

ROLE OF STATE AND POLICE IN THE WAKE OF COMMUNAL RIGHTS

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Medieval Legacy

Is it not an irony that in post-British India, the country's political leadership in pursuit of votes and vote banks is carrying forward the violent medieval legacy only for their political interests and dividends that come from such riots?

The pre-medieval invaders of India generally settled in Indian soil and merged in the cultural cauldron of this land. But the Islamic conquests were different. The conquerors indulged in mass killings, forced conversions with the superimposition of an alien Arab-Turk-Perso culture all in the name of religion. This created a permanent conflict between the two major religious groups. The creation of Pakistan in the name of religion and the failure of post independence Indian rulers to bridge the gap between the two communities have only exacerbated the distrust between the two communities.¹ Praising their faith as God's final and perfect religion, these conquerors declared that it was their divine right to conquer the non-Muslim world and to superimpose their culture on the people of the conquered territories. This mindset of the invaders clashed with the spiritual beliefs of the conquered people and thus created a permanent chasm. One cannot but agree that this was not just a conflict of religion but a conflict of civilization between the ruling class and the ruled.

The invaders had earlier succeeded in their mission in Persia and other gulf countries and rejected Judaism and Christianity as defective variants of Islam but the

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¹ Banerjee, S., 2002, *When the 'Silent Majority' Backs a Violent Minority*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(13): 1183-1185.

response of the natives in India was different and the ruled continued their resistance all through. Since then, the socio-cultural division between the two communities had remained a permanent feature of Indian society.² Nobel Prize winner V.S. Naipaul in his book *Half a Life* observed that: "Islam has had a calamitous effect on converted peoples. To be converted you have to destroy your past, destroy your history. You have to stamp on it, you have to say "my ancestral culture does not exist, it does not matter".³

The British Rule and Its Narrow Objectives

After the end of the imperialistic Islamic rule in 1857 and shift of power from the Muslim rulers to the British, there was a marked change in the attitude of the Hindus also towards the former as well as the new ruler. While "the Hindus looked upon the British rule as deliverance from Muslim yoke, and considered English education as a blessing, the Muslims in their eagerness to preserve their religion and religious views rejected English education". (*Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asian Sub-continent* by Yusuf Abbasi, p. 13).

The British ruler did not like to resolve the conflict between the two communities. They looked at the whole issue as a law and order one and emphasis was on communal harmony to prevent a break down in law and order and nothing more.

The post-Mogul historians repeatedly wrote about the Indo-Arab composite culture of this land but ignored the wounded psyche of the natives. Though the Hindus and Muslims were living together for more than a millennium both the groups always remained in social isolation from each other. At the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindus joined the *Khilafat* Movement launched by the Muslims against the British for restoration of Ottoman Empire but this unity was also a temporary one.

² Brass, P.R., 1994, *The Politics of India since Independence*, 2nd ed, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³ <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/09/26/the-politics-of-communal-violence/>.

Partition and Thereafter

The Indian National Congress had opposed the two-nation theory tooth and nail but its leaders succumbed to the pressure of Muslim League leaders who gave a call for Direct Action in 1946 that led to widespread communal riots in the sub-continent. These riots were said to be one of the immediate causes of partition.⁴

When India emerged as an independent democratic and secular republic, the then ruling Congress only tried to philosophize the Hindu-Muslim issue by repeating the same Marxian theory of composite culture by ignoring the fact that the “pang of toothache cannot be borne by philosophical speculation”. Of course the term “secular” was not incorporated in the Constitution at the time of its framing, its spirit was secular. But instead of formulating a practicable policy to resolve the historical communal conflict, the ruling political party carried forward the same policy of the earlier rulers. Ironically, the Marxists and Left-liberal intelligentsia also supported them.⁵

Revival of the Muslim League Politics by the Muslim Leaders and their Parties

This resulted in the Muslim League reviving the movement for the separate identity of the Muslims on the basis of religion which was nothing but a fight for a shared political power on the basis of a separate religious identity. For them, democracy and secularism were alien to their faith. “Democracy is a concept completely alien to the Muslim psyche to the extent that there is no equivalent terminology for it in Arabic or other languages spoken by Muslims.” (*Understanding Mohammad—A psychobiography of Allah Prophet* by Ali Sina, a Canadian Muslim of Iranian descent). They ignored the concept of common national identity as accepted by other minorities like Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians (Parsis) who hardly had any communal conflict in this secular country.

⁴ Brass, P.R., 1994, *The Politics of India since Independence*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵ <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/topic/communal-parties>.

Had the ruling establishment been bold enough and abandoned the concept of minority and majority in framing the constitution, the Indian Muslims like their counterparts in other non-Muslim majority democratic countries of the world would have resigned themselves to being equal citizens. They would have either opted for Pakistan or accepted the concept of common law for all. But our Constitution makers ignored the hard historical fact of religion which was the main reason behind partition and again divided the people into majority (read Hindu) and minority on the basis of religion by incorporating some articles which provided special privileges to the latter⁶. This generated a communal consciousness in both the communities and also revived the seething historical wounds in the psyche of the majority community particularly when the ruling establishment remained more concerned with the communal demands of the minorities. Emergence of other communal organizations could not be prevented.

Vote Bank Politics to Fore

In between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh, a number of commissions and councils like National Integration Council, Minority Commission, Rangnath Mishra Committee, Sachchar Committee were set up by the Central Government but such efforts could hardly resolve the communal conflict in the country. These exercises rather prompted almost all the political parties to go for competitive bidding to go for “vote banks” in the elections. Distribution of communal sops to the minorities particularly in pre-election year by the so called secular parties only accelerated the identity politics played by the minority religious leaders.

By and large only the vote-seeking political parties are blamed whenever there is any communal riot. But the so called secular media should be held equally responsible for not agitating against the vote bank politics being played by the political parties. If only the government had not interfered with the *Shahbano* case, things could have been different today. But it was not to be as vote bank

⁶ Devji, F.F., 1992, Hindu/Muslim/Indian, *Public Culture*, 5(1): 1-18.

politics appeared to be more important and crucial for survival of some of the political parties.⁷

Keeping alive the communal issues like over a decade old Gujarat Riots, Arrest of Muslim suspects in terror cases, arrest and conviction of Bataala House Encounter in 2008 and 2013 respectively suggest that the Muslim leaders have made it a strategy to flex their muscle on any issue which goes against the Muslims.

The Batla Encounter

Within a month of the Bataala House encounter in September 2008, various Muslim organizations organized a meeting in Jama Masjid Delhi on 14th October and condemned the arrest of Muslim youths who were suspected as accused in this encounter. It may be mentioned that Shahi Imam of this mosque in his invitation letters had highlighted the “bomb blasts, blame game, illegal arrests, and torture of Muslim youths” and also alleged: “The highly discriminatory actions of State police forces and central intelligence agencies have let loose a reign of terror to which Central government has turned a blind eye”. He felt that: “If we don't unite by closing our ranks to meet this challenge, history will never forgive us”. The meetings made this encounter a political issue which is still persisting.

Surprisingly, even the then Jamia Millia Islamia Vice Chancellor Mashirul Hasan a widely acclaimed campaigner of ‘moderate and tolerant Islam’ joined the communal polarization move and offered to provide legal assistance to the two arrested students of the university. He even led a street march in support of the Islamists.

Thus, with a sustained campaign the Muslim leaders succeeded in convincing the community members across the country that their community members killed in the police encounter and arrested were innocent and not terrorists. They went to the extent of preaching that the death of Mohan Sharma was caused by the bullet fired by his own colleague either deliberately or by accident.

⁷ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/newdelhi/unsure-what-will-work-in-2014-polls-political-parties-play-communal-card-too/article1-1121826.aspx>.

Revisiting Pre Partition Scenario

The increase in communal riots since the beginning of the new millennium on the eve of election years namely 2004, 2009 and 2013 shows that India is revisiting the pre-partition challenge of the communal flame engulfing the country. But the most unfortunate part of the scenario is the role of political parties, 'secular' intelligentsia, journalists, writers and academics in running down the image of the country in the world.

If the people of the country in general and ruling class in particular do not take lessons from the historical wrongs committed by Indians who brought defeat and dishonour to the nation either to save their throne or skin, we are bound to fail in bridging the gap of communal mistrust in the society. The prevailing dissatisfaction of the Muslim community and consequent unrest is a dangerous sign for both the internal and external security of the country.

The answer lies in a strong political will of both the state and central leadership to shed their politics of vote bank and one sided approach in handling the communal riots as otherwise the country will continue facing the challenge of the medieval legacy. Muzaffarnagar riot will not be the last and we will only see more riots in future.

In the decade since religious violence in Gujarat left hundreds of Muslims dead, the State's chief minister, Narendra Modi, who is accused of failing to stop the clashes, has struggled to shift attention from his image as a Hindu nationalist to his credentials as a pro-business administrator.

Still, Mr. Modi's political career, which reached a new high this month with his nomination as the Bharatiya Janata Party's candidate for Prime Minister, has been shaped by the riots in 2002 in which over 1,000 people died.⁸

In a country with a long history of sectarian violence, Mr. Modi's supporters often defend the controversial

⁸ <http://asiancorrespondent.com/113760/analysis-the-politics-of-indias-communal-violence/>.

leader by invoking the memory of another deadly riot—one that took place under the Congress party’s watch. In 1984, nearly 3,000 people, mostly Sikhs, died in retaliatory violence after two Sikh bodyguards assassinated the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

Many senior Congress leaders were accused of inciting mobs and organizing the clashes, and a few of them are still being tried by Indian courts. The party’s president, Sonia Gandhi, is also facing a lawsuit filed by a Sikh group in a U.S. court for allegedly protecting its members whom the group says was involved in the riots. Analysts have tried to explain why the criticisms leveled against Mr. Modi over the 2002 riots have been sharper and lasted longer than the backlash the Congress faced after the 1984 riots. The difference, some say, lies in the fact that the Congress is largely perceived as secular, whereas the BJP has acquired a reputation for being a Hindu majoritarian party.

Rajeev Bhargava, the director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi, said many people were willing to forgive Congress because “it is not a constitutively communal party”.

“The wounds of 1984 are limited to what happened in 1984,” Mr. Bhargava, who studies secularism, said. “It was an isolated incident, but there was no ideological foundation or pattern and therefore no fear of it being repeated.”

By contrast, he said, the BJP’s core ideology is centered on Hindu nationalism. The party rose to power in the nineties through a movement for the construction of a contentious Ram temple in Ayodhya that culminated in the violent destruction of a mosque in 1992, sparking bloodshed across India.

“The 2002 riots were not an aberration,” said Zafarul Islam Khan, the President of the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, an umbrella body of Muslim groups. “A hard-line Hindu agenda is part of the BJP’s plan.”⁹The

⁹ Sarkar, T., 2005, ‘Educating the Children of the Hindu Rashtra: Notes on RSS Schools’ in Jaffrelot, C., ed. 2005. *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press 197-206.

BJP says it is focused on the country's overall development and in turn accuses Congress of practicing vote-bank politics aimed at garnering Muslim votes.¹⁰

Congress has made political decisions to win over religious voters. In the 1980s, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, under pressure from orthodox Muslim clergy, overturned a landmark Supreme Court judgment that gave a Muslim woman the right to alimony. He also embraced the emotive temple issue to boost his re-election prospects in 1989, allowing the contentious foundation laying ceremony of a Ram temple next to a mosque.

But in making these moves, Congress showed political expediency rather than religious conviction, some analysts argue. Writing in the Indian daily *The Telegraph* in July, columnist Mukul Kesavan said: "Congress, by a kind of historical default, is a pluralist party that is opportunistically communal while the BJP is an ideologically communal party that is opportunistically secular."

But Sikh groups argue there is little to differentiate the two national parties. They accuse Congress of making false promises to the minority community while continuing to protect leaders who they say were involved in the violence. "The Congress party was in power then and they are in power now," said Karnail Singh, president of the All India Sikh Students Federation, who called the 1984 riots genocide. "They have controlled the system to suppress the truth and to prevent justice from being done."

Still, some analysts say the Congress party's attempts to reconcile with the Sikh community softened critics, a situation they contrast with Mr. Modi's refusal to apologize for the 2002 riots. Two successive Congress-run governments since 2004 have been led by the Sikh Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, who apologized for the riots when he came to power. "I have no hesitation in apologizing not only to the Sikh community but to the whole nation, because what

¹⁰ <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/most-communal-party-of-the-country-is-congress-rajnath-singh-1192309.html>.

took place in 1984 is a negation of the concept of nationhood enshrined in our Constitution,” he said at the time.

Another explanation is that Sikhs form a small minority in India and seldom figure prominently in political calculations, said Shekhar Gupta, a leading Indian journalist. They form less than 2% of India’s population, while Muslims account for 13.4%. The rivalry between Hindus and Muslims has a long and emotive history, beginning before India’s partition that led to the creation of the Islamic state of Pakistan.

Right-leaning commentators say Congress, which has relied on Muslim votes to win elections: “has kept the issue alive” because it has developed a vested interest in keeping the community fearing for its personal safety. “They honed in on the 2002 riots and assiduously created a demonology around it,” said Swapan Dasgupta, a Delhi-based political analyst. Congress spokesman Sanjay Jha said his party had not played vote bank politics over the riots, which he called “state sponsored,” an accusation the BJP denied.

Any idiocy and cruelty that has ever been recorded in the annals of history re-emerges during communal riots. As religious hatred engulfed the nation and over 1,000 people died, every possible refinement in human unkindness and poignant twists of fate were on display. Children are burned alive. New weapons—the lethal acid sling-shot—appear on the scene. A woman making tea on the street for the policemen standing outside her home in Bombay dies when the same *jawans* turn their guns on the building. Police arriving at the scene of ferocious fighting in Bombay’s Dharavi slum discover that the cause is not the Babri masjid but a stolen chicken.¹¹

Muslims infuriated by the sacrilege at Ayodhya went onto the streets to protest. Finding, in several states, that the police were using considerable force against them, they felt even more indignant. As Saeed Hameed, editor of *Tanveer Weekly* in Bombay, said: “The feeling was that the police didn’t even raise a *lathi* when *kar sevaks*

¹¹ <http://www.kashmirtimes.com/newsdet.aspx?q=23093>.

demolished the mosque but are shooting us when we protest against the destruction." An analysis of what happened and the reasons for some unpredictable developments, such as the staggeringly high death toll in Maharashtra and the comparative calm in Bihar.

Gujarat: The police collude and the administration sits idle. The violence which exploded in a state known to be a communal tinder-box shocked even thick-skinned residents hardened to atrocities and provided employment to ironsmiths who were asked by Hindu fanatics to work round the clock making sharp weapons. A majority of those who died were Muslims who had come out on the streets in cities such as Ahmedabad and Surat to protest against the demolition and succumbed to Hindu mobs or trigger-happy policemen. In Ahmedabad alone, 28 of the 37 Muslims who died were killed by police bullets. The administration lurked in the shadows, showing no will to stop the carnage. Five days after it began, the army had to be called in. When the police were not firing, they were passive.

There is no evidence to show that political parties were involved. Lumpen elements were, though, particularly in areas where prosperous Muslim traders lived. Hundreds of shops were looted or torched under the police's gaze. The end result was greater polarization. One sign of this was the behavior of Hindus who attacked a group of intellectuals protesting against the demolition, shouting: "Where were you when Hindu temples were demolished in Kashmir?"

Madhya Pradesh: Hindu fanatics and the press inflame passions. It was party time in Bhopal. As the news of the demolition arrived, Bajrang Dal and VHP workers celebrated by bursting crackers and distributing sweets. The police remained silent spectators. By the next morning, the bloodletting had begun. By December 12, the escalating violence had already taken 95 lives in Bhopal and 25 in other towns in the state. The stormtroopers of the Sangh brotherhood provided plenty of encouragement for the rioters by openly brandishing weapons while BJP MLA Shailendra Pradhan fuelled the hatred, saying: "In Bhopal, the minority community broke all limits of demonic barbarism."

Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa did little by way of damage control. It was only when it became clear that the Centre might dismiss his Government that the state police got a handle on the situation. Nor were matters helped by unsubstantiated reports in Bhopal dailies such as the *Madhya Pradesh Chronicle* and the *Navbharat* that about 70 girls had been abducted from the city and then gang raped publicly. The reports were denied by the administration but it was too late. Bhopal was already burning.

Maharashtra: Numerous Muslims killed in police firing. Most of the people waiting outside the overcrowded morgue at J.J. Hospital in Bombay to identify their loved ones were Muslims. They all had a similar story to tell of a male relative being shot by the police. Nissar Ahmed spoke of how his brother Races Ahmed, 28, had gone out of their hut near the Bandra railway station to see a clash between two groups. The police opened fire, and Races was hit in the leg. As he hobbled back home, two constables shot him in the chest. The vast majority of deaths in Bombay were from police bullets as policemen, armed with handguns, rifles and sten guns, fired straight into Muslim crowds. Bombay Police Commissioner S.K. Bapat admitted that most of the deaths were caused by police firing.

What started off as a clash between Muslim youths and armed police trying to protect public property turned communal as the riots spread from the densely-populated Muslim areas of south and central Bombay to the huge slums of Dharavi, Deonar and Ghatkopar. And a new weapon appeared: a tyre tube stretched between two poles used to direct quarter liquor bottles filled with acid at targets. Estimated range: 500-750 metres. A helping hand was provided by the assiduously inflammatory Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray who said the Government was harassing Hindus just to keep Muslims happy. The Muslim League also swung into action, putting up posters urging Muslims to make their anger known-and they did, galvanized into further protests by images they kept seeing of the demolition on satellite television. After a week's madness, however, Bombay was limping back to normalcy.

Assam: Bangladeshi immigrants add a new dimension. The epicenter may have been in Ayodhya but the tremors were felt in Assam as though it were just next door. As the news spread like a raging prairie fire, furious Muslims went on the rampage killing Hindus and destroying temples. The worst affected were the districts dominated by immigrant Muslims. The State Government says only 68 persons died in the week of massacres but local newspapers put the figure much higher. The political ramifications of the violence are alarming. Since the Muslims who went on the offensive were largely immigrants from Bangladesh, the ethnic divide in the state now has religious overtones. An intelligence official from Assam cautions: "The Assamese did not endorse the demolition of the *masjid*. But the violence unleashed by the immigrants will only harden attitudes towards them."

West Bengal: Marxist smugness exacerbates the violence. Last rocked by communal violence in 1946, the mayhem this time was far worse. The orgy of unreason not only drove the two communities apart, it also punctured the Marxist Government's cockiness that it could nip any communal trouble in the bud. This cockiness had caused complacency—one of the main reasons why Calcutta was so badly affected. The administration's responses were ludicrously slow. Even when police stations were half a kilometre away from trouble spots, help took ages to arrive. Ram Chandra Kashyapi, 63, rang up the police eight times but nobody came: "I have lived through the 1946 riots. What happened this time is infinitely worse" said an army officer: "It was not a very bad situation but a badly managed one." The Marxists' optimistic decision to lift the curfew helped the mobs regroup and reorganize and led to the second round of rioting.

Uttar Pradesh: Bad, but not as bad as expected. It was the one place that everybody expected to go up in flames but, oddly enough, while sensitive towns such as Kanpur and Varanasi were gripped by the nationwide frenzy, other towns were relatively calm. The reason being that most people had had their fill of Ayodhya-related violence in 1990 under Mulayam Singh Yadav. But no thanks to the State Government. Most districts hardly had enough forces to cope with large-scale rioting. Anxious to pre-

empt a Hindu attack, many Muslims went on the offensive. For all the tension, however, it was back to business as usual after a few days.

Rajasthan: Swift police action minimizes deaths. The death toll in this BJP-ruled state could have been colossal. What prevented catastrophe was the prompt reaction of the police? On the morning of December 7, as soon as a violent mob had gathered near a place of worship in Jaipur, the police opened fire, killing 15 people. But, in police parlance, it was "effective firing". Its impact was felt almost immediately. The situation was under control within two hours. Chief Minister Bhairon Singh -Shekhawat also called in the army in seven towns immediately. And eight towns were placed under curfew.

Bihar: Muslims listen to Laloo. As soon as the first dome of the Babri Masjid collapsed under the *kar sevaks'* onslaught, Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav swivelled around in his chair, picked up the telephone and dialed the district magistrates and police chiefs one by one: "Shoot whoever foments communal violence. Deal with the situation ruthlessly; otherwise you know how I will deal with you." Before the incendiary news could get around, the police and paramilitary forces had moved into communally sensitive areas. The army was standing by too. Laloo's directives initially helped contain violence but pent-up emotions finally erupted in towns like Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Munger. However, the toll-24 dead-was among the lowest in the country. Of these, nine people died in police firing. One reason for the muted backlash was Laloo's nurturing of Muslim-Yadav unity. He was able to persuade Muslim leaders to influence their flock to maintain sanity in return for promise of protection. Laloo also went round the state appealing to both sides to keep calm. To beef up security, he even ordered the withdrawal of 82 sections of armed security men on VTP duties.

Kerala: ISS keeps mum but police firing takes heavy toll. The Muslim League issued R c SAI a strike call the moment it heard the news. By early evening, everybody knew about the demolition. Students preparing for exams closed their books and sat glued before TV sets. Panic spread. In a pleasant surprise, the Government and the

police swung into action immediately. Prohibitory orders were declared in all sensitive areas. And the Government announced that severe action would be taken against trouble-makers. Leaders of both communities urged restraint.

The violence began with a bomb blast in an auto rickshaw in Trivandrum and exploded into an uncontrollable riot in Kasargode. Railway stations and Central Government offices were attacked. The police were clearly out of their depth and the army had to be flown in to Kasargode and Malappuram from Trivandrum. More troops were requested for from Hyderabad as the BJP called for a *bandh*.

The *bandh* evoked little response, yet it extracted a toll of four lives. The only redemption: no place of worship was attacked. Malappuram temple came pretty close but its priests managed to dissuade the rampaging mob. The rabid ISS maintained a low profile. The Government too did not provoke it by making pre-emptive arrests of its activists. In fact, ISS chief Abdul Nasser Mahdhani who had reason to feel vindicated after the Ayodhya incident, remained silent, even in the face of reports about the ban on the ISS?

Andhra Pradesh: Police firmness keeps the hatred within bounds. Few cities in the country anticipated violence as well as Hyderabad, which has been a communal trouble-spot since the early 80s. But when trouble broke out, its scale was far less than expected. This was mostly because the police had made many preventive arrests and Chief Minister K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy had given the force a free hand. The *carte blanche* to the police turned out to be a mixed blessing. Expecting a long spell of curfew, the police did not impose one in the sensitive old city area till rioting actually started. Then, when faced with riotous mobs, instead of first trying to disperse them by using *lathis*, the police fired, causing many of the deaths. Karnataka: 60 DEAD. Muslim mobs outnumber the police. The moment the news about the mosque began circulating, furious Muslim mobs began gathering in the Muslim-dominated area of Shivajinagar of Bangalore looking for a confrontation. Half-a-dozen districts in the state were affected. The basic cause of

bloodshed was that the police were hopelessly outnumbered everywhere as mobs, armed with broken tube lights, iron rods and cycle chains, took to the streets. The State's three CRPF companies had been posted at Ayodhya. As DGP A.J. Anandan said that their plight was pathetic. Most of their men haven't slept for a week since they came on duty in December. The Government desperately sought additional forces but the Centre, inundated with similar requests, was unable to help.

Tamil Nadu: All quiet on the southern front. While the rest of the country was exploding with fury, Tamil Nadu appeared to be an oasis of peace. Madras was particularly quiet. The only aberration was a few stray incidents in the southern districts such as Tirunelveli where two people died in police firing when a mob attempted to set fire to a police station. Even the reaction of the political parties seemed muted in comparison with other states. The DMK and the AIADMK decided to observe a *bandh* on December but it was incident-free, thanks to the Government and the police who had' been on red alert as early in December. The relative calm can be attributed to the remarkable restraint shown by Muslims. All they did was stage a few demonstrations and close down businesses. The BJP's limited base in the state was another reason for the relative calm. Punjab and Haryana, two towns affected was put under curfew. These two states were spared the carnage, though a curfew was imposed for the first time since 1947 in the Muslim majority town of Malerkotla in Punjab in December when some people tried to take out processions and damage a temple. Haryana's Gurgaon district, with a sizeable Muslim population, was also put under curfew.¹²

Conclusion

The problem of communalism at the present stage of societal development in India is almost intractable. This is as difficult as eradication of prejudices from the human mind. It is easier to part with money or comfort, but it is much more difficult to part with one's pet

¹² <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/babri-masjid-bloody-aftermath-across-india/1/162906.html>.

prejudices. These prejudices have resided in human mind for centuries; framework of years or even decades appears to be too short for ridding the human psyche of prejudices particularly those relating to color, religion and language. But this realization should not act as a deterrent in coming to grips with the problem and chalking out a purposeful plan of action to contain it and ultimately to solve the problem.

The task of curing India of communal virus is no less difficult than transforming her from a semi-feudal superstition-ridden society into a modern enlightened society. The hold of the past on our people has to be loosened by developing in them futuristic orientation. People of various communities and religious persuasions joined together in the common endeavor to overcome their present disabilities and to attain a prosperous future would have little time and inclination for petty squabbles and recriminations.

They will labour together in fields, factories and laboratories to increase the food production, consumer goods and sophisticated devices and gadgets to improve the quality of life. Economic linkages between people of different communities will provide an antidote to communal virus and heal the wounds of the past. The educational institutions, particularly the universities, can play a pivotal role in enhancing awareness about the anthropological and sociological findings that confirm the equality of races and communities.

While elimination of communal feelings requires multi-pronged strategy involving educational, social and political measures, prevention of communal conflagration requires alertness and immediate response from the law and order administration. The District Administration should regularly update itself about the various developments likely to cause communal ruckus. An political parties, instead on trying to cash in the people's religious or minority sentiments should behave in an acceptable way, rather than treating various sects of religiously complicated society that India is as a mere vote bank.

It can initiate preventive detention of mischievous elements from the concerned communities and can thus reduce the chances of a communal conflagration. The local magistrates should keep themselves updated with the happenings in religious congregations and should be on the lookout for any serious portents of communal trouble. Timely information can ensure preparedness of the administration for unpleasant situations as it will not be caught napping. If this happens, India might see the dawn of coming years in a new light. Otherwise, something will always be holding the spirit of the nation back.

