He said the Sri Lankan Government was determined to exterminate the Tamils and to establish a Buddhist state. Over 600,000 Tamils have been pushed out of their homes and at least 200,000 of them have taken refuge in other countries, he said.

## Torture tactics

The Sri Lankan Police and Army have become experts in torture and have invented some truly ingenious torture tactics that would put to shame even the most hardened torturers in the annals of history, according to Mr. Kumar.

Many a horrified Tamil detainee had a live python thrust down his throat or was forced to spend endless nights in a dark room filled with corpses when he failed to part with information his tormenters wanted. Other new torture methods included forcing obnoxious fluids, including human blood, down the detainee's throat, Mr. Kumar told UNI here.

He said the special torture groups, trained to extort information from the Tamils, combine these

nauseating methods with traditional ones such as suspending their captives head down over a fire fed by dry chillies and application of chilli powder to the sensitive parts of the body.

The Sri Lankan inventory of torture implements also included the classic iron rods smeared with chilli powder, which are thrust into the captive's rectum, he said.

More than 50 different methods of torture were being adopted by the island's police and army, Mr. Kumar said.

He said the torturers were largely unsuccessful in their efforts as most of the detainees were innocent Tamil farmers who had no relevant information to part with. Hardcore Tamils were rarely caught but even if they were, they seldom gave information of their colleagues' activities in spite of the torture.

The police and the Army were, as a result, unable to flush out or effectively control the militants in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, he said.

Sri Lanka is spending more than 15 million Sri Lankan rupees (about 7.5 million Indian rupees) a day on its armed forces, according to Mr. Kumar.

The security forces which are on constant alert were consuming a sizable chunk of the island's budget and this was having a telling effect on an already shattered economy.

The Rs. 1700 million surplus shown in Sri Lanka's budget this year has already been wiped off by the ever-increasing expenditure on defence. The budgetary allocation for defence was about Rs. 3,700 million but it has now risen to Rs. 6,000 million.

The projected estimated expenditure during 1986 was Rs. 69,000 million as against an expected total revenue of only Rs. 37,000 million. A gap of Rs. 32,000 million Mr. Varada Kumar said.

## FROM SINHALA ONLY TO ETHNIC VIOLENCE

*Kumari Jayawardena*

In the years uptill 1950, various ethnic and religious groups, other than the most important group, namely, the Sri Lanka Tamils, had become the victims of attacks by Sinhala Buddhists of different classes. As described earlier the Sinhala Buddhist bourgeoisie had challenged Christian hegemony in the late 19th century; the trading and merchant elements of the petty bourgeoisie had let loose violence against the Muslims in 1915, and the Sinhala working-class, with support from sections of the Sinhala urban petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, had shown hostility to the Malayalis in the 1930s. After independence, the chauvinist attitudes became further aggravated, with the Sinhala bourgeoisie taking the lead in depriving the working-class of Indian origin of both citizenship and franchise rights. In this case, racist policies were also class-biased manoeuvres to weaken the labour movement.

One minority, relatively untouched, however, by communal and religious violence, had been the Sri Lanka Tamils, who in 1953, numbered 885,000 or almost 11% of the population of 10.6 million. This group had been in Sri Lanka (probably) as long or longer than those calling themselves Sinhalese, as 'sons of the soil'. In fact, it should be stressed that the early chauvinist propaganda of the Sinhala Buddhists had been directed mainly against foreign religious and foreign ethnic groups; the attacks had focussed on alien bureaucrats, traders and workers said to be denying the Sinhalese their just rights and opportunities for trade and employment. The targets were,

therefore, not the Sri Lanka Tamils but the Bohras, Sindhis, Coast Moors, Malayalis and Christians who were directly pinpointed as 'enemies', as well as the British administrators and missionaries who were accused of 'Christianising' the country, thereby endangering the Sinhala language and Buddhist culture. This was to change in the mid-1950s, and for the next thirty years, the armoury of the Sinhala Buddhists was turned on the Sri Lanka Tamils who were rediscovered to be the 'traditional enemy' of the Sinhalese—an attitude which began as a cry of the petty bourgeoisie, *but was to sweep all classes by the 1980s*.

### Language as an issue

The language rights of the Sinhalese and Tamils, a question that came to the forefront in the 1950s, was the basic issue around which antagonism manifested itself. In Sri Lanka in 1953, almost 90% of the people (over 3 years of age) spoke only Sinhala and just over 20% only Tamil. However, the Sinhala population amounted to 70% and the Tamil-speaking population (Sri Lanka Tamils, Indian Tamils and the Muslims) amounted to around 30% of the population. Apart from an insignificant number (0.2%) who spoke English only, the whole population was linguistically divided into two groups, Sinhala and Tamil speaking. (Kearney, 1967:17)

The anomaly of continuing to conduct the administration in English, which was only understood by a fraction of the population, led to campaigns for a more democratic language policy. Since a knowledge of English was confined to those who had gone to urban schools, the issue was also a class question. The privileged segment of the population with an English education, commanded the highest administrative and professional jobs and this group also dominated all political movements. In this context, the most aggrieved was the Sinhala and Tamil educated intelligentsia, who resented their exclusion, even after independence, from prestigious occupations, and became vociferous in articulating their views on the language issue. In the colonial context, the agitation for Sinhala and Tamil language rights had been put forward by both the Left and the more nationalist elements of the bourgeoisie. When the Lanka Samasamaja Party was formed in 1935, one of its fundamental objectives included

the demand for the use of Sinhala and Tamil in the lower courts, at police stations and in government departments.

With the democratisation of political life through universal franchise and the expansion of education in Sinhala and Tamil, the language issue was frequently discussed in the 1940s, and the main political leaders of the time, were willing to espouse the cause of both languages as official languages. For example, in 1944, J.R. Jayewardene had proposed that Sinhala be made the official language 'within a reasonable number of years'; this was amended to include Tamil and by 27 to 2 votes, it was decided to recommend that Sinhala and Tamil be made the official languages for school instruction, public service examinations and legislative proceedings. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1944 remarked, "I have no personal objection to both these languages being considered official languages, nor do I see any particular harm or danger or real difficulty from this."

After independence an Official Languages Commission was appointed to decide on procedures for making both Sinhala and Tamil the official languages. In 1951, after S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike broke away from the UNP to form the SLFP, he alleged that the UNP had delayed action on the language question and the first manifesto of the SLFP declared:

It is most essential that Sinhalese and Tamil be adopted as official languages immediately so that the people of this land may cease to be aliens in their own land; so that an end may be put to the iniquity of condemning those educated in Sinhalese and Tamil to occupy the lowliest walks of life (Quoted in Kearney, 1967:65)

Although language was not the cause of any great agitation at the 1952 elections, during the period of Sir John Kotelawala's premiership (1953-1956), this question became the dominant issue of the day. Because of the build-up of this agitation, there was a swift change from the progressive demand for the use of both Sinhala and Tamil, to a chauvinist cry for Sinhala to be the only official language; political competition for the support of the masses played a key role in this process. Between 1953 and 1956, the 'Sinhala Only' cry swept the country and arguments about being 'swamped', this time linguistically, were used

in favour of Sinhala being proclaimed the only official language, to the exclusion of Tamil.

Political parties felt obliged to take a stand on this issue and in some cases, to change their policies. The SLFP by 1955, had officially switched to a 'Sinhala Only' line; the UNP leadership was committed to parity and in 1954, Sir John Kotelawala visited Jaffna and reiterated support for this position; however, faced with the mounting agitation, the UNP also changed sides and by January 1956, had adopted a resolution that 'Sinhala alone should be made the State language'.

### **Revivalism in a post-colonial period**

In the early 1950's Sri Lanka went through a new upsurge of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, based not only on the language question but also on religious fervour. The two issues, language and religion, were combined in the Sinhala mass consciousness not only by various mythic and symbolic factors, but also because Sinhala was the linguistic medium by which Buddhism was 'reproduced' among the Sinhalese. The Buddhist resurgence during this period, was inspired by the preparations for Buddha Jayanthi—the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's death. The feeling of dissatisfaction that Buddhism was still not given its due place in independent Sri Lanka, was frequently articulated and this discontent was expressed in the famous report of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress in 1956, entitled 'The Betrayal of Buddhism'. In this document, an open denunciation was made of political leaders who were "completely dominated by an alien outlook and values and estranged from their national history and culture".

Another publication in 1953 reflecting this revivalist trend was 'The Revolt in the Temple' by D.C. Vijayvardhane in which openly chauvinistic sentiments were expressed in a rambling book of 700 pages, discussing all manner of topics; the main concern was, however, the 'sacred rights' of the Sinhalese, re-emphasising some of the pronouncements of Anagarika Dharmapala forty years earlier:

The history of Lanka is the history of the Sinhalese race. . . .  
The Sinhalese people were entrusted 2500 years ago, with a great and noble charge, the preservation . . . of Buddhism

. . . in 1956 will occur the unique three fold event—the completion of 2500 years of Ceylon's history, of the life of the Sinhalese and of Buddhism (Vijayavardhane 1953: 25-7).

Legend and superstition were put forward as historical fact, which went unchallenged by the Sinhala intelligentsia of the period:

Thus did it happen that, on the very day the Lord died at Kusinara. Vijaya of the Solar race and his band of seven hundred followers of Sinhapura, in pursuance of the design of the Master, and of the gods, landed in Ceylon and so helped to found in Lanka what thereafter came to be known as the Sinhalese race.

The birth of the Sinhalese race would thus seem to have been not a mere chance, not an accidental occurrence, but a predestined event of high import and purpose. The nation seemed destined, as it were, from its rise, primarily to carry aloft for fifty centuries the Torch that was lit by the great World-Mentor twenty-five centuries ago. (ibid. 32, emphasis added)

However, the totally romanticised and unhistorical view of the past based on mythology, fantasy and racial 'destiny' is also seen in the author's references to the 'Aryan Sinhalese', alleged descendants of Prince Vijaya, who were 'Sinhalese' even before their arrival in the island:

Most of these people were Sinhalese in heart and mind before they left their motherland. They brought with them, within them, rather, the ripened fruit of centuries of civilization, literature and art, poetry and music; and Aryan culture was bodily transported to create and enrich the virgin civilization of Sri Lanka. (ibid, 31, emphasis added).

The persistence in a post-colonial, and presumably more enlightened era, of prejudices and misconceptions that might have been excusable in an earlier age, is certainly evidence for the non-development, during these years, of a rationalist consciousness among the majority of the Sinhala people.

### Class and Language

In Sri Lanka, language was mainly connected with certain



class interests of the petty bourgeoisie. For the bourgeoisie, swabhasha (i.e. the use of one's own language) was not an important class issue and their leaders had no particular reason to get agitated on the question; they were fluent in English and able to get by in Sinhalese or Tamil as well. The reactions to the language issue among the various political leaders showed that while advocating swabhasha, they were not emotionally committed to the exclusive slogan of 'Sinhala Only'. For example, in 1944, J.R. Jayewardene was quite prepared to accept an amendment, adding Tamil to his proposal to make Sinhala the official language, and up to 1954, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, as well as John Kotelawala had advocated the parity of official languages. It was only when language became a means of gaining political power that the leadership changed its earlier position on the issue.

For the working people of Sri Lanka, too, language was certainly not a crucial issue. But Swabhasha policies were supported because of the need for communicating officially and otherwise in their own language, whether it be Sinhalese or Tamil, and on some expectations that recognition of the mother-tongue would mean better educational and job opportunities for their children. But the agitation exclusively for 'Sinhala' raising particular demand of the Sinhalese working-class and peasantry, who had no reason to exclude the recognition of Tamil. In fact in August 1953, the working-class led a militant hartal on an economic issue, protesting the cut in the rice subsidy, an event which united the entire non-plantation workers of all ethnic groups and which also spread to the rural areas.

To the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, however, language was an issue that aroused strong emotions and had profound significance. This class included the rural and urban small proprietors and traders and those who were key opinion-makers among the Sinhalese intelligentsia—monks, writers, novelists, poets, journalists—as well as other articulate sections—school teachers, students and minor employees in the government and private sectors. In a society dominated by the Christianised English-educated, it was these sections who felt economically, socially and politically deprived and excluded from the various material privileges of society.

During the 1950s, the two connected issues of employment and education became very strongly inter-linked to emerge as basically, an anti-Tamil issue. Upto that date, the members of the Sinhala and Tamil bourgeoisie had amicably studied together in the universities and were colleagues in the higher professions; at lower levels they had worked alongside each other in the public services. This worked without too much antagonism as long as the system had enough space for both communities in the educational institutions and in employment. The increase in unemployment in the early 1950s, however, along with the rapid expansion of secondary education in Sinhala and Tamil put a further strain on the employment situation and eventually on the higher education system. These factors aggravated the tensions that were building up and language itself thus came to be seen as an economic issue.

### Teachers

Four main sections of petty bourgeoisie were particularly active on the language agitation. First the Sinhala teachers, who in 1956, numbered 35,000 felt great resentment not only because they were paid half the salary that English-trained teachers obtained, but also because they had low status in a situation where knowledge of English was linked to higher positions in the social hierarchy.

In addition, the facilities and conditions in the English schools were far superior to those in Sinhala schools and this distinction which affected the performance of students, further aggravated the hostility against the English-biased education system. Howard Wriggins, who interviewed many Sinhala teachers, summarised their views:

Most of these disadvantages would disappear, it was argued, if Sinhalese were made the sole official language. All the status that previously adhered to English when it was the official language' would become associated with the Sinhalese language and thence to Sinhalese teachers. They were, after all, the experts in Sinhalese culture and language, and if their proficiency received state recognition, naturally they themselves would rise in status. If Sinhalese were made the state language, differential pay, educational

facilities, and job opportunities would no longer favour the English speaking elite. And, as it was seen from the village, vast numbers of government jobs would immediately be opened to their students if English were displaced and Sinhalese promoted. (Wriggins 1960:338-339)

### **Students and Youth**

The students in Sinhala schools and the unemployed youth educated in Sinhala, were also at the forefront of the 'Sinhala Only' agitation. The expansion in swabhasha education in the 1940s had resulted in increasing numbers studying in Sinhala and Tamil. By the 1950s, the problem of unemployment educated youth had become a political issue. The Sinhala students were particularly vociferous on the language issue in the hope that a 'Sinhala Only' policy would lead to greater employment opportunities. This point was emphasised by Pieter Keuneman of the CP, who in parliament, exposed the economic illusions created by the 'Sinhala Only' Act, which had given false hopes of employment to young Sinhalese:

We had one argument from the representative of the local Klu Klux Klan . . . he made a statement that this is a bill to solve the employment problems of the Sinhalese. . . . Why do you think all these SSC students and others are stirred to such an extent? . . . many of them believe that immediately this bill is passed they will all get jobs, that their economic problems will be solved.

(Hansard, 14 June 1956)

### **Ayurvedic Physician**

Another active pressure was that of the ayurvedic physicians who numbered between seven—ten thousand; they had occupied an important position in traditional society, but had been relegated to a marginal position by the government's medical services based on 'Western' medicine. This group was particularly active on the language issue, believing that raising Sinhala to the position of the official language would automatically be associated with a resortation of traditional Sinhala culture, within which the ayurvedic system of medicine would receive its due place. Since the ayurvedic physicians comman-

ded respect in the rural areas and also had an important hold on the people in their capacity as healers, the involvement of this group in language agitation served to bring the issue to the rural masses.

### The Monks

The most militant and articulate spokesmen of the petty bourgeoisie on the language issue were the Buddhist monks, who in the early 1950s had begun to prepare for Buddha Jayanti by organising themselves into associations and then into federations of Bhikku Organisations. Two of the large federations joined to form the Eksath Bhikku Peramuna (EBP), designed to mobilise the monks to defeat the UNP at the elections. The main issues included those raised in the Buddhist Commission Report: The restoration of Buddhism through state recognition and patronage; Educational reforms and privileges for Buddhist properties, as well as the promotion of Buddhist values; The censorship of obscene books and films and the banning of horse-racing and the consumption of alcohol.

In addition, the monks organised agitation on the language issue and were the main speakers in the 'Sinhala Only' campaign. The monks felt keenly on this question; they were educated in the Sinhala language and its classics as well as in Pali, and were accepted by the Buddhists as the protectors of Sinhala culture. But they had neither recognition nor influence in areas dominated by the English-speaking elite, namely the administration, higher education and politics.

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The resentment of all these sections of the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie against the English-educated was particularly strong, and their campaign, was focussed against the UNP as the party in power; charges were flung against the leaders on grounds that they were Westernized and Christian in culture, much being made of allegations of degenerate habits among the ruling classes such as drinking, gambling and beef-eating. Such themes of 'immorality in high places' (reminiscent of Dharmapala's fulminations of an earlier epoch) always evoked immediate responses by playing on the resentment and envy of

those groups in society who delighted in exposing, 'vices' in the rich, which they defined as un-Sinhala and un-Buddhist. The Sinhala people, once again fell prey to false consciousness; the capitalists were attacked for their language, religion, life-style and 'wicked' habits, rather than for their exploitation of the working people; minorities were seen as the enemy and the way was set, once again, for the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie to forget its radicalism and to go rushing down the slippery path of chauvinism under the banner of 'Sinhala Only'—dragging the country into the mire of ethnic violence.

### **Sinhala Chauvinism in the 1950's**

By the time of the election in 1956, both the UNP and the SLFP, as well as Philip Gunewardena's VLSSP (Viplavakari Samasamaja Party) had opted for the declaration of Sinhala as the only official language. The LSSP and CP, however, continued to hold out for parity of Sinhala and Tamil and many of the meetings they organised in support of this policy were broken up by Sinhala chauvinists. At the elections in April 1956, the coalition led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the Majahana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), won 51 seats out of 95 seats (obtaining an absolute majority), the Left winning 17 seats and the UNP being reduced to 8 seats. Since the election campaign had been based mainly on the language issue, the first legislation of the new government was the bill to make Sinhala the sole official language.

In presenting the bill, Bandaranaike outlined the injustices that had arisen out of the continued use of English, and explained the basis for the change from parity to 'Sinhala Only'; referring to Sir John Kotelawala's speech in Jaffna calling for parity, he described the reaction :

“Then everything exploded. People in the South saw this thing staring them in the face—parity of official language—and felt that it would be gravely detrimental to the continuance and progress of the Sinhala language ; that it would almost imply the extinction of the Sinhalese language.”

(Hansard, 6 June 1956)

However, Bandaranaike, who had earlier advocated parity,

also made some interesting reservation ; describing the ‘Sinhala Only’ agitation, he said, “The vast majority of the Sinhalese felt that way very strongly. That at least is a fact. Whether you consider them to have been absolutely justified is another question.” (ibid)

The support that Philip Gunewardena of the VLSSP gave to the bill attracted attention, for he was the first Left leader to abandon a progressive position on the ethnic issue. One LSSP member taunting him by quoting from an earlier speech, in 1948, on the occasion of the Citizenship Bill when Gunawardena said, “The LSSP and other revolutionary parties will fight this communalism and will not in any circumstances succumb to racialism. We have . . . fought to obtain for every person who lives in this island . . . the same rights.” (Quoted by Anil Moonesinghe (Hansard, 11 June 1956). By 1956, Philip Gunewardena’s views had changed and he argued that the ‘Sinhala Only’ Bill was necessary to redress historic grievances.

“We are completing, by this Bill an important phase in our national struggle. The restoration of the Sinhalese language to the position it occupied before the occupation of this country by foreign powers, marks an important stage in the history of the development of this island.”

(Hansard, 14 June 1956)

### **Left Opposition**

The main Left parties in Sri Lanka came out in favour of parity, despite certain currents of opinion within their parties which preferred to move with the ‘Sinhala tide’. In 1955, in the midst of agitation for ‘Sinhala Only’ and three days after the LSSP rally at the Colombo Town Hall had been broken up by Sinhala extremists, Dr. Perera proposed in the Parliament that Sinhala and Tamil be made state languages on a basis of parity. He referred to the mounting chauvinism in the country.

It would have been easy for me and the members of my party to have sponsored the very popular idea, Sinhalese Only, and we would have been acclaimed as heroes as a good many others have been. But our party has taken up a consistent position. Ever since our party was launched,

we have never faltered or wavered from the position because we felt that was the correct line to take. That position we still adhere to. However unpopular that line of action might be, I myself am convinced of the correctness of that attitude. It might mean going into the political wilderness for some time, but still we the members of the LSSP are prepared to face that. Let there be no mistake about this.

(Hansard, 19 Oct. 1955)

The Sinhala Only Bill of 1956 was bitterly contested by both the Tamil Congress and the Left members of parliament. The Marxists attempted to find reasons for the degeneration to racism that had occurred. A brief consideration of their views are revealing, especially in view of their own changes of policy only a few years later.

#### **Forewarnings of Separatism**

In the debate in parliament, Leslie Goonewardena attributed the lack of concern for minority opinion to the absence of a developed national consciousness in Sri Lanka :

“One of the reasons why the state language question has become so acute and apparently. . . incapable of solution is because of the low level of consciousness of a Ceylonese nationality that exists among the people. . . we did not have mass struggles against imperialism in order to win independence. . . . If the Sinhalese as well as the Tamils had gone to jail in their thousands, a consciousness not of Sinhalese and Tamil nationality but of a Ceylonese nationality would have been built up in that struggle.”

With great foresight he also warned that the consequences of forcing the Sinhala language on an unwilling minority, would be ethnic rioting and also added:

There is the graver danger . . . if those people . . . feel that a grave and irreparable injustice is done to them, there is a possibility of their deciding even to break away from the rest of the country. (Hansard 8, June 1956).

Similarly, Colvin R. de Silva argued forcefully that while the acceptance of parity of language was the road to ‘freedom of our

nation and the unity of its components', 'Sinhala Only' would lead to unforeseen consequences:

Two torn little bleeding states may yet arise out of one little state . . . ready for the imperialists to mop up that which imperialism has only recently disgorged (Hansard, 14 June 1956).

Several of the Left speakers in the debate referred to the government's cynical use of the language issue for gaining political power. Anil Moonesinghe contrasted the 1947 and 1952 elections, which had no slogans to 'save the Sinhala language', with that of 1956 in which it had become the main slogan. 'How can one account for this except by the fact that certain people made this an election issue because they wanted to come to power' he stated, further criticising the MEP concept of Socialism:

"For them Socialism is confined to one section of the people to one community, I have never witnessed this type of Socialism, except the Socialism of Pilsudski, Hitler and Mussolini." (Hansard, 11 June 1956)

In the voting in June 1956, there were 66 votes for the Bill (MEP, UNP and VLSSP) with 29 votes (LSSP, CP and Tamil Congress) being cast against. Significantly, the two major parties of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, along with a breakaway from a working-class party had opted for a policy that went against minority interests, in the name of redressing historic grievances and catering to the needs of the Sinhala masses. As in earlier instances, once again a democratic demand had been transformed into an anti-democratic assault on minority rights, and the Sinhala leaders were able to delude the Sinhala public that a progressive step forward had been achieved. Instead, what happened was a quick descent into ethnic violence, which erupted even as the Bill was being discussed.

### **Ethnic violence and conflict 1956-1958**

The agitation on the language issue led in 1956 to the first outburst of serious ethnic violence in forty years. It began when the Federal Party members who had started a satyagraha on



5 June (when the "Sinhala Only" bill was introduced), were assaulted by a crowd of the Sinhalese; there were further violent incidents against Tamils in Colombo and in the colonisation schemes of the Gal Oya Valley (in the eastern province). During this phase of violence, over 150 people were estimated to have been killed.

The ethnic problem was thereafter to escalate and dominate the politics of the country. In this period, the Federal Party organised active resistance to the government's language policy, and announced a further satyagraha campaign for this purpose, timed for August 1957. The Prime Minister tried to avert this by coming to an agreement with the leader of Federal Party. Under the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact, the satyagraha was abandoned; Tamil was to be recognised as the language of a national minority and the language of administration in the Northern and Eastern provinces, with provision for regional councils with powers over education, and the selection of persons for colonisation schemes.

Sections of the Sinhalese, including the militant bhikkus, declared the pact to be a betrayal of Sinhala interests and the UNP organised a march to Kandy to protest against the bill. The situation was further aggravated by the campaign in Jaffna in March 1958, to tar out the Sinhalese letter 'sri' on vehicle license plate, which led to retaliation by Sinhalese crowds who began to tar Tamil signs in Colombo. In addition, there was continuous pressure on Bandaranaike by the bhikkus who surrounded his house, demanding the abrogation of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact; he finally had to accede to these pressures.

This was the background to the rioting that broke out in many parts of the country on 23 May 1958, being especially severe in Colombo, Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Kurunegala, Panadura, Galle, and Matara. Shops were looted and set on fire. Tamils were attacked and killed, trains were derailed and unparalleled violence took place for 4 days before a state of emergency was declared. The riots resulted in 12,000 Tamils having to flee from their houses and take shelter in refugee camps before being transported to Jaffna. The mood in Colombo during the riots can be seen from the government

agent's reports which described the situation on 26 and 27 May:

Passing vehicles were stopped and their occupants mercilessly assaulted. Moving trains were halted at several places and the passengers ruthlessly attacked. There were many instances of arson and such brutal scenes as men being burnt alive. Looting was rampant. The Police were helpless against these marauding rioters (Quoted in Kearney, p. 87).

One particular feature of the 1958 outburst was the violence in the areas of the North Central and Eastern provinces in which there were Sinhala landless colonists settled from other areas and hired wage labour, working on the opening up of jungle areas.

\* \* \* \*

The success of the 'Sinhala Only' campaign and the events of the 1958 riots once again revealed the persistence and strength of the concepts that we have identified as forming the Sinhala Buddhist consciousness. The concepts of the primacy of the Sinhala people and their mission to protect Buddhism were brought into full play during this period and were strong enough to incite some Sinhala people to go on the rampage against Sri Lankan Tamils. In class terms the particular economic interests that were being served were those of the Sinhala petty-bourgeoisie, consisting of the Sinhala intelligentsia, students, clerks, teachers, monks, small traders and shopkeepers. To this group, the language issue had been one of critical importance, affecting their daily lives and giving them the illusory hope that 'Sinhala Only' would mean more employment prospects and chances of getting into the prestigious posts held by the English-speaking elite. However, the Sinhala Buddhist consciousness was strong enough to draw in the support of other sections of the Sinhalese like the urban poor, landless peasants, colonists and lumpen elements, for what was conceived as a common struggle of the Sinhalese against the Tamils: in addition, the chauvinism of the period also forced the bourgeois political leadership to support the demand for 'Sinhala Only' in order to succeed electorally.

The 1958 violence caused serious re-thinking in MEP circles and after the riots were over, a Tamil Language Act providing for the 'reasonable use' of Tamil in the North and Eastern provinces was passed, but this was done in the absence of the Federal Party M.P.s who were in detention. The forces of chauvinism that had been unleashed in the early 1950's and instigated the violence, loot and arson of 1958 were to continue in their violent policies—the Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike being shot dead in September 1959, by a bhikku.

## NOT A POLITY

*A.T. Sibagurunathan*

Apparently and rather unfortunately, the people and government of India tend to think of the polity of Sri Lanka with the same sanctity which they attach to the polity of the union of India. The concept of nationhood among the people of India emerged through the ordeal the people underwent over a period of ninety years commencing with the Mutiny of 1857 in the course of a determined struggle to win swaraj. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, there was no struggle for swaraj. An extract from a memorial sent by a political leader who is regarded as a great Sinhala patriot is apposite: "It would indeed be a gracious act on the part of the Crown if the unswerving loyalty of the people of Ceylon during a century of British rule is rewarded by concessions which are about to be made to their fellow-subjects on the neighbouring continent, who cannot be said to have shown the same unfaltering devotion to the British Throne—from Sir James Peiris' Memorial dated 1908. The official historian of the Ceylon National Congress for compiling which the bulk of the material was provided by none other than the present president Mr. Jayewardene, has written thus: "In the manoeuvres towards the transfer of legislative power during the period 1942 to 1947, the team of Senanayake and Goonetilleke appear to have exercised the arts of a Cavour."

The plea made by Sir Oliver Goonetilleke in London that Ceylon be regarded as a little bit of England is well-known and need not be commented upon. Sir James Peiris, a Sinhala leader of the first three decades of the 20th century was the

first elected vice-president of the legislature. Senanayake was the first Prime Minister and Goonetilleke was the first Ceylonese Governor General after independence.

The Constitution of Sri Lanka, when it was made a Dominion under the British Crown was, to use the words of Ponnambalam "conceived in darkness and hatched in secrecy" and proclaimed by Letters Patent from Buckingham Palace. Only three Ceylonese (Senanayake, Goonetilleke and possibly press baron D.R. Wijewardene) did participate in the process of constitution-making.

When in 1972, Ceylon was constituted into the Republic of Sri Lanka, the main body of the Tamil parliamentarians walked out of the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution was enacted without their participation. When in 1978, the government, under the prime ministership of Mr. J.R. Jayewardene proceeded to create a "democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka" and give a new Constitution, the main body of the Tamil parliamentarians boycotted the sittings completely.

In connection with the Tamil demand for Eelam, the information in the following extract from the Preamble to the Constitution (1978) is of much significance: "The people of Sri Lanka having by the mandate freely expressed and granted on . . . 21.7.1977 . . . and having solemnly resolved by the grant of such mandate and the confidence reposed in their said representatives who were elected by an overwhelming majority, to constitute Sri Lanka into a Democratic Socialist Republic... ..we, the freely elected Representatives of the people of Sri Lanka, in pursuance of such mandate do hereby adopt and enact this Constitution as the supreme law of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka." The significance of the Preamble, which is unequivocal, cannot be ignored because it embodies basic principles of political science. The polity of Sri Lanka gets constituted only on the mandate given at the general elections of 1977 by the sovereign people. This preamble is, however, belied by the fact that the sovereign people of the north and the east (peopled by Tamils) did not give such a mandate to the United National Party which proceeded with the Constitution-making process.

On the other hand, the people of the north and the east gave

the TULF in 1976 a mandate in the following terms: "To proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that "we alone shall rule our land that our forefathers ruled, Sinhalese imperialism, shall quit our homeland."

The Constitution of 1978 further states that the territory of Sri Lanka shall consist of the twenty-four administrative districts specified in the Schedule thereto. The word "consist" is derived from the Latin words *sum* and *sistere* and are of no mean significance. It is only as a result of the administration districts coming together (*cum sistere*) that the polity of Sri Lanka gets constituted. The districts have an existence anterior to the polity of Sri Lanka. Some of the districts had their own flags in ancient times. The Tamil districts of the north and the east have not willed to enter into the polity of Sri Lanka by any freely expressed popular verdict.

A republic can be constituted only by the will of the people concerned. A republican constitution enacted in the teeth of boycott by a group of people living in contiguous area can never be valid over those people. Constitution-making in Ceylon has always been a partisan affair. The notion that the Constitution is the organic law and that the people as a whole are agreed on essentials and disagreement exists only on inessentials is alien to the politics of Ceylon; similarly, the notion of constitution-making being a matter of consensus is unpalatable to the Sinhalese. The result is inevitable: the Constitution of 1947 secured by Senanayake by such artful manoeuvres was treated as a scrap of paper in 1972 by the politicians then in power.

When the government and people of India speak of the sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka, they have only swallowed an illusion which is a perversion of facts. Sovereignty resides with the people and not with a land mass, national sovereignty comes into being only when the sovereign people acting with freedom and solemnity resolve to form themselves into a given polity. When no such thing has happened, the concept of a polity of Sri Lanka as embracing the north and the east is a falsity and a fiction. Sri Lanka as such is only a geographical expression.

—*The Times of India*

## ON THE BRINK

*A. Ananderswaran*

While your editorial 'Sri Lanka on the Brink' (December 3/4) forcefully and pertinently focussed attention on the alarmingly deteriorating situation across the Palk Straits, it is disappointing to note that you have not suggested any possible way out of the impasse.

The extent of ignorance about our island neighbour, of its peoples and problem is colossal even among our intelligentsia. For instance, the Speaker of our dissolved Lok Sabha, Mr. Balaram Jhakar, had directed our media to refer to those affected in the ethnic riots in the island last year as 'people of Indian origin'. No, they were not. The majority of those affected were Lankan Tamils of Lankan origin who could trace back their title to the soil of their birth there to prehistoric times well before the introduction of Buddhism in the island. Threatened with denial of all their fundamental rights and the prospect of total denationalisation and consequent elimination as a factor of any consequence in the political and economic life on the island, they have no choice but to fight it out to the last and break out of the ever shrinking ghettos into which they are being squeezed.

Recently the Lankan Minister for national security, Mr. Lalit Adulathmudali, admitted to the policy so far sought to be glossed over, of compulsory settlement of Sinhala convicts and other *lumpen* elements in all the predominantly Tamil areas. The ostensible reason trotted out is that this would help pave the

way for national integration! It is against such ethnic aggression and terror tactics that the Tamils had to react, as they did, in the state-aided Sinhala farm settlements in Vavuniya and Mullaitivu last week.

Another popular misconception is that the Tamils (mistakenly presumed to be Indian settlers of recent origin in the plantation areas) are asking for a separate state of their own! No: nothing of the kind. The incontrovertible fact of history is that at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in Ceylon in 1609, the Tamils had their own, independent and sovereign state in the north and north-east of the island. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch and then by the British whose occupation of the island became total and final with the surrender by the Sinhalese of the Kandyan kingdom and the signing of the Kandyan Convention (which, be it noted, is in Malayalam!) in 1815. The three separate kingdoms of Jaffna, Kotte and Kandy were amalgamated into a single unitary administrative unit in terms of the Colbrooke Commission's recommendations in 1983. When Ceylon got her independence in 1948, the Act of 1947 provided only for the grant of an Order-in-Council. The Tamils could have asked for and obtained a separate Constitution Order-in-Council whereby the situation would have reverted to what it was before the colonial powers took over the administration of the Jaffna kingdom. Since there was no legal or even formal instrument of accession to the government in Colombo, the Tamils are now only asking for a reassertion of their legitimate rights in view of the sordid and unbroken tale of treachery and betrayal of their rights by the Sinhala dominated governments in Colombo right from 1948.

It is unfortunate that the Lankan Tamils did not deem it expedient to forge a united front with the Indian Tamils in the first years of independence for reasons which are not wholly laudable. For their acts of omission and commission, the Lankan Tamils have already paid heavily in blood and tears. If now they stand united and unyielding and assert their inalienable rights, they will earn the sympathy and support of enlightened world opinion. Let it not be said of us that in their hour of supreme trial and peril we were found wanting.



## SRI LANKA: THE VIEW FROM MADRAS

*Kajal Busu*

For the past one month, the thrice-weekly ferry from Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu to Tallaimannar in Sri Lanka, the *mv Ramanajam*, has been leaving without any Indians on board. On the return trips, however, the 880-capacity ship is packed to its seams with 1,200 Sri Lanka Tamils, most of them fleeing from the massacres in Valvettiturai and Mannar.

They are arriving in tatters, tin trunks packed in a terrified hurry with the most useless of household goods: burnt bits of clothing, dented utensils, perhaps a water pot. They will scatter and merge with the Sri Lankan Tamil population already housed in camps in Madurai district.

Meanwhile, Vedaranyam on the Tamil Nadu coast, near Point Calimere—a take off point for the clandestine boat service organised by the Eelam groups—is teeming with Eelam watchers. Vedaranyam is a stretch of marshland famous for its migratory bird population. In December every year, hordes of bird watchers descend on the place to gawk at Siberian cranes, and hotel bookings are normally full for that month. Now, however, Vedaranyam's hotels are crawling different kinds of bird-watchers, four months before the season. Police officials in Tamil Nadu suspect that they are probably foreign agents with impeccable tourist credentials.

The six major Eelam groups based in Madras—Eelam People's Revolutionary Front (EPRLF) led by Padmanabha alias Ranjan, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led

by V. Prabhakaran alias Tambi, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) led by Sri Sabharatnam, Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (Plote) led by Uma Maheshwaran alias Mukundan, the Eelam Research Organisation of Students (EROS) and the highly insulated Tamil Eelam Army (TEA) led by Tamba Pillai (Panagoda) Maheshwaran are playing it low key after the Meenambakkam airport bomb blast.

The blast is believed to be an amateurish bungle by Panagoda Maheshwaran who was arrested with 12 other colleagues from Madurai five days after the Meenambakkam blast. The TEA is disliked heartily by the other Eelam groups; they consider it a simple terrorist organisation without any mass base in Sri Lanka, comprised of a bunch of vigorous schoolboys. The TEA, to the chagrin of the other groups, is also the one with the most money to blow. It has allegedly been raiding banks in Sri Lanka without concern for repercussions on the local Tamil population. Sources charged that with the four crores rupees that Panagoda has stolen, he bought a house, three motor-cycles and a couple of jeeps in Madurai. Then he went on an arms-buying spree just prior to the Meenambakkam blast. Panagoda is said to be the mysterious 'Kathiresan' in whose name the two Madras suitcases were booked and for whom the police is still searching.

Panagoda's plan, according to the other Eelam groups, was simple: two suitcases packed with gelatin-based explosives would be loaded on a flight to Colombo, from where a contact would place them on a Paris-bound and London-bound Lanka Airlines 747s. What Panagoda failed to check up was that Madras Customs has, for years, been holding up unidentified baggage and would not have let the suitcases through. Panagoda is said to have watched his suitcases taken off the conveyor belt. Then he began his series of panic calls to the airport security.

Said a central committee member of EPRLF, "He should have gone to the customs and claimed the baggage instead of letting it explode. The Tamil Nadu government would not have touched him."

The blast not only heralded a crackdown in Sri Lanka but led to tighter security tabs on Eelam groups by the Indian intelligence. Said Shankar, Indian representative of London-

based EROS, "Now we have to wait and see what the police do with Panagoda. His arrest could be a discreet signal to us to keep our noses clean in India. If they put him behind the bars, we've had it."

Police officials, meanwhile, will not disclose the identity of the Israeli national nabbed in Thanjavur two weeks ago. They confirm, however, that four Israeli Shin Bet agents—Israeli internal security advisors who replaced the external security Mossad in Sri Lanka—were part of the 170-member mourning group that arrived in hushed secrecy in Madras after the bomb blast.

Said Dr. Balasingham, Professor of Political Science at a Sri Lanka University and now Chief Ideologue of Prabhakaran's Tamil Tigers: "The current massacre of the Tamils in Valvettiturai and Mannar is a planned government move. It is clear that the Israelis have advised the Sinhalese government to follow the 'scorched earth' policy: 'Clean out the mass base of the guerrillas by genocide and massive displacement of population. The Israelis did the same thing on the West Bank.'"

Israeli advisors are said to be moving around openly in army convoys in Sri Lanka dressed visibly in complete black. "They are not training the Sinhalese army," said Padmanabha, leader of the EPRLF. "They are advising them on strategy." The only group actively fighting in Sri Lanka now are the Tamil Tigers and they are opposed completely by the other groups. Dr. Balasingham revealed that the Tigers have taken up intensive guerrilla warfare to "destablise" the Sri Lanka government, but the other groups consider the price too high. As one said, "For every soldier the Tigers kill, we lose 20 Tamil civilians. This is not a revolutionary group."

The Tigers are a varied lot. Dr. Balasingham is a well-known Trotskyite, Prabhakaran only recognises the efficiency of the gun, Father Chinnarasa (who has been expounding on the Tigers the world over and is a survivor of the Wellikade prison massacre) is a staunch anti-Marxist, and Nirmala Nityanandan, Tamil poet-writer who was rescued from Batticaloa prison a few months ago, is a Marxist with a strong feminist outlook. The other more politicised groups charge that the Tiger cadre comprises of excitable young men without ideology but trained

to a fine edge and the Tiger strategy of hitting back arbitrarily at the Sinhalese army is "detrimental and adventurist" and will not advance the process of getting the Eelam state.

To bring some semblance of sanity into the "freedom struggle" three groups have come together on a broad strategic base: the EPRLF, EROS and the TELO, the oldest and possibly the wisest of the Eelam groups, put their heads together to form the United Front a month ago. The Tigers have consistently refused to open a dialogue with the other groups, demanding that any merger will have to entail Prabhakaran's supremacy. When asked about the charge that the Tiger strategy is inviting avoidable reprisals, Dr. Balasingham said, "There have to be losses in a revolutionary struggle. We can do nothing about it. Sometimes freedom is won by blood and tears."

"Even the few attacks we have planned have had a positive aspect: we got arms, we demoralised the army." Reports arriving in Madras reveal that the Sri Lankan government has gone in for massive arms order to specific armament concerns: Smith and Wesson, the Jonas Arms and Aircraft Co and Colt in the United States, and Heckler and Koch and Pyrotechnik of West Germany. The South African government is said to be playing merely a middleman's role of armament salesman.

Said 'Gandhiyan' David, a survivor of Wellikade and one of the most respected Gandhian Sri Lankan Tamils in the Eelam movement, "The Sri Lankan government has had a longstanding relationship with the South African government. This is not the first instance. A number of laws are modelled on South Africa's. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, which gives the army a carte blanche, is one. Israel, of course, is going to the highest bidder. I remember that in 1964 I had gone to Israel and met the then chief of army staff. I had asked his help for the Tamils and he had listened very sympathetically and attentively. This is the pass it has come to now."

Israeli advisors also seem to have advised on transferring arrested civilians and Eelam fighters to the Sinhalese-dominated south of the island country. The latest reports with Padmanabha of the EPRLF say that 3,500 youths from Jaffna have been taken in buses and trucks to Boosa, Ahugala and Katpedda in the Galle district, south of Colombo.

The army action in Mannar, which left less than 10 houses standing, is reported to have caused a massive setback to the Sri Lanka government's tactics. Mannar is predominantly Muslim, a section of the population the government has taken pains not to alienate. When the army went on rampage after a blast at the Mannar police station—probably a well-planned Tiger target—there was an almost immediate hue and cry from the Gulf nations.

Muslims in Sri Lanka—including Lanka Muslims, Indian Muslims and Malays—form 7.6 per cent of the country's 15 million people. The 1981 census placed them at 1,485,000. They have traditionally been branded 'Thembiya', a derogatory word for tradesmen.

They faced their worst time from 1970 to 1977, under Mrs. Bandaranaike's government. Seventy-two anti-Muslim incidents are reported during these years, the major one on 2 February 1976, at Puttalam.

Muslims, however, were not affected by the 'Sinhala only' Act of 1956 and lived shakily but fairly comfortably through the years of anti-Tamil violence. It seems obvious now, however, that they have managed to draw international reaction.

Sources say that the Palestinian National Council (PNC) which is to meet in Tunis around 15 September is expected to ask for strong economic sanctions against Sri Lanka. Jordan has already asked for the cancellation of work permits of Sinhalese Sri Lankans in the Gulf. The Saudi Arabian ambassador to Sri Lanka was withdrawn from Bombay before he could get to Colombo and the country has refused to accredit the new Lankan ambassador. Iraq, one of the principal buyers of Ceylon tea, has recalled its present ambassador. Iran has also withdrawn its ambassador from Colombo, leaving its new consulate empty.

The dragging in of Gulf sanctions against Sri Lanka seems to have been a preplanned manoeuvre by various Eelam groups. The bomb at Sri Lanka security minister Athulathmudali's office building—which was defused—and the bomb blast at the Hotel Lanka Oberoi in which one woman was killed, were claimed by the 'Movement Against Zionism', which, sources say, is nothing but EROS. "The army thought a Muslim group retaliated and flattened Mannar."

An eyewitness report of the massacre at Valvettiturai:

“On 11 June, a catamaran with four fisherboys in it was shot at by a patrol gunboat of the Sri Lankan navy. The four boys were killed. This was on the Olikandy Coast, east of Valvettiturai.

“On 4 August, navy personnel came ashore at Inpiruddy, west of Point Pedro and went on a looting spree. Then they went westward towards Valvettiturai and Polikandy. The navy personnel also shot dead four Tigers.

“At 11 am on 4 August, the army came in and took away 400 boys.

“On 5 August, they took another 400. The army came into town and appealed for all boys from 15 to 25 to be brought forward for checking and nothing more. We thought that the army would free them. The appeal had been soft and quite nice.

“At 10 am on August 5, the navy began to bomb the place.”

The losses at Valvettiturai have been estimated at Sri Lankan Rs 50 million, which includes the burning of 10 fishing boats and the towing away of 20 plastic fishing boats by a naval gunboat probably a bid by the navy to reduce runs to the Indian coast.

Of the four lakh Tamil plantation repatriates to India under the Shastri Sirimavo Pact of 1966 and the Indira Sirimavo Pact of 1976 when the time period of repatriation was extended by another five years, 90 per cent are living in dire poverty. Four hundred repatriation programmes were supposed to have been working to resettle them. Only two are in operation now in Tamil Nadu: a geranium field in Kodaikanal and a seed farm at Ooty. The others closed down because the state government found them unviable.

The rest of the repatriates—India was to have four lakhs while Sri Lanka was to give citizenship to 3 lakhs—are eking out a miserable living in the deforested, naked hills of Ooty. A report by a survey group said that 30 per cent of the repatriates had died of starvation over the years. Neither the central government nor the Tamil Nadu government—already doubled over under the weight of its ridiculous chief minister’s nutritious noon meal programme—are likely to welcome more refugees.

The Eelam groups also believe that the plantation workers of

Indian origin in the central hills of Sri Lanka are crucial to India's stepping into the country. Said Dr. Balasingham: "The Sri Lanka government is taking care not to strike at the plantation workers, the true proletariat of Sri Lanka. If they do, they know that India will intervene." Of the one million plantation workers that Dr. Balasingham claims are in the central hills, 70,000 are said to have fled to Vavunia and have begun to work as agricultural labour there. Observers also believe that if India were to offer repatriation to these workers, Sri Lanka's precarious economy would collapse.

None of the Eelam groups said that they wanted India to intervene militarily. They do not believe that India wants, in the first place, a "socialist" Eelam state in the Indian Ocean. Said Padmanabha, "We can't depend on India for a long time." Shankar of EROS said, "We would want to liberate ourselves." And Dr. Balasingham said, "The Tigers don't want Indian armed intervention. We just want the Indian government to recognise our struggle, like it supported the struggle of the PLO and Nambia".

The Eelam groups believe that India would at best substitute a puppet Bandaranayake government for the Jayewardene government. . . it would not give them Eelam. Said Logan of the TELO, "Even if the Indian army intervenes, we can't visualise a situation where Sinhalese and Tamils can co-exist peacefully. The racial difference is too strong." Uma Maheshwaran, leader of Plote believes that India should at least allow him to prepare a "standing army" of about 5000 soldiers for an ultimate blitz on the Sinhalese government.

In Tamil Nadu, which is so close to the Sri Lanka problem, the recent massacres in which between 350 to 500 people are said to have lost their lives, including a score of Eelam fighters, have made a minimal dent. DMK leader Karunanidhi's grandson, unionist in the Loyola college union here, led a procession again at the massacres and was promptly taken away by the Madras police. Karunanidhi was unavailable for comment but it is believed that he is enraged enough to deal in more rhetoric, asking the Indian government to intervene in Sri Lanka. Schools and colleges in Madras have remained closed for five days, ending Saturday, because the state government expected some

trouble. Nothing happened, excepting dark flags flying at half-mast on August 15.

Eelam seems a long way away. What is most evident is Left rhetoric. Every Eelam group, including Prabhakaran's mixed lot and Panagoda Maheshwaran's adventurists, calls itself Marxist-Leninist, and will not look at another group. There are differences even on the boundaries of the Eelam state. While Dr Balasingham made it clear that the Central hills of Sri Lanka, with its plantation population, would not be included, the TELO, EPRLF and EROS insist that it must.

Meanwhile, the Tigers promise to carry on the fight and invite more reprisals on Tamil civilians, and the other groups have not even lifted a finger in defence against the Sinhalese. This basic dichotomy—on when "action" should begin, whether it should begin with a mass base or with mercurial guerrilla tactics, is yet to be resolved. The Sri Lankan army has fewer doubts about what it should do.

—*Sunday Observer*



## THE MUSLIM FACTOR—THROUGH MUSLIM EYES

*Qadri Ismail*

Last week, some of the country's leading political and social analysts met, as part of an on-going project which began in late 1983, to discuss the various aspects of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. At the top of their agenda was the Eastern Province. The question uppermost in their minds was why they had failed to take into account the "Muslim factor" all this time. Was it due to intellectual laziness or was it because the Muslims as actor has emerged only just now? Either answer would have been unsatisfactory; especially since most of them had frequently spoken of the possible "Lebanonization" of Sri Lanka. Further discussion threw up two other reasons, symptomatic not only of them but of the country at large, which together make for fairly complete explanations. The Muslims of Sri Lanka have always maintained as low a public profile as possible; and the Sinhalese and the Tamils, no doubt partly as a consequence of this, have always given the Muslims brotherly treatment.

No one can do that any more. If anybody ever doubted that in a country increasingly cracking up along ethnic lines the Muslims (no less than 7.6% of the population) would continue to lie dormant, the (censored) violence in the East has given the lie to that thought.

The race riots in the East, which most people in the rest of the country don't seem to know much about, are easily the

# Tamil-Muslim riot toll 40

COLOMBO, April 21 (UNI).

Tamil militants opened fire on a tractor carrying the bodies of five Muslims in Sri Lanka's Eastern province, killing the tractor driver and injuring another person, the State-run radio reported today.

The radio said the militants attacked the tractor while it was on its way from Batticalo to Eravur. The five bodies, found in Eravur were earlier taken to Batticalo for identification and post-mortem.

National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali was quoted in the press as having said the Government was now in control of the situation in the Eastern province though tension prevailed.

**AFP adds:** A total of 1,600 houses were wrecked in areas of Eastern Sri Lanka recently in clashes between Muslims and Tamils, according to leaders of the two communities.

Regional Development Minister Chelliah Rajadurai and Deputy Posts Minister Abdul Majeed said in a joint statement published today, that sectarian clashes in the Eastern province during the past 10 days were estimated to have caused around 500 million rupees (20 million dollars) of damage.

The statement, published in today's edition of the weekend newspaper said that reconstruction work in Akkaraipattu town, where the clashes began, would cost an estimated 250 million rupees (10 million dollars).

The clashes have claimed 22 lives, according to official figures. But unofficial reports claim the toll could be as high as 40.

Mr Rajadurai and Mr. Majeed, who represent constituencies in the Eastern province, have appealed for peace between Muslims and Tamils.

Home Minister Bil Devanayagam, who was sent on a fact-finding mission to the Eastern province by President Junius Jayewardene, told AFP on Friday that some officials and mem-

bers of the public had claimed that the police were involved in the trouble.

Mr. Devanayagam said he did not know whether this was true. He is likely to report his findings to President Jayewardene today.

National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali has dismissed the allegation of police involvement.

Mr. Athulathmudali said the Tamil separatists from the North, particularly Jafna, had infiltrated the East and caused much of the trouble.

He said that the clashes began because Tamil 'terrorists' were trying to force Muslims to accept their views on secession.

After Tamil separatists committed several acts of violence in the East, sections of the Muslim community began publicly protesting against the militants, according to Mr. Athulathmudali.

He said that this led the 'terrorists' to launch attacks on Muslim shops and houses.

Meanwhile, according to UNI from Madurai, the Tamil Nadu unit of the Bharatiya Janata party today urged the Centre to take back the Kachchativu, as the Sri Lankan Government had violated the provisions of the 1974 agreement under which the island was given to them.

In a resolution, the executive committee of the party, which met here for two days said the agreement had stated that if the island was used for purposes other than peaceful and religious, the agreement could be dishonoured.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting BJP secretary Jana Krishnamurthy said the Sri Lanka Tamil problem was a national problem and the entire nation must be involved.



worst since July 1983. But another feature of them has escaped most commentators. Hitherto, one side has always been on the receiving end. Here, for the first time in the long history of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, we have had retaliation. Tamils and Muslims in the east of the country, perhaps abetted by 'external' elements, have been going for each other with violence and vehemence. The slowly splitting social fabric of the country has been given a harsh, crack. It will take some time for these wounds to heal.

With the proliferation of allegation and counter-allegation it is difficult to arrive at the correct sequence of events or the exact facts. But, one man fact-finding mission visited Karaitivu (unfortunately, only there) and gives an account of how the whole thing began. The investigator was Dr. Frank Jeyasinghe, Principal of the Kodikanal School in Tamil Nadu until he fled during the July riots here.

Karaitivu, a Tamil town surrounded by Muslim villages, was where the whole thing began. The casualties there were 11 dead, 40 hospitalized, 12,000 homeless and millions of rupees worth of damage. The question most people are asking today is how the Muslims, who lost whatever small arms they possessed due to recently passed emergency regulations have wrecked such havoc. (Censored)

The government has strenuously denied that the STF (or Police Commandos as they are popularly known) have played any role in abetting the violence. Mr. Abdul Majeed, MP for Samanthurai, dismissed the claim, (Censored) as utterly false.

From Karaitivu, the violence spread up and down the east. Details are hard to come by and the reason for such widespread attacks, at this point of time, seem to be the simple one of action and reaction (censored).

The question then arises as to why the conflict was not controlled, especially in such a heavily policed area. Why couldn't the authorities, both civil and service, contain it? Admittedly, the geography of the area has something to do with it. Vast parts of the East are rural and jungle; and the attacking is mainly done at night. But the leader of the SLFP, Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike, has a different perspective. "The government does not want to quell the violence," she told me.

“They thrive on it.”

But why did it happen, in the first place? The Tamils and the Muslims, from all accounts, were living fairly amicably in the past.

Dr. Jayasinghe discovered strong senses of identity in both communities in the area. Borders between Tamil and Muslim villages are clearly defined and conflicts have arisen before. But these have been quickly controlled.

In the last few months, however, terrorist extortion of money from people in the area has increased (censored).

But recently the extortionists (who could, according to some, even be goondas or agent provocateurs) have threatened the families of their victims if they don't comply. And since it is also a fact that more Muslims than Tamils trade or are rich farmers there, it was inevitable that the Muslims would have to bear the brunt of such demands.

It was this, rather than the alleged killings of three Muslims in a mosque in Mannar, which led to the hartals in the east by Muslims protecting against the terrorists. According to the Jayasinghe Report, “One possible reason for the change in Muslim attitudes (i.e., their decision to protest publicly) could be the increasing realisation of most Muslims that the prospect of the sharing of political power with the Tamils in the Eastern Province in the event of a separate state becoming a reality, are becoming remote.”

Do the Muslims in those parts feel that religion would be threatened in such an eventuality? Feelings are vague on the subject: certainly they weren't very existant among the admittedly few Muslims I spoke to in a visit to the area last month. So the development, if it exists must be recent. Certainly (censored) of the killings in the mosque must be a contributory factor.

Mrs. Bandarnaike questioned this too. “Do you think,” she asked, “the terrorist have anything to gain from shooting Muslims in mosques? If they ever achieve Eelam, which I hope and pray they never do, they have to live together with the Muslims. Don't misinterpret this to mean I am trying to defend the terrorists. Certainly not. What I am trying to do is to look at their actions from a realistic point of view. And unless they

are trying to chase all this.

All this makes me recollect what a Tamil politician told me not many moons ago.

### Mistake

He said that the Muslims had made the cardinal long term mistake of “choosing” as their “leaders” those Muslim politicians who happened to be in power at the time. Thus it wasn’t consistent or really coherent in putting across the view of the community. All this would do in the short term, he said, and you’ll no doubt benefit economically. But if the time comes then the community as a whole is threatened, you will have no leaders and no organisation through which to defend your interests.

“I do not think, at this point anyway, that the Muslim community as a whole is threatened. But, Muslims out of the East, something very impossible to achieve, then that killing doesn’t make sense.”

The view was shared by many Muslims : that peace and harmony would have to be restored as soon as possible since both communities have to continue living there together. It is here that the current Muslim leadership has come in for criticism. The Minister in charge of Muslim Affairs, Mr. M.H. Mohamad, is out of the country. And Mr. A.C.S. Hameed hasn’t visited the East. According to many Muslims I spoke to, the people there are crying out for proper leadership. Incidentally, I spent a lot of time trying to meet Mr. Hameed. May be it is the fault of his secretaries, but I never got through to him.

Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud, Minister of Education in the previous government, wasn’t so sure. “Some outsiders are in this game to keep the Muslims and Tamils divided,” he told me. “We have our suspicions of Mossad. They are mischief-makers. The Israelis have always been the enemies of Islam. They will always take trouble to damage Islam. We don’t know for sure whether they are involved here. But many people are suspicious.

What has impressed me about the situation there as seen here is the near total apathy displayed by (censored) Muslims

towards their brethren (censored). Some leading Muslim professionals and government servants didn't even know what was going on. (That is, they weren't interested enough to seek information). Another just returned from abroad and so informed on events from the international press, displayed complete callousness. This, coming from a very senior civil servant, utterly amazed me: "If we are to fight the terrorists a lot of innocent people must die. It is inevitable. It may be a sad thing but you can't help it. We are fighting a war and in a war many innocent people suffer." (censored). Karaitivu has been suspected to be a terrorist base and I then asked him how he would think of "inevitable" killings if his children were affected. He admitted, in a smug fashion, that then he would think differently. But, of course, his children are not affected. (Nor, not as yet). The violence has not come down to Colombo,

There is, however, a very real fear that this may happen. There was a call from some quarters fortunately nipped in the bud, for a complete hartal to be observed by the Muslim businessmen in Colombo after Friday prayers. This just may have led to a flare-up. But obviously the government won't let Colombo suffer. (Censored)

That area falls within the electorate of Mr. Halim Ishak and he, too, expressed fears of this. He told me there were many pockets of Tamils and Muslim neighbours, who may or may not be relied upon to keep quiet. "But I must impress upon you," he said, "that I raised this matter up in Parliament twice and on both occasions didn't get a satisfactory reply." I asked him whether he thought from now on the Muslim point of view will have to be taken into account properly when discussing the national problem. Like many others, he concurred.

"Sri Lankans have always thought that the Muslims are only worried about their businesses or their estates, or paddy fields, never that, they'll erupt. Now they will have to listen to us."

What, then are the long term consequences? The Tamils, apparently, don't blame the Muslims but the government and the forces. They are more than prepared to live together again, and have been impressed by the decision of some

Muslims to finance the rebuilding of the Pattini Kovil at Karaitivu, for instance. But there is a lot of hatred on the Muslim side. And a lot of fear; since it does appear that certain terrorist groups have been involved in the attacks on the Muslims.

I asked Mr. Abdul Majeed (from all accounts a sober Muslim leader and certainly one who didn't allow his electorate to detonate) whether the Muslims' demand for arms should be acceded to. He thought so. "Ninety per cent of our arms have been taken away. So we need them purely for defensive purposes. For defense only, not for attacking the Tamil civilians. If we have the proper leadership we can see that this is enforced.

He is right about both sides having nothing to gain from killing each other. Certainly the Muslims can't drive all the Tamils out of the east. And it is not within the realm of the probable that they could, all emigrate to the west, certainly not, given the sparse concern their brethren here have shown over their fate. (Censored)

The Sri Lankan Muslims (once called the Moor) has in the course of a very few years, lost their distinctive racial, or indeed ethnic character. The change in linguistic usage is not accidental.

And from the cultural point of view (and the Muslims being an educationally backward community, the cultural point of view has always been articulated by the other communities) it appears that our main contribution to the Sri Lankan character has been buriyani and watialapam (and, to wash the mouth after that!) faluda.

It is inevitable given all this (and the resurgent Islam in other parts of the world) that Muslim identity here would revolve around the religion. Especially so in the unwesternised East, where the Moulavis in the mosque have quite a bit of influence over the thoughts and deeds of the populace.

—*Island*, Colombo



# AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORT OF TAMIL- MUSLIM RIOTS

*Dr. Frank Jayasinghe*

## **Introduction :**

When reports of the incidents of violence in the Eastern Province during the period April 10th to April 16th reached Colombo, a group of concerned citizens met to inquire into what possible action could be taken to ascertain the nature of the events which were taking place in the Eastern Province.

The group was greatly disturbed by the recurrence of ethnic violence, only two years after the horrible events of July 1983. It was becoming increasingly clear that existing procedures for preventing such violence, for maintaining law and order and for providing redress to victims were wholly inadequate in the context of deteriorating ethnic relations. In recognizing the failure of these processes, the group of concerned citizens feel that it was extremely important to constitute independent commissions of inquiry involving persons belonging to groups not immediately implicated in the violence who would in the public interest investigate and report on (1) the causes and sequence of events which led to the violence and (2) the nature and extent of the violence.

It was hoped that these types of reports would lead to recommendation which would help strengthen democratic institutional processes responsible for resolving inter-ethnic

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1. This investigation was carried out on behalf of the Citizens Committee.

conflict and which would also help foster the extremely important values of impartiality, objectivity, and the due process of law.

In this regard, the citizens committee requested Dr. Frank Jayasinghe, Consultant to I.C.E.S. to constitute a one-man commission of inquiry into the events at Karaitivu in the Eastern Province. Mr. Nigel Hatch from the soon to be established Legal Aid Centre was requested to assist him as Secretary. The Terms of Reference of this Commission were following :

- (a) To inquire into and report on, the sequence of events relating to the outbreak of violence in the Karaitivu area from 12th. April to the 16th. April 1985.
- (b) To examine the causes for these incidents, and
- (c) To make recommendations on how communal harmony could be restored to the areas and the measures to be taken to rehabilitate the persons affected.

The purpose of this report is not to find fault with any particular group or to pass judgement. It only attempts to ascertain facts in an objective manner in the hope that such understanding will contribute to the restoration and maintenance of ethnic harmony and also assist in bringing justice and relief to those affected by the violence of the past few weeks.

In pursuance of this mandate the Commission visited Batticaloa, Kalmunai and Karaitivu, the scene of the incidents, and the refugee camps. We spoke to several affected persons, public officials and leaders of the Muslim community.

We left for Batticaloa in the evening of Tuesday 16 April 1985 and arrived in Colombo the evening of 18 April 1985. The period from Friday the 19th to Monday the 22nd was spent in analysing the data gathered and writing the report.

### **Geographic, Socio-Economic and Political Composition of Karaitivu**

Karaitivu is a 100% Tamil village situated approximately 27  $\frac{1}{4}$  miles south of Batticaloa, and is surrounded by Muslim villages, a phenomenon peculiar to the Eastern Province where one finds Muslim villages interspersed with Tamil villages and

vice versa. Karaitivu is spread over 6 sq. miles and is situated laterally in between the main road which extends from Batticaloa to Arugam Bay on the one hand, and a stretch of lagoon on the other hand which is in turn separated from the sea by a sand bank. The Muslim villages which flank it are also bounded by the main road and the sea. The most conspicuous land mark in the village is the famous Pattini Kovil which is considered to be one of the most important and famous temples dedicated to Goddess Pattini in Sri Lanka. The village itself is largely comprised of houses, a few shops, schools and 6 Hindu temples.

The people of Karaitivu are conscious and proud of their ethnocultural background and maintain that by being *Kovillas*, which historically has antecedents with being Ministers of Hindu Temples, they are superior, in terms of caste, over the vellalas. In addition, this community has been associated with educational, cultural, and literary excellence exemplified by the pioneering efforts of Swami Vipulananda, a scholar renowned for his educational and cultural pursuits who raised the educational standards of this community by establishing schools in the region.

The occupations of the earlier generations of the Karaitivu community were related to cultivation and to a lesser extent fishing. However, today the village is associated with having produced a number of middle and lower grade public servants serving in the banking, agriculture and fishery sectors, and more particularly, teachers, which according to reports, is the highest per capita per village in the entire Eastern Province.

The Muslims in the adjoining village are predominantly fishermen and to a lesser extent farmers and traders.

It should be pointed out that in these regions of the Eastern Province, the major share of paddy lands are owned by Muslim farmers, which are in fact worked by Tamil labour, which illustrates the economic interdependence between the two communities.

At the same time there has been economic rivalry between the two communities, especially in the area of trade and to a lesser extent fishing.

With regard to the political affiliation of the two communities, we were informed that the Muslim villages that surrounded

Karaitivu voted predominantly U.N.P., while the Tamil village of Karaitivu supported the T.U.L.F. We were not in a position to establish whether the latter claim was particularly the case, and are aware that assertions have been made to the contrary.

**Background and Events leading to the Ethnic Riots :**

In general, there have been minor clashes between the Muslims and Tamils in this region over the years over a range of issues. For instance a few Muslim traders who had shops at the end of the Tamil village of Karaitivu at the junction of Potuvil Road were compelled to discontinue their trade by the Tamils.

There was contention over two Muslim places of worship (not mosques) initially established, according to the Tamils with their consent, which the Muslims subsequently claimed was their property owned over generations. Even though a few Muslims tried to maintain that, they were destroyed very recently and were contributory factors towards the riot, other responsible Muslim Leaders were emphatic in pointing out that these two places of worship were destroyed during the cyclone in 1979. All the Tamils in the area corroborated this version of events. There has also been a corresponding increase over the last few years of a Muslim ethno-religious identity which evidently was exploited by some politicians.

We were made to understand that in general the Muslims face a critical land problem in the Eastern Province due to an increase in population. As scarcity of land became acute, tensions between the two communities increased mainly because of fears of expansion and absorption. As a result of this particular socio-economic factor new rules and regulations evolved in both communities which forbade members of either ethnic community to sell to the other ethnic community, which is indicative of a desire by both ethnic communities to maintain their separate identities in a situation where they have coexisted for centuries.

Earlier, Karaitivu belonged to the Kalmunai electorate and during this period the votes from Karaitivu were critical in deciding the fate of an election either way. Now, however,

being a part of the Potuvil electorate has diminished its political significance in terms of outcome at elections.

Due to the geographical location and economic interdependence of the two communities there have been intermittent clashes over the years over comparatively trivial issues such as Muslim farmers being harassed by Tamils when they pass through Karaitivu, way laying of vehicles and robbing of paddy belonging to Muslim farmers.

It was repeatedly emphasised by members of both members of both communities that these conflicts in general were minor and were quickly resolved before they escalated into serious clashes.

An important feature that emerged from our investigations in terms of being major cause for the violence was the fact that the militant organisations comprising of both Tamil and Muslim youths, which operate in this area have had the unofficial approval of both communities, which was manifested by favourable responses whenever requests for financial aid and provisions were made. Allegations were also made that some Muslim businessmen in Akkaraipattu utilised the militants to rob and thereby economically ruin their rivals, but we were unable to verify this.

However, events had changed over the last 6 months where Muslim businessmen in particular were subject to harassment and extortion by militants with threats of abduction and bodily harm to themselves and family members, if they did not comply with their demands. The Muslims were beginning to resist those demands due to the escalation of such occurrences. A number of such individual cases were brought to our notice which we were unable to verify as we could not interview the alleged victims.

It was suggested that one possible reason for the change in Muslim attitudes could be the increasing realisation of most Muslims that the prospects of the sharing of political power with the Tamils in the Eastern Province in the event of a separate state becoming a reality, are becoming remote.

As far as we were able to ascertain, the ethnic violence in Karaitivu erupted, against this general backdrop, due to the following events:—

- (1) The 3-day Hartal organised by Muslims in Akkaraipattu to protest against the escalation of militant activity in the Eastern Province. Media reports estimated that over 3000 youths participated in this Hartal. The emotions generated by this Hartal which was meant to be non-violent spread swiftly to other Muslim villages in the region including Saindamarudu and Nindavur which are Muslim villages adjacent to Karaitivu.
- (2) On 11 April a large number of Muslims gathered at the mosque at Mavalippalli in the evening for all-night special prayers. The following morning a group of young Muslims returning to their villages were harrassed by having the religious caps pulled and beards stroked by Tamil youths as they passed Karaitivu.  
3 days of violence erupted leaving in its wake a trail of destruction that included 11 dead, over 40 hospitalised 12,000 homeless, millions worth of damage and a rapid successions of events that have over-run the Eastern Province.

#### Sequence of Events:

##### (1) *Friday, 12 April 1985*

In the morning, about 3000 Muslim youths from the surrounding villages crossed the "border" that separate the villages and began to attack houses first with stones and then proceeded to set fire to them. According to the people we interviewed at the Karaitivu refugee camp, they all heard gun-shots which were recognised as emanating from automatic weapons and not shot-guns, which incidently were once possessed by people in these areas, but have since been withdrawn by the Government.

It was alleged by eye-witnesses that members of the STF, dressed in civilian clothing provided the attackers fire-cover. The general pattern appeared to be an over-running of a particular location by the Muslims with supportive fire power allegedly provided by the STF, with the demolition of house and property once the inmates had fled. It should be noted that we were repeatedly informed that the firing was in the air, and not directed at people.

We were informed that this attack ceased around noon, and recommenced in the early afternoon and continued till dark, with the general pattern outlined above being replicated in these attacks.

(2) *Saturday, 13 April 1985*

The attack recommenced on the 2nd day, early morning, by the same assailants numbering about 3000, including allegedly the STF.

An important feature of Saturday's attack was the fact that a group of Muslims attacked Karaitivu from the East in boats which belonged to a State-owned fisheries union. Allegedly, members of the STF were also a party to this attack, and here too allegedly provided fire-cover support for the Muslims.

There was a replication of the same pattern in this attack as well, with homes, schools and temples being attacked and burnt.

Here too the firing was directed not at persons but instead in the air, and the attack ceased at nightfall.

(3) *Sunday, 14 April 1985*

The attack recommenced very early morning and on Sunday the entire village was apparently overrun with the same pattern of destruction and looting of property.

A significant feature of Sunday's attack was the allegation that two helicopters kept on encircling the village, at a low altitude, allegedly firing at the village and more importantly dropping explosives on the village. Apparently Sunday's attack was the most severe.

#### **Interviews with Civil Administrators**

To place the events in perspective we had to ascertain the role of the Civil Administrative authorities and the role of the law enforcement authorities before, during and after the Karaitivu incidents.

Unfortunately we were unable to interview the DIG/Eastern Range and S.P. Batticaloa as they were both out of station. Neither were we able to contact the G.A. Amparai under whose area of authority Karaitivu fall within, as we subsequently learned.

We did interview Mr. Anthonymuttu—G.A. Batticaloa and Mr. Selvaratnan, Addl. G.A. Batticaloa.

The question uppermost in our mind was how it was possible that such a tragedy could be allowed to continue over 3 consecutive days without any administrative and police interventions.

We raised this question with the G.A. Batticaloa Mr. Anthonymuttu who explained to us the intricacies of Administrative Boundaries and the corresponding reluctance of any administrator to exercise power beyond the strict confines of his area of authority.

He explained to us that it was a common error to regard Karaitivu as falling within the Divisional boundary of Batticaloa but that it was in fact within the Amparai Administrative District.

Mr. Mansoor in particular gave us a clear and dispassionate account of the relevant issues. We were struck by his sincere desire to restore communal harmony in Kalmunai, an objective that was shared and echoed by Mr. Hussain and Mr. Samsudeen as well. They collectively bemoaned the total breakdown in ethnic relations that took place, and we have no doubt that they will do everything possible to restore peace.

### **Concluding Remarks**

At the outset we feel that had the appeals for official assistance which began no sooner the incidents of Karaitivu commenced were responded to, a lot of the tragedy that ensued could have been averted. The clamping down of a curfew and the despatching of the Police to maintain law and order at any cost would have contributed significantly. It still remains incomprehensible to us as to how violence was allowed to escalate for three consecutive days without any intervention from the law enforcement authorities.

It is important to note that there was a congruence of views by the Muslim and Tamil communities on the historical background, general causes, cause of events and the results.

Members of both communities repeatedly reiterated to us that in the past when conflict did take place between the Tamils and Muslims in this area, at most "a few heads were broken" and the conflict quickly resolved due to the swift intervention by the leaders of both communities. There was concern that this process broke down over the Karaitivu incident.



While this was the key feature that distinguished previous incidents from the events that transpired between 12-14 April, the disturbing feature of our investigations was the implication of a group of the STF by members of both the Muslim and Tamil communities in the events that took place in Karaitivu. In fact the victims of Karaitivu cited that as a key reason for their inability to offer any resistance over the 3 days, and a Muslim leader gave this as the reason for not being able to intervene during the 3 days.

We were also informed that there was a general belief shared by the STF that certain inhabitants of Karaitivu had alleged connections with the militants and that there was a cache of arms hidden in the Pattini Kovil premises. We were also informed that over 30 youths had been arrested by the STF over the last few months because of alleged militant activities.

When we specifically asked the victims of Karaitivu as to what made them implicate the STF the common denominator was the presence of automatic weapons and the fact that they were dressed in civilian clothes. Apparently they do conduct operations in such clothes. We recognise that these two indicators alone are insufficient to implicate the STF with Karaitivu as it is equally possible the militants could fall within their description. When events are placed in perspective it is unlikely that the militants would have participated in the attack on Karaitivu, which was under suspicion in the first instance of having some inhabitants that had military connections.

The G.A. Batticaloa informed us that no sooner was he aware of the outbreak of violence, than every endeavour was made to contact the authorities, administrative, law enforcement and political, in Colombo, Batticaloa and Amparai, to bring the situation under control. However, he was unable to contact some of the above mentioned.

He also appraised us of the laudable steps that were taken to prevent the spreading of violence and the maintenance of peace in the Batticaloa District by convening two meetings, one on the 15th, which was attended by religious and other leaders of both communities which resulted in the formation of a peace committee which met again on the 17th at the Batticaloa Kachcheri.

The Addl. G.A. Batticaloa, Mr. S. Selvaratnam who is also in fact a native of Karaitivu, helped us to place some of the historical, geographic and socio-economic terms germane to these incidents in perspective.

He informed us that in Karaitivu village there were 4 telephones-2117, 2290, 2481 and 2503 which apparently were in constant use over the period of the attack in contacting M.P.s, the police and other relevant Administrative officials.

This feature was repeatedly emphasised to us by victims at Karaitivu, and they commented that there was no response to their appeals over the 3 days.

### **Muslim Contacts**

Very regrettably our contacts with members of the Muslim Community around Karaitivu were limited.

Even though we were extremely keen to interview people particularly from the surrounding Muslim villages, we were advised by Muslim leaders not to do so as tensions continued to remain high in the Muslim villages. This was apparently due to a fear of imminent militant reprisal due to what happened at Karaitivu.

We were able to talk to retired District Judge Mr. M.M. Hussein, M. Samsudeen—Attorney-at-Law, and Mr. M. Mansoor M.P. for Kalmunai, and District Minister. Even though our contacts were numerically limited, their contributions were of tremendous value and importance, as they are in varying degrees of prominence, leaders of their community in the region and very articulate on the Muslim view point. Discussions with them helped us greatly in clarifying issues and placing them in perspective. Without having spoken to them we would not have been in a position to understand the events that took place in all its complexities.

One such area was the reported existence of Muslim refugee Camps, which we were keen on visiting. It was explained to us that at the beginning a number of Muslims did gather at the village school through fear of “reprisals” from the militants, but had subsequently returned to their homes.

One Muslim leader informed us that during the early attacks on the village that there was resistance, which resulted in some

Muslim injuries including one gun-shot injury. We were unable to verify this.

We are aware that the STF was established for the important and difficult task of combating the activities of militant groups fighting for a separate state in the North and East. What we have reported indicates that there is prima facie evidence of some personnel of the STE being implicated in the incident of violence in Karaitivu.

Regrettably we were unable to contact the personnel of the STF or Senior Police Officer in the area to ascertain their responses to the serious allegations made against the STF. We wish to state that in recording the allegations made against the STF we are in no way passing any judgement on them,

Two instances that were cited to us clearly indicated the great desire of the Muslim community, undoubtedly shared by the majority in both communities, to restore and maintain communal harmony.

The first was the fact that it was the Muslims from Samanthurai that arrived first in Karaitivu with expressions of regret and material aid and provisions to the victims.

Secondly, while tensions had been generated to some extent in the surrounding Muslim village beyond Karaitivu, the allegation was made that the STF attempted to instigate Muslim youths from Kattankudy to attack a Church in the adjoining Tamil village of Araipattai. This was averted by the timely action of the muslim religious and village leaders who met in the mosque and took an unequivocal decision to excommunicate anyone taking part in any violence.

The actions of the Muslims from Samanthurai and Kattankudy are undoubtedly commendable.

It must also be stated that as we were leaving the refugee camp at Karaitivu, late afternoon on Wednesday 17 April 1985, we saw Mr. Devanayagam M.P. and Minister Home Affairs, Mr. Rajadurai Minister Regional Development, Mr. Dayaratne M.P. and District Minister Amparai, Mr. Pathmanaban M.P. and the other Senior Govt. officials arriving at the camp site. We had no doubt that, as a result of this visit, the victims of Karaitivu will get the much needed relief as well an opportunity to explain their plight to Government officials.

On our way to Karaitivu on the 17th, we did notice a squad of Policemen at the "border" that separates Saindumarandu and Karaitivu. We wish to mention that the voluntary organisations in Batticaloa had already responded magnificently by providing the victims at Karaitivu provisions and medical aid.

### **Recommendations :**

What we heard and saw during our investigations brought home to us the senselessness of communal violence and strife, and the need for strengthening democratic institutional processes for conflict resolution in a democratic plural Sri Lanka.

The recommendations we make are within this framework but not necessarily in order of priority :

- (1) Whenever communal violence erupt even on a limited scale immediate action should be taken by the Law Enforcement Authorities to contain the violence. While the imposition of a curfew may be optional it is imperative that firm steps should be taken to maintain law and order.
- (2) Even though events have overtaken us, every effort should be made to restore law and order and defuse communal violence and tensions in this area by :
  - (a) Formation of grass-roots level joint committees, multi-ethnic in composition consisting of religious and village leaders that could act in times of crisis.
  - (b) The formation of inter-district committees consisting of GA's/AGA's/Village level authorities/police/M.Ps for the same purpose as in (a) recommends this because of the structural limitations inherent in the present administrative system that prevents officials from action beyond their areas of control.
- (3) Immediate steps should be taken to rebuild the places of worship, the homes and other destroyed property and rehabilitate the victims of Karaitivu. Undoubtedly realistic financial compensation is important.
- (4) A full and impartial inquiry be initiated to investigate

the Karaitivu incidents specially in the light of the prima facie implication of the STF.

- (5) Having investigated Karaitivu and having read the media reports before and after our visit we feel that even within the confines of censorship, newspapers should endeavour to send correspondents on the spot to ascertain the facts. Distorted reporting to our mind, contributes further to ethnic tensions.
- (6) Since the completion of this investigation we are saddened to hear of reports of further violence in Akkaraipattu, Eravur and Batticaloa. We, therefore, recommend that similar investigations be undertaken in these areas as well.

### Accounts of Victims

The following are accounts, selected at random, of victims of Karaitivu whom we interviewed on 17 April at the main refugee camp ;

- (1) *Mr. Krishnapillai* (former Fisheries Corporation Regional Manager; presently Manager, Jaffarjee Bros.)

When we met Mr. Krishnapillai who was one of the residents of the refugee camp, he pointed out that they had no external assistance in organising the refugee camps for over 12,000 people, and that the victims organised themselves. He related the events of the 3 days, and he told us that on the morning of Friday the 12th he heard a large crowd shouting slogans, proceeding towards the village.

He also heard "hundreds of gun shots, not normal shots, but shots from rapid fire automatic weapons".

He also heard the sound of breaking of buildings and explosives.

He saw the Pattini temple which is close to his house being attacked.

He saw people in civil armed with weapons, firing in the air. The attack on the village continued till dark.

The attack recommenced early Saturday morning with the Muslims and "commandos" arriving by boats from the lagoon. He heard shots all around and the Eastern side of the village was

attacked.

He stated that on Sunday the attack was even worse, with 2 helicopters circling low and firing and dropping explosives on the village.

On being questioned he stated that there was no Police protection given to the village whatsoever over the 3 days, even though persistent appeals were made to the M.Ps and the police over the telephone. He added "no M.Ps have visited us up till now".

However, he said that Muslims from Samanthurai were the first to bring them provisions.

It should be noted that whenever Mr. Krishnapillai referred to the Muslims that attacked them, he referred to them as "our Muslim brothers" and betrayed no animosity towards them.

In implicating the STF, he stated that this was the factor that gave the Muslims the courage to launch this unprecedented attack on Karaitivu.

- (2) This account is from a Police Officer attached to the Batticaloa Police Station whose identity has been withheld.

His house was attacked on Sunday the 14th and his car was damaged. He stated that of the crowd that attacked his house 70% were aware of his police connection and wanted to save his house, but the other 30% insisted that it should be destroyed.

He said, "So far Muslims and Tamils had fights but made up. It was never like this. This time the Muslims had backing privately or officially from the Commandos."

On being specifically questioned about the gunshots he said that they were not the reports of shot guns but either of SLR's or M16's. On being questioned as to whether the Muslims possessed shot guns he said that all these guns were withdrawn by the Government about a year ago.

He informed us that one Police vehicle arrived from Kalmunai on Sunday and that he informed them that he was in the Police and appealed to them for help, but no help was forthcoming.

According to him "the closest Police Stations were at Sammanturai and Kalmunai both 2 to 3 miles away from

Karaitivu and they obtained no security from either of these places.

He said that he heard that the Muslims had spent over Rs. 25,000 at the Kalmunai Rest House over the 3 days, entertaining the Commandos.

- (3) *Mrs. Soma Namasivayam* (Manager, People's Bank, Karaitivu)

Her house which was attacked on the morning of Sunday the 14th, is situated in the 2nd division of the village. She said among the attackers were "Farook, Proprietor Fashion House, Kalmunai; Adambava, brother of Office Attendant, People's Bank, Karaitivu; Haniffa of the Bank of Ceylon together with the butcher and fisherman".

She also said that she saw "a commando, dressed in running shorts and a T'shirt, firing in the air".

She informed us that when she questioned the individuals mentioned as to why they were attacking the village, they claimed that they had come to protect the residents of Karaitivu.

- (4) *Mr. S. Manicavasagar* (Officer-in-Charge, Ceylon Fisheries Corp., Kalmunai District.

He informed us that all his dealings were with the fishermen in the area, including the surrounding Muslim villages from which the attackers came. His house is on the Northern "border" that separates Karaitivu from the adjoining Muslim village.

"On Friday, at about 3.45 p.m. when I was sleeping with my little fellow, heap of stones fell on my house. I saw over a 1000 Muslim youths and commandos in civilian clothes."

He told us that he took his children and fled and his house was burnt.

Asked why they did not offer any resistance at all over the 3 days, he replied "how to fight an army?" He added: "All phones were fully used in trying to contact Muslims, M.P.s and higher level people. However, we would not contact S.P. Batticaloa and D.I.G. Eastern Province as they were both on leave".

(5) *Mr. Ananda Coomaraswamy* (Clerk/Class I Highways, Kalmunai)

He informed us on Friday the 12th at about 8.30 a.m. he saw a "Commando" in camouflage firing in the air.

(6) *Mr. P. Kandan*

He informed us during the attack in the area where he stayed there were 4 males and about 100 females trying to take cover as there was firing all around.

He said that he spoke to a "commando" who informed him "you will not be hurt". But the houses in the village will be destroyed and the sells poisoned other than 4 or 5.