

COMMUNALISM : RISE AND GROWTH



Myth

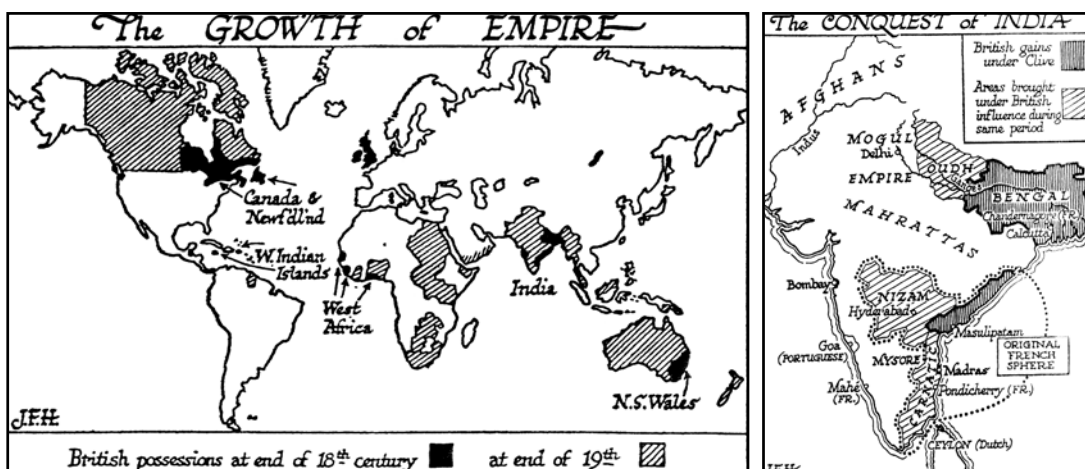
Ours is a five-thousand-year-old Hindu Nation!



Fact

This is a misconception as nation-states are a modern phenomenon. Earlier kingdoms were the norm. Nation-states succeeded kingdoms first in Europe, nearly four centuries ago. Kings were authoritarian rulers, with network of feudal lords, and agriculture was the main economic activity. Nascent crafts got organised as guilds and later into industry. Nation-states are generally, though not always, democratic formations based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Those nations which industrialized earlier colonized other countries, especially in Asia, Africa and South America. India was colonized mainly by the British, with small portions colonized by the Portuguese and French. The British 'plunder project' aimed at taking away the raw materials from here and creating markets for their goods. In order to do these, they set up new ventures here in agrarian, commercial and industrial arenas. In these, Indians first acted as subordinates but soon took to modern technologies; and with this a new class of merchants, bankers, landlords, industrialists, plantation-owners and brokers came into being. The introduction of English education in 1835 was meant to produce a class of clerks and administrators. This changing social dynamic laid the foundation of the new phenomenon of 'nationalism'. In a very elementary form this changed scenario formed the backdrop for the rise of different reform movements and new associations and unions of economic, social and political nature on the Western pattern. In due course, the intelligentsia started demanding widening of franchise, simultaneous examinations for administrative services, Indianization of services, etc. Emerging industrialists supported them in these demands, adding their own demands for





Above: Madras Mahajan Sabha building. Right: Gazulu Laxminarasu, Founder of Madras Mahajan Sabha

increased facilities for industrialization in India. A spirit of Indian consciousness started emerging for the first time and this was due to a combination of various factors like the material demands of newly emerging classes (professionals, businessmen, industrialists).

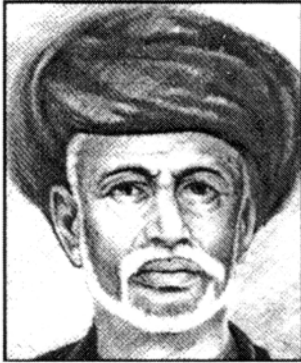
Modern education, communication (railways, telegraphs), free press, and hatred for British racial arrogance, economic exploitation and weaknesses of judiciary were some of the features of the changes occurring at that time. British rule and the process unleashed by them were pregnant with contradictory processes. The free press created a strong impetus for the rise of national consciousness. This led to the formation of many local regional associations aimed at voicing the grievances of the emerging elite and projecting their vision of the 'nation'. These associations included the Bombay Association, Madras Natives association, Pune Sarvajanik Sabha and the Madras Mahajan Sabha. Meetings of these associations started taking place and the one such which took place in Calcutta in 1883 was the precursor of the formation of the INC (Indian National Congress) in 1885.

The INC expressed the ambitions of these associations and rising classes and asked for holding of Indian civil service examinations in India, more facilities for industry, and commerce and land reforms. The basic principles of INC (Indian National Congress) were eradication of race, creed and provincial prejudices, and encouragement of natives in the political process.

In response to this Sir Syed and Raja Sheo Prasad of Kashi formed the United India Patriotic Association (August 1888). The aim of this association was to convey to the



Report of First National Congress



Mahatma Jotiba Phule was the first to lay the foundation of education for women, and the anti-Brahmin, anti-Zamindar, anti-Moneylender movements



Lokmanya Tilak's certificate of release from Yervada Prison



Raja Rammohan Roy was the social reformer. Agitation against Sati (burning the widow on her husband's funeral Pyre) was his major contribution.

British that all communities and aristocrats are not with the Congress, to convey the views of Hindu and Muslim organisations to the British Parliament, and to strengthen the rule of British in India by weaning people away from the Congress. Many people associated with this group were later to be part of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. The mix of these processes and secular organisations being thrown up was described by Surendranath Banerjea and Lokmanya Tilak in the words 'India is a nation in the making', meaning thereby that it is a representation of common interests of Indian people vis-a-vis the colonial power. At this time reformers like Rammohan Roy were asking for abolition of abominable practices like sati. Phule was at this time calling for taking to modern education and women's education. Pandita Ramabai took up the cause of women's education. Phule also laid the foundation of a non-Brahmin movement aimed against the social power of the Zamindar-Brahmin nexus. Later Ambedkar was to pick up the threads of this movement and struggle for the rights of the untouchables.



Myth

Communalism began in this country because of the treachery of Muslims.



Fact

The rise of communalism has been a very complex process. Colonial policies led to the economic domination of merchant-money lenders (by and large Hindus). Hindus could take maximum advantage of modern education and thus get a place in the bureaucracy. The post-1857 anti-Muslim bias of the British gave a slight edge to the Hindus, who took to modern enterprises/professions with great keenness. British historians used the categories Hindu, Muslim, and Brahmin. Indian historians picked up only two of these categories,



Dr. Ambedkar led the dalit rebellion for liberty, equality and fraternity



Pandita Ramabai, scholar and activist



Periyar Ramaswami Naicker - led the 'Self-Respect movement for dalits and women.'



Sir Syed Ahmed Khan - Advocate of western education.

Hindu and Muslim. The Indian leadership used religious consciousness to inculcate modern nationalism amongst the people, using concepts like Ram Rajya and Khilafat. This resulted in two processes: (a) arousal of nationalism, and (b) arousal of communalism. We will shortly see that communalism arose due to the politics of Muslim feudal lords, Hindu Zamindars, and the British policy of divide and rule.

Introduction of Education: Industrialization : Changes in Social Values, Relationships

Group A: Secular Democratic	Group B: Communal
Rise of new classes of businessmen- industrialists, workers, educated classes	Decline of landlords, kings and section of clergy associated with them
These groups form associations, Bombay Association, Madras Mahajan Sabha, etc.	This groups looks at new changes with fear and suspicion
Their political expression in the form of Indian National Congress. In due course other political streams expressing the values of this group come up, Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Bhagat Singh and Friends), Republican Party of India.	Fearful of the rise of new classes and INC, they form United India Patriotic Association (UIPA) to promote loyalty to British UIPA gave rise to Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League. Later the RSS came up as an ideology inspired by leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha.
This stream was conceptualizing for India as a nation in the making.	Muslim League held that they are a Muslim nation since the advent of Mohammad bin Kasim. Hindu Mahasabha/RSS held that we are a Hindu nation since times immemorial



Group A: Secular Democratic	Group B: Communal
This group held the values of liberty, equality. Equal rights to people, irrespective of religion, caste and gender.	Ideology was based on hierarchy of caste and gender, as sanctified by the organized religion, clergy
Participated in freedom Movement and Process of social change.	Totally aloof from freedom movement and opposed to social change



Myth

Partition took place due to the Muslim League's ambition and Jinnah played a central role in this.



Fact

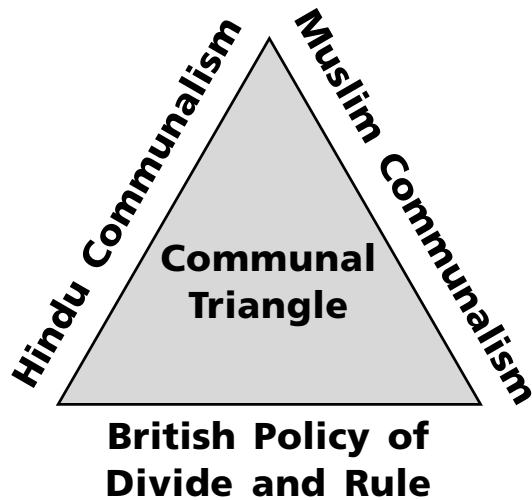
Partition was a multi-faceted tragedy. In this tragedy, Muslim communal politics, Hindu communalism and the British policy of divide and rule played a central part. The Muslim League was representative of the interests of the Muslim elite. It wanted to appropriate maximum privileges for the rich Muslims. It stated that Muslims are 25 per cent of the population, but for passing any legislation two-thirds majority should be made necessary, and Muslims should be granted one-third representation in legislatures so that they can prevent anti-Muslim legislations. The Congress rejected this demand. Jinnah emerged as the main leader of the Muslim League. The two-nation theory was simultaneously accepted by Muslim communalists (Chowdhary Rahmat Ali and the Muslim League) and Hindu communalists (Hindu Mahasabha and RSS,) Along with the birth of the Congress, began two opposite, but in some way similar, trends which were opposed to the secular politics of the Congress. The first of these was expressed by Sir Syed Ahmed, who started his campaign in 1887, and the second was the Hindu revivalist streams.



The communal triangle:

With the formation of the Indian National Congress and





its representation of the cause of the 'rising classes', and its methods of 'protest' vis-a-vis loyalty, Sir Syed Ahmed got alarmed and kept aloof. Instead he set out to organise the Jagirdari elements amongst Muslims, and along with his followers propagated the view that the Congress was meant for the interests of the Hindus and the 'low-born' classes. In contrast to the Congress demand for representation he was for nomination of elite persons by the British and said that the British are the best guardians of Muslim interests in India. Later these efforts culminated in the formation of the Muslim League, which stood for the

interests of Muslim landlords and Nawabs.

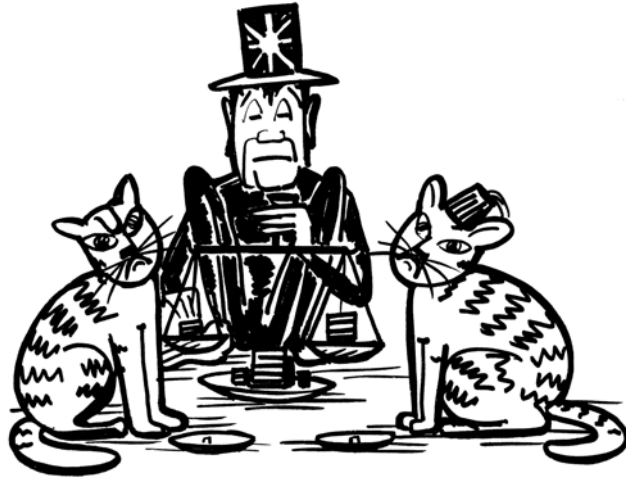
Simultaneously the principles of the Congress were being opposed by another section. This was the section of Hindu zamindars, traditional tradesmen (baniyas) and the Rajas of Riyasats (princely states). From the 1870s, a section of Hindu zamindars, moneylenders and middle-class professionals began to arouse anti-Muslim sentiments, simultaneously opposing the Congress goal of a single common nation irrespective of religious identities. They talked of tyrannical rule of Muslim rulers and of the role of the British in giving liberation from that. They came up with the formulation that the ancient, pre-Mughal age was the golden age of India. The leader of the Arya Samaj, Pandit Lekh Ram, went on to condemn all forms of Islam and demanded that Muslims should be expelled from India or converted to Aryanism. They founded the Punjab Hindu Sabha and were hostile to Indian National Congress. According to them the INC's role of uniting people of different religions into a single nation meant sacrificing Hindu interests to appease Muslims. According to them, a Hindu is a Hindu first and then an Indian. The culmination of these efforts led to the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha and later the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.





British Policy of divide and rule

The British rulers realized the differences between the Hindu and Muslim elite and embarked on the policy of divide-et-empere (divide and rule). With the formation of the Indian National Congress, they were very uncomfortable with its' demands. Sir Syed's opposition to these demands came in handy for them and they encouraged Sir Syed and his elite followers in their communal demands. The British played their cards well and, taking advantage of the Hindu-Muslim divide, they tried to snub the INC time and again. They recognized a group of Muslim Nawabs and Jagirdars as the representative of Muslims (the Shimla delegation), and similarly encouraged the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. None of the organisations undertook any anti-British agitation, neither were they subject to repression by the British.



Thus there are three major factors which resulted in the partition of the country. The first was the British policy of 'divide-and-rule'. The Second was Muslim communalism, representing the interests of Muslim zamindars, Nawabs and other elites. The third was Hindu communalism (RSS, Hindu Mahasabha, and partly through the Congress) which represented the interests of Hindu Zamindars, Brahmins and Baniyas (traditional tradesmen).

Tragedy of India's Partition

Colonial period: Decline of Muslim landlords, adverse representation of Muslims in jobs, except in UP, rise of traders (mainly Hindus), part of colonial commercial bourgeoisie transformed into industrial bourgeoisie.

In 1937 elections Congress got a majority in many states, formed governments, rejected Jinnahs demand for incorporation in ministries, and also rejected Jinnah's demands for partition. Even before this, in 1937, the Hindu Maha Sabha convention Bhai Parmanand said 'Mr. Jinnah argues, there are two nations in the country (Hindus and Muslims), he is right.' Thus, the Congress theory of building a common nationality falls to the ground. There are only two options: (1) Partition of country (2) allow Muslim state to grow in the present state.

The Congress leadership left with only two options (1) strong centre with partition, and (2) loose federation without partition. They opted for (1), despite Gandhi's opposition to this.

Hindu Mahasabha in 1937 at its Ajmer session demanded the partition of the country.



Most of the Muslim elite was for the same.

Muslim elite was represented by the Muslim League and demanded higher representation with an eye on more privileges. After rejection of this demand, they were firm on demand for Pakistan, hoping that this would give them unlimited power, avoiding competition from the Hindu elite.

Trajectory of events leading to formation of Pakistan.	
Muslim Communal Politics	Hindu Communal Politics
1860: Sir Syed Ahmed articulates the need for modern education and jobs for Muslim	Hindu zamindars and elite demand a share of seats in the legislature and call for cow slaughter ban
1906: Formation of Muslim League projecting the fear of a Hindu majority. It is mainly a demand of the Muslim elite	1907: Formation of Punjab Hindu Sabha 1915: Hindu Mahasabha formed 1920s - Lala Lajpat Rai: wrote 13 articles saying that Hindus & Muslims can't live together, Bengal Punjab should be partitioned. 1925: Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh formed
Poet Iqbal demands a separate homeland for Muslims in the North-West.	Nehru Committee under pressure from Hindu Mahasabha rejected the 4-point demand of the Muslim League. This formed first base of demand for Pakistan
Chaudhary Rahmat Ali coins the word Pakistan. P for Punjab, A for Afghans (Pathans), K for Kashmir, S for Sind and Stan the Persian suffix meaning land	1930: Lala Lajpat Rai in a letter to Mahatma Gandhi demands the partition of country. 1933: Bhai Parmanand, President of the Hindu Mahasabha calls for cooperation with British to settle scores with Muslims.
1932: Macdonald's Communal award	1937: Hindu Mahasabha: Ajmer Session resolution says Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations
1937: Muslim demand of fighting elections jointly and then participation in the government is rejected by the Congress. Jinnah's two-nation theory takes shape	1938: Bhai Parmanand says, 'Mr. Jinnah argues that there are two nations in the country...If Mr. Jinnah is right, and I believe he is, then the Congress theory of building common nationality falls to the ground. This situation has got two solutions. One is the partition of the country into two and the other to allow a Muslim state to grow within the Hindu State.'

Cabinet Mission Plan (1945) recommends autonomy of States. This is unacceptable to Congress. Nehru's stand that forthcoming constituent assembly can change the earlier agreements comes as the final blow to unity efforts. Impasse. Partition proposed by Mountbatten. Acceptance by both Congress and Muslim League



Muslims were 25 per cent of the population. As the franchise was based on property-holding or education, only 10 per cent of these were eligible to vote. From amongst these only 60 per cent voted for the Muslim League. When the resolution for creation of Pakistan was passed in the Lahore convention of the Muslim League, many poor Muslims took out processions condemning this resolution.

Causes of Growth of Communalism in India

A stagnant secularization process (involving separation of religion and politics) due to: (1) Slow development of economy, (2) Competition between Hindu and Muslim elite, (3) Weak mercantile bourgeoisie vis-a-vis feudal lords, (4) British policy of divide-and-rule. The Muslim League was representative only of the Muslim elites. People like Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad stood for secular nationalism, Hindu-Muslim unity, and anti-British struggles. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani: 'These days nations are based on geographical boundaries and not on religion.'

Communalists and Freedom Struggle

Second World War:

Congress: Anti-British Agitation

Muslim League: Help in British War effort

Hindu Maha Sabha, RSS : Help in British War effort

Mostly these political formations remained aloof from freedom struggle



Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan was for composite Indian Nationalism

Most of the Muslim elite (bureaucrats, businessmen and rich landlords) left for Pakistan. Most of those left behind - poor, landless, self employed artisans etc. - were not the ones asking for Pakistan. After partition, the Muslim community shrunk in size, and started being blamed for partition.

Two-Nation Theory	
Hindu Maha Sabha:	Muslim League :
This country belong to Hindus, Muslims should either leave the country or should remain subservient to Hindus.	Pakistan, a secular state with Muslim majority is the only way to protect our interests.



What is Communalism?

A belief or ideology according to which all people belonging to one religion have common economic, social and political interests and these interests are contrary to the interests of those belonging to another religion.

There are three stages (degrees), discernible in the development of communalism:

Mild : People following the same religion have similar interests

Moderate : Dissimilarity of interests between people of different religions

Extreme : Interests of people following different religions are antagonistic to each other, based on fear and hatred of other religions.

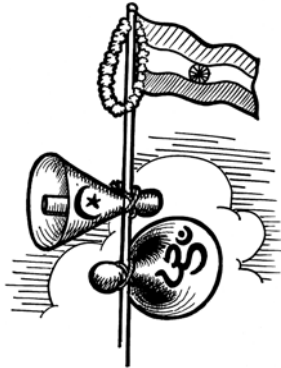
Basis of Politics	
Feudal structure (kingdoms)	Colonial/Modern society
Favor/Reward and Succession	Mobilization/Competition

Slow pace of transition from a feudal structure to a modern set-up results in consolidation of religion/caste-based identities.

In a limited job market, competition based on religion/caste communal politics is handy to (a) hide economic frustrations, (b) hide the real sources of misery, and (c) mask the relationship between exploiters and the exploited.

Sometimes religious/caste distinctions coincide with economic distinctions, e.g., the exploiting sections (landlord, moneylender and merchant) were upper- caste Hindu and the exploited are poor peasants, landless labour, etc., were low-caste or Muslims.

Common Features of Hindu Communalism and Muslim Communalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Came from declining sections of society, landlords and kings ◆ No struggle against British; subtly encouraged by British ◆ Congress denigrated and despised ◆ Supported only by the elites of the communities ◆ Believed that Hindu and Muslims are separate nations ◆ Mutual hatred for each other ◆ Strengthened each other through their politics ◆ Spread fear against each other ◆ Believed in hierarchy of caste and gender (feudal value system) ◆ Opposed to democratic values ◆ Their politics consolidated the colonialists ◆ Even currently they are on the side of US imperialist policies



Bengal and Kerala (Moplah): Hindu landlords/Muslim poor peasants

Punjab: Muslim landlords and Hindu peasant elite used their religious identity to suppress the exploited/oppressed sections of society.

Savarkar and Jinnah : Non-religions and communal

Gandhi and Abul Kalam Azad : Deeply religious and

non-communal

Nehru and Bhagat Singh : Atheists and non-communal

Muslim Communalism : Muslim League

Hindu Communalism : Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, partly also through Congress



Myth

Kashmir is another example of Muslim Separatism.



Fact

Let us have a look at the Kashmir issue. At the time of independence, there were over five hundred princely states. These states were given three options: (a) to merge with India, (b) to merge with Pakistan, or (c) to remain independent. The kings were given guidelines to take a decision based on physical proximity and the opinion of the people. While problem of most of the states was solved with ease, the rulers of Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir showed a bit of a hesitation in taking their decisions. Hyderabad and Junagadh were merged into India by military action.

Jammu and Kashmir was a Muslim majority state with over 80 per cent Muslim population. Kashmir's Maharaja Hari Singh wanted to remain independent and he had the vision of developing Kashmir into the Switzerland of Asia. He offered a standstill agreement to both India and Pakistan. While Pakistan accepted the treaty, India refused. Before any conclusive decision could be reached about the status of Kashmir, Pakistan invaded Kashmir through its army disguised as tribals. Maharaja Hari Singh left the valley for security reasons. Sheikh Abdullah, the chief of the National Conference, played a major role in the post-aggression scenario. The king began negotiations with India through emissaries for sending the army to Kashmir to defend Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah backed it up and ensured that the Indian army intervenes.

Nehru stated that unless some agreement is signed, India could not send its army to a state where it has no legal standing. Accordingly, a treaty of accession was drafted with



Article 370 for safeguarding the interests of the people of the state. The accession treaty's principle was 'Two Chiefs, Two Constitutions' (Do Pradhan Do Vidhan). India was to look after defence, external affairs, communication and currency, while the assembly would decide all other matters. The provisions of the Indian Constitution were not to be made applicable to Kashmir, as Kashmir was to have its own Constitution. On these conditions, India sent its army. By that time Pakistani army had already occupied a third of Kashmir. To avoid civilian casualties, a ceasefire was declared and the matter was taken to the United Nations. As per the UN resolution, a plebiscite was to be held after both the armies vacated Kashmir. This has not taken place so far. Pakistan declared its part of Kashmir as Azad Kashmir and the Indian part had its prime minister and a Sardar-e-Riyasat.

The Indian government came under pressure from the Jan Sangh (the previous avatar of the BJP) and other ultra national elements to forcibly merge Kashmir into India by diluting and gradually reducing the autonomy of Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah, the popular prime minister, refused to yield to the Government of India's pressures. On the charge of treason, he was sentenced to jail for 17 years. During this time the post of Kashmir's prime minister was changed to chief minister and the Sardar-e-Riyasat was changed to Governor, and gradually the reach of the Indian constitution was extended to Kashmir. The Indian government started to supervise the affairs of Kashmir. The democratic process started getting weaker and weaker.

All the central governments had acted on the basis of distrust in the local leadership. After the dismissal of Farouq Abdullah in 1984 and the massive rigging of elections in 1987, the process of disillusionment amongst the people in the valley was complete and the youth became more vulnerable to the path of violence. This initiated a process of alienation among Kashmiri youth. This resulted in the rise of militancy due to the restrictions on the democratic process. The internal dissatisfaction led to support to terrorism. Taking advantage of this, Pakistan started sending its militants and the problem started getting worse by the day. Again Faroukh Abdullah was jailed for seven long years, showing that the central government did not trust the locally elected representatives. Another factor was the Al Qaeda's entry. A section of Al Qaeda, which had been set up by the US to fight against the Soviet army in Afghanistan, entered the valley, having achieved their goal in Afghanistan.

The worsening communal scenario in India in the decade of the 1980s added fuel to the fire of terrorism in Kashmir. Meanwhile, a communal angle was being given to the harmony prevalent between Kashmiri Pandits and the local Muslim population. Terrorists took advantage of that distortion. A section of terrorists did target the Hindus on purpose. A sense of fear and insecurity gripped the Hindus.

Jagmohan, who was appointed the Governor of Kashmir, operated on the premise that all Kashmiri Muslims are terrorists. And so he felt that if Pandits leave the valley, he can deal firmly with the militants. Accordingly, he offered transport to Pandits to leave the valley. The local leaders of the Muslim community opposed the move to the hilt. But



encouraged by Jagmohan, the Pandits left the valley and are living a wretched life in refugee camps. It also must be noted that among the victims of terrorist violence there are a large number of Muslims who were either killed or had to leave the valley. Essentially a problem between two neighbouring countries has been given a communal color. The Kashmiri leadership had the opportunity to merge with Pakistan but they did not do so all. Even today many Kashmiri Muslims are opposed to a merger with Pakistan.

Despite the severe alienation resulting from the policies of Indian rulers, due to suppression of their ethnic aspirations and repeated dismissals of popular governments by the Indian government, the Kashmiri people are even today not opting for Pakistan as the alternative. Their main demand has been to preserve their autonomy as promised in the treaty of accession; their main aspiration is to preserve the ethnic character of Kashmir and to be able to live life away from the crossfire resulting due to the interference of Pakistan and the mistrust of the Indian state. In one of the recent opinion polls conducted by Outlook (16 October 2000) 74 per cent of the respondents feel that separate identity of Kashmir is what is required, 16 per cent favoured greater autonomy and only 2 per cent wanted merger with Pakistan. 39 per cent still felt that a solution could be found within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

The major spurt in the activities of militants took place from 1990 onwards, in the aftermath of the rigged elections of 1987. We will have a look at some of the figures of the casualties and destruction of property in Kashmir by the militants.

Myth

The militants are communal, look what have they have done to Kashmiri Pandits.

Fact

The wholesale migration of Pandits from the valley is a big blow to the traditions of the valley. As the figures above show, the damage by militants is to both the communities and not to Hindus alone. The Pandits had first considered migration in 1986 but this decision was held in abeyance due to the appeals of a goodwill mission, which was constituted by reputed Kashmiris steeped in plural culture. In 1990 the militancy was stepped up. This time around Jagmohan, the hardcore right-winger, was the governor of Kashmir and he ensured dissolution of the goodwill mission to Pandits by pressurizing one of the Pandit members of the team to migrate to Jammu. In March 1990 Balraj Puri stated, 'I found no hostility among common Muslims in Kashmir against Pandits, and allegations of gross violations of human rights by security forces needs to be investigated'. At that time Hindu communal forces took it upon themselves to spread fear and terror amongst Pandits. 'Much disinformation is being spread in Jammu and Delhi that scores of Hindu temples and the shrines have been desecrated or destroyed in Kashmir. This was only partly true and it is baffling that the Government has not





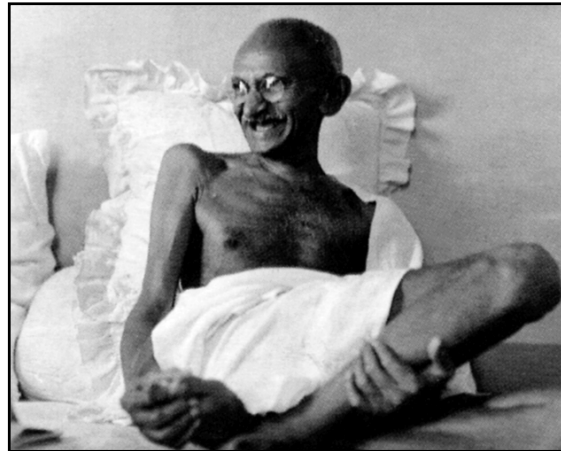
thought it fit to ask Doordarshan to do a program on mandirs in Kashmir just to reassure people that they remain unharmed' (Press Council of India, 1991).

Thus the problem of Pandits migration is an unfortunate outcome of the alienation of Kashmiri people resulting in militancy, Hindu communalist outfits' baseless spreading of fear psychosis and the pressure of Governor Jagmohan, and not due to Hindu-Muslim hostility. (Based on research of Strategic Foresight Group. Courtesy Communalism Combat, January 2005, p. 14).



'India is supposed to be religious country above everything else...[And yet] I have frequently condemned (religion) and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seemed to be stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation. And yet I know well that there was something else in, it, and something that supplied a deeper inner craving of human beings.

- Nehru



'Religion and state will be separate. I swear by my religion, I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to with it. The state will look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern

- Gandhi

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