Ram Janmabhoomi Vs Babri Masjid

The dispute, as is well known, is that some Hindu organisations claimed that the mosque known as **Babri Masjid** in Ayodhya, a town in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh, was built by Mir Baqi, a general of Emperor Babar, in 1528 after demolishing a grand temple on the spot, that marked the birthplace of Lord Ram – the most important incarnation of *Vishnu* in the Hindu belief system. So, while the Hindus wanted to remove the mosque from the spot and build a Ram temple there, some Muslim organisations disputed the legitimacy of the Hindu claim. In the independent India, the matter has been in the courts since 1950. The mosque was destroyed on 06th December 1992 when a political rally developed into a riot involving 150,000 people. The report of Liberhan Commission, appointed on 16th December 1992 to investigate the demolition of Babri mosque, was tabled in the Indian parliament on 24th November 2009 and it has listed people responsible for the demolition of the mosque, indicting some very senior political figures of India.

No doubt, the manner the disputed structure called Babri Mosque was demolished on 06th December 1992 was wrong. The organisers of the rally on the day had promised to the Union Government and gave an undertaking to the Supreme Court of India that the structure would not be harmed. After giving that undertaking, the act of demolishing the mosque, that too in front of the world television cameras, was unacceptable. It left the Muslim community in India with a feeling of a gross excess and insult, and it belittled the Indian State.

However, the crude nature of the events on 06th December 1992 should not blind us to the truth of history and propriety. As

this writer has argued in another article published in this magazine, where some Hindu groups were the guilty party, no one has the right to attack others' places of worship. And if it has been done by someone in the past, mature and civilized behaviour requires that it should be apologised for, and the mistakes rectified. As the Liberhan Commission acknowledges, Ayodhya is of special importance to Hindus. Justice MS Liberhan makes the observation:

"This Place had become emotive issue owing to its position as the birth place of Ram, a theme present in every facet of the culture, connecting the past with the present & the future." (*Report of the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission of Inquiry,*para 9.5, p. 24)

The Muslim groups at the forefront of this dispute contend that there are provisions in the Quran, according to which no mosque can be constructed at someone's place of worship. So, this mosque could not have been built by destroying a temple.

Well, the history does not support this argument.

No historian disagrees with the fact that the Shiva Temple at Somnath was destroyed several times by Muslim invaders and rulers, starting with the plunder of its treasures by Mahmoud of Gazni in 1024, and finally by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1701, who also built a mosque on the spot. There is incontrovertible evidence that 27 temples were dismantled to construct the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in the Kutub Minar complex. Many parts of the Dilwara Jain Temples complex were destroyed by successive Muslim rulers. The Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi was demolished four times by Muslim invaders and rulers. Anyone who has visited the site can make out how brazenly the so-called Gyanvapi Mosque is built upon the temple complex to humiliate the Hindu community.

What happened in Somnath, Delhi, Dilwara and Varanasi did happen at many other places. According to some historians,

more than 3000 temples have been destroyed and replaced by mosques by Muslim rulers in India.

Regarding the origin of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, after 17 years of his study, Justice Liberhan concludes that ***"the construction of the mosque by Mir Baqi in 1528 is now an admitted fact."*** (*ibid,* para 18.9, p 62).

And, there is plethora of evidence to show that the Babri mosque was constructed after destroying a Ram temple on the spot.

The available records of the Ayodhya dispute in government documents go back to the middle of the 19th century. According to British sources, Hindus and Muslims used to worship together in the Babri Mosque complex, earlier called *Masjid-e-Janamsthan*, for hundreds of years until about 1855. The then Commissioner of Faizabad, P Carnegy, wrote in 1870: *"It is said that up to that time (viz. the Hindu-Muslim clashes in the 1850s) the Hindus and Mohamedans alike used to worship in the mosque temple."* As quoted in a BBC Urdu Service programme, *Meezan*, broadcast on 11th December 1990, earlier in 1861, giving detailed description of Ayodhya in his book, *Historical Sketch of Faizabad Tehsil, including the Former Capital of Ayodhya and Faizabad*, Mr Carnegy had written: ***"It seems there was a grand temple at this place, and in 1528, during his stay in Ayodhya, Babar ordered the destruction of that temple."***

The matter first reached the British courts in 1885-86. Efforts in 1883 to construct a temple on Ram *chabootra* (platform) situated in the complex were halted by the Deputy Commissioner who prohibited it on 19th January 1885. Raghubir Das, a *Mahant* (head priest), filed a suit before Faizabad Sub-Judge Pandit Harikishan seeking permission to construct the temple on this *chabootra* measuring 17 ft x 21 ft. The Sub-Judge, though agreed with Raghubir Das's contention that it

was Ram's birth-place, but dismissed the suit. An appeal was filed in the court of Faizabad District Judge Colonel JEA Chambiar. On 18th March 1886, Col Chambiar passed an order in which he wrote: ***"I visited the land in dispute yesterday in the presence of all parties. I found that the Masjid built by Emperor Babar stands on the border of Ayodhya, that is to say, to the west and south. It is clear of habitants. It is most unfortunate that Masjid should have been built on the land specially held sacred by the Hindus, but as that event occurred 358 years ago it is too late now to remedy the grievance."***

Again, while rejecting the subsequent appeal filed by Raghubir Das on 25th May 1886 before him, the Judicial Commissioner of Awadh, W Young, wrote in his judgement on 01st November 1886: ***"The place where the permission to build the temple is being asked for is situated in a premises that has got a mosque which came into existence because of discrimination and religious repression by an emperor who chose this place for the mosque with total disregard for the Hindus' faith. The access available to the Hindus for entering the mosque is very narrow, and for years they have been trying to get proper facilities for their entrance, and they want to construct two buildings in the premises – one, Sita's Kitchen, and the other, Ramchandra's birth-place."***

As Rashid Ashraf, the producer and presenter of the BBC Urdu Service programme, concludes, though the permission to construct a temple was refused and the Hindus and Muslims continued to worship alongside each other in that complex, it was through this court case that the British judges accepted the Hindu claim that it was the birth place of Lord Ram.

Afterwards, writing in the Faizabad District Gazetteer in 1905, HR Neville made it totally clear that the *Janmasthan* temple *"was destroyed by Babar and replaced by a mosque."* Mr Neville wrote: ***"The Janmasthan was in Ramkot and marked the***

birthplace of Rama. In 1528 AD Babar came to Ayodhya and halted here for a week. He destroyed the ancient temple and on its site built a mosque, still known as Babar's mosque. The materials of the old structure (i.e., the temple) were largely employed, and many of the columns were in good preservation." (HR Neville, Faizabad District Gazetteer, Lucknow, 1905, pp 172-177, cited by Harsh Narain*The Ayodhya Temple Mosque Dispute: Focus on Muslim Sources*, Penman Publications, New Delhi, 1993).

Thus, after investigating the site and relevant historical documents several times, the British officials and judges agreed that the so-called Babri mosque was constructed on the spot where a Ram temple stood before it.

As opposed to the clear judgements given by the British judges, the courts in the independent India have decided to sit on the matter for ever. Four civil suits regarding the title of **Ram *Janmabhoomi*** have been filed in the district court of Faizabad, the first one being filed in 1950. After 40 years, in 1989 these cases were transferred to theLucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court. Since then another twenty years have passed, and no judgement has been made so far. In fact, judges are often quoted as saying that they are not capable of deciding a historical event.

Actually, the most important question is – What are these courts deciding now when twice the British judges had accepted the Hindu claim more than one hundred years ago!

Unable to decide the matter themselves, in 2003 the Lucknow Bench asked the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), to conduct a more in-depth study and an excavation to ascertain the type of structure that was beneath the rubble.

The ASI team was headed by an archaeologist of international repute, BB Lal, who had earlier worked for UNESCO committees and served as President of the World Archaeological Congress.

The ASI report indicated proof of a 10th century temple under the mosque. In the words of ASI researchers, they discovered ***"distinctive features associated with… temples of north India"***. The excavations yielded: ***"stone and decorated bricks as well as mutilated sculpture of a divine couple and carved architectural features, including foliage patterns, amalaka, kapotapali, doorjamb with semi-circular shrine pilaster, broke octagonal shaft of black schist pillar, lotus motif, circular shrine having pranjala (watershute) in the north and 50 pillar bases in association with a huge structure"*** *(Evidence of temple found: ASI,* The Tribune, August 26, 2003)

However, as the findings of the ASI were not to their liking, the Muslim groups termed the ASI report as "prepared under political pressure". Zaffaryab Jilani, the counsel of the Sunni Central Waqf Board, said: ***"The ASI has filed a saffron report"***.

Firstly, it is insulting to the integrity of a world renowned archaeologist like BB Lal, who headed the ASI survey. If the Muslim groups do not accept the authenticity of the ASI, one wonders which institution of India they do really respect! The question is, if the ASI is accused of preparing its report under the influence of the Hindu parties, under what political pressure P Carnegy, Colonel JEA Chambiar, W Young and HR Neville made their statements and judgements! The findings of the ASI in 2003 only corroborated the statement made by HR Neville a century ago, as quoted above.

It is because of this *Main-Na-Maanu (I-will-not-agree)* attitude of the Muslim groups that the Indian courts find themselves unable to decide the matter. Actually, it is not that all Muslims are against restoration of Ram and Krishna temples. First of all, Shia Muslim organisations have expressed no objection to the Ram Temple. Then, a lot of other Muslim organisations and ordinary Muslims, irrespective of the denomination they belong to, have expressed their support to the construction of Ram temple. The so-called

Muslim groups opposed to the restoration of the Ram Temple and other important Indian symbols are dominated by people who actually should have no place in post-partition secular India. For instance, Syed Shahabuddin, the leader of the so-called Babri Mosque Action Committee, is the same person who raised the demand to ban Salman Rushdie's book in India, has been demanding *Shariat* for the Indian Muslims, and championed the Islamist cause in Shah Bano case – denying matrimony to divorced Muslim women. Similarly, Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi was the same person whose followers have been indulging in violence against Taslima Nasreen and compare Shabana Azmi to prostitutes, and whose party opposed Hyderabad joining India. These people might be living in India, but actually they are soul-mates of the Taliban.

And, rather than being respectfully persuaded to accept the truth and act reasonably, these hard-line Muslim groups are actually being encouraged in their intransigence by the self-professed "secular" politicians and intellectuals of India. 'Secular' is the Indian equivalent of the Western concept of 'non-racist', and as per the current Indian definition, one is "secular" only if one agrees with Muslim fundamentalists! So, politicians like Mulayam Singh and Lalu Prasad, who openly play casteist and racist politics, are very "secular" because of their proclamations that 'a Muslim can do no wrong'.

While the Indian courts express inability to arbitrate in the dispute, in the independentIndia the people who have arrogated themselves to decide the issue are the Marxist historians of the JNU. One such historian is Prof Ram Sharan Sharma, who writes,***"Ayodhya seems to have emerged as a place of religious pilgrimage in medieval times. Although chapter 85 of the Vishnu Smriti lists as many as fifty-two places of pilgrimage, including towns, lakes, rivers, mountains, etc., it does not include Ayodhya in this list."***

Now, the way Prof Sharma quotes *Vishnu Smriti*, it sounds like *Manu Smriti* that every Hindu should be familiar with. By

quoting little known book, Prof Sharma wants to prove that Ayodhya is not significant in the eyes of the Hindus! One would like to ask Prof Sharma, as per his research how many Hindus consult *Vishnu Smriti* before embarking on a pilgrimage! I'm over fifty, and I certainly had never heard of this "great" *Smriti* before my research for this article. As regards, Prof Sharma's assertion of Ayodhya emerging as a place of pilgrimage in medieval times, according to the Cambridge dictionary, medieval times is the period in European history from about 600 AD to 1500 AD. If Prof Sharma accepts this definition, how does it prove that there was no temple in Ayodhya in 1528? If anything, it only gives credence to the Hindu claim that the temple destroyed by Babar was constructed by Garhwal king Govindachandra (1114–1154).

Prof Sharma also says that Tulsidas, who wrote *Ramcharitmanas* in 1574 at Ayodhya, does not mention it as a place of pilgrimage. This suggests that there was no significant Hindu temple at the site of the Babri Mosque.

This is the most ridiculous argument. Bethlehem wasn't the place of pilgrimage before the time of Jesus Christ's birth. As normal, Ayodhya developed into a place of pilgrimage after the event, while *Ramcharitmanas* is written in the present form, set in Ram's time. Actually, not only is this the most ridiculous argument, it is an attempt to misrepresent Tulsidas and falsify Indian mythology. *Ramcharitmanas* is divided into seven sections. And, out of seven sections, Tulsidas devotes one full section to Ayodhya, called *Ayodhya Kaand*, and celebrates the beauty of Ayodhya at many other places in the book. What could have been a better way of describing Ayodhya as a place of pilgrimage!

Prof Sharma ignores the basic fact that the classic Sanskrit text *Ramayan* by Maharishi Balmiki is the ultimate authentic source of Ram's story, and it celebrates Ayodhya as the birthplace of Ram and its grandeur as the capital of Ram's kingdom.

Another Marxist historian Romila Thapar says, ***"If we do not take Hindu mythology in account the first historical description of the city dates back recently to the 7th century, when the Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang observed there were 20 Buddhist temples with 3000 monks at Ayodhya, amongst a large Hindu population. In 1528, nobles under Mughal emperor Babur constructed a mosque over the disputed site. The mosque, called the Babri Masjid, has become a source of contention for some Hindus. At the end of the 19th century, Ayodhya contained 96 Hindu temples and 36 Muslim mosques. Little local trade was carried on, but the great Hindu fair of Ram Navami held every year was attended by about 500,000 people".***

The question is – why we should not take the Hindu mythology into account? Can we respect Greece, while ignoring the Greek mythology! Can one understand the history ofEurope without taking Christianity into account? Or can we understand the Arab world without taking Islam into account? The Hindu mythology is the base of what the world calls Indian culture and civilization. Hinduism and India are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate the two. In many languages of Europe, the word for Indian is Hindu. Or does Ms Thapar believe Hindu mythology is all a myth? Ram's life and Ram's birthplace is a myth? Ms Thapar should explain why half a million people would gather in Ayodhya every year. Does it not mean anything!

In fact, the only myths that are being created are by the self-professed Marxist historians who are spreading the ideas that Babar was an Indian! Ibrahim Lodhi and Alauddin Khilji were indigenous rulers! Well, they were as much indigenous rulers as the Viking and Norman rulers in England, as much as the Dutch and French rulers inIndia! No one can deny the fact that Babar came all the way from Ferghana (in present day Uzbekistan) and invaded India in 1526 after crossing Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, andAfghanistan. Even if he didn't construct a mosque at Ram's birthplace, could any of these

“intellectuals” tell us what business Babar had to launch unprovoked attacks on Indian kingdoms and murder thousands of innocent people!

Marxists are supposed to side with the victim and fight against present and historical injustice. And, it is historians’ duty to pursue the truth, no matter how ugly it is. But Indian Marxist historians have decided to side with an invader, who did everything in his might to crush the local culture and impose a foreign religion and language on India! Quoting an obscure piece of religious literature and misrepresenting the classic texts to justify the imposition of a foreign culture on a people is not great pursuit of truth, but intellectual dishonesty! In the face of overwhelming historical and archaeological evidence, clutching to straws and denying the oppression is not scientific socialism, but rationalising cowardice!

Had these historians been really pursuing truth, they would have tried to find where the missing pages of *Babarnama* are and who is responsible for those pages gone missing. The Marxist historians have made no attempt to find another book that went suddenly missing in most libraries in India. It was *Hindustan Islami Ahad Mein* (India Under Islamic Resolve) by Maulana Hakim Saiyid Abdul Hai, which like the original *Babarnama*is stated to include a chapter that described the demolition of the Ram *Janmabhoomi*and other temples. Instead, these people find solace in siding with the invader and the oppressor. And, these “secular intellectuals” are totally silent to the findings of the ASI in 2003.

These “intellectuals” do not want to know the truth. They fear truth and justice. They call those who speak the truth and seek redress to the past repression communalists and racists!

White Man went all over the world with sword in one hand and the Bible in the other. The native communities of Africa,

Asia, Australia and America were colonized, economically exploited and culturally suppressed. Indigenous religious beliefs were dubbed as mumbo-jumbo and Christianity was imposed on the people. Europeans imposed their culture on the Native American Indians. Now, if the Native American Indians demand that they want to retrieve a few symbols of their past culture, would we call them racists! Hindu is nothing else, but a person who maintains a connection with the pre-Islamic Indian culture. They are a defeated people at the hands of Muslim invaders. Now, when the Hindus are asking for retrieving some symbols of their ancient culture, which were crushed by the invaders, there is nothing communalist or racist about it. On the contrary, those who want to deny the vanquished the right to retrieve symbols of their past culture are actually siding with oppression. Love for the relic of Indian defeat and a symbol of invader's triumphalism is perverted secularism!

We should be mature enough to understand that the struggle against the excesses committed by Muslim invaders or rulers, or by Hindu and British rulers for that matter, does not mean a fight or hatred against the communities those rulers came from, or even against their descendents. Peace and harmony in the society is essential. But falsifying history cannot achieve true harmony. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we do not bind ourselves in falsehood. The truth of history should never be obscured or denied.

A Witty Out of the Box Solution to End Corruption and Tax Evasion

The governments in the US and many European countries are very concerned, and very rightly so, about the problem of tax-evasion. Many of these governments have been pursuing some of the Swiss banks for information on their citizens who have deposited stolen tax money there, and some countries have even been engaged in heated discussions with the Swiss government regarding the secrecy surrounding the issue. In the developing countries, people and politicians talk about the rampant corruption in their bureaucracy, and the need to get rid of it. But everyone seems helpless and no effective step is taken to tackle the problem.

Well, the solution to these problems is quite at hand.

The problem of corruption, tax evasion and many other socio-economic problems can be solved totally by adopting banking cards as the only mode of payments. Abolition of currency notes and coins would abolish all illegal, corrupt, and dishonest practices. The evidence of illegal trading, illegal work, smuggling, drug pedaling, human trafficking and other socio-economic crimes would straightaway be available to the enforcement authorities.

As every customer would be paying through their banking cards, no business would be able to hide any transactions and under-report their sales. And, as the businesses would be making payments to their suppliers and employees also from their business banking accounts using the banking cards, there would be record of all their purchases, and there would be no chance of false invoices or receipts being submitted. This would solve the problem of under-payment of the VAT/Sales Tax and

the income tax.

Under that system, not only no tax evasion can take place, the black money sitting in the Swiss banks (and in other foreign countries) would also be forced to return to the country. That money cannot be brought back in the form of currency notes to the country any more. It would be rendered worthless unless brought back through the duly recognized banking system. And, no one can bring any money into their bank account without having an explanation for that and paying all the dues on it. So, rather than letting their money being rendered worthless, the past tax-cheats would prefer to bring it back to their country and pay the dues to their government. Like the speed cameras, different filters on bank accounts would do the IRS/HMRC inspectors' work. Whenever any unusual amount of money (eg, black money presently sitting in the form of piles of currency notes, or money coming from a foreign country) enters a bank account, a filter would trigger an alert which would be received by the enforcement authorities who then can probe the matter.

The system would also squash the problem of illegal immigration. No business would be able to employ an illegal immigrant, because there would be no "cash" to pay a person who is not entitled to work in the country. Now the records of paying workers' wages would be in the business's bank account. So, who would dare to employ an illegal immigrant! Bank accounts could have NI numbers on them. Illegal immigrants would no longer be able to breathe in the system.

Professional thieves would look for some other honest professions. Most of the thieves steal to resell those goods. But selling a good that was not obtained in a legitimate way through a bank account would simply mean inviting prison sentence. Even the potential buyers of stolen goods would be deterred by the fact that their purchase would get recorded in their bank accounts. Thus professional thefts would just vanish.

Similarly, it would be so easy to catch drug paddlers and human traffickers. Even fraudsters would not be able to get very far. It would be easy to retrieve the money lost through frauds, as it would be sitting just as an entry in another bank account.

The days of banks being robbed and people being mugged for money would become history.

There would be no queues in the banks for getting cash or depositing cash. There would be no need to visit a bank for day-to-day transactions. One would need to visit a bank only to open or close an account, or get some advice. The banks would not need big premises. Their staffing needs would also go down, and so their costs. So, the fee they charge from their customers should also be much less. Certainly, they would be able to afford that the payments up to a certain amount, let's say $200/£100/Rs 1000, attract no charge. Thus the banking system would be more efficient and less costly.

In a country like India, there would be another enormous benefit. No government official would be able to take a bribe – not even a penny. They would have only one personal account at one point of time. Any money coming into their account would get recorded. Every government official's (and their family members') bank accounts should have automatic filters. The moment they get any money coming into their account from any source other than their employer, they would be asked to explain that.

There would be immense benefits to the society, and it would reduce cutting the forests.

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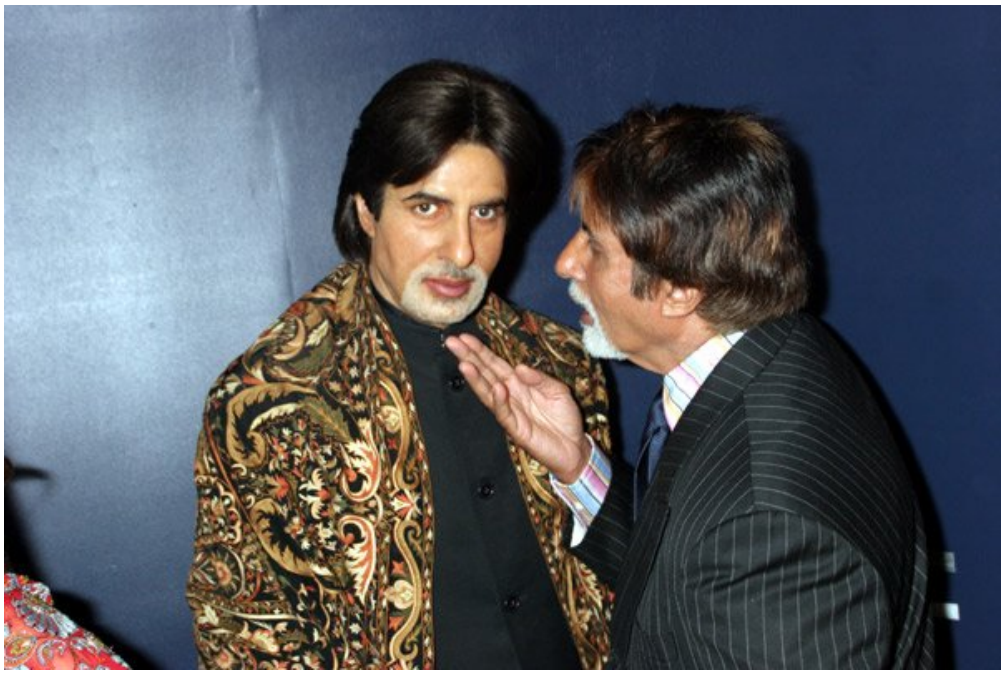
A Self-Inflicted Contradiction in the Indian Secularism



On 20th January 2008, a Mufti from Dehradun mosque issued a *fatwa* against Salman Khan for getting a wax statue of himself

installed at Madame Tussauds. It is one of the main London tourist attractions where wax statues of the famous and the rich of the world are installed. So far Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai and Shah Rukh Khan are the only other Indians who have been given this recognition.

Not only is this a harassment of an Indian citizen who has done nothing wrong as regards this matter (actually the installation of Salman Khan's statue at Madame Tussauds reflects the growing recognition of the Indian cinema at the international level), it is a challenge to the State of India. The phenomenon of the Red Mosque is not confined to Islamabad or Pakistan only, there are many Red Mosques in India as well.

Before that, the farce that has been played in the theatre called the state of West Bengal in relation to Taslima Nasreen lays bare the fact that India has lost its soul and identity. The provincial government run by a communist party – that claims to follow Marx, who said *"religion is the opium of the people"* – caves in to Muslim obscurantism and communalism, and expels a progressive, feminist and secular Bengali writer from Kolkata.

To top it all, on 19th January 2008 the State Minorities Commission of Maharashtra sent a letter to the Central Government asking for the refusal of a visa to Taslima Nasreen and Booker Prize winning author Salman Rushdie as "they have hurt the feelings of the Muslim community." Calling the writers "anti-social elements", the Chairman of the Commission, Mohammed Naseem Siddiqui, wrote: "We do not want them to stay in India and create law and order problems."

Mr Siddiqui also said that action should be taken against painter MF Hussain for painting Hindu Gods and Goddesses in the nude.

The violent protests against Taslima Nasreen in Kolkata were

organised by a Muslim group called the All India Minority Forum, and have been spearheaded by a political party based in Hyderabad, the MIM. Its leader, Asaduddin Owaisi, has been visiting various television studios and saying that Taslima Nasreen should not be allowed to stay in India because she is not an Indian citizen, but a Bangladeshi citizen.

Now, one does need to remember that Pakistan was demanded by the likes of Mr Owaisi (the MIM even fought against the State of Hyderabad joining India). There are many people living as Indian citizens now who supported the demand for Pakistan. On the other hand, there were people – some of them Muslims – on the other side of the border who felt Indian and were opposed to the creation of Pakistan. While most of the Hindus came to India, some Hindus did not, and the Muslims obviously could not. It did not mean that every Muslim living in the territory forming Pakistan was supportive of the new State. But they had no choice. And the statehood of Pakistan, and thereby Pakistani and then Bangladeshi citizenship, was imposed on them and the remaining Hindus there. Otherwise, those people in Pakistan and Bangladesh have always remained Indian. Through my business I have met quite a few Muslims from Pakistan who have said they call themselves Indian and they believe the Partition was wrong. At the BBC, I received letters from Pakistan written in Hindi under Muslim names. They may not have Indian passports and they may not be living in the Republic of India, but India is their spiritual home and they are Indians in their hearts. Taslima Nasreen, out of tune with the Mullahs who want to establish an Islamic State in Bangladesh, is one of them. As we all know, in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Hindus have never been given equal citizenship rights. The establishments in those countries look at them as agents of India. After the demolition of the so-called Babri Masjid in India, the attacks on the Hindus in Bangladesh (and Pakistan) by Muslim mobs were in fact (spiritually) attacks on India. Rather than being a silent spectator of the atrocities committed on the Hindus by fanatic

Muslim mobs in Bangladesh, Taslima Nasreen recorded those atrocities in her book 'Lajja', and exposed the Bangladesh government who claimed that all minorities are safe in their borders. Whether Indian or not, Taslima Nasreen has done a great service to Indians and India. And India should be grateful to this lady, and it is incumbent on India to give her every possible support – not just a visa and citizenship.

Mr Owaisi might have got an Indian passport, but his intellectual and political sympathies are not with India – they are with the Islamic fundamentalists of Bangladesh (and other countries). He wants Taslima Nasreen to be expelled to Bangladesh so that his soul-mates dominating there can devour her and kill her in the name of Islam, which he finds a trifle difficult to do in mainland India.

The question is why India is in such a situation that it's finding it hard to protect one of its friends, let alone honour her. The answer lies in the Indian leaders' wrong response to the Partition. India has committed a fundamental mistake in deciding its own character after the bifurcation of its land.

Right from Gandhi and Nehru to Buddhadev Bhattacharya, Indian political leaders have never been able to understand the Muslim psyche in general and deal with it properly. It was not just Iqbal and Jinnah who wanted a separate state, Muslims all over the country supported the demand for Pakistan with near unanimity. In March 1946 elections, the Muslim League received 86.6% of Muslim votes and won all the 30 seats reserved for Muslims in the Central Assembly (Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, MacMillan, 1984) on a policy of creating an independent state of Pakistan, with an implied threat of secession if this was not granted. And yet, the Indian leaders were thinking that they may be able to win over the Muslims and stop the division of the country. While Jinnah was stated to be declaring,**"We shall have India divided or we shall have India destroyed"** (Margaret Bourke-White,

Halfway to Freedom: A Report on the New India. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1949) and the armed Muslim mobs were definitely observing Direct Action Day (16th August 1946) by attacking the Hindu communities in Kolkata, the Indian National Congress was thinking that the partition of the country may be avoided. Even after the state of Pakistan coming into existence and being recognised and propped up by the international imperial powers, Gandhi was hoping that he may be able to persuade Jinnah to dismantle the statehood of Pakistan! What a naïve thing to think!

Demoralised with the success of the Muslim League in turning the brightest hour of India – *when it achieved independence after centuries of colonisation* – into its darkest hour, the Indian leaders were confused and confounded. Seeing India bleed in front of their eyes, they were overwhelmed. And then they were being led by "great" Gandhi who went on threatening the other Indian leaders with hunger strike till death if his irrational and illogical ideas were not accepted. Gandhi went on telling the Hindus and Sikhs in the newly created Pakistan to stay there, and, of course, telling the Muslims in India not to go to Pakistan. With such a call, Gandhi was denying the coming into existence of the State of Pakistan. Did Gandhi expect his call to go down well with the supporters of the Pakistan Movement who "struggled" for decades and made "sacrifices" for the creation of Pakistan – an exclusive State for Muslims! They were breathing a sigh of relief that at last their struggle has fructified and were rejoicing the moment! They could not bear the thought of non-Muslims still living in *their* land! *Any infidel living in Pakistan – the land of the pure – was a self-contradiction in terms!* No wonder, in the pursuit of their dream, they reacted with even more violence. Because of the unrealistic behaviour of the Indian leaders at the time, Pakistanis even today accuse Indians of not accepting the separate existence of Pakistan. So, had the Indian leaders accepted the reality of the Partition and adopted a rational approach towards it, there

might not have been that much bloodshed. The migration of populations could have been controlled and civilised (as much as possible under the circumstances). Arrangements should have been made to get Hindus, Sikhs and Christians out of Pakistan. Of course, no violence against prospective Pakistani citizens should have been allowed, but all those who supported the creation of Pakistan should have been respectfully escorted out of India.

But the Indian National Congress was living in a state of denial. The Indian leaders were out of their depth and did not know what to do.

There was a person called Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman. He was one of the prominent leaders of the All India Muslim League, spearheading the Pakistan Movement. On 23rd March 1940, at its Lahoresession, under the chairmanship of Jinnah, the Muslim League adopted a resolution, known as the Pakistan Resolution. The Resolution read as follows:

"No constitutional plan would be workable or acceptable to the Muslims unless geographical contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary. That the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign … That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in the units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights of the minorities, with their consultation. Arrangements thus should be made for the security of Muslims where they were in a minority."

This resolution was moved in by A. K. Fazlul Huq, the then Chief Minister of Bengal, and was seconded by Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman. In 1941 it became part of the Muslim League's

constitution. Throughout the period of the Pakistan Movement, Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman remained one of the prominent lieutenants of Jinnah.

However, after the creation of Pakistan, Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman was sitting in the Constituent Assembly of India! And, he even took the oath of allegiance to India! Yet, no one asked Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman what he was doing in the Constituent Assembly of *India*, after believing all his life that "No constitutional plan would be workable or acceptable to the Muslims… (except Pakistan)" (Pakistan Resolution – as quoted above).

Now, the Constituent Assembly of India believed very strongly that the separate electorates devised by the British rulers laid the foundation of the Partition. Yet, within two weeks of the creation of Pakistan, on 27th August 1947, during the discussion on minorities' rights, Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman, accompanied by another of his colleagues from the Muslim League, was again demanding separate electorate for Muslims! Sardar Patel, who was presiding the session, said:

"Well, when Pakistan was conceded, at least it was assumed that there would be one nation in the rest of India – the 80 per cent India – and there would be no attempt to talk of two nations here also. …I have no intention to speak on this, but when the Mover of this amendment (demanding the separate electorate for Muslims) talked such a long time and it was supported by the Leader (Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman), then I felt that there is something wrong again still is this land…"

Yes, there was still something wrong in the remaining India. Despite Sardar Patel, and the rest of the Assembly members, appealing to the Muslim League members to withdraw the amendment, and pass the constitutional provisions relating to minorities unanimously in a show of unity, Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman and his colleague did not budge to accept the provisions drafted and adopted unanimously by the Minority

Rights committee. Pleading for separate electorate for the Muslims, Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman had said that there was no need for suspicion towards Muslims. Of course, there was no room left for suspicions. Given the character of the Muslim League, Sardar Patel and other Indian leaders should have been **certain** that the people like Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman were staying in India to see if they could play the politics of Hindu-Muslim divide again. But Sardar Patel and other members of the assembly could not see that.

After failing in his attempt to start the process of Muslim separatism all over again in the remainingIndia, Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman soon left for Pakistan, and Jinnah appointed him the Chief Organizer of the Pakistan Muslim League.

Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman left, but many still stayed to hurt India from Inside! From Shahabuddin to Owaisi, there is a long line of Islamic fundamentalists who want to have a parallel State within the State of India.

Some people believe had India been declared a Hindu State, we would not have had these problems. As argued by this writer in another article in details in a previous issue of India Link, that would have been the biggest blunder India could have committed. It would have been like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. However, the form of secularism India has adopted was also not responsive to the reality and the history. The response to the carving of an Islamic State called Pakistan out of India wasn't limited to only two options – declaring India a free for all secular state, or becoming a Hindu State. There was a third alternative – **India should have been declared a Secular State *sans* Islam.** The realistic, rational and right response to the Muslim League's "success" was that political Islam should have been outlawed in India as Nazism has been outlawed in Germany since 1945. There should have been constitutional provisions on the lines of Article 24 of the German constitution and Article 9 of the Japanese constitution barring political Islam from the

public sphere for ever. Those who tore India apart should have been treated as the enemies of India, and should have been disarmed within the boundary of India the way the Axis powers were disarmed at the conclusion of the Second World War. Like Hitler, those who perpetrated a holocaust on India in pursuit of their Fascist agenda to achieve "the land of the pure" based on racial and ethnic cleansing and caused unprecedented bloodshed in the history of India (and mankind) should have been made to pay for their crimes against humanity. It is right for India to be secular, but it needed to be ensured that ugly Muslim separatism never rears its head again in India. It needed to be made clear – through constitution – that Islamic parties have no right to exist in the State of India. The Muslim League, the MIM, etc. should be outlawed totally and completely. There should be no place for Shahabuddins and Owaisis in the political sphere of India. Religion should be strictly a matter of personal faith for Muslims. Of course, it was India's duty to protect those who opposed the creation of Pakistan, and treat them equally. But, if anyone was craving for Islamic or Muslim politics, they should be straightaway arrested and deported to Pakistan – as was done in the case of the MIM president and Razakar leader Qasim Rizwi in 1948. Adding 'AI' before their names doesn't make these parties Indian. Their basic philosophy remains as anti-secular, anti-democratic and anti-India as ever. The recent behaviour of the MIM proves that. In a secular and democratic society, Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasreen have as much right to express themselves as Mr Owaisi. But Islamic politicians will never accept that. Because the Indian leaders did not handle the Partition logically, the enemy is living within.

In fact, it's not just what happened to India during the Partition. Even otherwise, Islam is incompatible with secularism. The fight between Islam and Secularist forces in different Muslim countries precisely proves this point. The biggest danger the Islamists see is not from Christianity or

Hinduism – they are sure one day they would be able to show *the light of the true God* to these lost souls – but from Secularism. And, they're not wrong. Secularism based on rational and liberal thinking is the biggest threat to Islam. Vice versa is true in the same way. The biggest threat to secularism is Islam. The secularists in Turkey might have succeeded in nipping the Islamist tendencies in the bud, but many Muslim countries, such as Algeria, have gone through a lot of painful time. That's why the moderate Pakistani politicians dread Islamists so much!

Secularism and democracy cannot survive if the tendencies that have been inimical to those ideas are allowed to live within their spheres. By allowing Islamic groups and parties to grow in its body, the State of India is facilitating its own destruction. As exemplified in Taslima Nasreen's case, the enemies of India are demanding the expulsion of an Indian (if not an Indian, definitely a friend of India) from India, by claiming India to be theirs! This is the travesty of secularism! Actually the travesty of the logic of history!

Some people would say what about the Hindu parties? Well, it has to be said at the outset, violence, or threat of violence from any quarter to a piece of art or writing, is unacceptable. So, the activists of Bajrang Dal or VHP indulging in violence should be treated as criminals and nothing else. Had Mr Siddiqui not been a Muslim bigot himself, it was quite plain to see that it is not Salman Rushdie, or Taslima Nasreen or MF Hussain who are creating law and order problems. It is some hooligans who have been rioting in the name of "religious sentiments". Such people have no place in a civilised society.

Now, coming to the Hindu parties in the main, firstly Hinduism cannot be equated with Islam or Christianity in the context of India. Hinduism is the bond between different parts of India. Orissa and Gujarat, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh feel as one country and are together in one State because they share the

Hindu culture. If there is no Hindu culture, these geographically distant lands and linguistically and racially different people would have nothing in common and the State of India would not exist. The singular factor that is responsible for the existence of India is that of the Hindu culture. So, the Hindu parties in India have to be looked at in the same way as the Christian parties in Europe – somewhat immature and a bit of nuisance. But the Hindu parties do represent the gut feelings of Indians. Their influence is benign and their existence is no danger to India, unlike the Islamic parties that have proved to be anti-India. Secondly, secularism and the so-called Hinduism are perfectly compatible. A person like me who doesn't believe in God, and has participated in cultural activities that would have been viewed as 'blasphemous' in other cultures, is seen by other Hindus as a normal Hindu. It can be said with a high probability that Hinduism is the most secular religion in the world. And it is definite that Hinduism cannot survive without secularism. And, it is because of the secular psyche of Hindus that India is a secular country. How many Muslim-dominated or Christian dominated countries are as secular as India! Even in the UK, the Queen is the Head and Protector of the Christian faith and gives a special message to British citizens on Christmas Day. We cannot imagine even the BJP, which many people call a Hindu party, demanding that the President of India should act as the Protector of Hinduism and should deliver a special message to the people of India on the day of Diwali! Actually, Indian secularism – *Sarva Dharma Sambhav* (equal respect for all religions) – is a part of Hinduism itself. An attack on secularism would be an attack on Hinduism. So, there cannot be a danger to Indian secularism from the Hindu parties. And lastly, the most important difference is that the Hindu parties did not demand a separate State for the Hindus, nor have they been given a separate State. While Islamic parties demanded a separate State for Muslims, and they have been given a separate State. So, while one has to bear Hindu, Sikh and Christian parties,

there is no justification to accept Islamic politics in the residual India. If someone believes in Islamic politics, they are welcome to Pakistan! That territory is reserved for them!

The views expressed by the author are personal.