

**Collected Works
of
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(1927-2011)**

Politics

Rationalist Foundation

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Religion and Caste in Politics

This Conference is going to discuss the question of religion and caste in Indian politics. This is a subject that has been discussed several times in India in schools and colleges in seminars and symposiums and even in public conferences. Even the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly to some extent considered this question when making the relevant provisions relating to religion in the Indian Constitution. However, when rationalists discuss this question, there is in their minds implicit an assumption that the Indian Constitution is a Secular Constitution and that India is a Secular State. This is how I find that from time to time rationalists denounce the actions of the politicians both in and out of power when they resort to religious practices. The opening of a bridge across a river, the inaugural function of a State-aided school, the travels of the Prime Minister and the President of India across the length and breadth of the country at the cost of the public exchequer to have Darshans of the myriad deities - these and other actions of the people in public life have been attacked by rationalists on the ground that the State of India does not permit a public official to do these things at the Cost of the public exchequer. It is thought that the Constitution of India, which is said to be a secular Constitution, does not permit public expenditure for these non-secular activities.

In my opinion, this is a misconception activating the minds and actions: of the rationalists when they denounce the actions mentioned above. Elsewhere in a talk delivered to the Bombay Rationalists' Association I have dwelt at length on the different provisions of the Indian Constitution and have shown how the Constitution of India, despite its preamble amended in the year 1976, is not a secular Constitution. If, therefore, the rationalists are basing their challenge to the non-secular activities of the people holding public offices on the legal ground, they are, in my opinion, on a weak ground.

I may briefly state as to why Indian Constitution is not a secular Constitution or that the Republic of India is not a secular republic. In my opinion, that State is a secular State which is separated from religion by firm and impregnable wall. That State is not a secular State which merely tolerates all religions and encourages all religions equally. If once religion is allowed to play any part, large or small, in the affairs of a State, that State cannot be said to be a secular State. That is why in America by a series of judgements of

the Supreme Court it has been held that there is a wall of separation between the Church and the State. As early as in 1802, Thomas Jefferson, a founding father of the American Constitution and later a President of the United States, had mentioned that the first Amendment to the Constitution of the United States enjoining upon the congress not to make any law respecting the establishment of a religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof necessarily meant the separation of the Church from the State. Indeed, he used the phrase "wall of separation between the Church and the state was built up by the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution".

This view of Jefferson was adopted subsequently by several decisions of the United States Supreme Court which, however, has held that individuals and institutions are free to practice such religion in such form as they like provided, however, that such practices are not aided by any public funds. In *Engel v. Vitale* 37 U.S. 421 -1962, the Supreme Court of the United States has held that recitation of even non-denominational prayers is not permissible in a state-aided school because it gives preferential treatment to persons who believe in religion or God as against those persons who are irreligious or atheists. To put it a little bit loosely, the Supreme Court of the United states has recognised atheism itself as a religion, the practice whereof shall not be discriminated against by the State aiding any school which may encourage directly or indirectly any religion or all religions or even atheism.

In the Indian Constitution as it stood prior to 1976, there was no mention of the word "secular" anywhere. Even the word "God" did not find a place any where in the Indian Constitution except in the forms of oath prescribed for the functionaries such as Ministers and Judges before embarking upon their office. A proper and critical examination of the provisions of the Indian Constitution shows that the promotion of any religion or all religions by the State is not prohibited by the Indian Constitution, Though certain provisions in the Indian Constitution arm the State with powers to regulate or restrict economic, financial, political or other secular activities associated with religious practice, the other provisions do not prohibit the State from providing funds to any institution, especially an educational institution, which may be indulging in religious propaganda or religious instruction. For example, Article 28 of the Constitution of India only provides that no religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of the State funds. In other words, if there is in the budget of a particular educational institution some amount which is not drawn

from the public exchequer then that educational institution is free to impart religious instruction, though most of its funds may be received from the public exchequer. It is well known that in the State, the entire bill of the salaries of the teaching staff is paid by the State; and nearly the entire bill of the non-teaching staff of a school is also paid by the State. Despite this, I am not sure whether you can successfully challenge the granting of funds to such an educational institution, if it imparts religious instruction. Similarly, article 27 of the Constitution only prohibits the State from levying any tax the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination. This means that a particular tax cannot be levied for the purpose of the promotion of a particular religion. This does not prohibit the utilisation of the funds from the general revenue for the promotion of any particular religion or religions or all religions. If India were really a secular state, such permission for the utilisation of funds for non-secular purposes would not have been possible.

The myth of India being a secular State has been perpetrated not by politicians alone but even by several intellectuals. For example, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has in several of his speeches characterised India as a secular State. Mr. P.B. Gajendragadkar in his Telang Memorial Lectures on "Secularism in India" has also insisted that India is a secular State. These and other scholars have thought India to be a secular State on the basis of the definition given by Donald Eugene Smith in his book "India as a Secular State". Smith has suggested the following definition of a Secular State:

"A secular state is a State which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion."

I have adopted a different definition of a Secular State, namely 'that State is a secular State which is separated from religion by a firm and impregnable wall.' Even according to the definition of Smith, India is not a secular State because the Constitution of India does not prohibit the State to promote a religion.

Some people have regarded India as a Secular State because, according to them, in this State there is what is called *Sarva Dharma Samabhav* (same feeling for all religions). This phrase has been repeated *ad nauseam* in support of the Contention that India is a secular State.

Once you accept that religion has a certain role to play in public life and, therefore, in politics the concept of entertaining this same feeling for all religions loses its meaning. In practice it will turn out that on some occasions some religions are more equal than the others. Besides this, unlike in America where atheism and rationalism have been recognised as a sort of religions, in India that status is denied to them. In a State where the governmental machinery and the public revenue can be utilised for the purpose of a religion or more than one religion in more or equal measure, secular ideologies such as rationalism and atheism have no place. In my opinion, therefore, the concept of same feeling for all religions is meaningless and does not bestow upon the State of India the secular character.

In the year 1976, by the 42nd Amendment, the preamble to the Constitution was amended to mention that India is a secular State. This by itself has not changed and cannot change the character of the Indian Constitution or the character of the Indian State. A mere mention of the word "secular" in the preamble does not convert the Constitution into a secular state just as a mere mention of the word 'in the preamble will not convert India into a paradise. Ultimately the enforceable provisions of the Constitution have to be properly understood in order to find out whether a Constitution is a secular Constitution or not, or whether a State is a secular State or not.

It is in this context that we must consider the role of religion and caste in Indian politics. Before we do that, however, I would like to briefly refer to the origin of religion. Religion originated as a response to certain needs of mankind in its infancy. The mankind underwent varieties of experience. The man looked with awe upon the diversity in the universe unable to comprehend the multiplicity of phenomena. For example, the Aryans who came to this country purportedly from the arctic were wonderstruck by the regular rotations of the seasons, the sunrise and the sunset at regular times, the snow-clad mountains, the flowing water and the green pastures. This set them contemplating upon the origin of the universe and they came out with certain philosophies. Similarly, other religions originated in the man's need and desire to understand the universe around him. It is how every religion developed a unified doctrine explaining the origin of the universe and man and the relationship between the two. This is the intellectual part of a religion.

No religion can be complete without having an ethical content in it and this was developed on the basis of the knowledge of the world

possessed by early propounders of the religions. Though they developed a set of rules in conformity with their intellectual, view of the universe, a set of dos and don'ts were brought into being and they were considered as a morality which should bind the members of a society. On a closer and careful examination you will notice that most of the morality preached by most of the religions is based upon one concept, namely the concept of fear - fear of punishment in the other world, fear of punishment by a supernatural being, fear of loss or fear of being denied something in future. The morality also to some extent was based upon the need to escape from the suffering in the present world.

The intellectual and ethical aspects of religion had to be enforced through some agency. As a result, institutions and organisations were set up by the people who subsequently came on the religious field. Though certain religions like Hinduism do not have an institutional framework as such they have developed such agencies as the Swamis and Sanyasins to enforce the morality developed by that religion. Indeed in its earlier days a special caste was designated for reading and interpreting the scriptures and for enforcing the morality of those scriptures by various means.

Ultimately there are certain common features of all religions. One of them is the existence of a transcendent reality. It may be called a God or a Brahma or even 'Karma' as in the case of Buddhism and Jainism. It is also a feature of every religion that the ultimate reality cannot be perceived by reason or by senses. It is a reality beyond the unreality, the absolute truth which cannot be approached or understood except by certain rituals prescribed by that particular religion.

The worst feature of all the religions is that the doctrines which were originally developed as a response to certain needs of the mankind and as answers to certain questions which posed themselves before the mankind have become doctrines, rigid and unchangeable, despite the change of times and advance in knowledge. This is how the intellectual responses of religions to the problems of mankind differ from the intellectual responses of the rationalists and the scientists. In the case of the latter there are theories and not doctrines. Despite these various infirmities and weaknesses in the religions, the world has never been free from the influence of religion. On the other hand, religion has become more and more important in the eyes of man. I cannot help quoting William and Ariel Durant who have in "Lessons of History" said as follows:

“Even the skeptical historian develops a humble respect for religion, since he sees it functioning and seemingly indispensable, in every land and age. To the unhappy, the suffering, the bereaved, the old, it has brought super-natural comforts valued by millions of souls as more precious than any natural aid. It has helped parents and teachers to discipline the young. It has conferred meaning and dignity upon the lowliest existence and through its sacraments has made for stability by transforming human covenants into solemn relationships with God.

India has been the land of many religions which have flourished since times immemorial in more or less equal form. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism are what can be called the Indian religions while Islam came to India through the Khyber Pass. Today it has made India its permanent home. India has got the world's second largest Muslim population, next only to Indonesia. All these religions have an all-pervading influence upon our society. Not only the mere mode of worship but the births, deaths, burials, cremations, food, dress, property succession - all these things are rigidly controlled by religious roots. There are umpteen numbers of rituals and rites broadly called Karmakanda. In order to interpret these religious roots, a priestly class is inevitable. Though the British rule initially came as a follower of trade and not to spread Christianity, later however, Christianity did take roots especially on the western coast of this country. There after it spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. As a result, India today has accommodated every religion of the world on its soil.

It is, therefore, futile to expect that any rationalist or atheistic movement or even a large scale scientific revolution will rid this country of the religious influence. I have a feeling that the very co-existence of so many religions makes it impossible for this country to get rid of any religion. After independence the influence of religion has increased rather than decreased. Right from the President of India to the Talathi of the village, people follow, not only in their personal lives but also in their public lives, a code of conduct which cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be called secular. You have got more and more religious meetings and conferences. There are more godmen though they travel by jet planes. A holy Kalash is received by the head of the State in Delhi and it travels across the length of the country being received by the Chief Ministers on its route. Modern transport such as helicopters, are made available to shower flowers upon statues and symbols like Kalash. In all these, the active participation of not only people

holding public offices but the machinery of the State itself is evident. The official Pooja of the Pandharpur Vithoba has to be performed by the Chief Minister of the State along with his wife.

The caste also has been playing equally important and sometimes more sinister roles in the society. In the case of Hindus, caste is inseparable from religion. In practice, however, religion is a distant, vague concept while caste is nearer to which one closely belongs. Religion belongs to the other world. The caste is here and certain and you encounter it every moment of your life. Caste is worn on the forehead or around the neck and even in the form of dress. Religion may be concealed, but the caste cannot be. Religion requires some ethical or moral conduct and behavior. Caste requires nothing but rank unashamed, crude, tribal loyalty. Religion can be changed but caste cannot be. Even if a person gets converted, say from Hinduism to another religion, his caste follows him and when he returns to the Hindu-fold he is restored to the old caste.

Is it possible to destroy the influence of religion and caste by waging vague un-pitched battle against them? In my opinion, it cannot be done. One must remember that the problems of Indian society affecting the common man are essentially secular problems such as industrial development, agricultural production, housing, food etc. There are recurrent famines, epidemics and floods. When we are tackling these problems, there is no question of any confrontation with religion or caste or the leaders of religion and caste. Indeed, some religious leaders ask the question as to why we are so much concerned with religion when they are not interfering with the tackling of secular problems by the State. What they are saying is only half truth. They are saying so in the first place because the religions or the scriptures do not provide any solution to the pressing problems of the day.

In practice, however, the sinister influence of religion and its leaders is evident in several spheres. It is for the rationalists to identify the fields where the religious leaders and the obscurantists are interfering and are having their influence not warranted by their importance. It is only after identifying those fields that the rationalists must meet them headlong and tackle them. They should be able to show that it is they who are in a position to give solutions to their problems and not the religious or caste leaders. Family planning is one of the problems where religion is likely to interfere with the state policy. A proper education of the common man is called for. Rationalists cannot remain aloof and merely preach from

public platforms that man should develop a proper rational attitude without rationalists participating in particular movements such as family planning whose success to some extent is being impaired by the interference of religion.

Revival of sati which was being attempted in the North is another problem where rationalists could play an effective role. The attempt being made by a particular community in imposing ban upon the women seeing films in the name of religion must be exposed in all its ugliness. The Constitution of India guarantees equality to both the sexes and if a religious tenet interferes with this fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution, then it is the duty of the rationalists to insist that the religions must give way to the secular. Indeed the forcible and often violent attempts made by the members of one community preventing the women from seeing films or otherwise taking part in social activities are punishable offences.

So far, unfortunately, the rationalist movement in India has been confined to conferences and meetings without jumping into the main stream of national life. I do not underestimate the value of conferences and meetings, but I am also not one of those who overestimate their importance. Educational programme must be undertaken. People must be made to love the nation rather than the country, that is, people must be made to love the people inhabiting the land and not merely the inanimate objects which have been glorified, unfortunately, in our national anthem. An attempt should be made to inculcate in the minds of all Indians respect and love for the Indian way of life, a way of life which is incomparable to any other in the world. This country has survived several vicissitudes and crises and has successfully maintained the structure of democracy unlike most of the other nations which became independent after the Second World War. It is only by teaching the people the benefits of a secular life that you can persuade them to shed some of their complexes arising from belonging to a particular religion. There is assurance of better life in this world - this must be brought to their knowledge. In my opinion, rationalist movement is not likely to have any perceptible progress unless it aligns itself with particular problems which I have mentioned above and demonstrates the futility or uselessness or even the dangers of handling secular problems in a non-secular manner. Though religion and caste have been playing devastating role in Indian politics, that role cannot be checkmated except by pitching the rationalist battle in particular fields. It is with this object in view that rationalists' organisations should be set up to a great extent. This has been done in Kerala

where 900 cells have been working in different parts of the State. People's science movement has taken the knowledge of science to the doors of the remotest villager. I hope, the rationalists in other parts of the country will follow similar course of action.

Jinnah – An Assessment

“You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State. ... We are starting with this fundamental principle, that we are all citizens of one State.”

These are not the words of a confirmed secularist. This is what Mohammad Ali Jinnah told the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11th August, 1947. These words were echoed by Mr. L.K. Advani when he was the Deputy Prime Minister of India and when he visited Pakistan on the latter’s invitation. He also called Jinnah a secularist. Recently, General Musharaf has reiterated Jinnah’s words. He reminded his listeners that Sarojini Naidu had called Jinnah “an Ambassador” of Hindu Muslim unity.

The result was a great uproar in Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Any words of praise for the founder of Pakistan were an anathema to the Sangh which called for the blood of Mr. Advani. They completely forgot that Sarojini’s words were uttered in 1911 when Mr. Jinnah was a leader of the Congress and he played an active role in politics as a nationalist. It was only around 1930 he broke away from the Congress when he felt that he was distrusted by the British, discarded by the Congress, and rejected by the Muslim League. Though Mr. Motilal Nehru once called him “a communal wolf in nationalist clothes” (*The Man who divided India* by Dr. Rafiq Zakaria), at that stage Mr. Jinnah had ceased to be a nationalist.

Mohammad Ali was the first child of his parents born in Karachi. His father was Jinnabhai Poonja (born in 1850). There is some dispute about Jinnah’s date of birth. In the school it is registered as 20th December, 1876, but it suggested that Jinnah himself got it changed to 25th December to show that he was born on the same day as Jesus Christ. Jinnah, with his intellect, forgot that 25th December was fixed by the then Pope. No one really knows when Jesus was born. Originally Christmas, as the birthday of Christ, was celebrated in March. But Jinnah’s action showed his own selfishness because he wanted to be remembered as having born on 25th December.

In his school days he was not particularly bright. It is reported that he was irregular in school attendance and wandered in the city. Once his father’s sister, who was resident of Bombay, visited Karachi, she liked the boy, took him to Bombay. The result was not

different. His school days continued in the same pattern, though he was vastly impressed by Bombay.

Jinnah was admired by people who came in contact with him for the sharp intellect and argumentative ability. Jinnah developed an ambition to go to England to study law. His mother was, however, apprehensive that he might be trapped by some British girl. So she insisted that he married before he went to England. He was then 16 years old. He married a girl, who was 14 years old. The marriage was held and within three days Jinnah sailed from Karachi. It shows one of Jinnah's characteristics – being indifferent to others and haughtiness. By the time he returned after four years, both his wife and mother had died.

Jinnah belonged to Khoja community among the Muslims. He shortened his name – Jinnahbhai – by deleting “bhai” from the name. So he became Jinnah. He had seen Bombay which he liked and decided to settle there. His father, originally a rich businessman, later suffered heavy losses and wanted to be looked after by his eldest son. That for some reason was not possible. Therefore he went to Ratnagiri, south of Bombay in the coastal region.

Jinnah set up legal practice in Bombay and amassed work. Though it is reported that he charged as much as Rs.1500 per case, it was doubtful considering that Rupee meant a Rupee in those days. But by any standard he was a good, intelligent lawyer. There is a case reported in the *Bombay Law Reporter* that Jinnah appeared in a case only to argue on costs. Nehru and Jinnah had no love between them. It was unfair of Nehru to say that Jinnah was a poor lawyer. Stanley Wooper says that Nehru said that Jinnah was completely lack of some responsibility. Nehru's intense hatred of Jinnah, according to Nehru, helped illuminate the true source of Jinnah's power. In fact Nehru went to Harrow and Cambridge with his father's blessing and never practiced law. On his return from England, he plunged into politics. He took to Khaddar which he called livery of freedom. Though Nehru and Gandhi were of different views and temperaments, he always suppressed them and became an obedient follower of Gandhi.

Jinnah was never to do anything of this kind. Right from the beginning he was a nationalist and member of the Indian National Congress, though he never toed the official line. He always thought that if India has to win freedom or even dominion States, it should be on legal and constitutional methods. He sharply disagreed with

Gandhi's non-cooperation or civil disobedience and stuck to this point to the last. On every session of the Congress he attended, he expressed his disagreement with Gandhi. Despite this, he remained a nationalist for long. Sarojini Naidu called him an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity – a sentiment which was echoed by Gokhale. Jinnah had said that in politics he would be Muslim. The grateful citizens of Bombay collected enough money to erect a Jinnah Hall in the Congress Bhavan at Girgaum in Bombay. Though the Hall is there, its name has been changed to P.J. Hall (Peoples Jinnah Hall) after Jinnah became a champion of Muslims and President of the Muslim League.

Jinnah never belonged to any party, except when he was the party. In his negotiations with Congress and Gandhi, his only *Mantra* was "Pakistan". He never clarified what his Pakistan was. The provinces where Muslims were in majority were obviously included. But he noticed yet ignored that among about 300 Muslim delegates in the Muslim Conference, there were 160 from undivided India. This never bothered him. He wanted Pakistan.

In the meantime, a few years after giving birth to a daughter Ruhie died. She was fond of cats and dogs in whose company she spent more time than in her husband's. She unfortunately fell ill and died at the tender age of 29. Jinnah grieved not for long. His interest in politics and law helped him to overcome the grief fast. Jinnah had developed probably one obsession – that of Pakistan, the contents of which he did not know. He publicly proclaimed that Musalmans are divided into different sectors – Shias, Sunnis, Pathans, Memons, Khojas, etc. – they are still one nation as they believe, unlike Hindus, in one God, one prophet as the last Prophet. He had also developed hatred towards Gandhi and Nehru. The latter was a cultured man who on many occasions differed from Gandhi, sometimes on vital issues, ultimately succumbed to Gandhi. Jinnah never liked a second place in any organisation. By 1920 Gandhi had captured Congress and was called Mahatma by his followers. To Jinnah, however, he remained Mr. Gandhi to the last. I think that was one of the reasons why he disliked the Congress.

Jinnah always insisted that India had two parties – one the Congress representing the Hindus and the second the League which represented the Muslims. He deprecated the idea of "*Vande Mataram*" at the Congress sessions. He deprecated it more because, he thought, the Congress imposed it upon the country and non-Hindus. He always insisted that the Congress represented only

Hindus and the League was the sole representative of Muslims. This he did in public speeches; he did it in negotiations with Gandhi and Congress. He has often pointed out the weakness of Pakistan of his vision. But he never wavered in his pronouncement. People wondered whether he really believed in Pakistan, but he made it appear that Pakistan was really the need of Muslims, though he knew that more Muslims resided in what would remain of India than those that would be in Pakistan. He thought that the Congress and in particular Gandhi had tried to humiliate and to make him humble. When in 1937, B.G. Kher asked him to become a minister in Bombay Cabinet; he replied that Gandhi should ask him. Unfortunately Gandhi gave reply in the letter in which there was no invitation to become a Minister. Probably Gandhi thought that it would be acknowledging Jinnah to be the sole representative of Muslims.

There were many occasions when he felt irritated by the attitude of Gandhi and Nehru towards him. He took his vengeance by repeating in his talks with Congress leaders, including Gandhi, and the British leaders that nothing short of Pakistan will satisfy the Muslims. When, in order to deter him, the British and the Congress warned him that Punjab and Bengal would also be partitioned, initially he grumbled that he would not accept a “moth eaten” or “truncated” Pakistan, but ultimately accepted. It is said that he would complain about the food given to him but would eat it. He demanded 800-mile corridor between East and West Pakistan but it was firmly rejected by other parties. He then quietly accepted the truncated Pakistan.

Nehru and Jinnah were almost of the same age. Nehru was at the Bar only for a few days. His father gave him enough money for Harrow, Cambridge and Bar education. His father was a rich and prosperous lawyer at Allahabad. He fell under the spell of Gandhi and joined Indian National Congress which was then fighting for freedom under the leadership of Congress. It can be safely said that he became almost a blind follower of Gandhi. He occasionally smoked and drank wine. He was the only son of his parents, though he had two sisters. He was a regular wearer of Khadi which he believed was livery of freedom.

Jinnah was made of a different stuff. Right from the beginning he always wore a three-piece suit. Though a Mussalman, he had no hesitation in drinking and eating pork. Nehru had married a girl which his parents had chosen for him; but not so Jinnah. At the age

of 14 he fell in love with a girl of 16. The latter also was infatuated with Jinnah. Ultimately much against the bitter feeling of her father, Sir Dinshaw Petit, a very rich man of Bombay, they married. For this crime, Sir Dinshaw never spoke to her. Jinnah's marriage was inter-communal. One would think he was a secularist. Not so. He opposed the marriage of his only daughter, Dina, who fell in love with Neville Wadia, a Parsee, who had been converted to Christianity. Neville's son, Nasli, is now the Chairman of Bombay Dyeing Empire. That was the extent of his secularism. As his insistence of Pakistan shows, though initially he was a nationalist, he had, when Dina was of marriageable age, become a communalist. Nehru, a modern man, wore Khadi. He often differed from Gandhi but always followed the Mahatma. Jinnah never liked Gandhi – in fact he hated “Mr. Gandhi”. He refused to call Gandhi Mahatma. He was told that Pakistan of his conception was impracticable but he never gave up the demand. That was his obstinacy.

In short, Jinnah was –

- (i) modern in dress and food, but not in outlook;
- (ii) completely indifferent to others' views;
- (iii) non-religious but was communal;
- (iv) originally secular but his hatred of Gandhi and Nehru had led him to hate Hindus.

Towards the end of his life, (September 1948) he was suffering from Tuberculosis and lung cancer because he was a chain smoker. Mountbatten thought that India and Pakistan should have in the beginning, at least, common Governor-General, but Jinnah vetoed the idea because he wanted to become Pakistan's first Governor-General. Pakistan he created has seen three military rules and the murder of a Prime Minister.

Neville Wadia left India after he divorced Dina; Dina moved to New York City and lived alone. Her only son, Nasli, is in India. Thus there is no Jinnah in Pakistan.

Minority Rights: Political Aspect

This Seminar is being held just a year after the Godhra massacre of 27th February, 2002 and the communal riots that followed in Gujarat in March, 2002. The working paper that is circulated makes large-scale references to Gujarat riots and the recent activities of what can be called Sangh Pariwar. The paper, not without justification, reflects the anxiety of the Muslims about the present and their future. This Seminar is being held in the year 2003, yet I wish to take you to the years 1947 to 1950 - the years of the Constituent Assembly debates. Most of you may not have been born that time. Even for those who like me, who were old enough to understand the happenings of those days, it is advantageous to recollect broadly the events of those days and how our Constitution-makers responded to them.

India gained independence in August, 1947 and Pakistan was also born simultaneously the same day. This dawn of freedom for both countries was accompanied by blood bath on an unprecedented scale. Migrations of populations in both directions - from Pakistan to India and vice versa took place. Those non-Muslims coming from Pakistan brought accounts of murders, rape and kidnappings which inflamed, not unnaturally, the feelings of hatred among the Hindus for the Muslims. The reverse phenomenon must have taken place in Pakistan. Adding to the hatred for Muslims were two important factors - one the Muslims got their Pakistan without fighting for it against the British whereas the nationalists of India had waged a freedom struggle for over two decades. Second, despite the fact that a State for Muslims for the sub-continent had been established, a large number of Muslims continued to stay in India.

In this atmosphere of hatred and unsettled conditions, if our Constitution-makers had totally ignored the questions concerning the 'leftover' Muslims, it would not have been unnatural. It must be said to the credit of the Constituent Assembly members that they felt that they owed a duty to the Muslims who, instead of going to Pakistan, threw their lot with the rest of India when they chose to do so. Not very charitable persons might have said these Muslims made virtue of necessity. Forget the motive - whether for love for India or for any other reasons - these Muslims elected to continue to stay in India. In addition, Jammu and Kashmir also acceded to India. In all earnestness the Constituent Assembly addressed itself to the problems of minorities. An Advisory Committee on Minorities was

appointed and on this Committee were representatives of all minorities - Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Anglo-Indians. It is not necessary to follow the deliberations of this Committee. Suffice it to say, the views of the minority communities were fully ascertained and examined. While going through the debates of the Constituent Assembly I was impressed by the sincerity and concern which was shown by the majority community members for the interests of the minorities. At random I will give one example. Speaking in the debate on 27th August, 1947 and responding to a suggestion made by Chaudhari Khaliqzaman (U.P. Muslim) for separate electorate for Muslims "in the light of changed circumstances", Govind Ballabh Pant (U.P. General) said:

"I may assure him and those associated with him that I am trying to look at the question exclusively from the point of minorities. I am one of those who feel that the success of democracy is to be measured by the amount of confidence it generates in different sections of the community.

I am also believer that the majority community should, while considering these questions, not only try to do justice, but throughout it should be informed and inspired by genuine feelings of regard for the minorities and all its decisions should be actuated by a real sense of understanding and sympathy."

(CAD Vol 5, p. 222)

We should also not forget that while debating the provisions which ultimately went into Part III of the Constitution - Fundamental Rights - the members of the Constituent Assembly were fully aware of giving certain additional facilities to the minorities. Right to Freedom of Religion (Article 25) is available to all including the minorities. Under Article 26 of the Constitution every religious denomination has a right to establish religious and charitable institutions and maintain the same. While these two Articles protect the rights of all communities, one particular Article, namely, Article 30, makes special provisions for minorities as follows:

"All minorities whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice."

The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against a minority institution. The importance of this

provision which is heavily loaded in favour of minorities in India has not been properly appreciated by the minorities.

Besides, there are laws which make outraging religious feelings an offence. Indian religions are allowed to maintain communications with co-religionists abroad. Financial contributions from abroad are not banned but are subjected to scrutiny by the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Central Government. There have not been complaints that any legitimate contribution has been prevented.

Few countries in the world are without minorities within their territories and none is entirely free of conflict involving them. But probably the Republic of India is the only State in the world which has, in its laws and Constitution, made specific provision of non-discrimination and of positive protection in respect of minorities.

The various international declaration and covenants have failed to define, or avoided defining minorities. The Tithes which are recognized and which are sought to be protected are not minority rights but Tithes of the minorities. This was partly because of the displacement of large groups of people in drawing the maps of European countries both in the inter-war period and after the Second World War. In Europe, minorities' questions arose because of the peculiar way minorities came into existence. Sometimes a minority may have constituted an independent nation within the present. Because of this and similar situations, it was said that in order to qualify for protection, a minority must owe undivided allegiance to the Government of the State in which it lives. It should also be noted that in Europe minorities were of language or race and not of religion.

Such is not the problem in India. The minorities in India are not immigrants; they are the sons of the soil. They are not the result of redrawing the boundaries of States. The communities, which are minorities today, would have been minorities even in *Akhand Bharat*. Moreover, every Muslim in India today is hundred per cent Indian in every sense. In his *Bharatiya Musalman, Shodh Aani Bodh - Indian Muslims: Inquiry and Understanding*, Setumadhavrao Pagdi, the historian par excellence of Maharashtra, has canvassed a view which ought to be understood by both Hindus and Muslims. In the first place, it is said that the British took India from the Muslim rulers. This is historically not true. By the time the British started occupying India; Muslim rule had been wound up.

India was wrested by the British from Marathas and Sikhs. Therefore the Muslims should not look upon the past with nostalgia. Secondly, Muslims never had any effective share in power in the Kingdoms that dotted the Indian continent. All the kingdoms in India were of foreigners with the exception of two. In the Muslim Kingdoms, large and small, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army was always a foreigner - never an Indian Muslim. The two exceptions were Umedshahi of Bidar and *Nizamshahi* of Ahmednagar which were founded by two Brahmins who had converted to Islam. Setumadhavrao Pagdi has criticized the conception prevalent in some circles that the present day Muslims are *Babarki Aulad*. These are Indian Muslims: there is no Moslem India as there is no Hindu India.

The politics of Muslims in India has to be worked in the context of this basic political, social and sociological fact. The problem of minorities in India is different from the problem of minorities, say, in Britain where the members of the minority communities are mostly immigrants whom Lord Denning called invaders (*The Due Process of Law* (1980), Butterworths p.155). The Indian minority problem is also different from the Tamilians' problem in Sri Lanka where the problem burst out with the denial of equality to Tamilians by the 1972 Constitution.

We are considering the problem of religious minorities though there are ethnic and linguistic minorities. In this context it is useful to note the religious component of India's population. In 1961, Hindus (excluding Buddhists and Sikhs) constituted 83.5% of the population; by 1991, there was a marginal decline in the figure to 82.0%. The Muslims constituted 10.7% in 1961; in 1991, they constituted 12.1%. These are so minor variations that they could be due to statistical errors or human errors on the part of the enumerators. Sikhs who form a visible community constituted 1.8% in 1961 and 1.9% in 1991. Christians' population as a percentage of the total population actually decreased from 2.4% in 1961 to 2.3% in 1991. The population of Buddhists has remained constant at 0.7%.

The problem of minorities especially in the form of Hindu-Muslim conflict has become acute since the early 1980s. In 1984 Vishwa Hindu Parishad was founded and soon thereafter, the *Ramjanmabhoomi* movement was started. The foundation of this movement was the belief that what is known as Babri Masjid in

Ayodhya was built at a place where existed a Ram Temple which was demolished during the reign of Babar and in its place the Masjid was erected. L K Advani during the campaign days that led to the demolition of Babri Masjid mentioned mentioned that, 'that there was a Ram Temple at that place' was a matter of faith and this faith could not be a matter of discussion or debate. He compared this faith with the Christians' belief in the immaculate conception and the Muslims' belief in the Quran as a divine revelation. I will not consider the question whether the *Ramjanmabhoomi* is in fact a matter of faith for Hindus. In a society governed by the rule of law, a matter of faith, however well-placed, cannot be allowed to destroy the rights and properties of other citizens. India became independent in 1947 and Constitution was also adopted in 1950. How is it relevant whether a temple existed at the disputed site 500 years ago? This is a preliminary issue which has to be answered in the litigation that is going on. Moreover, in 1991 the Parliament has passed The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, which has frozen the question of location of places of worship. Excavation of history *is* not permissible in the country committed to rule of law.

I will not attempt an analysis in detail of the concept of *Hindutva*. If it is an attempt at homogenization of different sects and cults within Hindu Dharma, one may not object to it. Nor can one legitimately object to the thesis that *Hindutva* is the principle that seeks to cultivate unity among the Hindus and pride in their great traditions. It is a sense of belonging. If you cannot object to Jewishness, you cannot take exception to *Hindutva*.

Adherence to one's religion is not communalism. Religiosity per se is not communalism. Even for a non-believer like me, attachment to ritualism, superstition, obscurantism, occult practices, and astrology - all these do not constitute communalism. In fact, communalism in the sense of feeling to a community for the purpose of enriching that community is not undesirable. There are scores of communal bodies engaged in the spread of education and culture which are doing social and national service.

However, in India, communalism having acquired political connotation has become a dangerous phenomenon. Communalism has come to mean using one religious community against the members of another religious community, and this has resulted in the great divide in India. The perversion of the ostensible moral order of a religion to temporal political purposes is causing

problems. Communalism is the negation of nationalism which is an aggregation of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual communities. Communalism, whether of majority or of minority deserves condemnation. Nehru once said: "There could be no compromise on the issue of communalism, Hindu communalism or Muslim. Communalism, as it is a challenge to Indian nationhood and Indian nationalism." (Quoted by Professor Rashiduddin Khan in his contribution to *Religion and Politics Today*, published by Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies).

I am dwelling on this because we must know the paradigm in which we have to work. In this connection I wish to recall that originally Shiv Sena was born as an anti-South Indian organization - *Madrasis* - as all the Bombaywalas call all South Indians. In fact, Shiv Sena was abusing South Indians and blaming them for the unemployment of Maharashtrians in Mumbai. The first major rioting that was indulged in by Shiv Sena in Mumbai was over the South-Indian issue. That was way back when Vasant Rao Naik was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and Modak, a Christian, was the Commissioner of Police of Bombay. Somewhere along the way the South-Indian issue fell by roadside. *Hindutva* became the programme of Shiv Sena. Even after this, Muslim leaders, film stars, continue to pay courtesy visits to Bal Thackeray.

There are minorities other than religious minorities - Marathi speaking minority in North Karnataka, especially in Belgaum District. There are Tamilians in the erstwhile Mysore State. There have been riots between Kannadigas and Maharashtrians; there have been riots between Tamilians and Kannadigas. Mercifully they have not been very fierce; they are not, happily, repetitive.

Then there are minorities within minorities. On a recent visit to Lucknow I was grimly reminded of this. Shias there are not allowed to take out Tazia procession because of the threat of Shia-Sunni riots. Fortunately, Shia-Sunni riots do not take place in India unlike in Pakistan where Shias face the prospect of being dubbed as non-Muslim minority, though the father of Pakistan was a Shia.

The Babri Masjid demolition has the most devastating effect upon the fabric of the rule of law and the regime of fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. I do not shed tears over the destruction of a place of worship - to whatever religion it may

belong. But it causes me intimate anguish to see the destruction of secular structure of India.

What are the possible solutions - short-term and long-term? In “Indian Muslims - The Need for A Positive Outlook”, written in the wake of Babri Masjid demolition but long before the Gujarat riots, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan advocates a compromise formula - that Muslims should forget Babri Masjid and Hindus should give an assurance that Mosques in Mathura and Varanasi will be spared. I am not trying to be more royal than the King - more Islamic than the Muslims - when I ask the question who are the Muslims to forget and who are the Hindus who should give the assurance?

It is recognized that Babri Masjid was built as an act of piety but as a symbol of emergent Mughal power. The motives in construction were political rather than religious. Till the advent of British rule, the Mosque enjoyed political protection. During the British regime it was protected by the rule of law - which rule of law has been incorporated in the Constitution of India. In *The Wonder That Was India - Part II* (Rupa & Co.) Prof S.A.A. Rizvi has given details of the hundreds of temples that were razed to the ground and of the mosques which were constructed on the sites of those temples. He has also mentioned that the materials of the demolished temples were utilized in the construction of several mosques. Is it not worth the Muslims’ while to renounce this part of Islamic legacy in India?

This apart, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan has expressed several valuable thoughts and made precious suggestions in the book I have referred to. I am not comfortable with several things mentioned in the book but they need serious consideration at this conference.

Late Prof. Rashiduddin Khan, whom I regard as a very perspicacious analyst of Indian situation and in particular of the phenomenon of religious communalism and fundamentalism, has advocated national integration as the long-term solution of divisive politics in India. Integration is a movement away from a traditionalist allegiance towards modernist, rational allegiance. While advocating such a course, Prof. Rashiduddin Khan has noted three important factors –

1. Need for integration arises, not in a homogenous society, but in a heterogeneous.
2. The necessity of national integration is accentuated by the existence of real or imaginary fear of disintegration due to the presence of mutually hostile and conflicting segments of population.

3. Need for integration becomes all the more urgent in plural societies which are democratic and which have in-built propensity for permitting, if not also promoting, dissent.

I am continuing to recall some more observations of Prof. Rashiduddin Khan. Integration is not a process of conversion of diversities into uniformity, but a congruence of diversities leading to a unity in which both varieties and similarities are maintained. All diversities are not divine in origin and should not be regarded so in operation. The cause of integration is not impaired by being conscious of one's individuality. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, whom Jinnah called the playboy of the Congress, expressed his testament of his faith in the following words in 1940 (when the demand for Pakistan was gaining ground):

“I am a Muslim and profoundly conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam's glorious traditions of the last thirteen hundred years. I am not prepared to lose even a small part of that legacy. I am equally proud of the fact that I *am* an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total makeup without which this noble edifice will not remain intact. I can never give up this claim.”

But the cause of national integration is not helped by taking a separatist stand on secular issues. The opposition to family planning and to an optional law of adoption is one instance. Regarding the alleged neglect of development of Urdu as discrimination against Muslims is wholly unjustifiable. Majority Muslims do not have Urdu their mother tongue. Last week I read in the papers that a Muslim witness in Tamil Nadu Court refused to take oath in the name of God as required under the Oath Act and said that he would take oath only in the name of 'Allah'. Boycotting of Republic Day celebrations and threatening to establish a separate judiciary are not acts which are conducive to national integration.

Recently there was a highly provocative move on the part of Muslims of Pratapgad (District Satara, Maharashtra) to celebrate the *Urs* of Afzal Khan. Afzal Khan is a hated name in Maharashtra. He was a mere soldier who had been sent by Adil Shah of Bijapur to capture Shivaji who, however, managed to kill him. Do the Muslims adore a Soldier? Do the Muslims celebrate the *Urs* of any King?

In the aftermath of Babri Masjid demolition, meetings were held on the minority rights and problems. In due course things were forgotten. Now a serious jolt has been given by Gujarat riots. We are holding meetings and conferences. Is this adequate! I am not a politician and I am not qualified to prescribe political solutions. I must, however, caution against the demand for separate electorates or reservation of seats for minorities. I condemn the suggestion that the safety of minorities depends upon the goodwill of the majority. It is a vicious doctrine. Apart from this, the post-Babri Masjid demolition elections demonstrated that the majority - overwhelming majority - of the Hindus rejected the BJP in the four States in the Hindu belt. There is only a minority in the majority community which can be said to be communal. I can say this despite the Gujarat riots and the results of the elections in Gujarat. The failure of the secular parties to come together in Gujarat was a significant factor in the success of BJP. In about 18 months the General Elections are due for the Parliament. The secular parties must make a clear choice. Will they come together or fall apart on the question of who should become the Prime Minister? One practical suggestion can be made. Right from now those interested in the secular character of the country should start working for a united platform of non-communal parties. Minority Rights Group consisting of activists from different communities can be set up not only to facilitate the unification of non-communal parties for the coming election but also to keep a watch on the developments that may give rise to conflicts. The minorities' problem is not the problem of the minorities alone. There are enough sane elements in our country and in the majority community who want to address themselves to this problem.

It is incorrect to say, as some say, that there is a systematic appeasement of Muslims. It is equally incorrect to say that there is a systematic persecution of Muslims. The richest Indian is a Muslim. The top film stars in India are Khans so much so that Indian film industry can be called *Khandesh*. The way the Muslims, especially in Mumbai, have bounced back after the 1993 riots shows that there is not in Indian polity any built-in bias against the minorities. However do not be-little

- Godhra Attack
- Attack on the Parliament
- Attack on the J.K. Assembly
- Raghunath temple
- Attack on Akshardham

Before I sit down I wish to say something about some points mentioned in the note circulated. It has been mentioned that *Hindutuavadis* talk of *Manuvad*. I have not heard of such talk. Let me tell you, *Manuvad* had been buried hundred fathoms deep and no power in India, in the world or in the heavens, can bring it to life.

It has been mentioned that the Constitution Review Commission was set up with a “clandestine agenda to import Manu’s laws back into Indian mainstream”. This is an astounding statement. The author of this note does not know what Manu’s laws were. The composition of the Commission headed by a former Chief Justice of India should have removed any misgivings in this regard. Such a statement was not necessary at this time.

Moreover, even Lal Krishna Advani has realized that India could not have been and cannot be a Hindu Rashtra. He has so stated on the floor of the Lok Sabha - this is something which is always clear to any student of Indian Constitution. The basic structure of the Constitution, which cannot be changed, includes the non-theocratic, democratic character of the Indian polity.

Terrorism and the State

It is a great tragedy that the citizens and no less the State are taking terrorism in their stride. Terrorism is not a small crime. It is against the society and the State, and an act of terrorism results in the death of several innocent citizens. In recent years, acts of terrorism have increased. Malegaon (in Maharashtra), Hyderabad, Parliament, Akshardham in Ahmedabad, suburban (local) trains in Mumbai, Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Bangalore – these are some of the places where acts of terrorism have taken place with the loss of hundreds of lives. One does not know who are behind these acts and what their motives are. One can guess the motives of terrorism in Kashmir. One can also imagine the acts of terrorism indulged in by Naxalites. But terrorism elsewhere is un-understandable. Acts of terrorism are committed by faceless men.

What do the terrorists want? Who are the terrorists? Answers to these questions can pave the way for negotiations. In Kashmir they are seeking union with Pakistan or at least independence. The demand is for obvious reasons, non-negotiable. But terrorism in other parts of India is without proper cause. If it is by Muslims, it can never succeed. India has, next to Indonesia, largest Muslim population who are, however, not staying in any localized area. A second Pakistan is not possible. Acts of terrorism which are indulged in can never succeed. Nor can it be said that terrorism is aimed only at non-Muslims. Indian population is mixed and when terrorist acts take place, they harm Muslims also. The chain acts of terrorism in Mumbai suburban trains and the bomb blasts in Samjauta Express injured and killed Muslims also. A glance at the terrorist acts in other countries shows the utter senselessness of terrorism.

On July 28, 2008, two bomb explosions in Istanbul killed 126 persons and injured 150 others. “The Hindu” mentions that 700 Afghan civilians have been killed in 2008. Between May, 2003 and February, 2008, a staggering 104,317 Iraqis were killed in terrorist attacks. In Baghdad and Kirkuk, three suicide bomb attacks killed 61 civilians and wounded 238. The last mentioned one is only for one day. On other days, more bomb attacks have taken place. This is because of the Shia-Sunni problem in Iraq. According to “South

Asia Intelligence Review”, the number of civilians killed in India in 2007 was 957. Other reports have given higher figures.

I have given these figures only to show the severity of the terrorist problem. What is the State doing, at least in India? The citizens are tired of the State sounding red alert, only after the incident. High officials issue condolences and the Governments often sanction money to the next of the kin of those killed and those injured. It is not seen that the Governments having taken some, let alone adequate, steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents. The Governments are busy with politics.

Under the Constitution of India, law and order is a State subject. It is the function and duty of the State to maintain peace in the State. It has been argued, and it is possible to argue, that repeated acts of terrorism are a national problem and the Centre should step in. This is neither logical nor legal. In fact, the States in India will never allow the Centre to take over the function. The States are ruled by parties different from the ones at the Centre. Incidentally it should be noted that in India the last three acts of terrorism were in BJP-ruled States.

I am suggesting that terrorism should not be a matter of political issue. It should be handled as a national subject. It is not too much to expect that all the political parties come together and evolve a common strategy of tackling terrorism. It is unpatriotic to apportion blame. The intelligence agencies, though controlled by the Central Government, should share intelligence, at least on terrorism, with State Governments irrespective of the fact that the State Governments belong to different parties. The Parliament may pass necessary laws; the State Government has to implement them. The anti-terrorist laws should not be the subject matter of politics or debate.

The history in India has unfortunately not been free from politics. Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) was passed in 1985, basically to deal with Khalistani problems in Punjab. The Act was meant to be temporary for two years, but was continued till 1995 in which year it was allowed to lapse. The non-Congress parties were not happy with practical repeal of TADA. NDA Government along with other parties passed Prevention of Terrorist Act (POTA) in the year 2002. It could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha as the Congress was in majority. The Government

took the unusual step of getting it passed by the joint session of the Parliament (see Article 108 of the Constitution). It was a tragedy that in an issue like that of terrorism there should have been such a difference of opinion as to require a joint session of Parliament. Ultimately, when Congress-headed U.P.A. came into power, POTA was repealed in 2004. The Supreme Court has upheld the validity of both these laws with minor modifications. The interest shown by the Parliament can be seen from the fact that while passing TADA, only eight members participated in the discussion which lasted merely an hour and ten minutes.

The repeal of POTA was accompanied by incorporating almost all the provisions of that Act in Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967 in 2004. If this were so, why did the Congress oppose the passing of POTA and why POTA was allowed to lapse. Specific provisions of POTA found a place in UAPA?

In *Kartar Singh v. State of Punjab*, while upholding the validity of POTA, the Supreme Court affirmed the existence of a class of offenders as distinct from ordinary criminals who could be tried under “normal” laws. Terrorism was recognised by the Court as “an aggravated offence”. It allowed the admissibility of confessions before a senior police officer under Section 15. The Government of the day defended the Act before the Court, but Parliament, at least a part of it, dissented. The Supreme Court has recognised that terrorism is a special kind of offence requiring a special kind of law. This view, I am sure, pervades the entire judiciary. But our legislators are not convinced. Some of our legislators have openly said that a Section of the population is not terroristic. Is it because of their pivotal role during the elections?

Terrorism is a serious problem; it is a phenomenon. Though it is a law and order subject and thus a State subject, it is a national problem. The State, with a capital, must be concerned with it. It must be handled by the nation as a whole. The Central Government should be an agency that should deal with terrorism. The States should welcome such a move as it would protect their territory and their populations. It is not merely a law and order problem; it is not merely a Constitutional problem. It is a question of the life of the nation. It is a question of unity and integrity of the country.

On Tackling Terrorism

Some years ago, a conference of Tories was held in Brighton. The then Prime Minister was staying in a hotel upon which an unsuccessful attack was made by the Irish Republic Army. A spokesman of the IRA rang up Margaret Thatcher to tell her:

“Today we were unlucky,
but remember, we will be lucky once,
you will have to be lucky always.”

Such was the arrogance of IRA which was the most terrorist organization of the world at that time. They kept the British Government busy and in suspense. They bombed a boat in which Lord Mountbatten was traveling and assassinated him, among others.

“Anatomy of terror”

But what is terrorism? Let us start with the dictionary meaning. Concise Oxford Dictionary (COD) defines “terror” as extreme fear and “terrorist” as someone who uses or favours violence and intimidating methods of coercing Government or community. There is usually some object in indulging in terrorism. IRA aimed at freedom for Catholics in North Ireland. Some Kashmiris have resorted to terrorism with a view to compelling the Government of India to grant freedom to the Kashmiris.

Often one does not know the aim of the terrorists. Acts of terrorism in Bangalore and Jaipur do not disclose the objectives of the acts. Obviously they do not want freedom for Kashmir. We do not know what they want. If we knew we could enter into negotiations with them. Apparently they are senseless acts. The serial bomb blasts on March 12, 1993 were probably a response to the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. And there was no way of responding to those attacks. Since then there have been over 200 terrorist attacks, 17 in the last five years alone. There has been a terrorist attack on India but outside India, namely in Kabul.

The following table gives instances of terrorist attacks during the last few years:-

<u><i>Date</i></u>	<u><i>Location</i></u>	<u><i>Number of people killed</i></u>
13 th March, 2003	Mumbai	11
25 th August, 2003	Mumbai	60
16 th August, 2004	Assam	16
29 th October, 2005	Delhi	66

The latest acts of terrorism are:

<u><i>Date</i></u>	<u><i>Location</i></u>	<u><i>Number of people killed</i></u>
13 th May, 2008	Jaipur	67
25 th July, 2008	Bangalore	02
26 th July, 2008	Ahmedabad	58
13 th September, 2008	Delhi	29

Out of the four mentioned hereinabove, the first three are from BJP ruled States; so one can say they are Muslim-inspired acts against *Hindutva*. But on October 11, 2007 a bomb exploded on Ajmer, killing, fortunately, only two persons. On May 18, 2007 and August 25, 2007, two attacks took place in Hyderabad, one in a mosque. In Malegaon in Maharashtra, twin bomb blasts took place after Friday prayers on September 8, 2006 in a mosque killing 40 people.

The abovementioned facts give rise to some possible conclusions. In the first place, the audacity with which attacks have been launched. Secondly the frequency with which these acts of terrorism have taken place. The locations of bomb attacks are at different places. From North to South terrorism has raised its heads. The most significant conclusion one can draw is that the attacks seem to be directed not against one particular community. Attacks

in Malegaon, Hyderabad and Ajmer were probably on Muslim community.

Hindus are not frequent or regular visitors to Pakistan. Many Pakistanis have relatives or friends in India. The “Samjhauta” Express is essentially meant for them. On February 19, 2007, two bombs ripped Samjhauta Express killing mostly Pakistanis. What was the rationale of this act of terrorism?

I am mentioning all these facts in order to show that terrorism in India has not got one face. Take the case of attack on India’s Embassy in Kabul where mostly Afghanis were expected to be killed. As against 4 Indians, 40 Afghanis (all Muslims) were in fact killed. Terrorism in India is directed at the Government, though innocent citizens are killed. That cannot be regarded as collateral for the obvious reason that the maximum is the killings of citizens.

There does not appear to be a single thread in all these acts. (This inference is subject to any finding the criminal departments of the States and the Intelligence Bureau of the Centre have come to). Any attempt to deal with terrorism must proceed on the basis that we are dealing with multi-headed hydra. It is not enough to go only against SIMI though it must be involved in some acts of terrorism. We have to go after many terrorist agencies.

What are the steps taken by the States and the Centre in this regard so far? Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) was passed essentially to deal with Punjab militants. It was of a limited duration and was, with a couple of extensions, allowed to lapse. There was at that time no opposition to it. But later when NDA Government was in power at the Centre, fresh legislation was sought to be passed. The Congress, which was in majority in the Rajya Sabha, was opposed to the enactment of the Act because of its belief that the Act was going to be abused. The NDA Government took an unusual step of calling a joint session of the two Houses and called it. Under Article 108 of the Constitution the President may summon both the Houses to sit in a joint session. Such a session was called and POTA was passed. This was in the year 2002. Despite this, not many anti-terrorist measures seem to have taken place.

In 2004, the Congress formed UPA Government in coalition with several parties. In the Common Minimum Programme, withdrawal of POTA was included, much to the delight of the left parties. So

POTA was repealed. Many draconian provisions contained in Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967 were included in POTA by amending the latter Act. But the new Parliament consciously avoided including the draconian measures of POTA such as:

- (i) admissibility of certain confessions made to a police officer (clean contrary to present Evidence Act);
- (ii) presumption of guilt of the accused (contrary to the cardinal principle of criminal jurisprudence);
- (iii) stringent bail provisions (contrary to ‘bail, not jail’ dictum of the Supreme Court);
- (iv) interception of telephonic conversations under certain conditions.

Whether because of the absence of Central legislation specifically on terrorism, more terrorist acts are taking place, as L.K. Advani says, is a moot question. With POTA in place, terrorist acts on the Parliament and Akshardham in Ahmedabad could not be prevented. Ultimately, the effectiveness of police actions and of legislation is important. Unfortunately, both parties, the Congress and the BJP, are looking at terrorism as a party matter. Certain developments in the field of legislation give this impression. The Congress says it is for the States to take action as it is a question of law and order; BJP says, the States are not armed with proper legislation on the subject which the Centre has to solve. Defence of India is in the Union list; public order is in the State list; the Concurrent list contains criminal law and preventive detention.

It is worthwhile to have a look at the legislation in different States, so far. The Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA) and the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act, 2002, have both received the President’s assent, the first one on April 24, 1999 and the second one on December 29, 2001. This assent was given when NDA was in power at the Centre. The Andhra Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act, 2001 also received the President’s assent. It was for three years, but a new Act with the same provisions is awaiting the assent of the President.

MCOCA defines organized crime as, among other things, promoting insurgency. Promoting insurgency falls under criminal law which is entry 1 in the Concurrent List. The Bombay High Court, however, accepted the view that MCOCA was under entry 1 – Public Order – on the State List. Subsequently, the High Court has held that it is

under entry 1 of the Concurrent List, namely, criminal law. Since it has received the President's assent, it is saved.

The Karnataka Act also uses the word "promoting insurgency" as forming a part of organized crime, as did the Andhra Pradesh Act, which lapsed. The Bombay High Court in its earlier decision took the view that though "insurgency" was a facet of terrorism, it could also be an aspect of "organized crime". The Court ruled that reference to insurgency in the context of organized crime was merely an incidental overlap falling under the Union List and hence it was permissible. However, the provisions about the interception of telephones and electronic media were struck down. In the State appeal, the Supreme Court has upheld the interception.

The field is thus open for any State law to incorporate provision for interception and the conversation on telephones tapped being admissible in evidence. However, the admissibility of confessions to the police and the presumption of guilt are matters repugnant to lovers of human rights.

The question is who is responsible for containing terrorism. If it is a subject of law and order, the States are responsible. Narendra Modi has criticized the Central Government for not giving consent to the Gujarat Control of Organised Crime Bill when a similar Act has been assented to by the President. The Gujarat Bill contains provision regarding interception of electronic communication. Now that the Supreme Court has upheld such a provision, there is no reason why the consent is being withheld.

The submission of a Bill for approval of the Government of India is not a constitutional requirement before its introduction in the State Assembly even if the Bill pertains to a matter in the Concurrent List. The relevant provision in the Constitution is as follows. Under Article 254, if a State law even if it is repugnant to a Central Act will prevail in that State if it has received the assent of the President. The Rajasthan Control of Organised Crime Bill, 2006 and the Andhra Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Bill, 2006 are pending with the Central Government for the assent of the President before being introduced in the Legislation. The Gujarat Control of Organised Crime Bill, 2003, and the Uttar Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Bill, 2007, though have been passed by the respective State Legislatures, are waiting for the assent of the

President. All the four Bills are on the model of MCOCA. MCOCA has received the assent. Why not these Bills?

Here, unfortunately, the party politics has entered the field. The MCOCA was assented when the NDA government was in power in the State. Now the Congress-led UPA is in power. Whether terrorism is a State or a Union subject or a subject in the Concurrent List, the administration of any law has to be done by the States. The States must be properly empowered to do so.

It appears that the Centre is not getting the assent of the President on grounds of constitutional invalidity. Possibility of conflict with a Central law on the subject may also be weighing with the Centre.

The targets of terrorist acts are many. Usually any crowded place is good enough for the terrorist act so that fear will result in the population. A busy bazaar, a temple with devotees, a crowded train, courts, even a hospital as in Ahmedabad – are places of possible terrorism. It is practically impossible to guard all these places as they are frequented by a large number of people. You cannot police the Indian railways as the Indian Railway system is the largest in the world. Temples attract devotees. Relatives and friends go to meet patients in hospitals. Where will you draw the line of no cross?

The only course open is to empower the law enforcing agencies. Making them more competent is important. In the wake of the recent Ahmedabad and Delhi blasts, the Mumbai police were put on guard. As a news channel of TV showed, being put on guard meant for the uneducated policemen was to stand at street corners. In view of the use of bicycles to carry bombs at Bangalore and Ahmedabad, it was expected that the police would check, at least at random, the bicycles. This elementary precaution was ignored by the Mumbai police.

Terrorism is a national calamity, not a party problem. It is the duty of the Central Government to see that it is tackled effectively. Which party is in power is totally irrelevant when the life and safety of the citizens are involved. Citizens of any State are the citizens of India and it is the duty of the Central Government to see that they are properly protected. The major political parties should come together and evolve a proper common strategy, instead of indulging in blame game. After all, politics is for the people though politics is

a means to achieve the welfare and safety of the people. Elections are around the corner. It is the time to act.

A History of Terrorism

The title of the book is *An Anatomy of Terror*. A History of Terrorism is its sub-heading. Andrew Smith, an eminent literary figure now in Oxford has miserably failed to understand and appreciate the meaning of terrorism which means a stream of thought and action. Terror is a single act not to be confused with series of transactions. An “A” is assassinated; it is murder; the motive for murder in all probability is a single act. In a given case, as in First World War, it is not terrorism. Terror lies

Discernible readers must bear this in mind. The Supreme Court and various academic bodies have struggled to arrive at an acceptable definition of terrorism. At one point the author seems to come near the definition of terrorism but fails to penetrate into its meaning.

He has displayed a good knowledge of acts of terror in his book, but the question – the difference between terror and terrorism – has illuded him. The Texts of Holy Terror is an entire Chapter devoted to the kernel of the book. When Jews had no home to settle down, Moses had no hesitation to order his followers to drive out the Canaanites and usurp the land. The Lord will be the God of Jews. If Canaanites resisted, the Jews “shall smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shall make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them. (Deuteronomy) Moreover, Moses recommends them that they are holy people unto the Lord. The God has spoken them to be special people.”

So the Jews were chosen, elected people. At the instance of Prophets Moses or Jhashu they killed Canaanites and drove them from the land. This is terrorism. It was not a single act. It was a series of transactions, a sort of act with a particular people. At a given moment a single man may use terror for a specific purpose, say for example, theft. That is not terrorism. Some times a group of people may attack a house for goods. That is dacoity. Though they have used terror it is not terrorism. Terrorism is an act by an individual or group of people for a specific purpose not connected with people in general. The famous distinction between law and order in detention law must be borne in mind. It will to a great extent understand the distinction between terror and terrorism. It is not a distinction without a difference.

The distinction between the two is difficult but not un-understandable. The Russian Revolution was based upon terrorism. Musharaff insists that terrorism in Kashmir is freedom struggle.

Unknown persons are usually, not always, targets. In the case of Irish Republic Army (IRA) it was unadulterated terrorism. They were in fact fighting for the freedom of Catholics in Northern Ireland. As a part of their activities they blew up the boat of Lord Louis Mountbatten who had resigned from all active politics. One does not know whether IRA wanted to kill Mountbatten. The target might be unknown. Since it was an inseparable part of their total fight, Mountbatten's killing can be called a part of terrorism. Whether one likes it or not, if it is accepted, Jammu & Kashmir is a part of India, what the Kashmiri militants are doing is nothing but terrorism.

Terrorism of Marxists in India is opposed by CPI (M). Maoists known by various names such as Naxalites have unashamedly indulged in acts of violence almost since the beginning of Indian Independence. The Telengana uprising was put down almost in the beginning. Maoism and Telengana movements were both exercises in terrorism. The object of both movements was to establish "Red" rule in India and both have failed. As many books – even textbooks – have pointed out, no armed insurrection can be successful in modern world as all State Governments are heavily armed. (Cuba is an exception).

A single act of terror can be successful. Andrew Smith, the author of this book, has given details of armed activities that have gone and are going around the world. He has dealt with, for example, Ku Klux Klan, the Irish rebellion, the problem of Palestine, Revenge of Islam, etc. But it is a pity that Mr. Smith has failed to analyze the essentials of terrorism. As someone examining terrorism has said, the terrorist has one target which he knows and which you do not know. Why is terrorism present in the world when terrorists know very well it can never succeed? Osama knows that Islam cannot be world religion as is depicted. This is where the experienced historian, has failed.

An Anatomy of Terror: A History of Terrorism.

Andrew Smith,

Pan Book

Dr. Ambedkar and Brahmins

Rakshit Sonawane's account of how Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's son and the so-called followers of Babasaheb treated Dr. Savita @ Mai makes very sad reading (Indian Express, Friday, 30th May, 2003). The devotion with which Babasaheb's Brahmin wife looked after him in his fading life and health went totally unheeded; worse, even Babasaheb's appreciation of the way she nursed him and cared for him was sought to be erased by his followers.

When Babasaheb's *The Buddha And His Dharma* was posthumously published, it was published without the Preface written by Babasaheb. The Preface which was written on 15th March, 1956 contained touching references to the help he had received from his wife. After the great leader's death, his widow had become *persona non grata* to his followers and the publishers suppressed the Preface and along with it, Babasaheb's expression of his fine feelings for his wife.

All this came to be known only when Bhagwan Das, a Punjabi Buddhist Litterateur included that preface in his Rare Prefaces Written by Dr. Ambedkar published in 1980. In this Preface Babasaheb had given an account of his early religious expressions, the origin of the book, and the circumstances under which the book came to be written. These points were incorporated by Mr. R. E. Bhole (the then Chairman of People's Education Society) in his Foreword (dated 19th November 1957) to *The Buddha and His Dharma* published first in 1957 but the references made by Babasaheb to his wife Savita were avoided. The non-inclusion of Babasaheb's Preface in the edition of his own book was in fact an insult to his memory. How could a poor summary of Babasaheb's narration be a substitute for the original Preface written by him? Even in a later edition (1974) in the Preface written by Justice R.R. Bhole (he was a Judge of the Bombay High Court at this time) not a word was said about Mai Ambedkar. (Source *Ambedkar and Buddhism* by Sangharakshita: Windhorse Publications, 1986).

This attitude of Babasaheb's followers is in sharp contrast to Babasaheb's own attitude towards Brahmins. Babasaheb's anti-Brahmnanism did not lead him to hate Brahmins. This can be seen from several facts which I am giving in chronological order.

Let us begin with Babasaheb's surname. The family name of Ambedkars was Sakpal but the family took the surname of Ambawadekar, after the village Ambawade in Ratnagiri District. In

a short autobiographical account, Babasaheb has recalled that he had a Brahmin teacher named Ambedkar in his school. Babasaheb affectionately remembers that his teacher used to give a share of his food. This teacher thought that Ambawadekar was a clumsy name and shortened it to Ambedkar which was then put in the school record.

Later when Babasaheb was in the second standard of the High School (present Sixth standard), he had a Brahmin teacher named Pendse whom Babasaheb remembers as an affectionate person. On one rainy day when Babasaheb went to the school completely drenched, Pendse teacher sent him with his own son, to Pendse's house where arrangement for a hot water bath was made.

In Elphinstone High School, Bombay, Babasaheb was asked to write on the blackboard to which some students in the class objected because their Tiffin boxes kept behind the blackboard would be defiled. The mathematics teacher told those students that Babasaheb would write on the blackboard and they were free to remove their Tiffin boxes. The mathematics teacher was a Brahmin called Joshi (This autobiographical account is included in Bhalchandra Phadke's *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* - 1985, Shri Vidya Prakashan, Pune). When in school Babasaheb used to go to Charni Road Garden (now S.K. Patil Udyan) to study. Krishnaji Arjun Keluskar, the Brahmin Headmaster of Wilson High School, who used to frequent the same garden, noticed the studious boy. Keluskar had pleasant talks with Babasaheb who says that these talks used to set him thinking. In 1907 Babasaheb, being the first Matriculate in the Mahar community, was felicitated in a public meeting where Keluskar was a speaker. Keluskar presented to Babasaheb a book on Buddha written by him in Marathi. Being nothing if not an avid reader, the new matriculate lost no time in devouring the book which contained the sublime story of the *Enlightened One*. One could be pardoned if one hazards a guess that Keluskar sowed the seeds of conversion in Babasaheb's mind. Keluskar continued to take interest in the untouchable boy and was instrumental in getting financial help from the Maharaja of Baroda for Babasaheb's higher education.

In the well-known Mahad Satyagraha where the Chavdar Lake was "polluted" by the untouchables, .Bapurao Joshi, a leading Brahmin citizen of Mahad, was a strong supporter. The caste Hindus wanted to purify the lake, but Bapurao Joshi jumped into the lake before that, challenging the pollution theory.

Sangharakshita (in the book mentioned earlier) has narrated an incident connected with the Mahad Conference. Two prominent non-Brahmin leaders of Maharashtra offered to support Babasaheb in his campaign on the condition that no Brahmins, even the liberal-minded Brahmins sympathetic to the cause of the untouchables, should be allowed to participate in the campaign. Babasaheb flatly rejected the offer by declaring that the view that all Brahmins were enemies of the untouchables was erroneous. What was objectionable was the spirit of Brahminism viz., the idea that some castes were higher than the other. Babasaheb said that a Brahmin free from the spirit of Brahminism was welcome. Not birth, but worth - that was what counted. This in effect was a basic Buddhist principle.

On one occasion Babasaheb was hesitant to fully take this stand. Maha Bodhi Society of which a Bengali Brahmin (not a Buddhist) was the President published a journal which had worldwide readership among the Buddhists. Babasaheb was reluctant to write for that journal because the President of that Society was a Brahmin. However in order to make known his views on Buddhism to the largest possible number of people, he did contribute an article of 6500 words. This was the famous "*The Buddha and the Future of His Religion*" which appeared in April-May 1950 Special Issue of *Maha Bodhi*, the official organ of the Society.

When Babasaheb was under a siege while piloting the Hindu Code Bill, which was opposed tooth and nail by the Kayastha President of India, it was two Brahmins — Hridaynath Kunzru and N.V. Gadgil - who made strong speeches in its support in the Lok Sabha. Incidentally it should be noted that Gadgil had been seriously injured while trying to force entry in a temple at Poona along with the untouchables. However, it must also be mentioned that the Bengali Brahmin, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, denounced the Bill as the one which would destroy the Hindu society.

As a rule, a sitting judge of a High Court cannot comment upon a bill pending in the legislature. Casting aside this rule, Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar (of the Bombay High Court) delivered lectures supporting the Hindu Code Bill. Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar's elder brother, Professor Ashwathamacharya Balacharya Gajendragadkar, took premature retirement from his post in Elphinstone College, Bombay, to accept the offer of Babasaheb to become the first Principal of Siddharth College, Bombay, - the first college established by Peoples Education Society. Incidentally, Babasaheb

and Prof. Gajendragadkar were classmates in the college and both of them passed the B.A. Examination in the same year i.e. 1912.

Freethinkers born in the so-called high castes are not proud of their birth in those castes, nor are they ashamed of it. They did not choose to be so born. People like us who have chosen to be freethinkers have been highly influenced by rationalism in Babasaheb's writings. Some of Babasaheb's so-called followers today are knocking at the doors of a leader who wanted the Government of Maharashtra to refrain from publishing Babasaheb's books. If Babasaheb was in a grave, he would have undoubtedly turned in it.

Kanshiram of Lucknow

In the United Kingdom when any one was created a Lord, he has to accept the name of some regime technically as his fiefdom. But now there are not enough fiefdoms which can be given to the Lords or which they can own. The only rights the Lords enjoy are to sit in the Lords for a fixed period of lifetime. With the reformation of the House of Lords, the Lords have no life lords.

We call Kanshiram the Lord; but the only town that can be associated with him is the town of Lucknow. Here he landed with his politics; here he wanted his political set up to grow. Here also he found Mayawati, who was an OBC. Mayawati once nursed the ambition of becoming a Sub-Inspector of Police so that she could undo the injustice done to Dalits. For Kanshiram who always dreamed her to be in high position told her, as she has herself told many years later, that if she becomes Minister, as Kanshiram desired her to be, she could see the file holders usually IPS Officers genuflecting for her signatures or initials. This was a much more dignified job, provided it is done in a dignified way. But she did not do so. She routinely abused the Officer, who had passed the Commission's examination. She wanted Uttar Pradesh to be the citadel of Dalits.

Her knowledge of Ambedkar's philosophy was abysmal. Ambedkar especially fought for untouchables - Mahars in Maharashtra. Babasaheb always spoke in Marathi or English. This would not have endeared him to Dalits in the North. There were several reasons for this. First, Babasaheb appeared in "suit and boot". What is important is that there was never a single scandal around him. It is on record that Yashwantrao, son of Babasaheb, who was working with Babasaheb at the relevant time, was once asked full account of Rs. 10/- entrusted to Yashwantrao but belonging to the party. But honest politician had no place in public life.

Kanshiram had no such scruples. He had no vision. His outlook was confined to OBCs. A clean-shaven Sikh and a Graduate he had a job in a Government Department in Pune. In 1964, an OBC clerk was suspended. Kanshiram protested and took up his case to Court which upheld the caste of the concerned clerk. It was here Kanshiram became aware of caste distinctions in Maharashtra. It pained him that even in a liberal place like Pune, casteism was rampant. He wanted to work for the OBCs. He would not have

succeeded in Maharashtra. First because in Maharashtra, Mahars were dominant and were followers of B.R. Ambedkar. Second, they could only understand Marathi well. Kanshiram, who did not know anything of Ambedkar nor any other language but Hindi, decided that Uttar Pradesh would be his field of activity.

Having been born in Punjab, because of the influence of Sikhism and Arya Samaj, Kanshiram was not a casteist. Moreover, he had come to Pune which, in his opinion, was a liberal place. The Pune incident referred to above kindled casteism in him. Till then Kanshiram was only marginally aware of Babasaheb. He knew him as a sort of leader of Mahars. Kanshiram was never aware of Ambedkar's greatness or scholarship. In fact, Ambedkar was looked upon as an odd man in the North. When, once Kanshiram took Babasaheb and Shahu Maharaj (of Kolhapur) to the North, people wondered who they were. They recognised to some extent the man in "suit and boot" but wondered who the man with turban was. This was the ignorance prevalent among the Dalits then.

Till then Kanshiram had read little of Ambedkar. Thereafter he avidly read Ambedkar. This had one unfortunate effect. It, in Kanshiram's mind, ignited intensive 'anti-Brahmanism'. Though in Mahad Conference, Ambedkar took a leading part in burning *Manusmriti*, he was never a Brahmin hater. But a smaller man like Kanshiram could not travel the right path. Manuwadi became the standard abuse of Brahmins. Two words have, however, to be added. Though *Manusmriti* prescribed strong punishments to untouchables for the smallest offences, it is not on record that any punishment was in fact given. Secondly, by the time Kanshiram entered politics, Manusmriti had been buried ten fathoms deep and nobody - not even Brahmins - remembered it. Manuwadis were nowhere in India. It was tragic even some gems in *Manusmriti* were and are forgotten.

Secondly, not only untouchability was abolished under the Constitution but now under the law, untouchability is an offence under the Civil Rights Act. Reservation in the Legislature originally for 25 years has continued. Reservations in Government service have been made, both in original posts and in promotions also. Now moves are afoot in making reservations in higher business schools; even in private institutions reservations are sought to be made. Constitutional mandate allowing the Government may compel private Companies to reserve certain percentage of posts - as in Government service - reserved for Dalits. Reservation of posts is no

longer a contested issue as was formerly. Much was lost for Kanshiram when he elected to enter politics.

For a person who wishes to carve out a place for himself in politics nothing was difficult. Brahmins were hardly 5% in Uttar Pradesh. They were not a threat to Dalits. But they aligned with Muslims and Kshatriyas in a crucial number. In Uttar Pradesh only 26% of the population was Dalits. They, on the basis of number only, could never aspire to come to power. Here the genius of Kanshiram comes into play. Without ignoring the Dalit factor he could manage that the Dalits can come into power. At least they could wield influence over other parties. Twenty six per cent was not a small number. By making other parties know this number and making Dalits united in their number, he could play a significant role in UP, politics. He established in 1984 a political party - Bahujan Samaj Party - BSP for short - I do not think he ever had the dream of becoming or making Mayawati Chief Minister.

Mayawati became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. This was a personal triumph for Kanshiram. Elections, as far as Dalits were concerned, were found to be foundation for Dalit problems. Even if all the Dalits had voted for BSP (which they did not) not one Dalit could become Chief Minister or even a Minister. But Kanshiram was a great master in politics. He dangled the number 26 in front of other parties which were too willing to accommodate Dalits, they were willing one to become a Chief Minister.

Thus, Mayawati - the possessor of magic - became a Chief Minister. Kanshiram could become one if he wanted. He wanted to remain a power, rather than in power. Once a Chief Minister, Mayawati could select her own Ministers - corrupt or not. Money is never a problem for a Chief Minister. It may pour in, really or otherwise, in the coffers of the party. On her own accounts, she has more than ten crores - apparently birthday gifts.

Ultimately, the success of Mayawati is the success of Kanshiram - the power behind the throne.

Kanshiram later crowned Mayawati his successor. It was apparent that he was slowly withdrawing from politics. He probably imagined that he could influence U.P. politics by remaining outside like Mahatma Gandhi. In Maharashtra, it was thought that Mr. Y.B. Chavan corrupted the Mahar and OBC leaders by dangling before them and sometimes giving them fruits of office. There was no such

leader in U.P. Thus there was no such possibility in U.P. But no outstanding Dalit leader came up in U.P. with Chavan's tactics.

It is said that Kanshiram was the only leader next to Ambedkar. It is unfair to compare Ambedkar to Kanshiram or to any leader. Ambedkar was an intellectual which Kanshiram was not; he started reading Ambedkar only after the Pune incident. By that time all rights for Dalits had been won. Kanshiram could never hope to finish reading Ambedkar. Ambedkar was untouchable as Kanshiram was not. It has been mentioned that even in a progressive State like Baroda, a Peon would not hand over a file to Ambedkar, he threw one at him. That was the extent of untouchability. Dalits, like Kanshiram, never suffered it. Babasaheb Ambedkar being a scholar had made a deep study of Buddhism which he adopted to suit Dalits of India. Buddhists elsewhere have criticized Ambedkar for repudiating the Four Noble Truths which were, to begin with, preached in Mrigavan near Varanasi (Dear Park). Ambedkar is in fact not regarded as Buddha. At best, he is respected as a libertarian.

Here the Buddhism has by now become many Buddhisms. You have unadulterated Theravad Buddhism. Nagarjuna, some years later, brought mythology into it. Then there is Chinese Buddhism. Japanese have got their own Zen Buddhism. Thailand has got Buddhism which worships idols. In his lifetime Buddha forbade the worship of idols. But Mahatma Gandhi bemoaned that Buddhists have erected maximum number of Buddha statues. Then there is Tantric Buddhism which is not Buddhism. There is nothing to indicate that Kanshiram ever knew the different kinds of Buddhism. Like Ambedkar's followers, he knew Buddhism was an alternative to Hinduism or Brahmanism. If you see books on Buddhism in India, you will not fail to see that every book abuses Brahmanism. There is no analysis of the principles of Brahmanism. No doubt, Kanshiram at one stage embraced Buddhism because, it is said, he was cremated as per Buddhist rites.

Kanshiram, no doubt, was a Dalit leader. It is doubtful if a cultured man like Ambedkar could ever win an election. He could not be relied upon making Dalits Ministers. He only wanted the stigma of untouchability removed and that could be done, as indicated earlier, by migrating to a religion like Buddhism - which Ambedkar did. Ambedkar had studied Buddhism. Few, if any, of his followers ever knew the principles of Buddhism. In his sense embracing Buddhism was emancipation and not conversion.

Spaghetti of Indian Politics

The fall of Vajpayee Government after 13 months of shaky existence is not the first example of a loosely knit coalition government collapsing due to the maneuvers of politicians. Vajpayee Government was propped by regular parties as well as some individuals who represented the single-member parties in the Lok Sabha - Maneka Gandhi, Buta Singh and Chandrasekhar. Small parties were having 3 or 4 members such as that of Chautala. No wonder L. K Advani was driven to publicly bemoan the blackmailing indulged in by small parties. Ultimately it was the All-India Anna Dravid Munnetra Kazagam that pulled down the Government. Jayalalitha made several demands, as a price of her support, which were unjustified but which were met. No, Government howsoever weak cannot satisfy the insatiable hunger of an unscrupulous politician such as Jayalalitha.

But she is not the only person who has brought down a government. Chandrasekhar's Samajwadi Janata Dal Government in 1991 depended for its survival on Rajiv Gandhi and satisfied many of his known and unknown demands. The DMK Government in Tamilnadu was dismissed and President's rule was imposed, though the then Governor Surjit Singh Barnala, had opposed such a move and subsequently resigned. Subramaniarn Swamy, the Law Minister in Chandrasekhar's Government, knew that the President could be satisfied of the breakdown of a State Government otherwise than upon a report from the Governor. Then there came the demand for the dismissal of Chautala Government of Haryana because two inconsequential police constables of Haryana were found snooping around Rajiv Gandhi's residence in Delhi. Even the genius of Subramaniam Swamy could not find that because of this "a situation has arisen in which the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution". So the recommendation for the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and fresh elections were called for.

The example of "the old man in a hurry", Sitaram Kesri, in toppling Devegowda with a view to himself becoming the Prime Minister and ultimately settling down with the alternative of Inder Kumar Gujral is too recent to be recalled in detail.

But it would be hypothetical to say that these are the only persons of straw in Indian politics. Let us recall the history of the Lok Sabha.

The first, the second and the third Lok Sabhas lasted their full terms - April 1952- April 1957, April 1957 to April 1962, April 1962 to March 1967. During the tenure of the third Lok Sabha, Indira Gandhi succeeded Lal Bahadur as Prime Minister Lal Bahadur himself had earlier succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru in May 1964.

The Fourth Lok Sabha constituted in March 1967 saw the reduced strength of the Congress Party and Indira Gandhi decided to call for fresh elections earlier and the fourth Lok Sabha was dissolved in Dec. 1970. The fifth Lok Sabha constituted in March 1971 was the longest, as it was extended by two years under the provisions of internal emergency proclaimed on 25th June, 1975. However, Indira Gandhi called for the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in January 1977 and the elections held in March 1977 swept the Janata Party in power with over-whelming majority in the Lok Sabha.

The Janata Party which came into power with the sole object of “Indira Hatao” could not be expected to last long. It was a coalition of parties of disparate ideologies - naturally it could not engender and sustain coalition culture. Charan Singh who, like Sitaram Kesri, was a man in hurry, wrecked the Janata Government with the help of the Congress Party. He became Prime Minister but did not face the Lok Sabha which was dissolved in August 1979.

In the election of January 1980 Indira Gandhi’s Congress returned to power with more than two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. Immediately thereafter she dismissed Janata Governments in seven states and imposed President’s rule in those states. Ample justification for this action had been provided by Charan Singh earlier who had got Congress Governments dismissed in the states. These dismissals were upheld by the Supreme Court. Justice P. N. Bhagwati, in his judgement, pointed out that with the massive success of the Janata Party in the Lok Sabha elections the very substratum of the support for the Congress Government in the States had disappeared.

It was thus inevitable that the dismissal of the Janata Governments in the States and the Progressive Democratic Government consisting of Sharad Pawar’s Congress and Janata Party would be upheld by the Supreme Court. Justice P. N. Bhagwati also wrote his famous letter of congratulations to Indira Gandhi.

Indira Gandhi seemed to settle down to rule India as its Empress as long as she lived. Her assassination on 30th October, 1984 catapulted Rajiv Gandhi into Prime Ministership and he called for

General Elections. The 7th Lok Sabha lasted from January 1980 to December 1984. The 8th Lok Sabha constituted in December 1984 provided Rajiv's Congress a majority higher than that of Nehru's Congress.

The 8th Lok Sabha lasted its full term till November, 1989 and in the elections that followed, for the 9th Lok Sabha, Rajiv's Congress emerged as the largest single party but not with sufficient strength to form a government. The Janata Dal, after defeating Chandrasekhar's claim to the Prime Ministership by questionable methods installed the moral V P. Singh as Prime Minister and the arch-type of party politics, Devi Lal as the Deputy Prime Minister. This secular Government which depended upon Bharatiya Janata Party for its survival collapsed when the support was withdrawn consequent to L. K. Advani's arrest on his Ratha Yatra. This was followed by the installation of Chandrasekhar as the Prime Minister to which reference has been made earlier and also to the circumstances in which he recommended the dissolution of the 9th Lok Sabha.

Fresh elections were held and the Congress Party was returned with sufficient strength to form a government which it did with P. V. Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister. In the election campaign Rajiv Gandhi had been assassinated. This, 10th Lok Sabha, lasted its full term from June 1991 to May 1996. Narasimha Rao also served his full term as Prime Minister.

Then started the era of hung parliaments. The 11th Lok Sabha came into being in May 1996 and was dissolved in December 1997 - a period of 19 months during which there were three Prime Ministers including Vajpayee for 13 days. The 12th Lok Sabha with Vajpayee as the Prime Minister lasted 13 months. The elections for the 13th Lok Sabha are to take place in September and October 1999.

What are the issues on which the parties are contesting the elections? Talks of state and national alliances and tie-ups are in full swing. None of the parties is talking of removal of poverty, population control, control of inflation, stable law and order situation; nor of corruption and several scandals that have rocked the country with no apparent effect. Bofors scandal was a peanut compared with urea, hawala and animal husbandry scandals. The worst, base features of party politics that Roy feared are at play.

In this background Sharad Pawar and his two colleagues have deflected the attention of the nation by raising an issue which is of no consequence for the stability or the welfare of the country The

Maratha leader had been sidelined in Maharashtra and if a foreigner and that too a younger one became the Prime Minister his ambition of becoming the Prime Minister, not concealed with any particular care, would never be realised. This may not be reason why he has raised this issue It is nevertheless misconceived. Pawar is not original in this demand which has been put forth by the BJP for a long time.

The question is whether an Indian citizen who is not born as a citizen of India should hold the high office of the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister. Those who are answering this question in the negative want the Constitution to be amended accordingly. Persons like L K. Advani, Ram Jethmalani, Jyoti Basu though born in territories now in Pakistan, became the citizens of India by operation of law contained in the Constitution. The fact some of the Congress presidents were foreigners or were of foreign origin is not relevant in the present context because now the levers of power will be placed in the hands of such persons.

Sonia Gandhi who is the centre of discussion was born in Italy, studied in England where she met Rajiv Gandhi, married him and thereafter has continuously resided in India, though for sometime she retained her Italian citizenship. She was thus non-Indian resident for some time. She became a mother in this country and she, as stated by herself, became a widow in India. Her connection with the country cannot be thus said to be tenuous. The oldest political party is led by her and if that party sweeps the polls she may become the Prime Minister. Are the parties opposed to the Congress haunted by the fear that the Congress on the wave of Sonias charisma will ride into power?

The argument against a person of foreign origin holding the high offices of the President, the Vice President and the Prime Minister is based on the assumption or apprehension that the person's loyalty to this country may not be sufficiently strong. It would be unsafe to entrust to that person these high offices when matters affecting the national welfare and security are to be handled. Will you stop only at these three offices? Such a person can become an M.P., a Minister - even a Defense Minister. Outside politics such a person can become officer in administrative, foreign and military services and can rise on merits to the highest position. The simple fact is that it is highly impractical and improper, by law, to prevent a citizen of foreign origin from occupying any position. That question is best decided by the wisdom of the electorate and the legislators.

It is often pointed out that the United States Constitution provides that no person other than a natural born citizen of the United States shall be the President of the U.S. Hence, Henry Kissinger, a first generation U.S. citizen, could at best become Secretary of State and National Security Advisor. The historical reasons for this provision are not known. However in France it is not provided that only a natural born citizen of France can be the President or Prime Minister. Though since 1948 only ethnic Italians have been Presidents of Italy; but that is not because of any legal provision. In Australia, a Prime Minister must be either natural-born or at least five years naturalised. Even in Pakistan it is not provided that the Head of the State should have been born in Pakistan, though he should be a Muslim. It is not known whether a converted Muslim can be barred legally from the high office. Are we bringing in Ram Rajya under the pretext of avoiding Rome Rajya”?

Freak Economics or Sensible Sociology

Steven D. Levitt was being interviewed for the Society of Fellows, a Harvard institution, which pays young scholars to do their own work, without any commitment, for three years. His work was examined by Senior Fellows who were world-class intellectuals. One senior fellow asked what the unifying theme of his work was. Levitt fumbled for an answer because he did not know what, if any, unifying theme of his work was. Amartya Sen, the future Nobel Prize winner for economics, summarized the unifying theme and asked Levitt whether that was the unifying theme. Levitt was too happy to say - that was it. Other fellows suggested other themes - each one of which was accepted by Levitt as his theme.

The situation was becoming comical when the philosopher Robert Nozick intervened to ask: "How old are you, Mr. Levitt?" The answer: "Twenty-six, Sir". Nozick told his colleagues on the interviewing board that at that age, Levitt did not need any unifying theme. "Maybe he's going to be one of those people who is so talented that he doesn't need one. He will take a question and he'll just answer it, and it will be fine."

That is exactly what Steven D. Levitt, who has recently been awarded John Butes Clark Medal for being the best American economist under forty, has done by asking several questions and answering them in a series of essays collected in the book under review.

Looking to the title of the essays in the book, it seems as though it is a book dealing with freak economics. "What Do School Teachers and Sumo Wrestlers Have in Common?"; "The Ku Klux Klan and Real Estate Agents"; "Drug Dealers Living With Their Moms"; "Where Have All The Criminals Gone"; and so on. Levitt is not a rogue economist and, therefore, one need not dub what is contained in this book as freak economics.

It is easy to dismiss this book as no economics at all. But if you recognize economics as the study explaining how people get what they want, then Freakonomics will be found to be distilled "dismal science". In *Affluent Society* (Boston Houghton Muffin 1958), John Kenneth Galbraith, the economist sage, pointed out that economic and social behaviours are complex and to comprehend their character is mentally tiring. Conventional wisdom consists in answering conventional questions. Unconventional questions are not necessarily bad nor are they uninteresting.

Levitt has raised several unconventional questions - in a provocative manner - and has come out with unconventional answers in this dazzling book - which is a reader's delight and a reviewer's despair.

In the debate around the selection of judges to the U.S. Supreme Court, one of the questions asked is what the nominee is going to do with *Roe v. Wade*, a case decided by the Supreme Court on 22nd January, 1973. By this decision, the Supreme Court legalized abortion throughout the country whereas earlier it was legal only in five States. Levitt says that this help triggered, a generation later, the greatest crime drop in recorded history. How?

According to Levitt, decades of studies have shown that a child born into an adverse environment is far more likely than other children to become a criminal. Millions of women, who were most likely to be benefited by *Roe v. Wade*, were from poor background which bred criminals. Smaller the families, lesser is the number of criminals. Levitt insists that this was the cause of drop in crimes in the U.S.A. in the late eighties and nineties when those improvident children (born but for *Roe v. Wade*,) would have reached the age of entry into crime. According to him, more serious punishment or larger police force would not have reduced crime.

The chapter *Drug Dealers Living with Their Moms* gives a very vivid and authentic picture of the world of drugs. This chapter is based upon a first-hand account given by Sudhir Venkatesh, a student of University of California, who entered that world by winning the confidence of drug dealers. A crack gang works pretty much like the standard capitalist enterprise. The drug empire is clearly demarcated among the oligarchs. A very interesting calculation made shows how the earnings from the trade are divided among the members of the gang. The world of drugs is a closed world and their members tend to remain with the families.

Did *Listerine* make mouthwash as much as it did bad breath itself! No, says Levitt. Listerine invented by Lister in the 19th century as an antiseptic, was later used as cure for gonorrhoea and as a floor cleaner. An aggressive advertisement campaign in the 1920s persuaded people that it was a solution for bad breath. Suddenly people became conscious of bad breath which till then was not considered a serious problem.

In just seven years the Company's revenues rose from \$ 115,000 to more than \$ 8 millions.

School teachers and Sumo Wrestlers indulge in cheating, appropriate to their profession; more deaths occur by children drowning in swimming pools (there are 5 million residential pools in the U.S.) than by guns (there are 200 million guns in the U.S.); people do cheating on online dating. These are some of the diverse topics covered by the book. The *sequitor* of the analysis is not always clear.

Take for instance the examination of the data relating to the names given by the parents to their children. Levitt classifies the names into “black” and “white” names, not necessarily related to race. Examining and exploring all the ‘relevant’ data, Levitt asks the question whether being given a distinctive white or black name affects one’s prospects in life? Answer is no, but a boy named Jake will tend to do better in life than the one called DeShawn. That is because the former is less likely to have been raised in a low income, low-education, single parent household, not because the name itself is of any advantage.

At least this is an admission that findings are co-relational not casual. The question of the effect of titles of books or the names of their authors is, in the context of the study of the names of the boys, worth examining.

That brings me to what I mentioned in the beginning about the interview Levitt had with the Senior Fellows of Harvard University. Did he or does he have any unifying theme? This book answers this question in the negative. As Robert Noziok mentioned in the interview - Levitt is one of those talented persons who will take a question and answer it. That is what Levitt has done in this book which deals mostly with sociological issues rather than with economic ones.

Reference:

Freakonomics - a Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything – written in collaboration with Stephen J . Dubner, a journalist of New York. Pub: Harper Collins, 2005. Pages xii + 233, price \$ 25.95.

Maldives

It is a nation or a country of 350,000 people – a population less than that of a taluka in India. A country like ours, which has a population of 1.2 billion, is a giant compared to Maldives which is situated to South West of India. Maldives is not on land. The Republic of Maldives consists of 1999 islands of which 200 are inhabitable. There are, among 1900, many lagoons and atolls having large number of coral reefs. That is how Maldives has become a tourist destination.

Some powers think it is of strategic importance. A big power can establish a base. It is on a route on which are Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. That is how the Chinese are contemplating a base there. Maldives, despite its 2000 islands, is a small country which can be gulped by any country. In 1996, 86 L.T.T.E. men captured Male (its capital) airport and would have proceeded to capture the country. In response to an appeal by the then President, Rajiv Gandhi sent a battalion of 1400 soldiers and the L.T.T.E. fled.

Though Maldives is situated at a strategic point and an outside power can establish a base there, it has not been done for several reasons. In the first place, Maldives is not one piece of land. A base established in one island will have to be defended from a force situated on another island. Secondly, Maldivians have now recognized that because of global warming, the water level is rising and the islands will be submerged, if not today at least in the near future.

Maldives is contemplating abandoning the islands and settling its population in another country even by paying some price. India, with its huge population, is not eager to accommodate Maldivians who are not likely to contribute to wealth. Sri Lanka, with its civil war, does not want another problem on hand. Australia, a large country with sparse population, can easily accommodate 350,000 people. But there will be ethnic and language problems. It is to be seen where and when Maldivians migrate in case the islands get submerged.

It has already been indicated above that Maldives is rich in fish and other marine life. Countries such as Germany which have no sea always go to Maldives to enjoy its natural beauty, harbours, coral

reefs, etc. That is how it is a tourists' destination. Major part of the income of the country comes from tourism. Coconuts and fish also fetch considerable income. Despite all this, Maldives is not a rich country, though not poor by Asian standards.

Some of the inhabitants are original Sinhalese. Originally, many East Africans came here. There are immigrants from other countries. For nearly 1400 years there was large presence of Buddhism in the country. Many specimens in the local museum bear witness to this. In about 1200 A.D., Maldives accepted Sunni Islam and today 99% of the population is Sunni. Maldives is liberal but it is feared that militant Islam may not take long to invade the islands. Even now the influence of local Islam is growing. But Maldives, despite 1999 islands, is a small country and is not likely to be of much influence. Plus there is the added possibility of the islands going under water any time.

Tourism brings income but in the case of Maldives it is bringing some undesirable things. Narcotics trade is increasing. The younger generation is influenced by the visible prosperity and mode of living of the tourists and is asking for change.

For some years, Maldives was under Portuguese rule and then passed on to the British. In 1965 A.D. Maldives gained independence and a Sultanate was established. In 1968 the Sultanate was overthrown. The first President of the Republic, for nearly ten years, was Ibrahim Nasir. In 1970 Abdul Gayoom became the President and has ruled with iron hand. He banned political parties. Several agitations have taken place during his regime. Maldivian Democratic Party was led by Mohammed Nasheed who was jailed for nearly ten years by Abdul Gayoom. Amnesty International has called Nasheed "a prisoner of conscience".

Fortunately because of popular pressure, presidential election was held in October, 2008 and Mohammed Nasheed was elected. Abdul Gayoom (71 years old) made way. Our Vice-President represented India at the swearing-in-ceremony of Nasheed and called the development a democratic development. Incidentally, Mohammed Nasheed is 30 years younger than Gayoom.

India, a secular, democratic republic, has reason to be happy about this wind of change. Nepal, hitherto a Hindu Kingdom, has now

become a secular republic. In Pakistan, military regime has come to an end and an elected Government has come into power. Bhutan retains monarchy, but elected Government. In Bangladesh attempts are being made to bring about clean regime. All these are welcome winds of change.

Alexandria Library

Libraries do not make history nor are they noticeable places in history. Even the citizens are not always aware of a library in their city. Some Encyclopedias do mention about Alexandria Library.

The Library of U.S. Congress is known as the number of that book is usually printed in the book. The Library of the British Museum is well known as in that library Karl Marx researched and produced “Das Capital”. You may even say the Communist revolution was launched from that library. Many are not aware that the Indian Parliament has an excellent library recently renovated.

But Alexandria Library is famous for historical reasons. Alexandria is the port town of Egypt founded by Alexander of Macedonia. It was the largest centre of learning and possessed the largest library of antique literature. It suffered loss during the days of Caesar and Theodosius. In modern time, it was restored to some extent after the opening of Suez Canal. It houses some of the great relics such as some great Roman antiquities. It housed at one time two obelisks known as Cleopatra’s needles – one now standing on the Thames embankment – and the other in New York.

Hypatia, a woman of great beauty and intelligence, was closely associated with Alexandria Library. She knew that she was beautiful as well as intelligent so much so that she thought that no man was a match for her. She rejected many suits and continued in her pursuit of philosophy. She was a teacher of Greek philosophy and her lectures were largely attended. She was not a Christian and was regarded as a pagan. She was known for her chastity.

The Archbishop of Alexandria got jealous as his lectures were thinly attended. In 415 C.E. when she was returning to her room, she was disrobed and killed by Christians who alleged that she was a propagator of paganism. There is a well known biography of Hypatia by Charles Kingsley. Incidentally, Charles Bradlaugh named his daughter Hypatia who edited some of his books.

M.N. Roy in his historic role of Islam comments that the real destruction of the Alexandrian seat of learning was the work of St Cyril who defied the Goddess of learning in the famous fear of Hypatia. The Christian saint would not tolerate the philosophical lectures and mathematical discourses by a young pagan woman

(Hypatia). He bemoaned the fact that a woman should be patronized by the Alexandrian society while the pious but incomprehensible sermons were attended only by a few. According to Roy, the rebels led by a regiment of monks burning with religious frenzy attacked the Alexandrian seat of learning and in the name of religion, perpetrated crimes too painful to be recorded and too shameful to be remembered. There is no instance in history where Saracens have shown or acted in an anti-knowledge fashion. The Caliphs encouraged men from the Arab world to study Greek literature, philosophy and medicine. It is universally acknowledged that the Arabs introduced Greek philosophy to the Western world when the latter was in dark ages.

During the period of the Fatimides of Africa, the library of Cairo counted over one hundred thousand volumes. M.N. Roy says that this fact gives lie to another calumny which depicts the rise of Islam as an eruption of savage fanaticism. The reference is the destruction of the famous library of Alexandria.

While books written in the eleventh and twelfth centuries scandalously give the story of the burning of the Library of Alexandria, contemporary accounts, even by Christians, are totally silent on the subject and in fact point out that Saracens were specifically directed that the books acquired even in war should not be destroyed.

One apocryphal story needs to be noted. When the Arab army conquered Alexandria during the time of the Second Caliph Omar, the General in charge was dumb-founded by the large number of books in the library. He sought instruction from the Caliph as to what should be done about them. The Caliph is reported to have said: "If these writings of the Greeks agree with the Book of God, they are useless; and need not be preserved; if they disagree they are pernicious, and should be destroyed." According to the story, the contents of the Library were distributed among the city's public baths, whose 4000 furnaces were fueled for six months with papyrus and parchment rolls. What an unbelievable story.

Will Durant in "The Age of Faith" gives three reasons why the story is unbelievable:

(1) A large part of the library has been destroyed earlier by Christian ardor;

(2) The remainder had suffered such hostility and neglect that most of the collection had disappeared by 642 and

(3) In the 500 years between the supposed event and its first reporter, no Christian historian mentions it.

The theory, says Durant, is now regarded as a fable. In any case, the gradual dissolution of Alexandria Library was a tragedy because it contained the works of several Greek philosophers, and historians. Fortunately, in recent years, the library has resurrected and it now occupies several floors. It has been partly financed by UNESCO.

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar (Retd)

Justice RAJahagirdar (Retd) studied economics and politics for his graduation and post graduation. During his college days he took part in dramas, debates, and elocution and Students ' Union activities. He studied Law while in employment and passed Law examinations meritoriously in 1959. Having passed the I.A.S. examination, he chose not to join the Civil Service. He served as Government Pleader, Professor of Labour Law in K.C. College and in the University of Bombay.

In 1976 he was appointed Judge in the Bombay High Court and retired from there in 1990. After retirement he was appointed Chairman of Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission but did not continue for long for personal reasons. He was also Chairman of the Committee for Fixing the Fee of Higher Education in Maharashtra.

In addition to his qualifications in Economics and Law, Justice Jahagirdar is a student of Philosophy, History and Religion. A voracious reader, Jahagirdar is fond of Will Durant and his wife Ariel, the famous philosopher-historian couple and quotes them often. His personal library, containing all the volumes of "The History of Civilization" written by this couple, is huge. Recently he has donated all his books to Academy of Political and Social Studies and SM Joshi Foundation Library, in Pune.

He is connected with free thoughtmovement and organisations and has spoken and written extensively on rationalism and secularism. He had been the Chairman of Indian Rationalist Association, President of Maharashtra Rationalist Association and Editor of "The Radical Humanist". As a Founder-Trustee of the Rationalist Foundation he has contributed Rs. 5 lakhs towards its corpus.

Dr. (Mrs.) Sharad Jahagirdar, daughter of Late Justice P.B. Gajendragadakar (whom Mharashtrians know very well), is a well known and an extremely successful gynecologist. Together, Dr. Sharad and Justice Jahagirdar have very generously donated to the cause of Rationalism, Secularism, Humanism, Social Justice and Freedom of Expression.



Rationalist Foundation