

# MARXIST

Theoretical Quarterly of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

XXXVIII, 4

October–December 2022

Editor's Note	3
SUBHASHINI ALI	
Thirty Years After the Demolition	7
VENKITESH RAMAKRISHNAN	
Dateline Ayodhya:	
The Hindutva Hegemony Project in Ayodhya Seen Through the Eyes of a Reporter	27
AIJAZ AHMAD	
Excerpted from:	
Culture, Community, Nation: On the Ruins of Ayodhya	41
DOCUMENTS	52
1 <i>People's Democracy</i> editorials (1992, 2002, 2012).	
2 <i>The Times of India</i> editorial (1992).	
3 <i>The Statesman</i> editorial (1992).	
4 <i>Hindustan Times</i> (1992).	
5 <i>The Indian Express</i> editorial (1992).	

# MARXIST

Theoretical Quarterly of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

## EDITORIAL BOARD

SITARAM YECHURY (EDITOR)

PRAKASH KARAT

B.V. RAGHAVULU

ASHOK DHAWALE

## CONTRIBUTORS

SUBHASHNI ALI is a Member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

VENKITESH RAMAKRISHNAN is a senior political journalist. He is currently the Managing Editor of 'The AIDEM' a multilingual website devoted to news analysis and offbeat features.

AIJAZ AHMAD (1941-2022), A Marxist Scholar.

For subscription and other queries, contact

The Manager, Marxist, A.K.Gopalan Bhavan, 27-29 Bhai Veer Singh Marg, New Delhi 110001

Phone: (91-11) 2373 8725. Email: pdpbln@gmail.com

Printed by Sitaram Yechury at

Progressive Printers, A 21, Jhilmil Industrial Area, Shahdara, Delhi 110095,

and published by him on behalf of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) from

A.K.Gopalan Bhavan, 27-29 Bhai Veer Singh Marg, New Delhi 110001

## Editor's Note

This issue of the *Marxist* coincides with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. This was a development that ushered the dynamics of the metamorphosis of our secular democratic Constitutional Republic into the RSS fascistic project of 'Hindu Rashtra', which is the complete negation of and the antithesis of Indian people's epic struggle for freedom and the consequent Indian State that was established under the Indian Constitution.

Such a metamorphosis is the product of nearly a century-long battle between contenting political/ideological/social visions that emerged during the freedom movement.

A continuous battle between three visions emerged on what must be the political, social, economic, cultural character of the independent state of India. Recognising the Indian reality of rich plurality and diversity, both the Congress and the Communists concluded that the unity of India, as a country and of its people, can be consolidated only when the threads of commonality amongst this rich diversity are strengthened and every aspect of this plurality – linguistic, ethnic, religious, cultural etc. – is respected and treated on the basis of equality. This recognised the fact that any effort to impose uniformity upon this diversity will only lead to a social implosion.

On the basis of this understanding, the mainstream Congress vision had articulated that independent India should be a secular democratic Republic. The Communist vision, while concurring with this objective, went further to envision that in order to consolidate the secular, democratic Republic, the political freedom

## MARXIST

of the country must be extended to achieve the socio-economic freedom of every individual, possible only under socialism.

Antagonistic to both these was the third vision which argued that the character of independent India should be determined by the religious affiliations of its people. This vision had a twin expression – the Muslim League championing an ‘Islamic State’ and the RSS championing a ‘Hindu Rashtra’. The former succeeded with the unfortunate partition of the country, admirably engineered, aided and abetted by the British colonial rulers, with all its consequences that continue to fester tensions and prejudices to date. The latter, having failed to achieve their objective at the time of independence, continued with their efforts to transform modern India into their project of a rabidly intolerant fascistic ‘Hindu Rashtra’. In a sense, the ideological battles and the political conflicts in contemporary India are a continuation of the battle between these three visions.

These three decades since the demolition of the Babri Masjid have seen the consolidation of the fascistic RSS project. This is reaching a point, unless halted by people’s popular struggle, of the destruction of the foundational pillars of the Indian Constitution – secular democracy, economic sovereignty, social justice and federalism – fundamental requirement to establish the RSS fascistic project. Central to destroy these basic features of our Constitution is the destruction of the independent Constitutional institutions beginning with the Parliament, the judiciary, the Election Commission, the CBI, ED and all other institutions created to function as checks and balances to uphold and strengthen the secular democratic Republic.

Central to the establishment of rabid rightwing fascistic regimes is the erection of a surveillance State and the creation of an education system that is based on promoting irrationality destroying reason. Irrationalism concludes that rational knowledge of the entire reality can never be comprehended. This entire reality can only be grasped with ‘faith’ or ‘intuition’ considered

a higher form of knowledge. Hindutva nationalism feeds people with such blind faith and, thus, feeds itself to promote its twin objectives of furthering the neo-liberal agenda and transform India into an exclusivist rabidly intolerant fascist State.

Thus, a 'false consciousness' of Hindutva nationalism is created by ensuring that objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. By controlling the media and social media propagating emotional appeals and the building of a personality cult continuously bombard the people bolstering the creation of this 'false consciousness' based on campaigns of poisonous hatred and violence.

By reducing India as a subordinate ally of imperialism led by the USA and eagerly pursuing the consolidation of US imperialist global hegemony, this fascist project seeks to elicit support for its domestic agenda by promoting brazen crony capitalism, looting India's national assets. This fascist project heaps growing miseries on the vast majority of the people astronomically heightening income and wealth inequalities. Labour laws and democratic rights of the working people to organise themselves in struggles is severely curtailed. All opposition and expression of dissent against the government is severely repressed. In the process, this fascist project seeks the sanction of imperialism, on the one hand, and the Indian ruling classes led by India's big bourgeoisie, on the other.

The halting of this fascist juggernaut urgently requires the creation of a counter-hegemony over the society. This counter-hegemony must be based on strengthening the struggles against this fascist project in a holistic way in the social, political, ideological, economic and cultural spheres. The struggles of the working people against the policies of class exploitation must be combined with this holistic struggle against Hindutva.

These decades have brought this task before the Indian people with great urgency. The strength of people's struggles based on larger unity like those that which came together in our epic freedom struggles needs to be forged to save the secular democratic

India that, *We, the people* established 75 years ago.

**Subhashini Ali** traces the history of the creation of the dispute of Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi, particularly since the events of the night of December 22, 1949. She discusses elements of the ongoing battle between the proponents of secular democratic India and the propagators of Hindutva. The Hindutva project, in its social vision, is nothing but a throw back to *manuvadi* social order whose hallmark is inhuman caste-based social oppression and the complete relegation of women to inferior status. The hatred against the religious minorities is accompanied with establishing this *manuvadi* project in the social order.

**Venkitesh Ramakrishnan** gives us an account of his experiences when he was there in Ayodhya covering the events in December 1992 and provides an eye witness account of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. He discusses how the transformation of secular democratic India into the fascistic Hindutva State is 'work in progress' with all its ups and downs that have been going on for a century with this demolition being the landmark event for advancing the social and political hegemony of Hindutva.

Late **Aijaz Ahmad** had been a regular contributor to the *Marxist* for decades. As a homage and more of a tribute, we are carrying extracts from a speech he delivered soon after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 that was published in July/August 1993. Here, he argues that communalism is certainly the cutting edge for the fascist project as a whole but other violences - of caste, class and gender - are always there to *form* the kind of authoritarian personality upon which the fascist project eventually rests.

Finally, in the **Document** section, we reproduce the editorials carried by *People's Democracy* as well as from national dailies. How much has changed in these three decades can be gauged by reading the mainstream national daily editorials, then and now. The fact of using such language and articulating such secular democratic values as they could do three decades ago and not in today's times is itself a reflection of the ongoing metamorphosis of India.

SUBHASHINI ALI

## Thirty Years After the Demolition

The horrifying and barbaric destruction of the Babri Masjid on 6 December, 1992 was a seismic moment in our history. It should be seen, however, not as an isolated incident of barbarity but as part of an agenda that aims to change the course adopted by a very young nation taking its first uncertain steps after attaining freedom on August 15, 1947. Despite the communal bloodbath of horrific proportions that accompanied its birth, it bravely adopted a course towards the establishment of a secular, democratic State.

It was precisely this course that forces like the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha were determined to thwart. The first blow was struck by them on January 30, 1948 when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a member of both organizations. Godse, editor of a publication named *Hindu Rashra*, had no compunctions about the crime he committed. He defended himself in the court and said repeatedly that, as a Hindu, it was his duty to kill Gandhi. Other members of the RSS and Mahasabha were also jailed along with Nathuram. His brother, Gopal, and his co-conspirator Apte received the life sentence and the death penalty respectively as did Nathuram. Hundreds of activists were arrested when the two organizations were banned. Prominent leaders like V.D. Savarkar and Mahant Digvijaynath of the Gorakhpur Gorakdham Ashram had to spend nearly a year in jail and were accused of being co-conspirators behind the murder.

Savarkar, propagator of the concept of Hindutva, had, in 1937

## MARXIST

publicly announced that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations who could not co-exist as one. This was endorsed by Jinnah and his Muslim League only in 1940 and what followed was the vivisection of India into India and Pakistan. Pakistan elected to become a theocracy while the tallest among the leaders of independent India pledged to carry forward the ideals of the freedom movement.

The idea of India as a secular nation was unacceptable to both Savarkar and his Hindu Mahasabha and to the RSS led by Golwalkar. They believed firmly that Indian nationality was defined by its Hinduness and that only Hindus could be the 'real' citizens of Independent India. Those belonging to other religions like Islam and Christianity could only live in India as second-class citizens entirely at the mercy of the majority community. For them, India could only be a Hindu Rashtra and they pursued their agenda with a relentlessness that rode roughshod over constitutional propriety, the rule of law and concern for human lives. Their relentlessness was responsible for much bloodshed and immense damage to a shared culture and to intermingling relationships forged over centuries.

Immediately after Independence, the Hindu Mahasabha that was quite visible on the political scene worked in close tandem with the RSS as demonstrated by Gandhi's murder by people belonging to both organizations. While this act led to both organizations being banned and their leaders incarcerated amidst general outrage, it is important to remember that they had the support of large number of Indians, many of them in important positions of power. They were almost acknowledged by many as being 'Hindu' nationalists despite the fact that they had played no role in the movement for freedom which Savarkar had actively opposed. Much of the support they enjoyed emanated from those belonging to the upper castes who were consumed with a longing for a hierarchical past that seemed threatened by the ideas of democracy and secularism. The trauma of partition and the terrible com-



munal violence it engendered did much to polarize society and created a groundswell of support for them. G.D. Khosla, one of the judges who tried Nathuram Godse wrote later “(after hearing Godse’s defence of his act) the audience was visibly and audibly moved. There was a deep silence when he had finished talking...I have no doubt that had the audience been constituted into a jury with the task of deciding Godse’s appeal, they would have brought in a verdict of ‘not guilty’ by an overwhelming majority.”

These conflicting attitudes towards the future course of the Indian nation were prevalent not only among large sections of the people but also shared by many of their leaders who were not members of the Hindu Mahasabha or RSS but of the Congress. Many of them were harsh critics of the Mahasabha-RSS ideology but they adopted compromising positions towards a defence of secularism and the rule of law because of their own majoritarian ideas, their casteist outlook, their political opportunism or a combination of these factors. It was this that made possible the events of the night of December 22, 1949 and the train of events that followed.

On that night, Mahant Abhiram Das of the Hanumangarhi Akhada, a leader of the local unit of the Hindu Mahasabha, climbed over the wall that separated the Ram chabutra (a courtyard which had earlier been claimed as the birthplace of Ram) from the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. He was accompanied by two others. The old and feeble *muezzin* of the Masjid woke up in alarm. He was shocked to see that Abhiram Das was cradling an idol of Rama in his arms. He tried to snatch it but was pushed and beaten. Bruised and bleeding, he ran for his life and took shelter in a nearby village where he remained for the rest of his life. He was haunted by what he had seen on that fateful night and nightmares tormented him till his death a few years later.

Abhiram Das and his companions entered the mosque and placed the idol there. They started removing items associated with prayers in the mosque and painted the name of Ram on the

walls. In the very early hours of dawn, they lit a lamp and started to pray and singing loudly. The District Magistrate and the Additional District Magistrate arrived on the scene only after large numbers of people started collecting outside the mosque. Leaflets announcing the 'miraculous' appearance of the child Ram (Ram-lalla) in the mosque had been distributed throughout the night and loudspeakers were relaying the news of this 'miracle' in different places. The administrators removed Abhiram Das and his companions from the mosque but not the idol.

The surreptitious placing of the idol in the mosque had been meticulously planned by a group of leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha the most important of whom was Digvijaynath, Mahant of the Gorakhnath Temple in Gorakhpur who had recently been released from jail where he had been incarcerated for his role in the Gandhi murder. The District Magistrate, KKK Nair and the ADM, Singh, had been privy to these plans which they supported wholeheartedly (KKK Nair's wife, Shakuntala, went on to become a Hindu Mahasabha MLA after which both she and Nair became Hindu Mahasabha MPs. Even their driver became a Mahasabha MLA.) The local Congress MLA, Raghav Das, who had the support of the Chief Minister, G.B. Pant, had won the election vowing to construct the Ram Mandir by 'forcing the irreligious (Muslims) to leave'. He was involved in all the activities of Abhiram Das and his colleagues and participated enthusiastically in a series of 'kathas' and 'paths' on the Ramchabutra. These rituals were accompanied by many attacks on Muslims, their graveyards and their homes.

Apart from the administration and the local Congress leadership, the district judiciary also played a role in ensuring that the idols were not removed, that a lock was placed on the mosque, that Muslims were forbidden access to it and that a budget was sanctioned for the regular feeding of Lord Ram inside the mosque.

At the very time that the installation of the idol was taking place, V.D. Savarkar, also recently released from jail for his role in

the Gandhi murder, was proceeding towards Calcutta for the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Mahasabha. On the way, on December 22, he addressed a gathering at Nagpur station saying "... Mahasabha, after two years of travails and suffering, has emerged stronger with its principles fully vindicated by the events during the period ... The talk of a secular state is absurd in a country which is inhabited largely by Hindus, and it is their proud task to establish a Hindu Rashtra."

On December 24, after the idols were firmly established in the mosque, N.B. Khare, the newly elected president of the Hindu Mahasabha, announced that the party was "now re-entering the field of politics with the ideology of a cultural state of Hindu Rashtra after a temporary suspension of its political activities". He asserted "Congress leaders say they would not allow the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra in this country; nobody wants Hindu Raj or Hindu government. Their confusion must stop. Hindu Rashtra is already there, and no power on earth can destroy it."

The confident declarations of the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha were paid little heed at the time. A few weeks earlier, on November 26, the final draft of the Constitution was placed before the Constituent Assembly by Dr. Ambedkar. Its passage was welcomed as the opening of a new chapter in Indian history. A set of laws promising equality to all its citizens, irrespective of caste, creed and gender, became the law of the land. Just a few years after the bloody partition of the country in the name of religion and after the establishment of an Islamic state on its Western and Eastern borders, the Indian Constitution embodying secular principles was passed. It seemed that the course of the Indian nation towards a future that promised equality and justice to all its citizens had been set and that all those engaged in thwarting it had been pushed to the margins.<sup>1</sup>

Both the Mahasabha and the RSS mocked the new Constitution and publicly reiterated their commitment to the *Manusmriti* as the real Nyay Shastra (sacred legal document). Savarkar wrote

## MARXIST

that after the Vedas, the *Manusmriti* was the most holy religious document. He said that this work guides us in all that we do and is the Hindu law and Constitution today (*V.D.Savarkar 'Manusmriti and Women', Collected Works, Vol 4*).

Golwalkar, Sarsanghchalak of the RSS, wrote in the *Organiser* of November 30, 1949, 'To this day laws as enunciated in the *Manusmriti* excite the admiration of the world...But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.' Golwalkar was bitterly opposed to every aspect of India's Constitution and an admirer of the pernicious caste system. In his *Bunch of Thoughts*, he writes '...Brahmin is the head, and Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the thighs and Sudras the feet. This means that the people who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e. the Hindu people, is our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of 'nation'...' (pp 36-37). Golwalkar and Savarkar's opposition to the Constitution and their commitment to *Manusmriti* define the Hindu Rashtra of their dreams.

In 1950, the incidents of the night of December 22 were not even known to many and for others, their memories had dimmed. A terrible crime against the rule of law and civilizational norms went unpunished and was soon lost in dusty files in Ayodhya court-rooms and government offices. Those responsible for committing it also lost much of their relevance. It seemed as if those committed to the Constitution and its values had succeeded in achieving a dominant influence on the way that masses of Indians envisaged their future and that of their nation. In fact, however, this influence was uneven and often superficial.

The RSS used the succeeding decades into expanding and strengthening its organization. It developed a formidable Sangh Parivar comprising of an ever-expanding combination of organizations that could attract into their fold diverse sections of society – students, religious heads, farmers, workers, tribals, women, retired persons and various professionals. Its political wing, the Jan Sangh developed the capacity to enter into alliances and ad-

justments with a wide variety of political parties.

By the end of seven decades of Independence, the failure of the ruling class to deliver masses of Indians out of poverty, hunger and unemployment, their failure to end landlordism and carry out widespread and far-reaching land reforms and their failure to ensure justice and security to women, dalits, adivasis and members of minority communities created the frustration and anger which was channelized by the opposition parties, including the Left. The political formation established by the RSS, the Jan Sangh was also able to achieve political successes in the changed environment.

It was precisely at this time that the Sangh Parivar along with other like-minded Hindutva groups decided to once again flex their muscles and challenge the constitutional state. For several years they had been organizing campaigns to ban cow slaughter all over the country. The issue selected was not only connected to Hindu religious belief but was also one that targeted and demonised members of the Muslim community as 'cow killers'. On November 7, 1966 several hundred thousand protestors including hordes of 'holy' men, members of Hindu sects along with members of different organizations linked to the RSS and Mahasabha participated in a march to Parliament at the end of a year-long campaign. Jan Sangh members including Members of Parliament also participated in the march. They marched through the main thoroughfare of the capital of India, brandishing tridents and swords, shouting slogans that threatened cow-killers and their supporters with death and worse, demanding a Hindu Rashtra. The procession ended in a public meeting outside the gates of the parliament. Swami Rameshwaranand, a Jan Sangh MP, took the mike and exhorted the crowd to 'teach a lesson' to MPs by closing down Parliament. The impassioned crowd breached the barricades, stoned a policeman to death and tried to break the Parliament gates. The police resorted to a cane charge and firing, killing 8 persons. The crowd dispersed, broke into the houses of several

## MARXIST

legislators and set many vehicles on fire. None of the ringleaders, however, was arrested or charged. Soon, the united front leading the agitation splintered and was disbanded.

The campaign leading up to November 7, 1966 and the events of that day have many significant aspects. For the first time since Independence, the Jan Sangh, RSS, influential capitalists like Dalmia, the Hindu Mahasabha came together with several Shankaracharyas, mahants and religious Hindu sects to conduct a nationwide campaign on an issue that was both religious in its appeal and deeply polarising. The campaign was extremely successful in mobilising vast numbers to participate in its march to Parliament. It resulted in a major attack on the Parliament without anyone being punished for the mayhem and violence that left at least one policeman and eight protestors dead. Those responsible for organising the March showed not the slightest remorse over either the attempt to attack the most important constitutional institution in the country or over the bloodshed that this attack caused. The prime minister Indira Gandhi responded with a series of palliative measures giving credence to the belief that the huge support that the Cow Protection campaign had been able to garner was instrumental in influencing her to soften her stand towards communal majoritarianism.

Soon after this, the general election of 1967 was held. The Jan Sangh made electoral gains that enabled it to join coalition governments in prominent Northern States with parties opposed to its ideological beliefs but eager to break the political dominance of the Congress. This naturally expanded its political base and also helped the Sangh Parivar to increase its influence and penetration into the administration, the media and various powerful institutions. While the Congress lost ground in these states, it retained its hold on the central government.

The victory over Pakistan and its dismemberment helped Indira Gandhi to win the 1971 election comfortably. In a few years, however, the dismal economic scenario once again gave opposi-

tion parties the opportunity to come together against the growing authoritarianism of the Congress government. The RSS was quick to ensure that all its wings, including the Jan Sangh, participated in a big way in the 'Nav Nirman' movement against Congress corruption in Gujarat and the JP movement against Indira Gandhi's dictatorial ways in Bihar. These movements and the Allahabad High Court Judgment setting aside Indira Gandhi's election in 1971 resulted in imposition of a National Emergency in 1975. RSS-BJP participation in these movements and the subsequent arrest of many of their leaders like L.K. Advani did much to burnish the political appeal of the Jan Sangh and to reduce public perception of it being a 'communal party'.

After the Emergency was lifted, major opposition parties including the Jan Sangh but excluding the Communists merged to form the Janata Party. In the General elections of 1977 they were able to form a Government at the center with Communist support. This experiment, however, did not last very long and, in 1980, Indira Gandhi led her party to a big victory at the center and in many of the North Indian States. Its stint in Government, however, gave the RSS an opportunity to continue its infiltration in the corridors of power, the administration and the media.

The erstwhile Jan Sangh members left the Janata Party after their defeat in 1980 and the BJP was formed. Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 paved the way for a huge Congress victory later that year under the leadership of her son, Rajiv Gandhi. The BJP could win only 2 seats.

The Sangh Parivar responded to this electoral setback by rebuilding alliances with various Hindu religious leaders and heads of sects and making the Ram Janmabhoomi issue central to its future campaigns. Responsibility for this campaign was entrusted to one of its wings, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). In 1984, the VHP organised a large gathering of various Hindu religious and spiritual leaders in the Vigyan Bhawan, Delhi and a decision was taken to reconstruct Hindu temples at Ayodhya, Mathura and

## MARXIST

Kashi (Varanasi) for the first time. After this, the VHP, along with its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, started organizing 'Ramjanaki rath yatras' in Ayodhya.<sup>2</sup>

To regain lost space in electoral politics, the BJP under its President, L.K. Advani, decided to lend its support to the VHP's Ramjanmabhoomi campaign. In its fateful Palampur declaration of June, 1989, it said 'The BJP holds that the nature of this controversy is such that it just cannot be sorted out by a court of law. A court of law can settle issues of title, trespass, possession etc. But it cannot adjudicate as to whether Babar did actually invade Ayodhya, destroyed a temple and built a mosque in its place. Even where a court does pronounce on such facts, it cannot suggest remedies to undo the vandalism of history.... On March 3, 1951, in Gopal Singh Visharad versus Zahur Ahmad and others, the Civil Judge, Faizabad observed, inter alia: "...at least from 1936 onwards, the Muslims have neither used the site as a mosque nor offered prayers there, and that the Hindus have been performing their Pooja etc. on the disputed site.'" Then, on 1 February, 1986, District Judge Faizabad referred to this 1951 order and directed that as "for the last 35 years Hindus have (had) an unrestricted right of worship at the place, the locks put on two gates in 1951 on grounds of law and order should be removed...."

"...The Bharatiya Janata Party calls upon the Rajiv Government to adopt the same positive approach in respect of Ayodhya that the Nehru Government did with regard to Somnath. The sentiments of the people must be respected, and Ram Janmasthan handed over to the Hindus – if possible, through a negotiated settlement or else, by legislation."

This declaration contained many half-truths and untruths. The Faizabad Civil judge's assertion in 1951 about Muslims not having offered prayers in the mosque was one such untruth since a muezzin who had been calling the faithful to prayer was chased out of the mosque in the night of December 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>, 1949. The reference to the Nehru Government's approach to the construc-



tion of the Somnath temple was a half-truth. Not only did Nehru strongly oppose the construction of the temple but he ensured that it was not built by the Government. That temple was, in any case, not constructed on the site occupied by a mosque. Statements and documents penned by members of the Sangh Parivar are littered with such half-truths and untruths as part of their effort to convince others of the veracity of their claims.

The pusillanimity displayed by Rajiv Gandhi in compromising with Muslim fundamentalists opposing the Shah Bano judgment by the Supreme Court in 1986 gave the BJP a strong argument against accepting a judicial decision in the Ramjanmabhoomi matter. His thoughtless chicanery in ensuring that the Faizabad District Judge passed an order removing the locks that had been placed on the doors of the Babri Masjid also strengthened the BJP hand. While both decisions had been made with any eye to increasing Congress support among Muslims and Hindus in the upcoming 1989 general election, they had the opposite result.

On the eve of the election, the VHP carried out a massive *shila puja* campaign. Bricks meant for the construction of the Ram temple were collected from every village, town and city of the country polarizing Hindus and Muslims in many places. Clashes and riots took place and Bhagalpur, Bihar witnessed a pogrom against Muslims in which more than 3000 were killed.

The *shilanyas* itself was undertaken on November 9 after the Congress Home Minister gave the VHP leader Ashok Singhal permission to do so. The VHP was urged to conduct the ceremony outside the disputed area but, as the *Indian Express* reported, ‘... on November 9, a congregation of VHP leaders dug a 7x7x7 pit just at the main entrance of the sanctum sanctorum, clearly on the disputed land, defying the agreement they had made with the authorities’.

Huge celebratory crowds collected in Ayodhya and Ashok Singhal, President of the VHP, announced “We have today laid the foundation stone of a Hindu Rashtra’.

## MARXIST

The Ramjanmabhoomi issue found a guarded mention in the BJP manifesto for the 1989 general election since it was fighting in alliance with the newly-formed Janata Dal. The Communist Parties also allied with Janata Party but there were contests with the BJP in all the seats that they fought. The double-edged strategy of the BJP, alliance with secular parties and support to a communalizing and polarizing campaign, paid handsome dividends and it could win 85 seats in the Lok Sabha. After the 1990 Assembly election, it formed Governments in Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and joined coalition governments in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The Sangh Parivar did everything to maintain the momentum of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. Militant demonstrations were held every month in different parts of the country with a special focus on UP where major riots were organised in early 1990.

On August 7, 1990 the Janata Dal Government announced implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations giving 27 per-cent reservation to OBC communities in Central Government jobs and educational institutions. While most BJP leaders and supporters were bitterly opposed to this move, OBC leaders like Uma Bharti were jubilant. The Sangh leadership realized that their project of creating an over-arching Hindu identity, subsuming caste differences, so essential to their march towards the creation of a Hindu Rashtra, had been endangered. To turn the tide in their favour, the audacious decision to embark on the Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya between September 25 and October 30 under the leadership of Advani was taken. The Yatra aroused a frenzy of hate against the 'descendants of Babar', and its path was soon drenched in blood.

In the *Sunday Observer* of October 14, 1990, Sudheendra Kulkarni, wrote: "What is new to this present round of communal violence...is the extent to which it has succeeded in penetrating the villages." *The Telegraph* of the same date says: "...The extent to which communal passions have been heightened is evident

simply by taking a look at what is happening in UP today: even before Mr. Advani's rath has entered the state, the death toll in communal clashes has gone up to 44...It was not just coincidence that communal riots should break out in Karnataka, within days of Mr Advani and his Ram rath passing through Solapur, near Maharashtra's border with Karnataka...At Mandasaur, Pramod Mahajan, asked the Muslims to either have faith in Lord Ram or else leave the country. Mr Advani all the while nodded in acquiescence and the hundreds of youths who surrounded the podium brandished their swords and trishuls and hailed the speech."

And yet, in an interview with Swapan Dasgupta reported in the *Sunday Times* of October 14, Advani could say "I am sure that everyone knows that it (the Yatra) has provided a healing touch; it has not caused any tensions or has not inflamed passions... But now the sentiments of the Hindus have been manifested and articulated in such a powerful fashion without arousing any communal passion" (*emphasis added*).

Finally, on October 22, the Yatra was stopped by the police who arrested Advani in Samastipur, Bihar on the orders of Chief Minister, Lalu Prasad Yadav. No rioting took place in the State either before or after the arrest. The BJP withdrew support to the Government and went ahead with the *kar seva* programme in Ayodhya on October 30<sup>th</sup>. Bajrang Dal activists and former DGP, Shirish Chand Dikshit an MP from Varanasi, entered the mosque and planted saffron flags on its dome. The police opened fire and about 32 *kar sevaks* were killed but the mosque was saved.

V.P.Singh resigned and India went to the polls again in 1991. The election campaign witnessed widespread rioting in Northern States and also the tragic assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress could form a minority Government at the Center and, significantly, the BJP saw the biggest jump in its vote share which increased 1.8. times to reach 20.1%. The BJP had succeeded in mobilizing large sections of Hindus, including OBCs, behind its Ramjanmabhoomi campaign despite its opposition to the Mandal

recommendations. It won 120 seats in the Lok Sabha and formed a Government in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh. An elated BJP and Sangh Parivar announced that *kar seva* would once again be carried out at the disputed site on 6 December, 1992.

As is well-known, huge numbers of Sangh Parivar activists entered Ayodhya before and on 6 December. The demolition of the mosque took place in broad daylight, in full view of the national and international press and of thousands of security personnel that had been deputed there to ensure the security of the mosque. The presence of a BJP Government in UP and of a pusillanimous Congress Government at the Center ensured that they did not do so.

As the demolition neared completion, the *Indian Express* reported that the following slogan was raised “*Ab banega Hindu rashtra*” (*Now a Hindu Rashtra will be established.*)

The demolition was received with both jubilation and also with horror and stringent criticism. The CPI(M) was unequivocal in its response, deeming it a barbaric assault on the Constitution and demanding the reconstruction of the mosque at the site of its demolition. Complete bandhs were observed in the Left-ruled States of West Bengal and Kerala. At a meeting of the National Integration Council earlier, the CPI(M) had actually urged the Prime Minister to act under Article 356 and remove the BJP Government of Uttar Pradesh to defend the Constitution. After the UP Government was removed in the night of 6 December, the CPI(M) demanded the removal of BJP-led State Governments in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. This was done subsequently.

The demolition was accompanied by violent attacks on Muslim lives and homes in Ayodhya and rioting in many parts of the country including several rounds of vicious attacks on Muslims in and around Bombay which claimed more than a 100 lives.

What transpired on 6 December was more than an act of communal vengeance. It was a carefully planned attack on the Constitution itself as part of the project to replace a secular India

with a Hindu Rashtra. The very choice of the date, 6 December, the death anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, architect of the Constitution was very symbolic.

An eminent Marxist scholar, the late Aijaz Ahmad, puts the act of demolition in the correct perspective when he writes "... with reference to the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the forces that carried it out, I would say that we would forget at our peril the fundamentally fascistic character of that event and those forces. This seems clear with regard to the nature of the event, the modes of mobilization, the very structure of the *Sangh parivar*, and the specific ideological form in which it practices and propagates its communalism...the Central Government, also sworn to uphold the Constitution, fully aware of the preparations, duly warned by the intelligence agencies that destruction of the mosque Supreme Court order was indeed part of the *Hindutva* plan, but following a 'soft saffron' (an early use of what has become a commonplace) line, did nothing to prevent that violation of the constitutional obligation...after the event, the government made simply no move to punish the actual culprits..."('On the Ruins of Ayodhya', *Lineages of the Present*). What the BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi said in an interview carried by the *Hindustan Times* of January 1, 1993, lends credence to this understanding. He said "It has brought Hindutva to the centre-stage. The BJP has become the voice of resurgent nationalism. It is redefining the political ideology of every aspect of the national life – be it secularism, socialism, foreign policy or economic issues. The Hindutva concept is going to be the deciding factor. All the political parties are going to be affected by this. This would lead to the creation of a new India."

The years after the demolition have been years in which the Sangh Parivar has been able to make headway in its journey towards its goal of establishing a Hindu Rashtra. It has, however, been a journey of zig-zags. It has had to face considerable obstacles which demonstrate the strength of those opposed to this goal.

## MARXIST

Its politics of polarization and violence that repeatedly made use of the Ramjanmabhoomi issue, the launch pad for its growth, continued to propel it forward. In this it was helped by the ambivalent attitude of various courts to repeated assertions by the Sangh Parivar that they would carry out construction of the Ram Mandir at the site where the Babri Masjid stood. It should be remembered that in December 2001, another mobilization was made in Ayodhya to undertake kar seva. Finally, the Supreme Court intervened to protect the status quo and thousands of infuriated kar sevaks were forced to leave Ayodhya. One group left for Ahmedabad on the Sabarmati Express.

A fire broke out inside the compartment in which many passengers died. Their bodies were taken to Ahmedabad by the Modi Government and were displayed as the bodies of Kar sevaks burnt to death by Muslims.

It was in the wake of this that the ghastly genocide of Muslims started later in the day and continued till at least the 10<sup>th</sup> of March.

The Sangh Parivar's claims received further legitimacy from the judgment delivered by the Allahabad High Court in 2007 in the title suit regarding ownership of the site. While the judgment divided the whole site into three giving 2 to Hindu plaintiffs and one to the Muslim side, two judges of three opined that "The area under the central dome is indeed the birthplace of Ram as per belief and faith of Hindus."

It is important to remember that, in this period, the BJP started replacing the Congress as the most favoured party for large sections of the capitalist class of the country, including the big bourgeoisie. The BJP was not only demonstrating its success in winning elections but the policies of its Government in Gujarat provided ample proof of its commitment to the neo-liberal paradigm.

In 2014, the BJP was able to come to power on its own at the Center under the leadership of Narendra Modi. In 2019, it was able to increase its majority in the Assembly. It has used State

power to accelerate its journey towards achieving the objectives of the Sangh Parivar, riding roughshod over most obstacles in the way.

The Supreme Court judgment in the Ramjanmabhoomi case in 2019 gave a tremendous boost to the Sangh Parivar's quest to establish a Hindu Rashtra. The Supreme Court in 2019 awarded the disputed site to Ram Lalla. The CPI(M) was perhaps the only political party that approached the judgment with skepticism and reservations. It said that once it became clear that a negotiated settlement of the issue was not possible, the judicial route was the only way to settle the matter. It goes on to say in an article that appeared in the Party weekly, *People's Democracy*, 'Though the judgment is replete with declarations about the necessity to settle the dispute not on the basis of faith but on evidence and facts; though it asserts that secularism enjoins treating all religions and faiths equally, the end result has been giving faith a greater weightage and, more disturbingly, giving precedence to the beliefs of one community. ... The paradox continues in that the judgment holds the desecration of the mosque by the illegal placing of idols within the mosque in December 1949 and the demolition of the mosque in December 1992 as "serious violation of law", but ends up handing over the site to the very forces responsible for this criminal assault. It should be noted that the representative of Ram Lalla – the "next friend" of the deity, on whose behalf a suit was filed in 1989 – is a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the organisation that led the agitation that resulted in the demolition of the mosque.

"The Supreme Court has cited the Places of Worship Act 1991 as a law, which enforces the constitutional obligations to uphold the equality of all religions and secularism. However, it would have been better, if the court had invoked Article 142 of the Constitution to decree that no other religious place can be subject to a dispute and alteration. This is all the more important since the Ayodhya verdict should not become a template for raising

demands regarding Kashi, Mathura and other religious sites. The RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, has said that the claims regarding Kashi and Mathura are not on the agenda “for now”.

“The judgment seems to give priority to maintenance of peace and tranquility rather than seeing that justice is rendered. Among the reasons given for reversing the Allahabad High Court judgment is that it would not “restore a lasting sense of peace and tranquility”. This is where it appears political considerations have come in for reckoning. The prevailing dominance of the Hindutva regime, the dire prospects, if the judicial verdict went against the majority sentiment – all seem to have weighed on the decision to hand over the entire 2.77 acres of disputed land to the juridical person of Ram Lalla.

“The prevailing sentiment that somehow the dispute has to be resolved and it is time to move on seems to have influenced the response of many of the secular parties and organisations to welcome the verdict. It is one thing to convey acceptance of the verdict of the highest judicial body of the land, but that should not blind us to the compromise with majoritarianism and its possible deleterious consequences.” (*emphasis added.*)

The Narendra Modi Government and Sangh Parivar lost no time in taking advantage of the judgment. On August 5, 2020, a *shila puja* of the Ram temple was held at the very spot where the Babri Masjid had once stood. The *puja* was attended by the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the saffron-clad Yogi Adityanath successor of Mahant Digvijaynath who had been such an important part of the successful conspiracy to install the idol of Ram in the Babri Masjid on the fateful night of December 22/23, 1949. The presence of these two leaders, elected to two important Constitutional posts was a tangible and visible blow to the secular Constitution. They were accompanied by Mohan Bhagwat, Sarsanghchhalak of the RSS. He made a short speech on the occasion, reciting only a single shloka from the *Manusmriti* in Sanskrit: एतद् देशप्रसूतस्य सकाशादग्रजन्मनः । स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेरन् पृथिव्यां



सर्वमानवाः ॥ २० ॥

*From a first-born (i.e, a Brahmana), born in that country*

Let all men on earth learn their respective duties.

The choice of both shloka and text are significant as is the occasion which was an important milestone in the journey of the Sangh Parivar towards its objective of establishing a Manuvadi Hindu Rashtra.

The journey continues to be one marked with violence, deceit and growing attacks on minorities, dalits, women, workers, farmers and the tenets of the Constitution. It is one in which the Sangh Parivar has been helped by many forces, several of which are outside its immediate fold. It has been helped by the adherence of many, including its victims, to the Code of Manu; it has been helped by many in the administration and judiciary who have betrayed their oath to uphold and protect the Constitution; it has been helped by the political opportunism of many who swore by socialistic and secular principles; it has also been helped by the leaders of the capitalist class and by feudal exploiters who have placed their wealth and the media that they control in its service.

It is also true, however, that this journey has not yet attained its destination and that it is possible to block its way. The strength of popular movements of recent times, especially the farmers' movement, have revealed the depth of popular discontent with the policies of the BJP Government. This discontent is growing and will continue to grow as the BJP resorts to greater attacks on the common people and their livelihood. Anger against the BJP's attacks on federalism and cultural diversity is also growing. There is growing apprehension among many sections of society that their basic rights are under threat. The challenge is to bring all this discontent, anger and opposition together to thwart the onward march of the Sangh Parivar. This can only be done if an ideological exposure of their agenda can be made in a way that is convincing to those discontented, angry and in opposition to their policies.

## MARXIST

Like other fascistic forces, the Sangh Parivar tries to blame the minorities for the unemployment, poverty, hunger and insecurity that is plaguing large sections of people. It incites violent attacks on these minorities in order to shift attention away from the real reasons for these problems and its inability to deal with them effectively because of their class policies.

As Aijaz Ahmad says, “They raise, in other words, the issue of mass misery only to suppress and willfully misrecognize the sources of that misery. The real alternative is to speak precisely of that misery, to make manifest the causes of that misery, to present a credible and comprehensive answer to that misery.”

This is the task that all those opposed to the Manuvadi Hindutva project of the Sangh Parivar must undertake. It is the Communists who have to take the lead and play an important role because it is they who are uncompromisingly opposed to all aspects of this project – economic, social and ideological. The true significance and the true horror of the 6 December demolition has to be understood widely by workers, farmers, women, dalits, adivasis, minorities and all those committed to a secular, socialist democracy as not only an attack on a place of worship but as an attack on their hopes for a just and equal society.

## NOTES

- 1 This account is based largely on “Ayodhya, the Dark Night” by Krishna Jha and Dharendra Jha.
- 2 Based on articles by Arun Anand in ‘The Print’ of August 4 and 13, 2020.

VENKITESH RAMAKRISHNAN

## **Dateline Ayodhya:**

### **The Hindutva Hegemony Project in Ayodhya**

#### **Seen Through the Eyes of a Reporter**

“Our Hindu Rashtra mission in Ayodhya and in Bharath as a whole is very similar to the waves in the sea. The size, the force and the intensity of the sea waves vary from time to time, but they never stop. It may look static, at times for the casual viewer, but the waves are moving and building up underneath, ready to strike big at the next opportune moment. In other words, our mission and the work related to it never stop. Kaam Jaari Hain (Work is on)”. These words were spoken to me (in Hindi) by Mahant Ramachandra Paramahans the then President of the Sri Ramajanmabhumi Nyas - a Trust set up by the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in the early 1990s - on 6 December, 1993, exactly a year after the karsevaks of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) led Sangh Parivar had demolished the Babri Masjid.

Paramahans was practically the face of the Sangh Parivar’s Ayodhya agitation in the name of the Ram Mandir in the 1990s, along with other Hindutva hard-liner leaders like Ashok Singhal of the VHP and Vinay Katiyar of the Bajrang Dal. Paramahans was also known for resorting to rhetorical speeches and figurative expressions every now and then, but the exposition in December 1993 on the sustained and relentless nature of the Hindutva campaign was made in a special and specific context. Barely two days

before I met Paramahans, on December 4, 1993, a coalition of the Mulayam Singh Yadav led Samajwadi Party (SP) and Kanshi Ram led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) had formed the ministry in Uttar Pradesh with the support of the Congress.

The ascent of this new government was preceded by the unexpected defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political arm of the Sangh Parivar, in the assembly elections to the State. This was indeed a shock defeat because the expectations within the Sangh Parivar after the violent demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December, 1992 was that Hindutva communal polarisation has reached a new high, especially in North India, and it would consequently lead the BJP to easy and massive electoral wins in the region.

In other words, the belief within the Sangh Parivar was that the creation of the Pan-Hindu social and political identity for which it had worked for decades has become a reality, at least in large parts of North India. But the social combination of Dalits, Other Backward Castes (OBC) and Muslim minorities forged by the BSP-SP alliance upset these hopes about the creation of the Pan-Hindu identity. It was in the context of this stunning electoral reverse that Paramahans spoke about the “SKaam Jaari Hain” concept to underscore that despite this setback the Sangh Parivar’s project would continue.

A couple of days later, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, yet another senior leader of the VHP, joined with Paramahans and addressed a group of reporters including myself to elaborate what they meant by the “Kaam Jaari Hain” idea. According to the two senior leaders, despite the electoral reverse in the 1993 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, the Hindutva combine had a dominant operational control over the town of Ayodhya and adjoining villages. They argued that the very act of removing the Babri Masjid, termed by both of them as “a 450- year-old blot on the face of India”, signified this control.

Paramahans and Giriraj Kishore went on to add that the

Sangh Parivar was able to achieve this dominance not through an overnight manoeuvre but as a result of sustained multi-national operations lasting several decades. “It was a political and ideological journey marked by ups and downs, sometimes resembling a roller coaster ride. The appearance of the idol of Ram Lalla inside the Babri Masjid in 1949 marked a major advancement. The manner in which the people of Ayodhya resisted and rejected the ‘Ram-Janaki yatra’, one of the first major exercises to propagate the liberation of Ramajanmabhumi, in 1984 was a big setback. The 1986 opening of the locks of the Babri Masjid by the then Rajiv Gandhi led Congress government at the Centre was a minor success that paved the way for future operations including karseva. But, the firing on the first karseva in Ayodhya on November 1990 by the then Mulayam Singh Yadav led government was a minor setback, which highlighted the Ramajanmabhumi issue globally, though it was thwarted locally. Similarly, the forced postponement of the July 1992 karseva was also a minor reversal while the ultimate demolition of the Babri masjid in December 1992 was a massive success.” - Giriraja Kishore explained that day.

Paramahans added that day as follows: “When the VHP first started focusing on Ayodhya as an important organisational destination, Ayodhya was projected as a twin town of Faizabad and its hallmark was so-called secularism. But we have changed that in a matter of two decades. Sometimes through the method of step-by-step functioning and sometimes employing a flurry of fast-forward movements. These included enhancing our geographical space in the town by bringing more and more religious institutions under our banner, either by buying their property or by persuading them to ally with us. There were also mobilisations, campaigns, kar sevas, and finally the demolition. But this is work in progress. The identity and supremacy have to be strengthened further and we are working on that. In fact, before reaching this point of success, too, we have gone through several operational

## MARXIST

levels characterised by success, partial successes, partial failures and major reverses. But the net result is that the project has moved on.”

After this interaction, CK Mishra and KP Singhdeo, two senior journalists based for long in Faizabad recounted the happenings that took place in Ayodhya between 1984 and 1992, and how these developments had resulted in the control and dominance that Paramahans and Giriraja Kishore were talking about. In 1984, the flock of Hindutva leaders who led the Ram-Janaki rath yatra, including Ashok Singhal, had to beat a hasty retreat from Ayodhya as a large number of Ayodhya residents, hailing from all communities, including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jain, got ready to physically prevent the yatra in the approach road to the Babri Masjid. The yatra had started from Sitamarhi in Bihar, supposedly the birth place of Sita, with the proclamation that Ramajanmabhumi would be liberated.

However, after this retreat, the Sangh Parivar deputed the VHP to work in and on Ayodhya in a concentrated manner. Through many operations that involved the “Chanakya Neethi of Sama-Dhana-Bhed-Dand”, a combination of sedate entreaties, distribution of largesse, threats and physical attacks, the Sangh Parivar was able to take control of large physical tracts of Ayodhya. These included big properties and institutions owned by individuals and groups, including other Hindu religious groups, as well as the smaller temples of Ayodhya running into hundreds. Those who accepted entreaties or accepted the largesse offered by the Sangh Parivar became part of the “peaceful transition” group. Those who had to be threatened or had to be physically dealt with formed the part of the “forceful takeover” group.

Manifold political manoeuvres, marked by systematic spreading of misinformation and virulent campaigns with the objective of aggravating communal polarisation, were part of this operation. A case in point was the propaganda during the days of the

1990 November karseva. A large number of media across the Hindi heartland were flooded with stories that hundreds had been martyred on account of police firing. The stories presented such a horrific picture that they said that the water flowing in the river Sarayu at Ayodhya had turned red as the blood of the “martyred” karsevaks had merged with the river. The then Mulayam Singh Yadav government contested the claim asserting that less than 30 people were killed in the firing. In turn, the VHP challenged this, and released a “first list” of 75 “martyrs”, complete with names and addresses. I and fellow journalist Sheetal P Singh got around to checking the list of persons who belonged to Uttar Pradesh and found 4 of the 26 listed from the State alive. Even more interestingly, a person who never lived was created fictionally in an address in Saharanpur and then killed on paper. Around five people in the Uttar Pradesh list had died on account of causes other than the Ayodhya firing, such as traffic accidents in their local towns or diseases like typhoid. The story did attract nationwide attention and caused embarrassment to the Sangh Parivar leadership. But, the masters of deceitful political manoeuvres took it in their stride and carried on with their operations in Ayodhya. Whatever the means, Mishra and Singhdeo pointed out in 1993, nearly two thirds of the town of Ayodhya was practically under the control of the Sangh Parivar by mid-1992. It was in such a context that Paramahans responded to the 1993 electoral reverse with the “Kaam Jaari Hain” remark.

And indeed, in yet another conversation with me eight years later, Paramahans would hark back to the 1993 December interaction and pose another bombastic question: “Kya Bola Thaa Maine! Kaam Jari Hain Na!!”(What did I tell you, work is on, right?). This was in March 2002, a few days after Gujarat had witnessed the horrific anti-Muslim pogrom that marked the killing of hundreds of Muslims along with other dreadful acts of violence, including mass rapes and mutilation. On that occasion, Paramahans went on to explain further: “all the resistance that political

adversaries put together in the name of secularism and empowerment of Dalits and OBCs or social justice and socialism would not be able hold on before the might of Hindutva. Gujarat and Ayodhya, as laboratories of Mission Hindu Rashtra have proved it and would go on proving it.”

Incidentally, Paramahans was also the head of the Digambar Akhara, which he used to term as a collection of “Warrior Mahants”, and had some reputation as a wrestler, who used to defeat much younger competitors in the wrestling pit. He would often tell those who came to listen to his periodic pravachans (expositions on religion and related matters) that as a practitioner of different martial arts and their philosophies, he saw nothing wrong in violence, subterfuge and crafty moves. Unlike many others in the Sangh Parivar, especially those who were part of the BJP, Paramahans did not hide behind pretensions of piety and adherence to social and democratic values. A large number of reporters covering events in Ayodhya for long also knew that in the scheming and duplicitous multi-speak strategies employed by the several small and big outfits of the Sangh Parivar, the seemingly pompous voice of this longstanding “Hindutva warrior” was the closest to the actual perspective held by the RSS and associate organisations.

For example, in the run up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, a range of leaders of the Sangh Parivar such as Atal Behari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, then Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh and VHP Vice President Swami Chinmayanand had adopted varied positions on the 6 December Karseva creating tremendous confusion among political observers and analysts. While Kalyan Singh and Chinmayanand stated in the National Integration Council and the Supreme Court respectively that karseva would be confined to performing bhajans and kirtans, Advani, who led a yatra in Uttar Pradesh during the run up to the demolition skirted direct references to the possible happenings on the karseva day and repeatedly harped on the responsibility of



the Indian State and its people to correct the “historical wrongs heaped on the Hindu community”.

Vajpayee, on his part was at his cryptic best stating in a public meet at Lucknow on December 5 that “no one can say for sure what would happen during the karseva”. He went on to add that “even to carry out peaceful bhajans and kirtans, the place will have to be cleaned and set up and, in the process, some bumpy mounds and protruding, piercing structures would have to be cleared”. Amidst all these pronouncements, Paramahans and Vinay Katiyar, who was considered a trusted deputy of the “warrior Mahant” at that point of time, were the two people who averred that the “structure would go this time” and that preparations for this, including the formation of suicide squads has been done by the Sangh Parivar. What Katiyar was saying was that the solemn assurance given by the then Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and a senior VHP leader, even before constitutional bodies, would be bypassed. “Is there a power and constitutional authority bigger than Lord Ram”? Katiyar had retorted when I pointed out that the implementation of the demolition plan as delineated by him would put leaders like Kalyan Singh, who have assumed office affirming allegiance to the Constitution. Indeed, the positions held by Paramahans and Katiyar were also part of the deliberate “multi-speak strategy” employed by Sangh Parivar. In its immediate context, these positions also added to the confusion among the public. But ultimately things turned out exactly as Paramahans and Katiyar had predicted.

I had observed this “streak of outspokenness” in Paramahans right from 1986, the period in which I had started covering Ayodhya and related developments. This streak remained steady with him till mid-2003, the period he fell into a relatively long illness and passed away on July 31 that year. In the very early interactions with me as a reporter he openly proclaimed he was one of the persons instrumental in surreptitiously placing the idol of Ram Lalla inside the Babri Masjid on the night of

December 22-23 1949, along with other “Warrior Priests” such as Abhiram Das, Ram Sakal Das and Sudarshan Das. In the other long conversations, he had with myself and other fellow journalists, from time to time, he would recount how, as a 21-year-old in 1934, he had led a crowd of rioters to ransack the police station to assert Hindu supremacy over the twin towns of Ayodhya and Faizabad.

Throughout all these grandiloquent narrations, there was a singular theme that appeared repeatedly. It was the insistence that the demographic dominance of the Hindu communities in India would ultimately gain political control first over Ayodhya and later over the country despite “long rooted diversionary political ideologies and practices like secularism, social justice movements including Dalit and OBC assertive politics, socialism and communism”. Many reporters, including myself, had seen him make one of the most telling statements asserting this conviction on December 9, 1992, three days after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. As a group of journalists went to see him on that afternoon at his headquarters of Digambar Akhara in Ayodhya he was playing the dice game of Bhag-Bakri with his disciples. Lifting his head from the game his first comment to the journalists was as follows: “Is Khel mein Bakri jeet Sakthi Hain. Lekin asli sansar mein Kar sakthi hain kya?” (The goat can win in this game, but can it in real life?). Paramahans was clearly asserting the Hindutva hegemony angle blatantly, but figuratively.

In later years, till he passed away in 2003, Paramahans would return to this metaphor as well as the “yeh tho sirf janki hain, ab kaashi, mathura baaki hain” (This is only the trailer, now Kashi and Mathura are our targets) slogan raised by the departing karsevaks as a consummate encapsulation of Hindutva politics and its goal, the Hindu Rashtra. He would also assert often that the advancement of the larger Hindutva political plank in the country would also follow the path as practiced in the laboratory of Ayodhya. Paramahans would also periodically return to his

pet theme of “correcting historical blemishes that deserved to be delivered from shame”. Of course, the list contained the targets to be removed, such as the Kashi Gyanvapi Mosque and the Mathura Jama masjid adjoining the Sri Krishna Janmasthan temple. The Taj Mahal in Agra and Qutab Minar in Delhi also figured prominently in the list. The argument was that the Taj Mahal was a Siva temple that it once went by the name of ‘Tejo Mahalya’ and that Qutab Minar was built by Muslim invaders after demolishing a Hindu-Jain religious complex consisting of 27 temples.

But this was not all. The list of “historical blemishes” contained institutions and entities like the Indian Parliament and the Indian Constitution as a whole. “The demand at present is only about addressing key issues like abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, but once we get to absolute power there are many things that would be completely uprooted” – the refrain would go thus. He would specifically refer to the Indian Parliament as one of the “institutional signs of subjugation and shame”. Starting from the architectural designs of the building to the parliamentary systems and practices, the entire package, including the legislative processes adopted by the Union and State government, was portrayed as a persisting symbol of the British domination. The Indian Constitution was seen as an extension of the parliamentary system that violates the spirit of Bharat and its Hindu ethos. “Guru ji M.S. Golwalkar had expressed such views even as the Constitution was being formalised. The Hindu Rashtra of the Sangh Parivar will undo all this.”

Significantly, this long Hindutva project, which developed over several decades and through very many ups and downs as well as political and organisational manoeuvres was facilitated decisively by the Congress, the grand old party of India, and its leadership at least thrice in a span of six years, between 1986 and 1992. In 1986, the Rajiv Gandhi government and the Congress decided to pursue a soft Hindutva line, which they thought would help them electorally, and decided to open the locks of the Babri

## MARXIST

Masjid and allow Hindu worship just outside it. This was done in response to a legal petition being accepted in a lower court. Three years later, in the run up of the 1989 Lok Sabha elections Rajiv Gandhi went one step further and sanctioned the shilanyas (foundation stone laying) ceremony for the Ram Mandir, imparting legitimacy to the Sangh Parivar claims on the issue.

Three more years later, in 1992, the Congress government led by the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao shuts its eyes to numerous inputs, including from intelligence sources including military intelligence, about the definitive possibility of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Military intelligence sources had made it clear in their reports as early as the last week of November 1992 that the number of karsevaks was mounting day by day and the security wherewithal at the disposal of the forces would be found wanting in controlling the situation if the crowd turns aggressive. However, this concrete information from the military intelligence to the union government apparently evoked no response from the Rao government.

As the demolition progressed on 6 December, 1992 the barbarism of hardcore Sangh Parivar outfits, which had manifested in diverse forms in Ayodhya over the past couple of decades turned to physical attacks on journalists, especially camera persons. Anybody who was creating visual evidence of the demolition of the Masjid was assaulted mercilessly. Evidently, this strategy has paid off. The criminal case on the demolition of the Babri Masjid, in which Hindutva stalwarts like Lal Krishna Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Ashok Singhal, Vinay Katiyar and Uma Bharati formed the list of the accused, was dismissed, among other things, for the prosecution's failure to produce adequate evidence.

Women journalists such as Ruchira Gupta, Suman and Sajeda Momein were also brutally assaulted on 6 December, 1992. Ruchira would later reveal that she extricated herself from the clutches of karsevaks somehow and reached the special dais set up in the precincts for leaders like Lal Krishna Advani, Murli Manohar

Joshi, Ashok Singhal and Uma Bharati with the request that Advani appeal to the karsevaks to stop the assault on the media. Then then “Hindu Hridhay Samrat’s” reply, Ruchira reported, was that he would not be able to attend to such personal inconveniences on day when such a historic event was happening. However, around 3:15 PM, after the fall of second dome, Advani was heard exhorting the karsevaks to block all entry points to the temple town, obviously to prevent any action by the security forces.

But later events proved that Advani’s exhortation was not really necessary. The forces who were present at the site did nothing to stop the demolition of the masjid and stayed inactive not only till the last dome was brought down around 4:50 PM but even when the karsevaks were cordoning off the area with their own fences, building up a temporary structure and placing the Ram-Sita-Lakshman idols there. In fact, a substantial security movement towards the town started only next day, around the evening of the 7th.

By this time, the Rao government had come to an understanding with the Sangh Parivar that the karsevaks would be escorted out peacefully, in special trains and buses. Through the night of December 7 and the day of December 8 the karsevaks left Ayodhya shouting the “trailer slogan”. By the time this “peaceful evacuation” took place, these karsevaks had attacked and torched around 100 Muslim houses of Ayodhya, forcing the residents to take shelter in the Sri Ramajamabhumi police station. The sequence of events as they had unraveled from the last week of November to the demolition and after signified not just the story of this tragic persecution and marginalization of the Muslim minorities but also the growing political, social and cultural hegemony of the Sangh Parivar led Hindutva forces.

As Paramahans pointed out in 1993, the “Kaam Jaari Hain” concept moved on not only beyond the reverses it suffered at the hands of the SP and BSP that year, but also the serial defeats it suffered in 2004 and 2009 at the hands of the larger opposition,

## MARXIST

including the Congress, the Left parties led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) – CPI(M), and regional forces like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the SP. As witnessed in Ayodhya in the 1980s and 1990s the Sangh Parivar followed multidimensional strategies and tactics marked by misinformation campaigns and widespread engineering of communal polarisation and brutal riots to overturn the defeats of 2004 and 2009 and get to massive electoral victories in 2014 and 2019. In 2014, the BJP election plank was strengthened by the multifaceted corruption charges that came up against the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) governments that ruled in the preceding ten years. However, in both elections, deliberately orchestrated creation of a communal divide was the mainstay of the Sangh Parivar's electoral manoeuvres.

The Narendra Modi led Sangh Parivar regime, technically run by a BJP led National Democratic Alliance government has moved on from successful or near-successful pursuits of one Hindutva social and political agenda after another. A new parliament building has come up, which large sections of the Sangh Parivar say contains the stamp of innate Hindu ethos and architecture, Article 370 has been abrogated and there is already a sustained campaign against the Constitution as a whole. There is even chatter about having a “new father of the Nation” to replace the stature accorded to Mahatma Gandhi.

And in Ayodhya itself, the path has been cleared both in terms of legal parameters as well as in terms of practical infrastructures for the construction of a grand Ram Mandir, essentially on account of the massive majority and authority that the Sangh Parivar has over the Executive structure of the country and its unmistakable ripple effects on the judiciary. In a judgement that can be termed as a ludicrous and dangerous at the same time the Supreme Court gave a verdict on November 9, 2019 allocating the disputed property that housed the Babri Masjid to the Hindutva side in the case. This, in spite of accepting that both

the smuggling of the Hindu idols into the mosque in 1949 and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 were illegal, criminal actions.

In recent times, there are reports that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has increased the frequency of his visits to Ayodhya, essentially to oversee the construction of the Ram Mandir. Apparently, he has had four visits to the town in a matter of 40 days during the months of October and November 2022. There is little doubt that the Mandir and the communal propaganda around it would be the hallmark of the election campaigns of the BJP and its ideological fountainhead in the future. Indeed, the work on the Mandir is progressing at a fast pace.

The November 2019 Supreme Court verdict had also provided for the construction of a mosque in Ayodhya, but it is to be situated approximately 15 kilometers from where the Babri Masjid existed. For all practical purposes, far away from Ayodhya. More significantly, it is not exactly conceived as a mosque, but a community center consisting of medical and educational facilities. And, of course, no work on the mosque has started on this complex despite the passage of three years.

Looking back at the last 30 years in the context of the happenings of November - December 1992 as well as the expositions of Sangh Parivar leaders like Paramahans, it is evident that the Hindutva project has moved over the past three decades building on the sectarian milestone created by the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The political reach it has is redoubtable with power, coupled with massive majority, at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh, the State that houses Ayodhya and Faizabad and has the highest population in the country. The aggressive Hindutva ideology it has unleashed and its effects are being felt at all levels of society.

In other words, it is a social and political hegemony reflected in the restrictions that the Sangh Parivar and its governments at the Centre and in several States are forcefully advancing in areas as diverse as freedom of expression to food habits of people, and

MARXIST

in the creation of the climate for the lynch mob killings of persons belonging to Muslim minorities such as Muhammed Akhlaq and Hafiz Junaid as well as brutal murders of intellectuals and thinkers like Gauri Lankesh, Govind Pansare and Narendra Dabholkar. Indeed, the milestone of communal and fascist politics of 6 December, 1992 has acquired gargantuan proportions in the 30 years since it showed its frightful face.

\*\*\*\*\*



AIJAZ AHMAD

**Excerpted from:**

## **Culture, Community, Nation: On the Ruins of Ayodhya<sup>1</sup>**

In its internal structure, meanwhile, the destruction of the masjid has all the characteristics of a fascist spectacle, coming on top of many preparatory spectacles, carefully calibrated over the years. It displayed the familiar fascistic relationship between the parliamentary front and extra-parliamentary wings; that same chain running from leaders to trained cadres to the mot) – bound together by a carefully choreographed hysteria and exhortations to violence; replete with appeals to masculine virility, national pride, racial redemption, contempt for law and civility – so that the liberal Mr. Vajpayee, the patrician Mr. Advani, the deliberately shrieking Uma Bharati, and those goons of Bajrang Dal who had come to believe that they were, quite literally, monkeys in the army of Hanuman, the servants of Ram and the eventual protectors of Hindu female chastity, were joined together in a public ritual that was expected to propel the *Sangh*, through its parliamentary arm but with the muscle power of its non-parliamentary wings, to unassailable state power. As if the event itself was not enough, video cassettes not only of the event but of many subsequent acts of violence, including the actual rape of Muslim women by goons in Surat, were then distributed throughout the country, so that they could be re-lived, over and over again, vicariously, by a whole host of men throughout the land,

## MARXIST

as so many moments of re-gained Hindu virility, as re-defined by the *parivar*. This is, I would contend, fascist masculinity with a vengeance.

\*\*\*\*\*

But we could go behind the destruction of the mosque and the ensuing communal orgy, to the self-organisation of the *parivar* itself – and, I shall be brief, since I am saying only the obvious. The image of the family is crucial here, because of its patriarchal resonance, even though the strictly all-male RSS is referred to by fronts of the *parivar* as *mata*. At the head we have a semi-secret, non-parliamentary organisation, the *sangh* itself, led by a handful of men, mostly of the Brahmin caste, bound by no norms of democratic representation even in principle, whose methods of internal organisation, promotion, decision-making, lists of actual cadres etc, remains shrouded in secrecy, despite the agreement under which the ban on the *sangh* was lifted in the 50s and which requires legal accountability on these issues. *This* is the organisation which assembles the fascist structure vertically, from the *shakha* upward, with its organisational ethic of cadre-building, loyalty and obedience, and its ideological identification of local community, Hindu culture, and Indian nationhood; and, it organises the structure horizontally, by spawning numerous fronts – perhaps fifty or more, as they claimed last year when the RSS was formally banned – covering such diverse areas as gender, childhood and adolescence, religious subjectivity, parliamentary representation, methodical violence. The *sangh*'s obvious public face is that of the BJP, supposedly a political party like the rest, but even the formation of municipal government in Delhi has shown that all the power is wielded by the RSS itself – not to speak of the Advanis, the Vajpayees, the Joshis etc, in the central leadership, all RSS veterans. Alongside that are other semi-public faces: the VHP, the Bajrang Dal, the *dharm sansad*; to assist in parliamentary mobilisation but also for non-parliamentary mobilisation;

for the assertion that matters of faith are not subject to law and constitution; to concentrate requisite force to drive that message home, especially to the Muslims but to the country at large. In the vast space that separates – but also connects – Mr Vajpayee and the Bajrang Dal are the intellectuals, the media manipulators, the experts in electronic fabrication, who interpret the daily events for us through newspapers; who lay out the visual images in those same newspapers to manipulate our sensory experience of what we read; who flood the mass market with films and videos. Here too, in this sphere of ideological mobilisation and re-making, there are levels and calibrations: the national network of the in-house publications of the RSS is carefully distinguished from a similarly national network of publications which represent the RSS viewpoint without being formally a part of the authorised network, which is then balanced against methodical penetration of the liberal media itself, reaching up to the upper reaches of the respectable dailies.

\*\*\*\*\*

What I am suggesting is that in its staging of spectacles, in its techniques of mobilisations, in the multiplicity of its fronts, in the shadowy traffic between its parliamentary and non-parliamentary organs, in the seamless interplay of form and content in its ideological interpellations, in the connection it asserts between a resurgent national tradition and the regaining of masculinist virility, in its simultaneous claims to legality and extra-legality, in its construction of a mythic history which authorises it to be above history, and in its organisation of a *dharm sansad* that authorises it to be above the civil parliament whenever it so chooses, the *sangh parivar* is a classically fascist force – with large Indian twists of course, as every fascism must always take a specifically national form. Because of features such as these, the *sangh* represents not only a communalism, in the ordinary sense, even though minorities in general and Muslims in particular are its special victims. The true object of its desire is not

mere Muslim submission but state power and the re-making of India as a whole – politically, ideologically, historically; and, true to form, this project of re-making India in its own image involves a great deal of un-making, both through selective appropriation as well as outright rejection of very large parts of our past and present histories. This process of unmaking and re-making involves the rejection of our secular-nationalist and communist histories; the re-domestication and redefinition of what little independence some women in this country have been able to achieve; to slow down the upsurge of the dominated castes; to control the pluralities of our intellectual and cultural productions; to club the regional minorities into submission to a centralised, authoritarian state; and to bestow upon a backward bourgeoisie nostalgias of an imperial past, dreams of nuclear power, hallucinations of regional dominance. Communalism, in other words, is only a cutting edge, even though this edge is quite capable of causing bloodbaths time and again.

The *sangh* foregrounds the issues of what it calls ‘pseudo-secularism’ and ‘the appeasement of minorities’ because it finds these issues strategically important in its bid to build a national consensus around a whole series of real and imagined resentments, but the object of this consensus is not merely the minority but, most centrally, that majority which we provisionally call Hindu, hence also the even more powerful project of re-defining and re-ordering Hinduism itself, in a syndicated, monolithic, telegenic, aggressive form – part Brahminical, part electronic, part plebeian. In other words, the *sangh* claims and has always claimed to be a *nationalism* – at once the *cultural* nationalism of the Hindu community, and, because the *community* is said to be co-terminus with the nation itself, the *political* nationalism of the Indian people as such. The history of this claim – part communitarian, part nationalist claim – is of some interest.

We have, first, Golwalker’s famous distinction, as he phrased it, between his own *cultural* nationalism and the *territorial* nationalism of the Congress as led by Gandhi *et al.* In this formulation,

cultural nationalism is the nationalism specifically of *Hindus*, whereas territorial nationalism is by definition secular in the sense that it includes non-Hindus as well and does not demand of them that they adopt what Golwalker would define as Hindu culture. By this definition, it might appear that he recognises secular nationalism as having a wider scope and the flexibility to represent all Indians, irrespective of religious affiliation, while he himself aspires to represent only the Hindus. But that is not what Golwalker means. He turns immediately and takes recourse to an ideological identification between two essentially discursive categories, namely *pitribhumi* (fatherland) and *punyabhumi* (spiritual homeland), worthy of German Romanticism itself, invoking the quasi-Hegelian idea of a National Spirit and asserting that the idea of citizenship be derived from one's origin and active participation in the working of that Spirit. Being born an Indian is thus not enough to qualify for true citizenship because 'India' designates only a territory; the *Spirit* of India resides, generally, in religions that arose within India and, quintessentially, in Hinduism, so that to be a true Indian one had to be a Hindu as well. In other words, Hindus were true citizens of India *prima fade* by having spontaneous recourse to that national Spirit by the very fact of birth in a Hindu household, but non-Hindus could *become* citizens by acquiring – that is to say, submitting to – that Spirit – not as *equal* citizens, since nothing could compensate for the taint of inferior birth, but as protected minority, or as wards of the state as it were. Golwalker of course cited Nazi Germany as his model for this racialistic definition of citizenship, but what is also striking about this definition is that the purported distinction between cultural nationalism and territorial nationalism is dissolved as soon as it is made, since the entire population residing in the territory of *Bharat Varsha* is thereby required to either accept the cultural nationalism as defined by *Hindutva* or to leave the territory altogether; the cultural nationalist, in any case, would not let go of even an inch of that territory. In the more extreme versions, it is said to be the historic mission of militarised Hinduism and the

## MARXIST

*Hindutva* state that it would set out to recapture the territories that Greater India has lost to other states of the sub-continent, Pakistan in particular but also Bangladesh. Purification of the existing territory, expansion into the adjacent territories of other states is thus part of the design.

\*\*\*\*\*

As regards the making of that particular form of Hinduism which the RSS presents as the cultural nationalism of the Indian people, two parallel process of syndication are striking. The first is the familiar one for which Romila Thapar initially used the term ‘syndication’, whereby *diverse* and even conflicting practices are sought to be taken over from very different traditions and incorporated into a single, pan-Indian religiosity – for which Ram is said to be the unique, uniform godhead. This is an *invented* tradition, if there ever was one! But something else, and in its own way perhaps even more alarming, is that the RSS has emerged as the unique successor and a point of intersection for great many revivalist currents that India has inherited from many quite distinct Hindu reform movements of the nineteenth century and diverse, even conflicting, political movements of the earlier decades of the present century. Vivekananda has been a staple of their invocations now for decades, and VHP’s special claim to his legacy is so elaborate and strident that the forces of the liberal-Left which think that they can unproblematically claim Vivekanand for a more decent formulation of the Hindu cultural ethos need to think of the consequences of that prior claim very seriously. Meanwhile, such things as the convergence between Golwalker and Savarkar, and the latter co-operation of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and the RSS in founding the Jan Sangh, have meant that the RSS has simply inherited the legacy of what was once the Hindu Mahasabha. Even the old confrontation between Arya Samajis and the Sanatan Dharmis has also largely lapsed into a some-

what syndicated Rightwing Hinduism and, therefore, into a more or less singular constituency for the *Sangh*. Large chunks of Bankim and Aurobindo are simply rehearsed as precursors of modernday *Hindutva*. Gandhi's tactic of keeping such individuals as Hedgewar and such organisations as the Mahasabha inside the Congress for as long as it remained at all possible, not to speak of the subsequent history of cooperation extended to the RSS by such diverse individuals as Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash Narayan during the *bhoodan* campaign and the anti-Indira agitation respectively, has made it all the more possible for the RSS to assert anti-colonial, reformist, even anti-authoritarian credentials. One of the notable features of this bid for building an alternative national hegemony is that the RSS lays claim, *in the religious sphere*, to the *whole* of the Hindu tradition, from the highest kind of Brahminism to the most plebeian and ecumenical kind of *bhakti*, as well as to the more modern kinds of revisionist Hinduism; and, in the socio-political sphere, it lays claim to the whole range of Hindu reform movements as well as to virtually every major figure in nationalist history, including Gandhi – with very few exceptions, notably Nehru. Let me note, parenthetically, that the ability of the RSS to partially coopt the rhetoric of Gandhian socialism, Gandhian Swadeshi, Gandhian *Ram \*rajya*, and their unmitigated hostility toward Nehru should give some pause to that section of our secular intelligentsia, notably our Subalternist historians, whose personal secularism is beyond question but who then find it so much easier to be partial toward Gandhi but would themselves be quite as hostile toward Nehru as the RSS itself. I do not mean that the priorities should simply be reversed, or that we should now set up some fundamental preference for Nehru over Gandhi in our narratives of canonical nationalism; simple reversals in such matters usually do more harm than good. What I do mean is that we need a far more careful look at those positions – frequently overlapping positions – that Gandhi and Nehru have represented within that history, even though the fashion these days, on the Right certainly but also in some sections of

the radical intelligentsia, is to pitch them as opposites.

Be that as it may. Let me explore a bit further my proposition that the remarkable capacity of the RSS to set its own agenda and to register a gradual but remarkably consistent expansion over a period of sixty years or more, is certainly a tribute to its own organisational genius, but this genius has met with such success because of its ability to draw upon large number of legacies which have been an enduring feature of diverse reform movements and nationalist articulations throughout the history of modern India. The idea of uniform Hindu victimisation over a thousand years is as old as Indian modernity itself, and we can find it there already in Rammohun, who was otherwise also the author of *Tuhfat al Muwahideen*, a book deeply imbued with concepts of Islamic rationalism, and a pleader of the Mughal king's case in the court of the company. For Rammohun, of course, those were fleeting assertions, by no means a substantial part of his social or historical vision. But such ideas begin to get articulated far more systematically by the last quaricr of the 19th century, with enough of it getting played out subsequently during the Swadeshi movement for Tagore to specifically warn against the tendency. The pursuit of a revamped, reformed but also monolithic and even aggressive Hinduism that presents itself as the *real* tradition; the invention of a past, anti-Muslim nationalism in the form of the sagas of Maratha and Rajput warriors; the idea that the kshatriya ideal of manhood is the proper ideal for Hindu manhood in general; the emphasis on physical culture and the building of the male body as a key to Hindu redemption; the figure of the heroic Sadhvi leading Hindu men in acts of redemption of the national honour – all these, and much besides, the RSS has inherited from the fictions, the zealotries, the reform movements of the 19th century and the twentieth, from Bengal to Maharashtra to Punjab. Its unique achievement is that ideological elements that had in the past remained discrete are now integrated into a singular, all-encompassing ideological position and are given not only a far more vicious form but, most crucially, linked now to



uniquely new forms of organisation and mobilisation. Even the image of the RSS as an all-male club of reformers who know best – and that of the swamikas as both objects and agents of that reform, at once released and restrained by the reformer, active, above all, in the proper Hindu household, and then in carefully orchestrated family-to-family, neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood networks, and only very selectively on the national scene, whenever the directive agency of the reformer so desires – all this recalls, on a much grander scale of course, the quintessential relationship between the 19th century reformer and the object of his reform – usually the wife, the daughter, the sister-in-law. Needless to add, there is much in our secular-nationalist histories that also took over those same ideas, those same models. The secular-nationalist versions had remained essentially paternalistic and condescending, in the way of much 19th century liberalism, but they have unwittingly contributed to the more aggressively masculinist versions of the RSS type.

In other words, by the time the RSS takes over such ideas, they have gathered to themselves the density of very powerful histories, no less historical for being so thoroughly modern. What I am suggesting, first, is that the difference between the so-called Hindu nationalism of the *sangh parivar* and the secular nationalism of its bourgeois opponents cannot be conceptualised in the binary terms of Tradition and Modernity; the *parivar* itself draws upon a number of very modern traditions, and it is at least arguable that those who have choreographed its fascist spectacles, from the *rath yatra* onwards, know more about modernity than many of our avant-garde artists and historians. But I am also suggesting, second, that the strategists of the *parivar* know perfectly well that many of their ideas resonate strongly with a certain kind of widespread ‘common sense’ that has been prepared for them already, by other movements, social practices, intellectual productions, all of which they can now selectively incorporate, by re-writing, into

## MARXIST

their own history as so many precursors of modern-day *Hindutva*. This is by no means the only common sense available in modern India, and it is much to be doubted that the majority of Indians subscribe to the sum of those ideas or even find them relevant. But the confidence that there is a large enough pool of consent is also visibly there, in numerous RSS practices, as for example in the stipulation that every boy who ever comes to any of the *shakhas* must come with prior consent and daily knowledge of elders in the family; the presumption is that the consent would already be there or can be both obtained and sustained relatively easily. Consent of course comes all the more easily not only because of prior patterns of socialization but also because the RSS, through the *shakha*, is able to offer facilities (such as organised sports) and particular kinds of feelings (such as pride, group bonding, social ambition) that are scarce for the majority of the children caught in the urban vortex.

But there are other kinds of consents, other kinds of violences as well, that potentially contribute to the making of a fascist project. Notable among these is the normalisation of the practice of violence as a way of satisfying acquisitive desire and of imposing the will of the powerful on the powerless. An urban middle class that habitually sets its women afire because the dowry they bring does not satisfy the greed of the men of that class; because they are not sufficiently submissive; or because they are suspected of sexual infidelity, normalises the idea of violence as normative in gender relations. The agrarian upper castes that periodically set fire to the households of the menial castes normalise the idea of extreme violence in class and caste relations, as much as does the ruling party which carries out a pogrom in an entire community to avenge the assassination of its Prime Minister by her bodyguard. The men who congregate around their video cassettes to watch *Hindutva* goons raping Muslim women are certainly communal men, but this particular form of communal bonding between the rapist and the voyeur

stems from older and wider histories which have connected patriarchal households, caste-divided local communities and the so-called national culture in great many complex ways. Communalism is by no means the only – and, in quantitative terms, not even the largest – structure of routine violence in our society, and there are times when a communal kind of violence comes so easily to so many men, and gets exercised against even peaceful neighbours, precisely because this particular form of violence draws upon so many other kinds of aggressions. In contemporary India communalism is certainly, as I said earlier, the cutting edge for a fascist project as a whole, but those other violences – of caste, class and gender – are always there to *form* the kind of authoritarian personality upon which the fascist project eventually rests.

NOTE

- 1 First published in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 21, Nos. 7-8, July-August, 1993.

DOCUMENTS

## Assert India's Unity

WE BOW our heads in shame. The vandals masquerading as religious heads, their political mouthpieces and their fanatic foot-soldiers have been able to accomplish the most despicable job of destroying the four and half centuries old structure known as the Babri Masjid. In order to do it, their religious ethics did not come in the way of resorting to every conceivable subterfuge, deception and blatant lies. On 6 December, they almost succeeded in killing India. And 6<sup>th</sup> of December will be known in the historical calendar of this country as BLACK SUNDAY

All patriots, and the Left in particular, have always taken great pride in and stood as the defenders of a united India, indivisible, and hence indestructible. In one of his first poems, Rabindranath Tagore, one of the India's greatest poets and visionaries, proclaimed how the Shakas, Huns, Pathans and Mughals had come as invaders, but in the time became absorbed into and contributed another rich segment to the tapestry of Indian culture. Thus was built the glory and majesty on Indian civilization.

While therefore, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, religion-wise and now to a great extent politically, India has come to consist of divergent groups, all of them pledged to remaining together in one country called "India, that is Bharat". Some two centuries back a famous English poet had said that when a part of the whole dies, the whole dies to the extent of the part. Therefore, "ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee". A part of India was sought to be murdered on BLACK SUNDAY and because of

it the whole of India is writhing in excruciating pain. Hundreds of lives, nobody knows for sure the exact number, have already been lost in a fratricidal war. How many hundreds are yet to be sacrificed? As Indians, believing in the secular and democratic destiny of the country, we are forced to bow our heads in shame that such things could actually be perpetrated. How this dastardly purpose was achieved though bluster and deceit is now common knowledge, and has been detailed elsewhere in this issue.

The BJP, the common mouthpiece of these fanatic outfits, which assured the Supreme Court, the parliament of India and the country that *karseva* would be confined to Bhajans and *kirtans* only, is not only not repentant or apologetic about what incalculable harm it has done to the secular and democratic fabric of India's body politic, it is stridently justifying what has been done in the name of faith. When logic and reason fail to dissuade such betrayers, then it is time to unleash the organized force of the state to bear upon them.

But who is to perform this job? Obviously, the government. But still two days after the event the government of India was still seemingly under paralysis and numbed. Clearly if the BJP was the perpetrator, Narasimha Rao was the abettor. If he seriously believed that two and half lakh people were coming to Ayodhya for 'bhajan and kirtan', he was a simpleton. And a simpleton cannot be retained at the helm of affairs of a country. It was the case that he was afraid to take early action immediately after the non-BJP secular opposition gave him a *carte blanche* to do whatever he thought fit to foil the suspected nefarious designs of the *sangh परिवार*, he must be deemed to be too timid, to say the least, to occupy the exalted position of prime minister of great country as in India.

Internationally, we are fast becoming a pariah. Pakistan is finding justification for its misdeeds, and the Arab countries, with whom we had excellent relations, are reconsidering these relations, perhaps even an oil embargo. Even Bush, despite his own black record vis-à-vis the blacks and Hispanics in his own

MARXIST

country, has found an opportunity to express his 'displeasure'. Thus India's fair name is being dragged in the mud.

To Keep the secular flag aloft was the duty, obligation and responsibility of Narasimha Rao. He has failed and failed miserably. He must go. He no longer enjoys the moral right to continue. Meanwhile the sternest possible measures must immediately adopted to contain the escalating threat of a fratricidal war. Deterrent punishment should be meted out to those responsible for the destruction of the structure, with no quarter given to them. This is time to act with courage, determination and decision.

**Editorial in *People's Democracy*, 13 December, 1992**

DOCUMENTS

## Demolition : A Continuum

IF ever any confirmation were needed, it has come in a stunning manner during the course of this turbulent decade. And, that is the following: the demolition of the Babri Masjid was not an individual isolated act of a frenzied communal mob but is a part of a well-thought out theoretical and ideological project that seeks to convert the secular democratic republic of modern India into a fascistic “Hindu Rashtra”.

These years, particularly from 1998, when the BJP-led coalition came to control the reins of State power in the country, have chillingly demonstrated the unfolding of this sinister agenda. Their diabolic character is revealed by the manipulation of legal procedures subverting the law of the land preventing action against L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and others in the case of criminal conspiracy to demolish the Masjid. The recent Supreme Court ruling to try the case afresh in the Rae Bariely courts throws back the process of justice by a decade.

In the pursuit of this objective, the communal forces have adopted a two pronged strategy. On the one hand, they seek to generate a sort of a monolithic unity amongst the vast diversity within the community of Indians embracing Hindu religion, and, on the other, they generate hate against enemies outside of the Hindu faith, i e the Muslims and the Christians. The entire propaganda machinery is based on the Nazi methodology of ‘superiority’ of the Aryans and hatred of Jews.

In fact, the ideological foundations for a Hindu Rashtra, were

## MARXIST

laid in the 20s by V D Savarkar. It was later adopted and an organisational structure provided for this by the RSS after its foundation in 1925 and particularly, in the period of the late thirties when the British inspired communal divide was exploited to the full.

This objective was articulated by none less than the former long serving RSS supremo M S Golwalkar way back in 1939 in a book titled, *“We or our nationhood defined”*. His chilling fascist articulation of the RSS agenda continues to be the inspiration for the saffron brigade today.

Eminent intellectuals and patriots have described these later years of the decade as “forebodings of fascism”, “pre-fascist upheaval” etc. This is all too visible in every sphere of our public life -- Rabid communal polarisation; fascist intolerance against everything and everybody that challenges the RSS variety of “Hindu Rashtra”; large-scale penetration of all institutions of democratic society by RSS people; contempt for the republican Constitution; unscrupulous manoeuvres, manipulations and sordid bargaining sans all principles and norms; heaping unprecedented economic burdens on the people; and rampant unmitigated corruption.

The international experience of fascism as generalised by Georgi Dimitrov, the indomitable anti-fascist fighter, is being fully confirmed. Dimitrov had said: *“Fascism puts the people at the mercy of the most corrupt and venal elements but comes before them with the demand for ‘an honest and incorruptible government’ speculating on the profound disillusionment of the masses...fascism adapts its demagogy to the peculiarities of each country. And the mass of petty bourgeois and even a section of the workers, reduced to despair by want, unemployment and insecurity of their existence fall victim to the social and chauvinist demagogy of fascism”*. Recollect the RSS/BJP’s continuous drone of claiming to be a “party with a difference”. The litany of corruption, scandals and scams under this government has put everybody but the Saffron Brigade to shame. Yet, the government continues to brazen out shamelessly.

Dimitrov had also said that: *“It is in the interests of the most*



*reactionary circles of the bourgeoisie that fascism intercepts the disappointed masses who desert the old bourgeois parties.*” Its years in office have clearly established that this government’s policies are both pro-imperialist and in the interests of the most reactionary sections of Indian monopoly capital. In fact, this Vajpayee government has been the most pro-US government that independent India has ever had. Its economic policies have, on the one hand, mortgaged our country’s economic sovereignty and, on the other, impoverished the vast mass of the Indian people. In the foreign policy sphere, India has been reduced virtually as an appendage to US strategic interests in the region.

Further, these years have also shown the single-minded assault being mounted on India’s education system. The RSS’s objective of seeking to impose a uniformity on the rich diversity amongst the people belonging to the Hindu faith into a monolithic “Hindu” by venomously spreading deeper the communal hatred against the minorities can be seen in the changes that they are bringing about in the syllabus for our school students. The education system is, thus, being restructured to strengthen communal prejudices which the Saffron Brigade hopes will ease its journey towards achieving its fascist objective.

Likewise, these years have seen the relentless pursuit of re-writing Indian history. Distorting facts and historical evidence is absolutely necessary for the Saffron Brigade in order to establish their so-called claim to be the irrefutable masters of this land called India. For such a “Hindu Rashtra”, it is necessary to establish that Hindus, and Hindus alone, were the original inhabitants of India. This, in turn, requires proof that Hindus did not come here from anywhere else. For, if they had, then their claim on this land would be no different from all others belonging to different religious affiliations who came to settle in this land.

For Golwalkar then and the RSS today, the term Hindu is synonymous with Aryan. The high priests of Hindu society are still called the *Aryawarta*.

Rejecting with fascist contempt, all historical evidence to the contrary, the recent efforts to rewrite Indian history are singularly motivated to prove that India and India alone is the land of origin of the Aryans. They would have us believe that it is from here that the Aryans travelled around the world. The Saffron Brigade would have us believe that Hitler, who imposed fascism in Germany in the name of the superiority of the Aryan race, was actually a migrant from India!

The recent years have shown that there is no stone that the RSS would leave unturned in its pursuit of its fascist objective. The mainstay of its activities, however, remains the whipping up of communal passions and the consequent riots that are engineered. Every single judicial commission of enquiry that was instituted to probe communal riots in India since independence has singled out the RSS as the main perpetrator. Since assuming power, its activities on this score have grown sharply.

The State-sponsored communal carnage in Gujarat remains, however, the worst inhuman and savage act that they have committed so far. What has happened in Gujarat recently is tantamount to ethnic cleansing. The RSS and its affiliates are so brazen that leave alone showing remorse, they actually hail the incendiary killings in Gujarat as the “glory of the Hindus”.

Another point that was made repeatedly in these columns has also been confirmed. And, this is the fact that the BJP is nothing else but the political arm of the RSS. But for the compulsions of keeping the coalition of the NDA in order to remain in power, the fascist agenda would have unfolded even more rapidly under Mr. Vajpayee’s leadership. While mounting such heinous atrocities, the saffron brigade continues to seek to absolve itself under the guise of upholding “national sentiments”. From the demolition of the Babri Masjid (which was justified by the present Prime Minister himself on the floor of the Parliament by saying that the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya was a reflection of the “national sentiment”, thus echoing Golwalkar who asserts that

only a “Hindu” is “national”) to the production of nuclear weapons, everything is, according to them, the reflection of “national sentiment” which has not seen such glory (sic) ever before.

The RSS variety of nationalistic jingoism is sought to replace true Indian nationalism that unites people of all faiths, religions, castes and languages.

These years have actually confirmed, once again, what Dimitrov had said: “*Fascism acts in the interests of extreme imperialists but presents itself to the masses in the guise of a wronged nation and appeals to (so called) outraged `national` sentiments.*”

Thus, if India, as we know of it today, has to be saved from this fascist onslaught, then this communal juggernaut has to be stopped in its tracks. This requires the unity of all Left, secular and democratic forces who cherish India, i e, *Bharat*. Given the fact that some regional political parties who succumb to both political opportunism and the enticement to share the spoils of office continue to prop up this Vajpayee government and the RSS fascistic project, only a popular people’s movement to defeat these forces politically can save the situation.

It is this popular movement that has to be strengthened urgently. This special issue of *People’s Democracy*, we hope, will contribute to this struggle.

**Editorial in *People’s Democracy*, 8 December, 2002  
(Tenth Anniversary of the Demolition)**

DOCUMENTS

## Redouble Resolve to Strengthen India's Secular, Democratic Foundations

Today is the 20th anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid by the RSS/BJP led combine of communal forces. On every 6th of December, since 1992, the country hangs its head in shame recollecting the vandalism and destruction of the Babri Masjid. Amongst all others, this memory highlights the disastrous consequences of having a rabidly communal outfit assume the reins of State power. It is inconceivable that the Babri Masjid could have been destroyed the way it was without the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh. The complicity and the patronage provided by the government not only allowed but aided the gravest assault on India's secular democratic foundations.

Nothing illustrates this fact more than the verdict of the designated court which chargesheeted the accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case. Para 59 of the Hon'ble Court's order of 9th September, 1997 states:

“From our description it is concluded that in the present case a criminal conspiracy to demolish the disputed structure of Ram Janam Bhoomi/Babri Masjid was hatched by the accused persons in the beginning of 1990 and was completed on 6 December, 1992. Sri Lal Krishan Advani and others hatched criminal conspiracies to demolish the disputed premises on different times at different places. Therefore, I find a prima facie case to charge...” (The list

continues with many people, including Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti, Sadhvi Ritambari etc.)

Though subsequently when these communal forces assumed the reins of the Central government with the BJP leading the NDA coalition, they tried their best to manipulate this charge sheet and seek the exclusion of Mr. Advani, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister. However, on May 7, 2012, the CBI informed the Supreme Court that these charges cannot be dropped. A full twenty years later, justice has been denied to our Republic as those responsible for such an attack on the secular foundations of our country have not been brought to book. Justice delayed is justice denied. The legal proceedings continue to remain before the judiciary. Likewise, nothing tangible has happened on the report of the Liberhan Commission of Inquiry.

The modern secular democratic Indian Republic emerged on the basis of the syncretic ethos that truly represents Indian culture and tradition. The spread of communal poison and sharpening of communal polarization that deepens the virus of strife and bloodshed only destroys this very Indian cultural ethos. The irony and agony lies in the fact that such destruction is done in the name of protecting and advancing Indian ethos.

Having led the 'rath yatra' for the construction of the Ram temple at the disputed site at Ayodhya that left behind a trail of bloodshed and strife, Mr. Advani made an amazing claim in the Lok Sabha in 1999 that the demolition of Babri Masjid had jolted him "personally". "It was unfortunate. It shouldn't have happened". However, he hastened to add, "I am proud of the Ayodhya movement".

Soon after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Mr. Advani gave a call for a national debate on secularism. He outlined the BJP's conception in a set of two articles (*The Indian Express*, December 27 & 28, 1992). Though these were a painfully laboured attempt to whitewash the BJP's brazen violation of law, the capitulation of the assurances given by it to the Supreme Court and the National Integration Council and to disguise the pre-planned

and rehearsed destruction of the Babri Masjid, three `covenants' of BJP's definition of secularism were advanced. On today's occasion, let us examine them.

(a) "**Rejection of theocracy**". This means the automatic upholding of not only democracy but also secularism. However, does the BJP today repudiate what their Guruji Golwalkar had said: "In Hindustan exists, and must exist, the ancient Hindu nation, and nought else but the Hindu nation. All those not belonging to the national, i.e., Hindu race, religion, culture and language, naturally fall out of the pale of real national life".

The BJP has not disowned this till date. This only means that they continue the efforts at misleading the people and attempting to camouflage the real RSS intention of transforming the modern secular democratic Indian Republic into a rabidly intolerant `fascistic' "Hindu Rashtra".

(b) "**Equality of all citizens irrespective of faith**". The BJP's commitment to this concept can be understood only if they, once again, repudiate what Golwalkar said about all those non-Hindus living in our country as legal citizens inheriting India's rich plural legacy as much as Hindus themselves. Golwalkar had said that non-Hindus "have no place in national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the nation, and completely merge themselves in the national race. So long however as they maintain their racial religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners". Does the BJP repudiate this today?

(c) "**Full freedom of faith and worship**". It is, indeed, ironic that he had advanced this precept of BJP's concept of secularism soon after the wanton destruction of the Babri Masjid! After the Gujarat carnage 2002 and its constant efforts to return to RSS basics, it is unlikely that the BJP will repeat such a perfidy. The BJP's sincerity can be understood, once again, if only they are willing to repudiate what Golwalkar said:

"The foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence

the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea except the glorification of the Hindu religion and culture, i.e. of the Hindu nation, and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or they may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment - not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation, let us deal as old nations ought to and do deal with the foreign races who have chosen to live in our country”.

Not too ingeniously, Mr. Advani had then deliberately left out of his definition of secularism, its scientific foundation, the separation of religion from politics and the State. As long as this is not adhered to secularism in the sense of equal rights to all belonging to different faiths cannot be ensured. In evading this, Mr. Advani is only echoing, once again, Golwalkar: “With us, every action in life, individual, social or political is a command of religion...Indeed politics itself becomes...a small factor to be considered and followed solely as one of the commands of religion and in accord with such commands. We in Hindusthan have been living such a religion (Hinduism).”

The BJP's call for a national debate on secularism, which it periodically keeps reiterating, is nothing but a ruse to mask its real intentions of functioning as the political arm of the RSS and working for the realization of the RSS agenda of transforming the secular democratic Indian Republic into their vision of a rabidly intolerant fascistic 'Hindu Rashtra'.

In the supreme interests of Bharat – i.e., India – such a diabolic agenda needs to be foiled. Any remembrance of 6 December will have a meaning only if the resolve to checkmate and defeat these forces is strengthened. Ancient wisdom that has filtered down the centuries tells us that “for the evil to succeed, the good only has to be silent”. This 20th anniversary is the appropriate occasion for all Indian patriots to redouble their resolve, to break such silence.

**Editorial in *People's Democracy*, 9 December, 2012  
(Twentieth Anniversary of the Demolition)**

DOCUMENTS

## The Republic Besmirched

The worst was feared in Ayodhya and the worst has come to pass. The disputed Babri Masjid structure has been razed to the ground. Despite solemn promises made to the Supreme Court, the Kalyan Singh government and the leaders of the Sangh *parivar* failed to prevent this gross act of vandalism. The failure reveals their inability or unwillingness or both to operate within the confines of the Constitution. No matter how much they try to explain away the destruction of the mosque, the fact remains that in the eyes of the nation they have effectively placed themselves outside the rule of law. The BJP, which has been in power in four states and enjoys considerable influence in several parts of the country, will have to pay a heavy price for its abysmal conduct. In one swift stroke it has forfeited its claims to be a party of governance. The nation will be well within its rights to ask how it can be entrusted with any responsibility if it lost its nerve with such abruptness during the dramatic developments on Sun- day. It has invited the charge of unconstitutional behaviour.

The developments also expose the pernicious features of *hindutva* espoused by the Sangh *parivar*. The doctrine draws its sustenance from hate, prejudice, bigotry and a determined and cynical refusal to abide by the pluralistic, tolerant and ethically sound character of Hinduism. To achieve its political ends, the Sangh *parivar* has wantonly exploited religious sentiments. Its brand of nationalism, far from uniting the Hindu community, has sown seeds of distrust and divisiveness. This would be all too evident



from the consequences of the destruction of the Babri Masjid: the gulf between India's largest communities has widened; the Indian state has been thrown on the defensive and India's face has been blackened. The horrendous irony of it all is that such misery has been perpetrated in the name of Lord Ram, a name which in the hearts of millions of Hindus evokes sentiments of valour, justice and tolerance.

It is however not enough to squarely blame only the *hindutva* forces for Sunday's developments. The central government, Parliament, the courts and all those who shape opinion cannot escape their share of the responsibility. Quite clearly, they were unable to gauge the depth and extent to which the *hindutva* elements had spread their influence in the body politic. It is otherwise hard to explain the behaviour of the law and order forces and of the administration in Ayodhya. Their passivity and, in certain cases, even complicity during Sunday's *kar sevaks* are a shameful comment on their commitment to uphold the law. Had these factors been taken into account, it is more than likely that the situation would not have gone out of control. Steps would have been taken to ensure that the large congregation of *kar sevaks* remained at a safe distance from the mosque and that hotheads were held on a tight leash. But this is a thing of the past. The critical question now is the response of the Indian state to the aftermath of events in Ayodhya.

An early response, though frankly unusual, has come from President Shankar Dayal Sharma. His statement expresses with eloquence the anguish and anger that Sunday's developments inspire in the overwhelming majority of our people. He has denounced the vandalism and its perpetrators in the clearest possible terms, requested the Prime Minister to "initiate appropriate measures to uphold the rule of law, the maintenance of public order and the protection of all law-abiding citizens" and appealed to the people to "maintain peace and unity and cooperate with one another in curbing all anti-national elements". The statement

MARXIST

must command the attention it merits as a testament of faith in the Indian people's abhorrence of fanaticism. The nation now looks to the central government to demonstrate as firmly as it can that it intends to counter the forces of fanaticism, heal the wounds inflicted on the Muslim minority and ensure that appropriate obeisance is paid to Lord Ram only within the framework of the Constitution. The dismissal of the Kalyan Singh government is a first indication of the government's will. Note must also be taken of the appeal of the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid to his co-religionists to remain calm. Finally the enormity of what transpired in Ayodhya on Sunday would be obvious from the BJP's statement owning "moral responsibility" for the destruction of the mosque. Many more forceful moves will have to be made in the days ahead if the republic is to be saved from the scourge of hate and bigotry.

*The Times of India, 7 December, 1992*

DOCUMENTS

## The Death of a Dream

The country was treated to a variety of statements in the run up to 6 December by the BJP, and their allies, the VHP and assorted sants, designed on balance to lull this nation into a false sense of complacency. There will be no construction, kar seva means bhajans and kirtans, we will not touch the mosque immediately, we will respect court orders and more in same vein.

Even when Mr. L.K. Advani corrected the impression being given, he was careful to refer to shovels and spades only. Those implements are used for construction not for breaking down and the deception was complete.

Around noon, as so-called kar sevaks infiltrated into the mosque in ones and twos, the idols smuggled into the mosque nearly forty years ago were brought out and only then was the assault on the mosque begun. On the evidence, the mosque was destroyed not in the frenzy of the moment but according to plan.

Mr Kalyan Singh's resignation, the Prime Minister's anguish on television, and the bandh called by the Congress (1) do not wipe out the impression of carefully coordinated moves to give the BJP what it wanted this time round. The judiciary also will find it difficult to shake off the impression that they were helping the Central Government in an entirely sensible direction certainly, but too close for comfort. Normally, judgements are scheduled only the day before, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court announced on December 4 that their verdict would be pronounced on December 11.

## MARXIST

Only the Left parties come out of this disaster with honour. They have timed their moment well to force the Prime Minister to choose between them and the BJP. Mr. Nrasimha Rao will be forced take a stand and he has little choice in the matter.

If he is to survive he will not be in a position to offer the BJP any escape route from the situation they have created with cold calculation but which they will no longer be able to control as events unfold. They will protest that those who perpetrated the deed had nothing to do with them. They will be laughed out of court. As the *The Statesman* reporter's eye-witness account testifies, the BJP this time round had taken good care to select kar-sevaks who would do their bidding, no more and no less. The concerted attack on journalists, reporting the ghastly deed particularly photo-journalists, was part of a pattern.

The short point is that the destruction of the mosque could have been prevented. The armed forces and the reliable para-military units should have been deployed between the kar-sevaks and the mosque not held so far from the scene as to be ineffective. If the BJP and their supporters, fired by a spurious zeal, only intended to exercise their singing voice why was it necessary to cram every inch of space and more with hundreds of thousands of them?

To chant hymns of unity on Doordarshan and invoke Tulsi-das and Kabir, to call on the people to remain calm and appropriate sentiments expressed by the country's leaders is not enough. If the father of the nation were alive today he would ask the mosque be rebuilt preferably by the Hindus who destroyed it, and suggest that the temple to Rama be built nearby and urge Muslims to help with it, Mahatma Gandhi was shot and killed on January 30, 1948. He died on Sunday, 6 December, and a part of the dream that was India died with him.

*The Statesman*, 7 December, 1992

DOCUMENTS

## National Shame

The nation must hang its head in shame over what has happened at Ayodhya. The storming and destruction of most of the Babri Masjid by the karsevak is a blot on India's liberal tradition and tolerant spirit Hinduism has always been known for.

The Kalyan Singh government has been dismissed for its gross failure to protect the disputed structure and president's rule imposed in the state. But is that enough of an atonement for India to retain a place of honour in the comity of nations?

The damage has been done not to the mosque – whatever it was built on - but to what India stands for. No one knows how long it will take now to repair the psychological divide Sunday's events have brought about.

Heavens would not have fallen if those who claim to be leaders of the Hindus had waited for an amicable settlement of the dispute or the court's opinion whether there indeed existed a temple where a mosque was there until Saturday. No divine wrath would have been incurred if 6 December had not been fixed as the deadline for achieving the objectives decided by the self-proclaimed leaders of the Hindus.

The responsibility for Sunday's gory events at Ayodhya should rest among others on men like Lal Krishna Advani who chose to ride the 'rath' without knowing where it would lead him and the country to and Murli Manohar Joshi whose rigid posture could not be explained by an factors other than party compulsions and myopia. Mr. Advani perhaps was bothered more about personal

MARXIST

ambition to the prime minister of the country than concerned about national unity. Dr. Joshi was more bothered about his second term as president of the BJP than anything else.....

There is a crisis in the nation as much of politics as of conscience. The nation must now pause and reflect over where things have gone wrong.....

The Congress party opened the locks at Ayodhya, and three years ago allowed Shilnyas to seek electoral advantage without foreseeing the consequences of what it was doing at that time. The BJP leaders, afraid of losing a constituency, chose to ride the temple 'rath' without realizing that they won't be able to control the forces they were unleashing in the process.....

There is national crisis after all. The governments at the centre and in the states have to take all steps to maintain law and order. The people all over the country, also need to exercise restraint and ensure that communal peace is not disturbed by those who are always waiting for a chance to wreck it.....

**H.K. Dua, *Hindustan Times*, 7 December, 1992  
(Excerpts)**

DOCUMENTS

## The Nation Betrayed

The outrage Ayodhya witnessed on Sunday is an affront to our national honour. India's principal opposition party now stands exposed as one only too willing to resort to deceit and dastardliness in its frenetic pursuit of a religious goal. India's ruling party has set a new landmark in political pusillanimity.

If the Congress party had not turned its calculated ineptness into a shameful strategy of inaction, if the Bharatiya Janata Party had not hoped to gain political mileage out of brinkmanship and subterfuge, India would have been spared this ominous fallout of all that has gone on in the name of *mandir* and *masjid* for these past few years. And, there is little doubt that Sunday's senselessness, and inexorable culmination of all our compulsive shenanigans, will render our fragile fraternity ever more vulnerable to communal extremism.

Conceivably, they may now gloat over their present achievement, heralding it as an assertion of the Hindu will... (What) their leaders do not realise (is) that their victory is India's loss, in this fratricidal game. They have mindlessly intensified the morbid fears of some people which their bigoted leaders will now love to put to their narrow sectarian ends.

Much as BJP leaders disown responsibility for whatever has happened in Ayodhya, no one is naive enough to take them for their word. There is ample reason to believe that in the final days of the run up to the vandalism in Ayodhya, they chose to be led by the rabid ring leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the

MARXIST

Bajrang Dal and what have you. Nothing else can possibly explain the volte face on the part of its leadership which had once decided not to let its MPs take part in karseva. Before the echo of his direction died down, no less a person than Mr. L.K. Advani was constrained to announce that he was himself setting out to Ayodhya to participate in karseva besides the party president, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi...

It is a moot point whether Mr. Kalyan Singh was a victim of the course of events, or an avid spectator and abettor of that act of illegality. There may not be many takers for the view that he or his party was overtaken by events and that they had not anticipated this provocative scenario even as they were giving every affidavit that was sought by the Supreme Court. What is frightening is that a chief minister and his party, which happens to be the country's principal opposition formation, can make deceit its stratagem and have the temerity to make affirmations in court, which it has no intention or ability to implement.

*The Indian Express, 7 December 1992*