

## 4

### Cover Story

#### RELUCTANT DEMOCRATS

Although forced by circumstances to tread the democratic path, the JIH's vision is still clouded by the spectre of Maududi

### Editorial

Of faith and force 3

### Cover Story

Reluctant democrats 4

### Gender

Fashioning lies, veiling the truth 18

### Saffronwatch

Preventing a calamity 20

### Focus

Punish the perpetrators 23

### Dalit Drishti

Four Dalits slain in Srikakulam 26

### Arab Spring

Out of control 30

### Ethos

The colour of patriotism 33

### Forum

A nation's self-deception 35

### Observatory

Blasphemy law claims one more victim 36

### Bouquets and Brickbats

Riot victims spread harmony 38

### Voices

I "nationalist", You "casteist" 40

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**CORRESPONDENCE:** Post Box No. 28253, Juhu Post Office, Juhu, Mumbai – 400 049, India.

Printed and Published for Sabrang Communications & Publishing Pvt. Ltd. by Javed Anand at Siddhi Offset Pvt. Ltd., 5-12, Kamat Industrial Estate, 396, Veer Savarkar Marg, Prabhadevi, Mumbai – 400 025

#### Sole All India Distributors:

Sabrang Communications & Publishing Pvt. Ltd. P.O. Box 28253, Juhu P.O., Juhu, Mumbai - 400049, India.

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# Of faith and force

IT IS a commonly held Muslim belief, cutting across sectarian divides, that Islam stands on five pillars – Kalima (proclamation that there is no god but one god), namaaz (five daily prayers), *roza* (month-long fasting during Ramzan), zakaat (a religious tax on property owners) and Haj (the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca). Of these, the first three are believed to be obligatory for all Muslims, men and women, while the last two are only for the moneyed. In other words, it can be said that a Muslim who complies with these is fulfilling his essential obligations to Allah.

Not so, argued the late Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi who founded the Jamaat-e-Islami at a gathering of 75 followers in Lahore in August 1941. The maulana claimed that unlike other religions, Islam is not merely about ritual observances such as namaaz or *roza*. Rather, it is an ideology much like capitalism, communism and fascism are. The big difference, according to him, was that Islam is a revolutionary, god-given ideology. To be a Muslim is to be a revolutionary whose obligation it is “to strive with every means possible” to overthrow all man-made institutions and laws, establish an Islamic state and impose Allah-given Shariah rules. What’s more, in Islam, there is no concept of nations and nation states: the whole world must be brought under Allah’s sovereignty.

Inspired by Maududi, his contemporary, Sayyid Qutb of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, went a step further, making explicit what was implicit in Maududi’s world view: in the pursuit of the Islamic state ideal, the resort to violence was justified, including violence against those who were “Muslims only in name”. Today many scholars, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, hold Maududi and Qutb responsible for transforming the religion of Islam in the 20th century into an ideology (“Islamism”) and fusing faith with power (“political Islam”).

Maududi’s Islamism was debunked by the large majority of the subcontinent’s ulema who also consistently opposed the idea of India’s partition along religious lines. Maududi himself did not initially favour partition. But the moment Pakistan was born, he switched gears, seeking its immediate transformation into an Islamic state. And, believe it or not, he was sure that there was “at least a 60 per cent chance” of Hindu-majority India moving in the same direction.

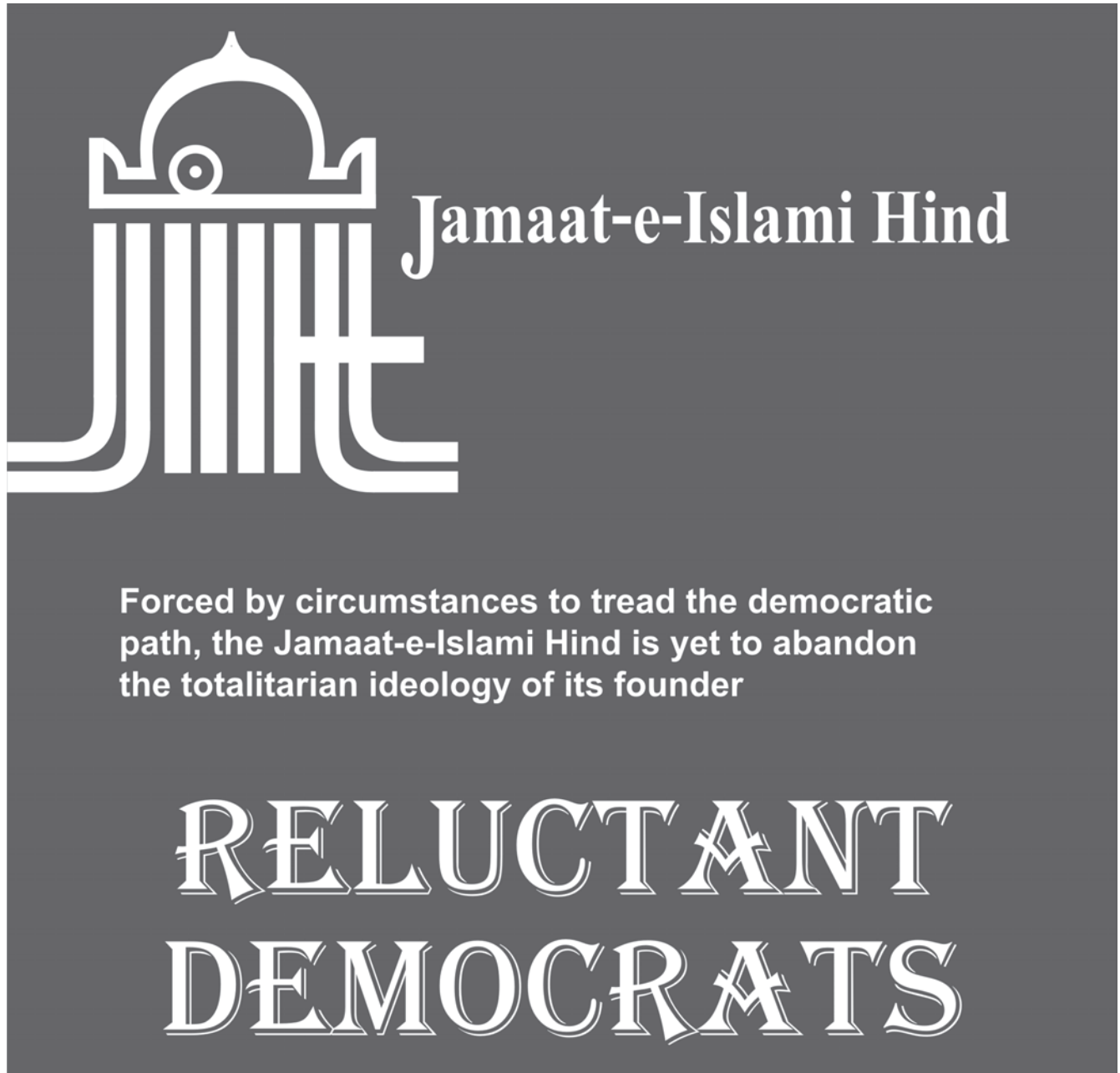
Our cover story this month traces the fate of Maududism and its organisational carrier, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), in an India that opted for secular democracy. All seemed well for a brief period when his followers were as clear as their leader about the road map to Islam’s inevitable triumph in Hindu-majority India. Not only were elections to be totally boycotted, government jobs, courts, schools and colleges were all to be shunned, as having anything to do with them amounted to participating in man-made institutions and endorsement of man-made laws. But the JIH was soon to run into roadblocks. Ironically enough, the biggest hurdle came from India’s Muslims, most of whom seemed more than keen on “un-Islamic” pursuits such as elections, government jobs, secular education and what have you.

The short summary of the JIH’s 64-year history in post-independence India is that this self-appointed leadership, this vanguard of Indian Muslims has ended up being led by the masses. An organisation that had scorned democratic politics and boycotted the electoral process for more than three decades has now spawned a political party of its own and is an eager collaborator with secular forces to “safeguard Indian democracy from Hindutva’s fascist threat”. The JIH’s shift in the democratic direction, no matter how reluctant, is certainly a welcome development. But the fact remains that the organisation is in many ways still hitched to Maududism and its ideal of an Islamic state. The dichotomy between the JIH’s word and deed is apparent, for example, when you examine its Constitution which remains even now firmly locked in the past. As is only to be expected, the organisation thus lays itself open to the charge of being double-faced, no different from the *sangh parivar* which the JIH denounces as fascist.

The JIH’s reluctance or inability to confront its past and to progress beyond the tortuous attempts to reconcile irreconcilables has other serious implications. As the JIH is well aware, Muslim extremists in India and elsewhere in the subcontinent still draw their primary inspiration from the writings of Maududi and Qutb. The best example of this is the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) which was established with the full blessing of the JIH in the 1970s and which turned to extremism in the early 1990s. SIMI has for years accused the Jamaat of treachery, of abandoning the Maududian path, even as it proclaimed itself to be the real inheritor and follower of the maulana.

There is only one way forward for the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind today: In order to ensure its survival as also to fight the menace of Muslim extremism in the subcontinent, it must engage in a sincere critique of Maududism, distance itself from the politics of marrying faith to force and openly denounce the Jamaat’s extremist chapters in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Kashmir.

– EDITORS



Forced by circumstances to tread the democratic path, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind is yet to abandon the totalitarian ideology of its founder

# RELUCTANT DEMOCRATS

**BY JAVED ANAND**

**M**EET Irfan Ahmad. Having started his educational journey from a madrasa in North India, he is today assistant professor of politics in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University, Australia,

and leads the country's Centre for Islam and the Modern World. What got him there, quite possibly, is his book *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*, published in 2010 by Permanent Black. The book forms part of 'The Indian Century', a series of select books on India's recent past. It has also been published by the Princeton University Press in the USA. "This is the most important book

written on Muslims in India in the last three decades," says Dale F. Eickelman, a renowned US-based professor of anthropology and a scholar of Islam and Muslim societies.

No mean achievement for a first venture, an outcome of Ahmad's PhD thesis on the subject from the University of Amsterdam. "You've come a long way, baby," one might say to him in appreciation. That, in short summary, is also

## ■■■ COVER STORY

what Ahmad has to say to/about the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) in his book. Without quarrelling with Ahmad's conclusion based on meticulous research, the fact remains that his conclusion, though not incorrect, is incomplete. A complete sentence about the JIH should read: You've come a long way, baby, but you've still got a long way to go. Though the JIH has in practice moved far away from its ideological moorings, it has yet to cut the umbilical cord that still ties it to the lethal ideology of Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, the Jamaat's founder.

That there is a movement within the Jamaat movement in India is true and that's a welcome thing. But there is a limit to the extent you can play with ideas, how far you can go with verbal jugglery. How long can you "interpret" and "reinterpret" Maududi to legitimise a course of action which would have been absolute heresy for the good maulana? All that you achieve in the process is to stand Maududism on its head. What is needed is a clean break, a decent burial of the Maududian world view, but as of now the JIH is nowhere close to getting there. Ahmad's otherwise engaging book fails to satisfactorily address the disjoint between Maududism – the bedrock of Jamaat politics – and its otherwise welcome departure – in the secular, democratic direction. Given this dislocation, to many Indian Muslims, the JIH looks in many respects like the mirror image, the Muslim version of the Hindu right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

### *The Lenin of Islamism*

To Maududi, the Lenin of Islamism, goes the dubious credit of "discovering" (Sayyid Qutb of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood was later to toe the same line and stretch it even further) that unlike other religions, Islam is not just faith and rituals, Kalima, namaaz, roza, Haj, zakaat. Above all, Islam is a "revolutionary ideology" whose goal is the capture of state power. To be a Muslim is to be a revolutionary whose entire being is dedicated to dismantling and overthrowing all man-made ideas, institutions, laws, isms – capitalism, communism, fascism – and grabbing political power to establish *hukumat-e-ilahiya* (Allah's kingdom) and Shariah laws.

Since there is no place for nation and nationalism in Islam, it is the bounden duty of a Muslim to strive through all means possible to establish Allah's kingdom and Shariah rule throughout the globe: from Japan and China to Iceland and America. If Islam is the revolutionary ideology and Muslims the revolutionaries, for Maududi, the Jamaat and Jamaatis are its vanguard.

In short, here is Lenin's famous "What is to Done?" thesis Islamised. Replace Marxism with Islam, communists with Muslims and the Bolshevik party with the Jamaat and there you have the complete blueprint for a totalitarian Islamic state.

For Maududi, the bloody partition of India was a great leap forward, since it had given birth to a *dar ul-Islam*, an abode of Islam (Pakistan). Admittedly, there was a little anomaly here, a little twist in the tale. The creator of the "*dar ul-Islam*", it so happened, was a beardless man whose commitment to Islam was suspect and whose avowal of secularism and democracy threatened to turn Pa-

### **How long can you "interpret" and "reinterpret" Maududi to legitimise a course of action which would have been absolute heresy for the good maulana? All that you achieve in the process is to stand Maududism on its head**

kistan into a *Paap-istan* (land of sin). But Maududi was confident that his Jamaat would ensure course correction and soon usher *hukumat-e-ilahiya* in Pakistan. The subsequent trajectory of the Jamaat and the fate of its agenda for Pakistan (and Bangladesh) lies outside the scope of this article, since the focus here is on the Indian version of the Jamaat.

### *Jamaat in dar ul-kufr*

If a part of the partitioned country was *dar ul-Islam*, the other part – greater in size and larger in numbers – was "*dar ul-kufr* (an abode of infidels)" as Maududi saw it. The agenda of the Jamaat in the predominantly Muslim *dar ul-Islam* appeared simple enough. But what was the Jamaat's rump – with all of 240 *arkan* (members) in 1948 – left behind in Hindu-majority India to do?

Not much of a problem there, the maulana believed. If the transition of Pakistan into an Islamic state was a certainty, Maududi was also confident that there was "at least a 60 per cent chance for Islam's success" in India too.<sup>1</sup> If you believed there was "at least a 60 per cent chance of success" in whatever you seek to achieve, wouldn't you "go for it"? So the JIH "went for it"; took up the challenge of transforming infidel India into a *dar ul-Islam*.

If you find this idea bizarre, hilarious, ridiculous or whatever, many Indian Muslims thought so too, even then. In his book, Ahmad narrates the account of a retired professor from Aligarh Muslim University who, as a student of the same university in the 1960s, had attended a lecture addressed by Syed Hamid Husain, then a prominent Jamaat leader. Formerly a communist, the highly westernised Husain had later embraced Maududism. During his lecture Husain attacked the ideas of secularism, nationalism and democracy, offering Islam as the only real alternative before India.

Ahmad's interviewee challenged Husain, arguing that it was "foolish" and "reactionary" to fantasise about an Islamic system in Hindu-predominant India. But an unfazed Husain asserted: "Yes, it is possible." Asked if Hindus needed to convert to Islam for the miracle to happen, his answer was no. Husain was simply reiterating the Jamaat line that just as a secular, democratic system remained un-Islamic irrespective of whether an Abdullah or a Ram Prasad presided over the affairs of state, so long as an "Islamic system" was established, it did not matter who was at the helm!

Maududi's and the JIH's conviction that India could be Islamised rested on three assumptions:

*Assumption one:* A very large section of Hindus who are victims of caste oppression can easily be won over to the fold of Islam. Why would lower-caste



Hindus who did not convert to Islam through centuries of "Muslim rule" in India do so under the new secular, democratic dispensation? Because there was no Maududi and his Jamaat on the scene earlier, might well have been the response.

*Assumption two:* As the Jamaat's monthly Urdu organ, *Zindagi*, argued in 1955: "If we consider the population of the whole world... we can say that every sixth man is a Muslim whereas out of 300 men, there is only one member of the Communist party. Despite their small number however, communism has captured one-fourth of the planet and is one of the two leading powers."<sup>2</sup> (Yet another example of the Jamaat's love-hate relationship with communists?) Numbers apparently did not matter; what did was the determination and sacrifices of the vanguard.

*Assumption three:* Since Hinduism did not have a "permanent world view", Hindus had no choice but to look to others for a system of governance. That is why they ended up adopting the "evil principles" of secularism, nationalism and democracy from the West. The task before the JIH was therefore straightforward: to tell the Hindu leaders of the Congress: "It is your duty (*farz*) to recognise, assess and examine... the Islamic principles and display the same objectivity you have adopted towards European democracy and Russian communism. We are sure that if you examine that then you would realise that in reality only the Islamic system is the guarantee of your and the world's welfare."<sup>3</sup>

### *Jamaat's recipe for India: Hindu state*

Based on such comforting assumptions, the strategy proposed by Maududi and adopted by the JIH was simple: Goad the Hindu leaders of the Congress party to ditch the ideals of secularism and democracy, establish a "Hindu state". In short, the Jamaatis preferred that Indian Muslims live under a Hindu state rather than a secular state.

While deposing before the Justice Munir Commission (appointed to probe the vicious and violent anti-Ahmadiyya agitation in Pakistan in 1953), Maududi had stated: "I should have no objection even if the Muslims of India are

treated... as Shudras and Mlecchas [the lowest castes and barbarians] and Manu's laws are applied to them, depriving them of all share in the government and the rights of a citizen."<sup>4</sup> Embarrassed by such a statement from their leader, Maududi's followers continue to claim that the good maulana was misquoted by Justice Munir. But then, here is the 1950 statement of Maulana Abullais Islahi Nadwi, the first *amir* (president) of the JIH: "I request... the Hindu leaders to adopt only those principles and based on them, establish whatever way of life exists among them. We would prefer that (Hindu state) to the secular systems of Europe. In the (Hindu) system, if there is a provision of death for Muslims like us, we are agreed even to that."<sup>5</sup>

"For a Muslim, it is not even legitimate to breathe in a secular society unless he strove to convert it into a *dar*

**To the ardent followers of Maududi, the organisation is deviating from "true Islam". As for those (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) who consider Maududism to be a recipe for a totalitarian state (some even call it "fascist"), its movement towards secularism and democracy is seen more as an opportunistic, temporary, tactical move**

*ul-Islam*," said Maududi. However, his and JIH's preference for a Hindu state seems to have been purely 'tactical'. It was believed that a 'Hindu state' (to be installed with full encouragement from Muslims) cannot last long because Hinduism lacked a "permanent world view" and was cursed with the caste hierarchy. A "Hindu state" was sure to collapse and the JIH (Islam's Bolsheviks) would quickly step in to seize the moment. As simple as that.

### *The commandments*

Equipped with such an impressive theological arsenal, the 240-member army of the JIH enthusiastically launched its Islamist project in post-independence India. In the beginning the JIH chose to float an island of its own in the sea of *kufr* so that Jamaatis may lead an uncontaminated Islamic life. The organisation's purist agenda included the following:

➤ Jamaat workers were prohibited from participating in any way in the electoral process. No standing for elections, no voting, since Maududi believed it meant participation in the *taghuti nizam* (idolatrous system).

➤ Staying away from elections was not enough. Every other component of the state apparatus, part of the system that propped up the un-Islamic system, was to be shunned.

➤ Government service, particularly in the Indian army and judiciary, and the banking system were an absolute *no-no*. (Muslims inspired by Maududism resigned from their government jobs before joining the Jamaat.)

➤ Joining the legal profession and practising as a lawyer was prohibited; taking cases to the courts was not permitted either except in extreme situations.

➤ Leave alone government educa-

tional institutions, even studying in a Muslim-managed educational institution like the Aligarh Muslim University was out, since Maududi had called such institutions "slaughterhouses" for Muslims. Madrassas run by various Muslim outfits too were "slaughterhouses" although of a different kind. So were Muslims to stay illiterate? Not at all; the JIH would open *darsghahs* (schools) and *saani darsghahs* (institutions of higher education) which would impart true Islamic education and nurture future Jamaatis. Girls' education was fine but co-education was out.

➤ The JIH would have nothing to do with other Muslim organisations because they lacked the "fundamental perspective of Islam" (read did not subscribe to Maududi's Islam).

➤ Any dealing with banks, savings or pension accounts, educational or business loans, all were haram because interest equals usury which Islam prohibits.

## COVER STORY

➤ Sinful practices such as listening to music, watching films, etc were all haram.

➤ Birth control measures were un-Islamic and for women, the burkha was a must.

How on earth was the Jamaat going to transform anything with such self-imposed isolation? *Daawah* (invitation, propagation) is the answer. For starters, the JIH issued a *daawah* to top Indian leaders, including the then president of India, Rajendra Prasad, and prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Sadly for Maududi's followers, the response, if any, was not encouraging. In order to convert the *aam aadmi* (common man) to its cause, it published books and periodicals in several Indian languages. But here again, the progress was far from soul-stirring. According to the JIH's own figures, as against 240 members in 1948, it had grown to only 981 members in 1960 when the total Muslim population in India then was around 42 million. It was not a very encouraging picture.

*The vanguard behind the masses*

As was only to be expected, the JIH found itself running into hurdles every step of the way. India's secular, democratic polity and more so the Indian Muslims' near total indifference to its agenda soon forced the organisation to rethink or be reduced to irrelevance. As it turned out, the demands of survival won over the dictates of ideology. Maududi had envisaged the Jamaat as the vanguard of the ummah (the global Muslim community). But if it has any presence on the Indian landscape today it is only because it chose, willy-nilly, to be led by the

Muslim masses. Slowly but surely, the body that had set out to transform India was itself transformed. That this transformation was not uniform but zigzag and patchy is another matter.

The Jamaat's step-by-step ideological retreat is best illustrated through its shifting stance towards the political, electoral process.

➤ Soon after independence, the JIH switched from its original *hukumat-e-ilahiya* mission to that of *iqaamat-e-deen* (establishing religion). It's just a change of terminology, both mean the same

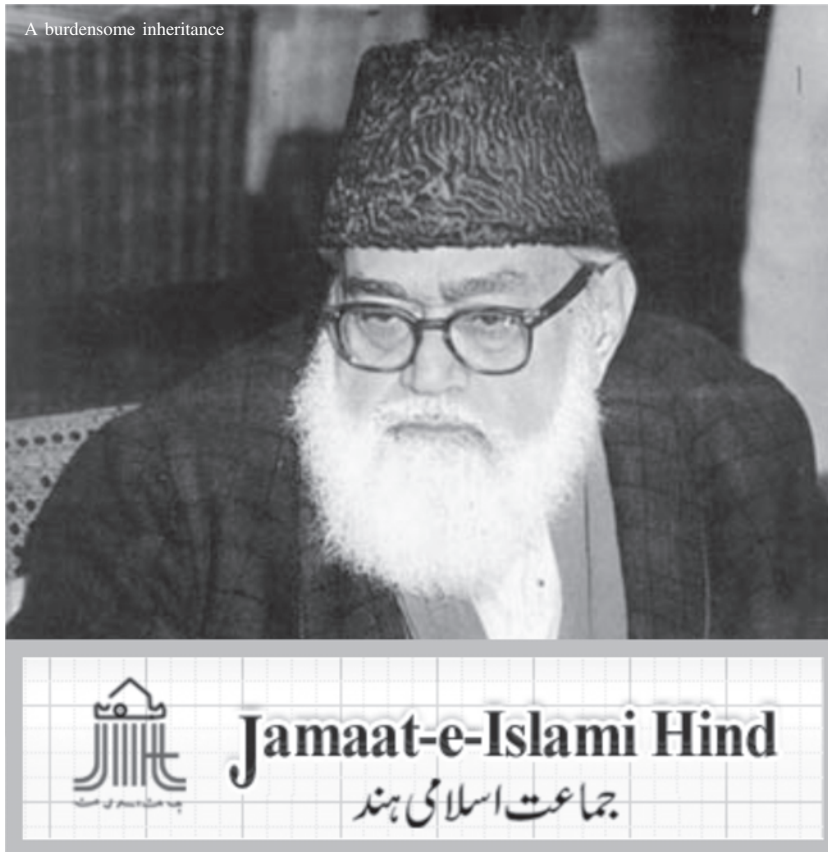
pated actively both as voters and as candidates. Finding itself totally isolated, the JIH was forced to revisit Maududi.

➤ In a dramatic U-turn on the eve of the 1962 elections, the JIH mass-distributed a pamphlet in Urdu under a title in Persian: '*Pas che bayad kard* (What is to be done?). Lenin again! The pamphlet, penned by the JIH's *amir* Nadwi, pleaded with Muslims to participate in elections, for not to do so would be "tantamount to suicide".<sup>6</sup> Muslims had in any case been actively participating since 1952!

➤ The ground for the shift had been prepared in 1961 when circumstances forced a new realisation on the Jamaat's *shura* (highest decision-making body): "if the path of elections could be used for the goal of *iqaamat-e-deen*", participating in the "ungodly system" was acceptable, it decided. Interestingly however, in the resolutions passed by the *shura*, the phrase *iqaamat-e-deen* was given a quiet burial. Participation in the elections was now okay because it was "in the interest of Islam and Muslims". But conditions applied: a Muslim wanting to contest elections must shun non-Islamic parties; it was okay for a

Jamaati to vote only "under some conditions"; votes must only go to a candidate who is "not from a non-Islamic party". For all practical purposes however, the JIH stayed away from the 1962 polls.

➤ Until the early 1960s, the JIH would have nothing to do with other Muslim organisations because, as mentioned earlier, they lacked the "fundamental perspective of Islam". But eager to be part of a new political formation in North India in 1964 – the All India



A burdensome inheritance

thing, the cadre was told. In that case, why change? The realisation, presumably, that harping on "Allah's kingdom" would not only not go down too well with the Hindu majority, even Muslims might scoff at the absurdity of the proposition.

➤ In the first two general elections of independent India – 1952, 1957 – Muslims were warned that taking part in the *taghuti nizam* was totally un-Islamic, haram. Indian Muslims however totally ignored the Jamaat and partici-

## ■■■ COVER STORY

Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat – Nadwi assured its leader Syed Mahmood through the Jamaat's mouthpiece, *Radiance*, that the JIH had full faith in the Indian Constitution and in a secular state. However, it remained opposed to sharing a platform with Hindus. All said and done, in the 1967 polls too, JIH members did not contest elections and the ban on its workers from voting remained in place.

➤ In the aftermath of the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi – during which period the JIH was banned and many of its top leaders jailed – the organisation took no official stand on the 1977 elections which dislodged Mrs Gandhi from power.

### *JIH in defence of secularism*

Fast-forward to 1985. Though matters reached a flashpoint and the organisation seemed on the verge of a vertical split, the leadership at long last pushed through its resolve allowing Jamaat workers to vote. After nearly four decades of organisational twists and torments over the issue, Jamaat members were at last free to vote: for Muslim or even non-Muslim candidates. The only condition now was that the candidates be of good moral character, sympathetic to Muslim concerns and not affiliated to any party whose ideology is "clearly against Islam and Muslims".

The JIH which began as a staunch opponent of India's secular, democratic polity (idolatrous system) had now turned into its active participant some 40 years later. Marking this shift, the phrase *iqaamat-e-deen* disappeared from the mastheads of the Jamaat's publications. What's more, with the rise of virulent Hindutva in Indian politics from the mid-1980s onwards, the JIH turned from mere participant into an ardent defender of democracy and secularism. In the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, it even floated a platform, Forum for Democracy and Communal Harmony, wooing practising Hindus, communists and avowed atheists to jointly combat "communalism and fascism". Invited to the Jamaat's *ijtima* (gathering) of 2002 were several Hindu high priests (*shankaracharyas*). One of them even blew a conch on the occasion and chanted: "Om, Om!" Had

he been alive, what would Maududi think or say?

Along with the radical shift of the JIH on the electoral front, some other foundational Maududian myths also came into question. Maududi's neat delineation of the world into *dar ul-Islam* and *dar ul-kufr* was one of them. Some Jamaat leaders now found democracy to be "an unexpected divine boon". Others claimed that India is neither *dar ul-Islam* nor *dar ul-kufr* but a *dar ul-daawah*. But for the devoted followers of Maududi, all this is heresy of the highest order.

In his book, Ahmad well captures the disgust of a Jamaat member from Delhi who was among many who quit the organisation when the ban on voting was lifted: "How on earth could Islam allow voting for *taghut* (idolatrous parliamentary system)? When I joined the Jamaat, we were told to eliminate *taghut*, secularism, democracy... everything against the Koran... We joined for *iqaamat-e-deen*. Now the Jamaat is fighting for

of social issues as well as leading and participating in social movements against anti-people government policies, fascism, imperialism, terrorism and environmental degradation". Particularly noteworthy is the fact that: "We work closely with non-Muslim groups in Kerala, particularly leftists, who are concerned about similar social causes".<sup>7</sup> The SYM has organised several statewide rallies to which it regularly invites nationally respected non-Muslim activists, most of whom are avowed atheists.

In the last two years the JIH has been fluttering its eyelids at communists who were once seen as its biggest ideological foes. In the 2011 assembly polls in Kerala, the JIH officially backed the communist-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), leading to the protest resignation of the organisation's former political secretary, Hameed Vanimel, among some others. But the JIH stuck to its support of the communists' front.

And in what some might see as a big leap forward, in April 2011 the JIH

## **If Maududi fantasised about an Islamic state, for Golwalkar, the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, Hindu Rashtra was/is the goal. If Islam meant "revolutionary ideology" for the former, the catchphrase for the ideologues of the Hindu right was 'Hindutva'**

*iqaamat-e-secular democracy*. Do you know about the Forum for Democracy and Communal Harmony?... What is it doing? It is fighting for the glory of secularism and democracy. You have also read Maududi. Tell me, what has secularism got to do with Islam? Where is the original ideology?"

Ahmad's field research in India, conducted between 2001 and 2004, covered the cities of Delhi, Aligarh, Rampur and Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh and Patna in Bihar. As we shall see later, had he extended his work to cover the southern state of Kerala (where Muslims are around 24 per cent of the total population), especially post-2002, he would have found that the JIH had moved even further down the road to secularism and democracy.

In 2003 the Kerala unit of the Jamaat set up the Solidarity Youth Movement (SYM) which has since been involved "in generating mass awareness on a range

launched its own political party, the Welfare Party of India (WPI), which will henceforth participate actively in India's "idolatrous system".

But this is where the good news ends. While Ahmad greets the gradual transformation of the JIH with an unqualified welcome, the JIH's politics remain suspect in the eyes of many Indians, Muslims included. A clear indicator of this is the sharp response of many Muslims to the launch of the Welfare party.

Here, for example, are the comments of Sahil Khan: "The floating of the new political party by the Jamaat... represents a shift in terms of the Indian Jamaat's strategy in the face of a transformed political context. Yet this does not necessarily mean a transformation of its overall ideology. Given the Jamaat's particular understanding of Islam, which many other Muslims do not accept, it is not surprising that the move has provoked considerable debate,



## COVER STORY

including visceral opposition, in Muslim circles.”<sup>8</sup>

The core of the dilemma before the JIH continues to be this: because the organisation merely seeks to explain away this or that departure from Maududism or, at best, resorts to a ‘we-don’t-agree-with-everything-the-Maulana-said’ approach, it invites suspicion and sharp criticism from the left and the right. To the ardent followers of Maududi, the organisation is deviating from “true Islam”. As for those (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) who consider Maududism to be a recipe for a totalitarian state (some even call it “fascist”), its movement towards secularism and democracy is seen more as an opportunistic, temporary, tactical move. For them therefore, the JIH is not very different from the Hindu right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Secular Indians view the *sangh parivar* (the RSS, including its affiliates such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, VHP, the Bajrang Dal, etc) as neo-fascist, proto-fascist or simply fascist. Ironically, the JIH also considers the *sangh parivar* to be fascist. But the fact is that there are striking similarities between the two. Before we examine the similarities, let’s take a quick look at the background of the RSS and the *sangh parivar*.

### *Islamic state vs Hindu Rashtra*

The RSS was founded in 1925 by a Maharashtrian Brahmin named Keshav Baliram Hedgewar who was heavily influenced by the writings of a fellow Maharashtrian Brahmin, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), who championed the cause of a “Hindu nation (Hindu Rashtra)”. If for Maududi, being a Muslim did not mean just

namaaz, *roza*..., for Savarkar, being a Hindu had nothing to do with *puja-paath* (ritual worship). As elaborated in his ideological treatise, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu*, India belonged only to those who considered it to be both a *punyabhoomi* (holy land) and *pitrubhoomi* (fatherland). Muslims and Christians were foreigners, since their holy lands lay outside India, and had no place in Savarkar’s Hindu Rashtra. (Though it could not be proved in court, many historians maintain that he was the mastermind of the conspiracy which culminated in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, a former RSS worker. The RSS was banned

Here is what Golwalkar wrote in praise of Nazism in his book, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, first published in 1938: “German national pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races – the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.”<sup>9</sup>



Golwalkar’s message for India’s religious minorities was clear: “From this standpoint sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the non-Hindu people [read Muslims, Christians, Parsis] in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu nation i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation,

claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizens’ rights.”<sup>10</sup>

following the assassination.)

The head of the RSS is referred to as the *sarsanghchalak*. Before his death in 1940, Hedgewar had, in a sealed envelope, named another Maharashtrian Brahmin, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906-1973), as his successor. For his followers, Golwalkar, who was the *sarsanghchalak* from 1940-1973, remains their most revered chief, respectfully referred to as ‘Pujaniya Guruji’ or as ‘Guru Golwalkar’. Critics of the RSS world view refer to him as the ‘Guru of Hate’.

### *RSS: JIH’s mirror image*

To return to the similarities between the Jamaat and the RSS:

➤ If Maududi fantasised about an Islamic state, for Golwalkar, the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, “Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation, Hindu rule)” was/is the goal. If Islam meant “revolutionary ideology” for the former, the catchphrase for the ideologues of the Hindu right

## ■■■ COVER STORY

was 'Hindutva'. (Had Hindus heeded the sage advice of Maududi and the JIH, instead of a secular, democratic republic, India, post-independence, would have gone the way of a Hindu Rashtra.)

➤ The RSS claims it is merely a 'cultural' organisation engaged in 'character building and inculcating patriotism'; the Jamaat too pretends to be a religious-cultural body. That the RSS claim is a sham is an open secret, for it tightly controls the politics of its affiliate, the BJP. For secular Indians, the RSS is in fact the political party and the BJP its 'parliamentary wing'. Having launched the Welfare party last year, the Jamaat too is at great pains to convince people that the WPI is an independent entity. Not many take this claim seriously, since, apart from anything else, the leading lights of the party are also top-level office-bearers of the Jamaat.

➤ The *sangh parivar's* ideal of a Hindu Rashtra is the polar opposite of a secular, democratic polity. That however does not stop the RSS from active participation in the country's democratic polity through its proxy, the BJP. In fact, swearing by democracy, the RSS/BJP uses every opportunity to remind Indians that it fought for the return of democracy while it was the Congress under Indira Gandhi that tried to dismantle it by imposing emergency rule in the 1970s. The 'Islamic state' ideal is also completely at odds with the idea of a secular, democratic state. But the "transformed" Jamaat, as we have seen above, is a keen defender of secularism and democracy.

➤ It is clear from the literature put out by both organisations that just as the RSS embodies social conservatism of the Hindu middle class, the Jamaat embodies social conservatism of the Muslim middle class. Both are archetypal patriarchal outfits, Male Clubs with their 'women's wing' for adornment. Their views of an "ideal woman" are remarkably similar too: conveyor belts to transmit culture from generation to generation.

*Whose Maududi is he anyway?*

If there are many similarities, there is also a sharp, situationally defined difference between the two. The RSS sees in Hindu-majority India a favour-

able "natural climate" for its sustenance just as Pakistan is for the Jamaat. Some wonder whether the Jamaat in India is adopting a more benign posture only because it is compelled to buy time, given the rather "hostile milieu", unlike in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Jammu and Kashmir where the Jamaat shows its "true colours".

If there is scepticism about the Jamaat's real motives from without, there is scathing criticism of the organisation from within the Maududian camp by those who accuse it of betraying the pristine ideals of "true Islam" out of cowardice or sheer opportunism. Apart from those who've left the organisation in sheer disgust, there are also those who are still within the Jamaat, perhaps dreaming of an opportune time to reverse the clock. But the most consistent and the sharpest critique of the JIH comes from the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). It is an organisa-

**It is one thing to talk about a hounded, targeted group being pushed towards extremist thinking and quite another to dress up your resistance to injustice in the theologically loaded idioms of jihad, *shahadat* and *khilafat*. Why would SIMI quote Maududi back to the Jamaat except to indicate where it got its inspiration from?**

tion which emerged from the womb of the Jamaat to launch itself in the 1970s and which, since the 1990s, has, rightly or otherwise, been accused of involvement in numerous terrorist activities across the country.

Though the subtitle of his book might suggest otherwise, an examination of the Students Islamic Movement of India is an integral and critical component of Ahmad's thesis on the JIH. It is by contrasting the radicalisation of SIMI – an offspring of the Jamaat – in response to the upsurge of virulent Hindutva from the 1980s onwards that Ahmad seeks to bring the transformation of the Jamaat into sharp relief.

*India: From riots to crimes against humanity*

Those familiar with the recent history of India will be aware of the growing communalisation of India's polity

since the mid-1980s thanks to the meteoric rise of Hindutva culminating in the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, the Shiv Sena-led anti-Muslim pogrom in Mumbai in December 1992-January 1993 and the genocidal targeting of Gujarat's Muslims by the Narendra Modi-led BJP government in 2002.

Since the 1980s onwards, from an era of "riots", India moved on to an era of one-sided, state-condoned and even state-sponsored carnage and pogroms targeting India's religious minorities. In this post-riots scenario, the role of the state is no longer limited to its earlier partisan conduct. In the past three decades it has been an active accomplice, prime instigator, even chief sponsor of mass crimes. Nellie, Assam, 1983 (target Muslims); Delhi 1984 (target Sikhs); Bhagalpur 1989 (target Muslims); Mumbai 1992-93 (target Muslims); Gujarat 2002 (target Muslims); Kandhamal, Orissa, 2008 (target Chris-

tians) are the most gruesome reminders of this ugly reality.

Were we to go by the definition adopted by the UN's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Indian state emerges with the dubious distinction of having subjected its religious minorities – Muslims, Sikhs, Christians – to genocidal targeting six times in 25 years. It is a record that even many dictatorships would find tough to match. Thanks to this prevailing culture of impunity, in each case, the masterminds of the mass killings have gone unpunished while the police officers responsible for shocking dereliction of duty received promotion after promotion.

Given this backdrop, for well over a decade now not only secular activists but highly respected establishment figures – retired top-level police officers and civil servants – have repeatedly made

## ■■■ COVER STORY

two assertions: one, no communal carnage can last beyond 24 hours unless the state wants it to; two, "by its failure to protect the life and property of a section of citizens, the state sows the seeds of extremism".<sup>11</sup>

Prem Shankar Jha, a veteran journalist and columnist, writes regularly for the national and international media. In the midst of the 2002 Gujarat carnage, in an article he wrote for the *Hindustan Times*, he lamented: "For every one person who has been killed [Gujarat 2002] there are 10 whose property has been destroyed, breadwinner taken and the family rendered destitute. Not the centre, not the state, not a single po-

Much the same thing was said in a different context by Antonio Cassese, the first court president of the 11-member bench of judges appointed to the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal to try the Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic and others for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes: "How could a woman who had been raped... or a civilian whose parents or children had been killed in cold blood quell their desire for vengeance if they knew that the authors of these crimes were left unpunished...? The only civilised alternative to this desire for revenge is to render justice."<sup>14</sup>

Indian democracy has been sadly lax

mon. One, the violence was never spontaneous but the result of meticulous planning, organisation and implementation by Hindu communal bodies. Two, the police and the administration showed anti-minority bias. Repeated recommendations by commission after commission on the imperative measures to pre-empt violence and to punish the perpetrators and derelict police officers have gone unheeded. It is in this climate of permissiveness that the culture of impunity has grown, with no accountability mechanisms in place.

As many peace-loving and justice-minded Indians have repeatedly emphasised in recent years, if the perpetrators of 1984 had been prosecuted and punished, the 1992-93 anti-Muslim pogrom in Mumbai may have been prevented; and if the perpetrators of 1992-93 had been punished, the 2002 genocide in Gujarat may have been pre-empted.

### *SIMI turns to jihad, khilafat*

You do not have to be an al-Qaeda supporter to point out that the absence of justice creates the climate for the birth of extremism. Two months before India's "26/11" (the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai), in his Field Marshal KM Cariappa Memorial Lecture in Delhi, the then union finance minister P. Chidambaram foresaw "new waves of terror" in India. "Out of the hopelessness and despair of the Muslim community – and if not addressed firmly, the Christian tribal communities too [Kandhamal] – will rise new waves of terror," he warned. The national media chose to ignore the

alarm bells rung by their favourite finance minister, or relegated this to a few paragraphs on the inside pages. Soon after he was made the union home minister in the aftermath of 26/11, Chidambaram spoke again: "We cannot fight terrorism effectively unless we fight communalism with equal determination."<sup>15</sup>

If the 1984 massacre of innocent Sikhs produced "Sikh extremism", the demolition of the Babri Masjid (December 1992), the anti-Muslim pogrom in Mumbai (1992-93) and the genocidal targeting of Gujarat's Muslims (2002)



The Jamaat-e-Islami in India: To dream the impossible dream

litical party, not a single industry association has even thought of setting up a relief fund to which concerned citizens can contribute to facilitate their rehabilitation. With such callousness at home, we will soon not need Pakistan or Kashmir to breed our terrorists for us."<sup>12</sup> In another article written around the same time, he repeated the warning: "Would it be surprising if some of them [Muslims] are asking themselves whether Hindus will ever let them prosper in India and whether it would not be better to go out in a blaze of terrorist revenge?"<sup>13</sup>

in providing such civilised alternatives with regard to the delivery of justice in the context of post-independence communal violence. What we have seen instead is an undeclared culture of impunity for the perpetrators and masterminds of communal carnage and for police officers who are constitutionally obliged to impartially enforce the rule of law. The reports of various judicial commissions – appointed by different governments from time to time to probe incidents of communal violence, fix responsibilities and make recommendations – have two conclusions in com-



## ■■■ COVER STORY

sowed the seeds of “Muslim extremism”. Terrorism is not the monopoly of any one religion. Discrimination and injustice saw the birth of extremism among the Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka and the Catholics in Ireland. But when an extremism brought into existence by force of circumstances finds anchor in a pre-existing ideology of terror, a closer look at the phenomenon becomes necessary.

Enter SIMI. When it was launched with the JIH’s blessings in 1977, SIMI’s declared objective was “character building” to fight against the perceived twin evils of communism and capitalist consumerism with its “degenerate morality”. In less than a decade however, this self-styled moral brigade had metamorphosed into crusaders for Islam, claiming for itself the mantle of “the real inheritor” of Maududism. In the mid-1980s SIMI had widely distributed eye-catching stickers proclaiming: “Secularism, NO; Democracy, NO; Nationalism, NO; Polytheism, NO; Only Islam”. The stickers adorned numerous Muslim homes and shops throughout India. From then on, Hindutva’s belligerence was matched by a rapid radicalisation of SIMI.

In December 1991, at an all-India conference held in Bombay (now Mumbai), SIMI issued its call for jihad. As Ahmad spells out in his book, “By jihad it did not mean a battle against temptation of the self; SIMI stated that it meant killing the enemy.”<sup>16</sup> In SIMI’s analysis, the agenda of the Hindutva forces was not limited to demolishing mosques and killing Muslims; its real goal was to wipe out Islam from India. The task before the jihadis was therefore to “attack the root: polytheism”. In other words, SIMI proposed to wipe out idol worship from India. Having taken to jihad in 1991, in 1996 SIMI added the re-establishment of the *khilafat* (caliphate) to its agenda.

Ahmad writes: “Now jihad was not only for the defence of Muslims under attack from the *sangh parivar* and the police but was also for the establishment of the caliphate.”

Without jihad, opined SIMI’s mouthpiece, *Islamic Movement*, “a revival of the caliphate is not possible”. In keeping with Maududi’s internationalism, if not stated in so many words, SIMI clearly implied that since Muslims and Islam

were being targeted not only in India but elsewhere in the world too, its own jihad was part of a global jihad with caliphate as its goal. Further, in an argument that Maududi would heartily endorse, SIMI proclaimed that if Prophet Muhammad was a “mercy upon mankind” (*rahmat al il alamin*), he was also “a prophet of wars”. Once jihad, *shahadat* (martyrdom) and *khilafat* had become its catch-all, SIMI embraced the Muslim Brotherhood’s epigram: “Allah is Our Lord, Muhammad is our Commander, Koran is our Constitution, Jihad is our path, *Shahadat* is our desire.”

“SIMI’s declaration of jihad,” says Ahmad, “did not stem from its members reading the Koran but from Hindutva’s violent mass mobilisation against Muslims through its campaign to build the Ram temple. Second, the SIMI became radical because the Indian state failed to practise secularism.”<sup>17</sup> Agreed that the anti-Muslim hysteria generated by Hindutva and the reluctance, or refusal, of the Indian state to impartially enforce the rule of law created the political climate in which SIMI’s militant idiom could find some resonance

### **You cannot continue to swear by Maududi, for whom secularism, democracy, nationalism, were “evil principles”, and simultaneously be ardent defenders of those very ideals without putting your credibility into question**

among a section of Indian Muslims. But surely it is one thing to talk about a hounded, targeted group being pushed towards extremist thinking and quite another to dress up your resistance to injustice in the theologically loaded idioms of jihad, *shahadat* and *khilafat*? Why would SIMI quote Maududi back to the Jamaat except to indicate where it got its inspiration from: Maududism, certainly, with a sprinkling perhaps of Qutbism. And who else but the JIH introduced SIMI to the Maududian world view?

#### *Credibility in question*

Yes, faced with the reality of secular, democratic India, the JIH was forced to depart from the core ideas of Maududi. But it contented itself by explaining away its departure from these ideas through re-interpretation or seeming disagreements with Maududism here

and there while maintaining a facade of overall ideological fidelity. Such pragmatism, or opportunism, was bound to create problems for the JIH. If, on the one hand, those opposed to Maududi’s Islamism found its equivocation suspect, Maududi’s devoted followers were bound to be outraged by such treachery. And in this they clearly had the good maulana on their side: “After all, what is the worth of that Islam which can be followed only in a specific context and, when the circumstances change, then it is abandoned and a different ideology is adopted according to convenience?”<sup>18</sup>

You cannot continue to swear by Maududi, for whom secularism, democracy, nationalism, were “evil principles”, and simultaneously be ardent defenders of those very ideals without putting your credibility into question. There is more than credibility at stake here. If the JIH’s embrace of secular democracy et al was sincere, the Jamaat owed it to itself as much as to others to undertake a searching critique of Maududi, to pinpoint the fallacies of his core theses,

to give Maududism a decent burial, dissolve the JIH and found for itself a new name in tune with its new politics. This the JIH has never attempted. As a result, the ghost of Maududi still inhabits the Jamaati universe and Maududian cobwebs continue to cloud its edifice.

#### *A friendly encounter*

Here’s a personal example. In response to an article I wrote for an Indian daily some five years ago, I received a polite call from the secretary of the public relations department of the Maharashtra state unit of the JIH. The JIH, I was told, had some issues with what I had written about the organisation and was keen to discuss this. I readily agreed and we had a three-hour conversation at the Mumbai office of the JIH, Maharashtra, where four senior office-bearers were present.

## COVER STORY

Here are a few examples from our friendly encounter:

*Me:* In the global marketplace of ideas, the Jamaat invites Muslims and non-Muslims alike to the Maududian ideal of a Shariah-driven Islamic state. The best case scenario for a non-Muslim in your dream state is the status of second-class citizenship. Why on earth should any sane non-Muslim be enthused by this offer?

*Response:* My hosts question my contention that in the Islamic state envisaged by Maududi, a non-Muslim would be consigned to second-class citizenship.

*Me:* I quote certain passages from '*Jihad fi Sabilillah* (Jihad for Allah's sake)',

preface the booklet, explaining clearly to readers its disagreements with the booklet's contents and with an explanation as to why you are circulating such a problematic text?

*Response:* To the credit of my hosts, they agree that I may have a point here.

*Me:* I gently point out how putting such booklets into circulation would, if anything, be counterproductive for the JIH. Were a non-Muslim to read such a pamphlet, won't he or she be put off Islam forever? If a young Muslim with an impressionable mind read such material, wouldn't he or she be rendered a total misfit in a secular, democratic society like India? Having been influenced

*Response:* What's wrong with that? The Islamic state is far better than a secular, democratic state.

*Me:* Better for whom and by what criteria? Shall we return to '*Jihad fi Sabilillah*'?

*Response:* There are some smiles but no coherent response.

*Me:* Your dream of an Islamic state in India makes no sense to me.

*Response:* None of my hosts retort that this was in the past, that the JIH is now in favour of a secular state. Instead, one of my hosts remarks: "If the communists can dream of a Marxist state, why can't we talk about an Islamic state so long as we go about it in a totally peaceful manner?" Ah, communists never seem to be far from the Jamaati's mind.

*Me:* So you are still dreaming of an Islamic state in India?

*Response:* Why not? The day we are able to convince enough Indians about our vision...

It is getting late. I am treated to lunch. We part company, agreeing to revert to these questions another day. (This has not happened yet.) I am left with the distinct impression that at least for my hosts – four senior office-bearers of the JIH in Maharashtra – an Islamic state and Shariah law in India are still not a closed chapter.

### *JIH's telltale Constitution*

Could it be that the Maharashtra unit has yet to internalise the JIH's transformation? The organisation's Constitution, which can be easily accessed on its website, is quite an eye-opener.<sup>19</sup> Ahmad, it seems, never visited the official website. Or perhaps he did not see much merit in pointing to the gulf between what the JIH still preaches and what it practises.

We learn from Ahmad's book about the welcome shifts in the JIH towards embracing secularism and democracy, inter- and intra-religious pluralism, etc. That this is so is empirically demonstrated by Ahmad through numerous practical examples. But let's take a look at its Constitution:

*Iqaamat-e-deen:* Ahmad points out that from the mid-1980s onwards, the expression *iqaamat-e-deen* disappeared from the mastheads of JIH organs as also from its public discourse. But Article 4



The JIH's first foray into national politics

a booklet based on a 1939 lecture by Maududi, and from the Munir Commission report.

*Response:* "Are you sure you are not misquoting?"

*Me:* I produce the booklet (in Urdu and in English) along with photocopied pages from the Munir Commission report.

*Response:* "In any case, we don't agree with everything that Maulana Maududi said." I am then told.

*Me:* If you don't agree with some or all of the contents of '*Jihad fi Sabilillah*', why should you be publishing and distributing it? Shouldn't the JIH at least

by such ideas, wouldn't such Muslim youth find SIMI more attractive than the JIH?"

*Response:* There is some disagreement, arguments and then an awkward silence.

*Me:* Non-Muslims accuse Muslims of double standards. They say that wherever Muslims are in a majority, they want Shariah law and an Islamic state; they only want democracy and secularism wherever they are in a minority. Isn't that your view too: an Islamic state for Saudi Arabia and Iran, secularism and democracy for India? Does that sound consistent?



## ■■■ COVER STORY

of its Constitution states: "The objective of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind is *Iqaamat-e-Deen*, the real motive of which is solely the achievement of divine pleasure and success in the hereafter... There is not even a single aspect of human life ranging from beliefs, rituals and morals to economic, social and political aspects which may be beyond its pale... *Iqaamat* of this *Deen* means that it, in its entirety and without exercising any discrimination or division, should be sincerely followed and followed single-mindedly. It should be so enforced and given effect to in all aspects of human life, individual as well as corporate, that the development of the individual, the reconstruction of society and the formation of state should all conform to this very *Deen*."

*Pluralism*: Article 6 states: "Every citizen of the Indian union, whether male or female, and irrespective of the community or race to which he/she belongs, is eligible to the membership of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind provided that he/she... bears witness, after understanding the creed, *La Ilaha Illallah Muhammadur Rasulullah*, with its explanation (mentioned in Article 3), that the same is his/her creed..." In other words, only Muslims are welcome and for that, reciting the Kalima itself is not enough. The JIH must satisfy itself that the aspirant has internalised its import. Article 9 further stipulates that "every member of the Jamaat shall have to endeavour that he/she should sever contacts of affection and friendship but not... general human relations with transgressors as well as iniquitous and god-neglecting people and should establish contact and connection with righteous and god-fearing people..." In other words, any relationship of "affection and friendship" with idol-worshippers and atheists is out of the question.

*Idolatrous system*: Along with lifting the ban on voting in the mid-1980s, the JIH is also said to have relaxed its requirement that a member of the Jamaat must not hold a government job or approach the courts. But Article 8 states: "It shall be incumbent on every member that he or she should... relinquish any key post which he/she holds under an ungodly governmental system, or the

membership of its legislature or a judicial office under its judicial system." Article 9 has two further stipulations: "Every member of the Jamaat shall have to endeavour that he/she should... in case of being part of any ungodly governmental system or being instrumental in giving effect to its laws, should readily part with that means of sustenance... [and] not go to un-Islamic law courts for settlement of matters except under compelling necessity."

*Islamic state, Shariah laws*: More important than all of the above is the "Ideology of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind" section on the JIH's website where the Maududian world view may be revisited in its undiluted splendour: "Jamaat believes that this world and everything that is in it has been created by the one god. He alone is the creator and sustainer of life in all its forms. Not only this; He is the ruler and the sovereign, and omniscient, possesses the sole prerogative, absolute privilege and unfet-

tered right of giving laws to mankind, through prophets, to regulate the entire mundane activity of man... It is thus the duty of man, who is the vicegerent of god on earth, that he should not only worship god but also live his whole life according to His law and render allegiance to Him, the lord and the sovereign."

### **The radical difference in the outlook of the IUML and the Jamaat accounts for their radically different trajectories since 1947. The IUML has been represented in the Indian Parliament since the very first elections in 1952 and it has been part of coalition governments in Kerala on several occasions**

*The challenge from Kerala*  
India's southern state of Kerala has an unusual demographic mix. While Hindus constitute around 56 per cent of the state's population, Muslims make up for about 24 per cent and 19 per cent are Christians. Thus Muslims and Christians – the two religious communities in India which have been at the receiving end of militant Hindutva in the last two decades – add up to nearly half the state's population. In the case of Muslims, apart from the Muslim-majority

state of Jammu and Kashmir, only Assam in the North-east has a higher percentage of Muslims (28.43 per cent according to official estimates) while the proportion of Muslims in Kerala and West Bengal is roughly the same. But it is only in Kerala that a Muslim party has since independence gained a firm foothold and has frequently been part of the ruling coalition. Even today it is part of the Congress-led United Democratic Front government with several of its ministers in the state cabinet. Surprising though it may sound, the name of the party is the Muslim League (its full name being the Indian Union Muslim League – IUML). This is the same party, remember, that spearheaded the demand for the creation of Pakistan.

Following partition, the IUML became a purely Indian entity although some of its leaders still refer to Mohammad Ali Jinnah as "*hamare Qaid-e-Azam* (our great leader)" along with the honorific "*Rahmatullah alaihe*". While a party with a name like the Muslim League, its leadership exclusively Muslim and its support base overwhelmingly Muslim, remains problematic in a secular democracy, one thing seems clear: though aligned to a particular religious community, the IUML has from the beginning echoed Jinnah's secular agenda for Pakistan just as the JIH remained committed to Maududi's Islamic state ideal. The aims and objectives adopted by the IUML at its inception in 1948 were:

➤ "To uphold, defend, maintain, and assist in upholding, defending and maintaining the independence, freedom and honour of the Indian union and to work for and contribute towards the ever increasing strength, prosperity and happiness of the people.

➤ "To secure and protect the rights and interests of the Muslims and other minorities in the state; and

## COVER STORY

➤ “To promote mutual understanding, goodwill, amity, cordiality, harmony and unity between the Muslims and every other community of India.”

“The IUML has been working since its inception true to its objectives and upholds the ideals of secular democracy and social justice. It has a vision of safeguarding the cultural identity of the Muslims, making them capable of their share [in] nation building and to equip them to face the challenges of changing times with religious commitment and [a] national outlook.” This is how the party recounts its history on its official website.<sup>20</sup>

Contrast this with the Constitution of the Jamaat and its programmes in the initial years post-independence. The

the Gulf countries, the influence of the JIH in Kerala was limited to a few pockets. Alive to new possibilities, the JIH piggybacked on the resulting prosperity in Kerala and today it has perhaps its strongest presence in this southern state, more than anywhere else in the country.

In an article titled ‘Socially Engaged Islam: A View from Kerala’, Yoginder Sikand showers praise upon the state unit of the JIH that would mesh well with Ahmad’s views on the progressive transformation of the Jamaat in India. Sikand writes: “Unlike much of the rest of India, Islamic organisations in Kerala are heavily involved in various forms of social activism, not limiting themselves simply to religious education and

Kerala), Jana Sevanam (microfinance schemes for helping the poor), Majlisu Taaleemil Islami (the banner under which it runs 150 schools, some 200 part-time madrassas and about a dozen Arabic colleges for Islamic higher studies) and the Solidarity Youth Movement (launched in 2003 for engaging with all sections of society to generate mass awareness on a range of social issues) – the JIH has established an impressive presence in Kerala.

Launched in 1987, the Malayali daily, *Madhyamam*, which shares the Jamaati world view but is not its mouthpiece, has today an impressive circulation of some 2,00,000 copies. JIH, Kerala, is clearly a well-oiled machine and funds do not seem to be a constraint.

As Sikand observes in his article, “The Kerala JI’s headquarters are located at the Hira Centre, an imposing multi-storey building in the heart of Calicut (Kozhikode), a town which for centuries has been a major Muslim centre. Enter the building and the stark contrast with North Indian Muslim organisations – even with the JI’s units in the north – is immediately evident. The building is sparkling clean and well maintained and it has separate offices for its different wings, which are staffed by a team of professionally qualified activists (and not just maulanas).”<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, the state with the strongest JIH presence also happens to be the state

which has seen the strongest challenge to Maududism in recent years. The story of the JIH and the fate of Maududism is perhaps best concluded with an account of this mass campaign.

If the petrodollars repatriated by Kerala’s Muslims employed in the Gulf were helpful in the JIH’s growing muscle, a number of developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s gave the JIH an opportunity to propel itself. The pro-JIH daily *Madhyamam* played a significant role, fishing in troubled waters, discrediting existing Muslim leaders and organisations. The newspaper’s launch



SIMI: Questioning the roots

radical difference in the outlook of the IUML and the Jamaat accounts for their radically different trajectories since 1947. The IUML has been represented in the Indian Parliament since the very first elections in 1952 and as mentioned above, it has been part of coalition governments in Kerala on several occasions. What’s more, as chief minister, the charismatic IUML leader CH Mohammed Koya led a coalition government in 1979 with support from the Congress party.

In comparison, until the boom in the petro-economy in the 1970s which drew a large number of Keralites to jobs in

preaching or to petitioning the government for sops. This is one of the major reasons for the remarkable social, economic and educational progress that Kerala’s Muslims, who account for around a fourth of the state’s population, have witnessed in recent decades. Among the major Islamic movements in Kerala is the Jamaat-e-Islami.”

Sikand proceeds to elaborate on how, through the institution of several forums and activities – the Dialogue Centre (for promoting intercommunity dialogue and understanding), Dharma Dhara (the communications wing of JIH,

## ■■■ COVER STORY

in 1987 preceded a major split in the Samastha Kerala Sunni movement in 1989. This presented *Madhyamam* with an opportunity to highlight the opportunism of the existing leadership and its lack of commitment to the community.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid, which came as a rude jolt to Muslims across India, created a major tumult within the IUML in Kerala. Many within and outside the party wanted the IUML to sever its links with the Congress party which was in power in Delhi but had failed to prevent the demolition. The IUML's reluctance to do so resulted in a split within the party and disenchantment with it among a large section of Muslims in the state. A little later, the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen, among the most powerful Muslim bodies in the state, also split.

In this climate of growing disenchantment among Kerala's Muslims, the JIH saw a big opportunity for itself. However, it was soon to face major competition from a different quarter.

As discussed above, the resurgence of virulent Hindutva from the mid-1980s onwards and the unchecked demonisation of Muslims and Islam resulted among other things in the radicalisation of a section of Indian Muslims. SIMI was one manifestation of this phenomenon. In 1989 Kerala saw the birth of the Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS), pitting its name and its politics against the *sangh parivar's* Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The ISS was among the several Hindu and Muslim organisations that were banned in the immediate aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Following the ban, the ISS leader Abdul Nasir Maudany floated another organisation, the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Though he has never been convicted in a court of law, Maudany was jailed for long years for his alleged involvement in terrorist activities. In 2010 he was arrested once again, this time by the Karnataka police, for alleged involvement with some Muslim extremist groups. While the PDP has lost much steam in the process, other extremist groups influenced by Maududism have surfaced to create problems for the JIH as well as the IUML.

The ban on the ISS in December 1992 and on SIMI in 2001 (soon after the 9/11 attacks in the USA) saw the mushrooming of several district-level organisations of Muslim youth in Kerala, with charitable and welfare activities as their ostensibly limited goals: the Malappuram Young Muslim Association, the Wayanad Young Muslim Association, the Kozhikode Young Muslim Association, etc.<sup>22</sup> Soon however, these organisations came together to form the National Development Front (NDF). In 2006 the NDF from Kerala, the Karnataka Forum for Dignity from Karnataka and the Manitha Neethi Pasarai from Tamil Nadu merged to form the Popular Front of India (PFI). In turn, the PFI announced the formation of a political party, the Social Democratic

### **The Kerala example shows that until it snips its umbilical tie with Maududi, the JIH will continue to find itself squeezed from both ends: between anti-Maududi Muslim organisations such as the IUML on one side and radical outfits like SIMI/NDF/PFI, with their claims of being the real inheritors of Maududism, on the other**

Party of India (SDPI), in mid-2009.

Judging by the names of these organisations, their pronouncements and the information posted on their websites, one would imagine them to be bona fide organisations fighting for democracy, human dignity and fundamental rights for all. But as many Muslims from these southern states will tell you, the PFI and its constituents are far from democratic outfits. According to these Muslims and not just the intelligence agencies and the police, the PFI and its predecessor, the NDF, are nothing but SIMI reincarnated.

Never mind the others, even the JIH's Kerala unit was forced to go public and distance itself from the NDF/PFI just as it had done earlier with SIMI. In April 2008 the JIH mouthpiece in Malayali, *Prabodhanam*, published a hard-hitting article titled 'Jihad Unlimited' blasting the NDF for "ridiculously imitating" Hamas and the Chechen Mujahideen. It charged the NDF with moral policing and wrongly interpreting jihad, which was bound to spoil the lives of "gullible youth".<sup>23</sup>

Here in Kerala, we have a replay of the Jamaat-SIMI feud elsewhere in the country, which has been dealt with above. The significant thing about Kerala however is that many Muslim organisations recognised this as an intra-Maududian feud and decided to launch a massive statewide campaign targeting Maududism itself. That the three-year-plus campaign between 2008 and 2011 was no flash in the pan is evident from the fact that it was spearheaded by mass organisations like the youth wing of the IUML, which claims a membership of over six lakhs, and both factions of the Nadvathul Mujahideen.

Why were these mass organisations so perturbed? Some might argue that the IUML was merely protecting its elec-

toral base but this misses the larger point. It must be pointed out that although the *sangh parivar* has long had a strong presence in the state, the BJP in Kerala has so far failed to win a single seat in the state assembly, let alone one in the national Parliament. The reasoning of the Muslim organisations involved in the campaign was simple: It is to the credit of Kerala's Hindus that they have shunned the *sangh parivar's* communal politics. If nothing else, it was the reciprocal duty of Kerala's Muslims to oppose communal and extremist Muslim bodies. The failure to do so would implicate the state's Muslims in opening the doors to communalisation of the state.

For KM Shaji, the dynamic president of the IUML's Youth League (and now a member of the state assembly) who held countless public meetings across the state challenging Maududism, there is a world of difference between the politics of the Muslim League and the Jamaat. According to him, being in the IUML, it is possible for a Muslim to remain true to his faith as well as to his



# COVER STORY

country and its secular, democratic polity: there is no contradiction, no tension between the two. But if you subscribe to Maududi's ideology, you are trapped in an ethical morass, compelled to live the life of a hypocrite or a misfit as a citizen, apologetic about your 'Indianness'.

Jamaati, CT Abdurahiman, head of the Dayapuram Educational and Cultural Centre in Calicut since its inception in 1984. According to NP Ashley, a young teacher and activist associated with Dayapuram, 'CT Sir', who is well versed in Islamic texts and Islamic history, wrote a critique of Maududi in

met him at Dayapuram in 2008, 'CT Sir' told me that ideologically speaking, Maududism, Nazism and Stalinism have much in common.

That this mass campaign was highly successful is evident from the results of the assembly polls in Kerala in May 2011. Clearly, the Jamaat as well as the NDF/PFI/SDPI failed to leave an impress. "The very impressive performance of the IUML in the elections only means that Kerala's Muslims have said an emphatic no to communal, extremist politics in Islam's name," says Ashley.

It remains to be seen whether the Jamaat-floated Welfare Party of India is a non-starter. As mentioned earlier, the party's launch itself was greeted by widespread scepticism and criticism. To those wedded to the Maududian world view, this was final proof of the JIH's betrayal of its founder. Those opposed to it voiced the concern that if it were to take off, the WPI would achieve little more than fanning Hindu communalism.

The Kerala example shows that until it snips its umbilical tie with Maududi, the JIH will continue to find itself squeezed from both ends: between anti-Maududi Muslim organisations such as the IUML on one side and radical outfits like SIMI/NDF/PFI, with their claims of being the real inheritors of Maududism, on the other. ■



Interestingly, if the Youth League and the Nadvathul Mujahideen provided the numbers for the campaign, the ideological thrust was provided by an ex-

Malayalam titled 'The Roots of Muslim Terrorism' during the campaign. Over 1,000 copies of the booklet were sold in Calicut city within four days. When I

### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Quote in Ahmad's book.  
<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Ahmad's book.  
<sup>4</sup> Report of The Court of Inquiry constituted under Punjab Act II of 1954 to inquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953 (popularly referred to as the Munir Commission report). The report can be accessed from the website of Muslims for Secular Democracy (India): <http://mfsd.org/maududi.htm>  
<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Ahmad's book.  
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<sup>10</sup> Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, *ibid*, p. 52.  
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<sup>12</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, 'Separating fact from fiction', *Hindustan Times*, March 13, 2002; <http://www.premshankarjha.com/index.php?article/view/SEPARATING%20FACT%20FROM%20FICTION>  
<sup>13</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, 'Why Narendra Modi has to go', *Hindustan Times*, April 10, 2002; <http://www.premshankarjha.com/index.php?article/view/WHY%20NARENDRA%20MODI%20HAS%20TO%20GO>  
<sup>14</sup> Chris Stephen, *Judgement Day: The Trial of Slobodan Milosevic*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 2005, p. 98; [http://www.icty.org/x/file/About/Reports%20and%20Publications/AnnualReports/annual\\_report\\_1994\\_en.pdf](http://www.icty.org/x/file/About/Reports%20and%20Publications/AnnualReports/annual_report_1994_en.pdf)  
<sup>15</sup> <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=42889> and Javed Anand, 'Seize the moment', *Seminar*, [http://www.india-seminar.com/2009/593/593\\_javed\\_anand.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2009/593/593_javed_anand.htm)  
<sup>16</sup> Ahmad, *ibid*.  
<sup>17</sup> Ahmad, *ibid*.  
<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Ahmad's book.  
<sup>19</sup> <http://www.jamaateislamihind.org>  
<sup>20</sup> <http://indianunionmuslimleague.in/history-indian-union-muslim-league-iuiml>  
<sup>21</sup> Yoginder Sikand, *ibid*.  
<sup>22</sup> NP Ashley, through email to this writer.  
<sup>23</sup> MP Prashanth, *The New Indian Express*; <http://islamicterrorism.wordpress.com/2008/04/29/jama%E2%80%99at-e-islami-hits-hard-at-extremist-islamic-ndf-in-kerala/>

# Fashioning lies, veiling the truth

*Contrary to fundamentalist claims, the hijab is not mandated by the Koran*

BY FARIDA MAJID

**A**S THE hijab issue heats up in France and Germany and the psychological pressure and the brainwashing of women intensifies all over the Muslim world, the feverish cry of “an attack on hijab is an assault on Islam” should be given a closer examination. Hijab, especially this modern form of the headgear that is causing controversy in Europe, is not, and should never be allowed to be, a valid symbol of Islam. Showing how irreligious it is to claim that it is an integral part of Islam best exposes the insidious misogynistic politics of worldwide “hijabisation”.

Of course, the hijab is not mandated by the Koran nor is it sanctioned anywhere in the Hadith (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad). I would like to turn to the Koran and discuss some of its verses, focusing on their semiotic value and rhetorical tone, hoping thereby to prove why the hierarchical enforcement of hijab on women is not only not required by the Koran but insisting that it is so constitutes a grievously sinful lie according to the Koran.

There are three verses in the Koran that deal with the women’s dress issue. All of them use mild-toned language, understandably suitable for gentle suggestion or kindly advice. No amount of conflation of the language used in these verses can possibly be construed as the Koranic mandate of hijab. The word “hijab” itself means “curtain” and it occurs seven times in the Koran in a variety of nuances of meaning. Its most notable use in surah Maryam in the sense of a “screen” occurs in the context of Mary’s immaculate conception of Jesus and the word metaphorically captures the moment of that miracle:

“Commemorate Mary in the Book. When she withdrew from her family she went to an eastern place. And she took a screen [a curtain, or a cover] from them, And we sent our spirit to her” (19:16-17).

References to seclusion and modest dressing of women are made in surah Ahzab (33: 32-33, 53) but they are very

specifically addressed to the prophet’s younger wives and Muslim scholars all over the world acknowledge that these advices, still mildly spoken, are not binding on the general mass of *mumina*, the believing women. Only one controversial so-called “scholar” from the Indian subcontinent, the infamous father of modern Islamic fundamentalism, Abul Ala Maududi, insists that the advices in surah Ahzab be treated as dicta for all Muslim women. He does not care that the verses in surah Ahzab begin very clearly with the apostrophe: “*Ya Nisa un*



Enforcing the veil: Nothing Koranic about it

*Nabi* [O women of the Nabi (Prophet)], you are not like other women”. Maududi wrote a series of essays in Urdu on women and purdah and published them in 1939. In a passionate defence of veiling of women, Maududi says: “Though the veil has not been specified in the Koran, it is Koranic in spirit.” Really!

Maududi’s haunted house of hijab’s “Koranic spirit” is so spooky that a precondition of entering it is a flat denial of what is actually there in the Koran. Such doublespeak is designed to mislead, to distort reality and to corrupt

thought and it is no wonder that Muslim religious scholars of the Indian subcontinent at the time vehemently shunned his brand of Islamism. Commenting on the manipulation of the sacred text, Rafiq Abdullah, a Muslim lawyer in London, notes: “Incapable of envisaging the Koran as a linguistic space which contains a multiplicity of discourses (including the prophetic, legislative, eschatological, narrative, metaphorical, spiritual), Islamists choose to ignore the fact that they are interpreting a mythical past and carrying out a partial, generally decontextualised reading of the words of god.”

The loud claims made by Muslim patriarchy and their army of well-mobilised women followers that there is a thing called the “Islamic dress code for women” has very feeble basis in the Koranic text. Religious traditions are vast and in Islam’s case, globally spread out. Traditionally, Islamic legal-moral rules or mores were carefully attuned to the way the Koranic language communicated on the matter at hand. Hermeneutics, or the art of interpretation, requires mastering a variety of skills and knowledge in the fields of history, philosophy, law, dialectics and linguistics besides theology. Trained religious scholars or Arabic jurists would comb the Koran in order to establish a graded scheme of classifying behaviour – *wajib* (mandatory), *mandub* (recommended), *mubah* (permitted), *makruh* (disapproved), *haram* (forbidden) and so on.

The fact that Abul Ala Maududi had no formal training as a religious scholar is evidenced by his blithe exclusion of consideration of Koranic texts in his pronouncements on veiling and seclusion of women. Completely insensitive to some of the beautiful sentiments expressed in the Koran about women, Maududi’s writings exhibit brute assertions, borrowing more from the old Judaeo-Christian theologies that brand woman as the original sinner and the cause of the fall of man than from the Islamic principles of gender equality.

The most egregious falsification occurs, ironically, in the case of the most



frequently quoted verse from surah Nur by the proponents of hijab: "Tell the believing women to lower their eyes, Guard their private parts, and not display their charms, Except what is apparent outwardly, And cover their bosoms with their veils, And not to show their finery" (24:31).

Mark again the even-toned rhetoric of the language of the advice and the generality of what is being advised. Not counting the fast disappearing tribal groups of Africa, South America and elsewhere where women remain topless, women of all religions all over the world dress by covering their bosoms. "Not to show their finery" is an additional cautionary measure towards checking an individual's desire to show off superficial adornments to outsiders. But the Koran is not as draconian in its opinion on a woman's natural desire to adorn herself: as the Muslim fundamentalists interpret this verse. In the rest of the *ayat* (verses), we get the idea that a sweet, youthful *mumina* can wear her finery in front of her family members and householders. Just don't stamp your feet too hard and create a jangle of noise that would make outsiders aware of all the baubles you wear. Pretty fair advice to impetuous youthful females given almost with a touch of grandmotherly affection.

The key to understanding the true import of this verse is the first utterance: "*Qul li-muminati yaghdhudhuna min absari hinna* (Tell the believing women to lower their eyes)". These words are rhetorically repeated here from the preceding verse 30: "Tell the believing men to lower their eyes..."

Bar none, both sexes are asked to *ghadhadha*, or cast down the gaze or glance. It is not hard to recognise this gesture, universal and utterly human, as the outwardly visible physical manifestation of a mental activity. Modesty, then, resides in the mind. All other external accoutrements suggested by the Koran are subservient to this inner, mental activity that is further reinforced by the adverbial clause *min absari*. The verb *absar* comes from *basira*, meaning "the ability of having the power of mental perception, discernment, clear thinking", etc. Therefore the clause *min absari* appended to the "lowering gaze" action should mean that we are asked by the Koran to divert our gaze from what is before our eyes and turn inward to our inner discernment and fine-tune our

moral judgements about what is decent and what is not. To construct a stricture of enforced superficial outward garb (the burkha or the hijab) out of this mild language of the Koran is a travesty and an insult to the deep moral and intellectual message of the Koran on developing our inner sense of humility.

As in surah Nur (30 and 31), all the advice on modesty to women can be shown to have counterpart advice to men elsewhere in the Koran. Further illustrating the difference in meaning that the rhetorical thrust of the language in the Koran can make, I would like to cite a verse from surah Luqman that is meant exclusively for men to observe modesty in their conduct and demeanour. The tone of the language here is definitely more strident than the one that addressed women in either surah Nur or surah Ahzab about modest dressing: "Do not hold men in contempt, And do not walk with hauteur on the earth. Verily God does not like the proud and boast-

**Modern fundamentalists do not blink at the idea of brazenly misinterpreting the holy Koran and manipulating the sacred scripture to fit their ideologically driven concepts about religion. Saying the Koran mandates hijab is a lie. Saying Allah will punish a Muslim woman who commits the sin of not wearing it is an outrageous lie**

ful. Be moderate in your bearing, and keep your voice low, Surely the most repulsive voice is that of the donkey" (31:18-19).

Imagine if it were required for all Muslim men to walk around for all their waking hours with a device fitted around their necks to measure the decibel of their voices and setting off an ear-piercing alarm alerting family members, co-workers and neighbours every time their voices reached the level of a braying donkey! How about men wearing a "macho prevention meter" around their waists? Or a shackle around their ankles to curb their "proud and boastful" bearing? The Koranic language is clear and unambiguous about its admonitions. The genuinely pious and spiritually well-formed men of old were mindful of such Koranic moral guidance.

In the guise of leading us back to an imagined and presupposed "purer" Islam, modern fundamentalists like

Maududi invent concepts that actually divert unsuspecting believers from the path of true devotion and traditional piety. Even though they appear to renounce the modern world's secular culture, they inhabit its material and technical realms and exploit them to the hilt. Maududi's writings are translated into 40 different languages and vigorously disseminated through the Internet. We must grapple with this odd quality of modernity of their movement and not regard them as "old-fashioned" conservatives or simply "backward"-looking in their religious views. They do not blink at the idea of brazenly misinterpreting the holy Koran and manipulating the sacred scripture to fit those ideologically driven concepts about religion. Insisting on hijab as a paradigmatic self-definition of Islam is one such concept. Saying the Koran mandates it is a lie. Saying Allah will punish a Muslim woman who commits the sin of not wearing a hijab is an outrageous lie.

I leave you to ponder the words and their rhetorical thrust in the following verse from surah Hud: "Who is more wicked than the one who fashions lies about God? Such men shall be arraigned before their Lord, And the witnesses [angels] will testify: 'These are those who imputed lies to God.' Beware! The scourge of God will fall on the unjust" (11:18). ■

*(Farida Majid is a poet, scholar and literary translator based in New York city. Though this article was first published in The Daily Star, Bangladesh, on May 13, 2004, we are reproducing it here in the context of the continuing attempts of Islamic fundamentalists and traditionalists who claim that veiling is an Islamic obligation.)*

Courtesy: *The Daily Star*;  
www.thedailystar.net

# Preventing a calamity

*An open letter to RSS sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat on why a Hindutvavadi should not be prime minister of India*

**BY SHAMSUL ISLAM**

Shri Mohan Bhagwatji, Namaskar,

**W**AS not surprised to read your comments in newspapers that it was not necessary to be a secular person to occupy the office of prime minister in a democratic, secular India. As per the press reports, you wondered why a Hinduvadi could not become prime minister of India.<sup>1</sup> I am sure you understand better than me that being a Hinduvadi is not the same as professing the Hindu religion. Our national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rammanohar Lohia, Rajguru, Sukhdev and many, many more were Hindu by faith but not Hinduvadi. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi, a great practitioner of the Hindu religion, was brutally assassinated for not being a Hinduvadi by a gang having allegiance to the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. Surely by Hinduvadi you mean a believer in Hindutva, a kind of political Hinduism outlined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkarji in his book *Hindutva*<sup>2</sup> and later developed by RSS ideologues like MS Golwalkar. You will agree with me that the RSS, currently under your command, has been a prominent flag-bearer of Hindutva since its inception in 1925.

I feel that before arriving at the conclusion that there is no harm in allowing a person who believes in Hindutva to become prime minister of India, we have to understand what Hindutva is. You will agree with me that we need to understand whether Hindutva is compatible with principles of democracy, justice, egalitarianism and secularism. In this connection, please allow me to scrutinise some of the origi-

nal documents and sources which legitimately belong to the RSS or its brother organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha. If you find that I am dishonest in referring to these or misrepresenting facts, you will be at liberty to initiate defamation proceedings against me.

*Does Hindutva stand for a two-nation theory?*

Bhagwatji, I would like to refresh your memory that both the originator of Hindutva, VD Savarkarji, and its flag-bearer, the RSS, earlier and under your command too had and has unequivocal faith in the two-nation theory: that

Hindus and Muslims are two different nations. While the Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah resolved to have a separate homeland for Muslims of India in the form of Pakistan in 1940, Savarkar propagated as early as 1937 that Hindus and Muslims were two different nations. While delivering his presidential address to the 19th session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad, Savarkarji unequivocally declared:

“As it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These were well-meaning but unthinking friends take their dreams for realities. That is why they are impatient of communal tangles and attribute them to communal organisations. But the solid fact is that the so-called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and Moslems... Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogenous nation but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems, in India.”<sup>3</sup>

Sir, has this not been the cardinal principle of your organisation also? The RSS, following in the footsteps of Savarkarji, always rejected the idea that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians together constituted a nation. Your English organ, *Organiser*, on the very eve of independence (August 14, 1947), editorially (titled ‘Whither’) underlined its belief in the two-nation theory once again in the following words: “Let us



Of questionable allegiance: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat takes the salute

no longer allow ourselves to be influenced by false notions of nationhood. Much of the mental confusion and the present and future troubles can be removed by the ready recognition of the simple fact that in Hindusthan only the Hindus form the nation and the national structure must be built on that safe and sound foundation... the nation itself must be built up of Hindus, on Hindu traditions, culture, ideas and aspirations."

Bhagwatji, please help our country to understand how the believers in Hindutva are different from pre-partition Muslim Leaguers who once played a prominent role in dismembering India.

*Does Hindutva respect the national flag and democracy?*

Sir, it may not be out of context to ascertain your attitude towards the national flag which represents a democratic, secular India. It is important to hear this from the head of organisations which swear by Hindutva. I would like to draw your attention to the following statement which appeared in the English organ *Organiser*, again on the eve of independence: "The people who have come to power by the kick of fate may give in our hands the tricolour but it never (sic) be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil and a flag having three colours will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is injurious to a country."<sup>4</sup>

Can those who denigrate the national flag in such foul language be allowed to rule this country?

*Sarsanghchalakji*, lay persons like me need to know from practitioners of Hindutva like you what you think of democracy. I would like to draw your attention to a statement made by the second *sarsanghchhalak* of the RSS and its most prominent ideologue to date, MS Golwalkar. As per the RSS archives, Golwalkarji, while addressing a group of 1,350 top-level cadres of the RSS in 1940, declared: "The RSS, inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology, is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land."<sup>5</sup>

Learned Bhagwatji, this slogan of one flag, one leader and one ideology was also the battle cry of fascist and Nazi parties in Europe in the first half of the

20th century. What they did to democracy is well known to this world. Can those who believe in such totalitarian designs be allowed to rule our country?

*Does Hindutva stand for casteism?*

*Sarsanghchalakji*, you will agree with me that the RSS and its brother organisations who want Hindutva rule in India hated the Constitution of India which was drafted under the guidance of Dr BR Ambedkar. When the Constituent Assembly of India had finalised the Constitution of India, the RSS was not happy. Its organ, *Organiser*, in an editorial on November 30, 1949, complained: "But in our Constitution there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day, his laws as enunciated in the Manu Smriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing."

Bhagwatji, it may not be a secret to

**Both the originator of Hindutva, VD Savarkar, and its flag-bearer, the RSS, have unequivocal faith in the two-nation theory: that Hindus and Muslims are two different nations... Please help our country to understand how the believers in Hindutva are different from pre-partition Muslim Leaguers who once played a prominent role in dismembering India**

you that Savarkarji remained a great protagonist of casteism and a worshipper of Manu Smriti throughout his life. The institutions of casteism and untouchability were the outcome of Manu's thought, about which Savarkar said the following: "Manu Smriti is that scripture which is most worshippable after the Vedas for our Hindu nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture, customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on Manu Smriti. Today Manu Smriti is Hindu law."<sup>6</sup>

Sir, the kind of civilisation that the RSS under your command and under

Hindutva ideology wants to build by enforcing the laws of Manu can be discerned through a glimpse at the laws prescribed by Manu for Dalits/untouchables and women. Some of these dehumanising and degenerate laws, which are presented here, are self-explanatory.

*The laws of Manu: On Dalits/untouchables*

➤ For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, (the divine one) caused the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Shudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet.

➤ One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudras, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes.

➤ A once-born man (a Shudra) who insults a twice-born man with gross invecive shall have his tongue cut out, for he is of low origin.

➤ If he mentions the names and castes (*jati*) of the (twice-born) with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth.

➤ If he arrogantly teaches Brahmins their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears.

➤ With whatever limb a man of a low caste does hurt to (a man of the three) highest (castes), even that limb shall be cut off; that is the teaching of Manu.

➤ He who raises his hand or a stick shall have his hand cut off; he who in anger kicks with his foot shall have his foot cut off.

➤ A low-caste man who tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of a high caste shall be branded on his hip and be banished, or (the king) shall cause his buttock to be gashed.

➤ Let him never slay a Brahmin though he may have committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an



## SAFFRONWATCH

(offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unhurt.

### *The laws of Manu: On women*

➤ Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families) and if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control.

➤ Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.

➤ Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear), for if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families.

➤ Considering it the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives.

➤ No man can completely guard women by force but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients:

➤ Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food and in looking after the household utensils.

➤ Women confined in the house under trustworthy and obedient servants are not (well) guarded but those who of their own accord keep guard over themselves are well guarded.

➤ Women do not care for beauty nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), "(It is enough that) he is a man", they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly.

➤ Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world).

➤ (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct.

➤ For women, no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts thus

the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts (are as impure as) falsehood (itself); that is a fixed rule.

I would like to remind you that a copy of the Manu Smriti was burnt in protest in the presence of Dr BR Ambedkar during the historic Mahad agitation in December 1927.

Sir, you will agree with me that



Golwalkarji was the most prominent theorist of the RSS and he, like Savarkarji, believed that casteism was a natural, integral part of Hinduism. In fact, Golwalkar went to the extent of declaring that casteism was synonymous with the Hindu nation. According to him, the Hindu people are none but: "The *virat purusha*, the almighty manifesting himself... [according to the 'Purusha Sukta'] the sun and moon are his eyes, the stars and the skies are created from his *nabhi* [navel] and Brahmin is the head, Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the thighs and Shudra the feet.

This means that the people who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e. the Hindu people, is (sic) our god. This supreme vision of godhead is the very core of our concept of 'nation' and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage."<sup>2</sup>

*Sarsanghchalakji*, the truth is that Hindutva is nothing but an ideology which stands for totalitarianism, casteism and injustice. I would conclude with the words of Dr BR Ambedkar who said: "If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt be the greatest calamity for this country... It is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account, it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost."<sup>8</sup>

Bhagwatji, the reality is that Hindutva is dangerous not only for minorities but also for the vast majority of Hindus, especially Dalits and women.

I eagerly look forward to your response to the issues raised in this letter.

Delhi, June 25, 2012

(Shamsul Islam is associate professor at the department of political science, Satyawati College, University of Delhi.)

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> See *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, and *The Hindu*, New Delhi, dated June 21, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Savarkar, VD, *Hindutva*, Delhi, Bharti Sahitya Sadan, 1989 (first edition 1923).

<sup>3</sup> Savarkar, VD, cited in *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya Hindu Rashtra Darshan* (Collected Works of VD Savarkar), Vol. 6, Poona, Maharashtra Prantik Hindu Sabha, 1963, p. 296.

<sup>4</sup> *Organiser*, August 14, 1947.

<sup>5</sup> Golwalkar, MS, *Shri Gurujii Samagra Darshan* (Collected Works of Golwalkar in Hindi), Vol. 1, Nagpur, Bhartiya Vichar Sadhana, 1974, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Savarkar, VD, 'Women in Manu Smriti' in *Savarkar Samagra* (Collection of Savarkar's Writings in Hindi), Vol. 4, New Delhi, Prabhat Prakashan, 2000, p. 416.

<sup>7</sup> Golwalkar, MS, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur, Bharat Publications, 1939, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Ambedkar, BR, *Pakistan or the Partition of India: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 8, Bombay, Govt. of Maharashtra, 1990 (reprint of 1946 edition), p. 358.

# Punish the perpetrators

*Demanding justice for victims of anti-minority violence in Rajasthan*



The Rajasthan Muslim Forum: Call for action

In Sept-October 2011 *Communalism Combat* had reproduced the preliminary report of a fact-finding team set up by the People's Union for Civil Liberties to investigate the attacks on the Meo Muslim minority in Gopalgarh, Rajasthan, on September 13-14, 2011, where police brutality and mob violence claimed 10 lives and left several persons injured. Thereafter, in a report on the All India Democratic Women's Association's Convention against Communal Conflict in December 2011, CC had revisited the incident.

Distressed by the state government's reluctance to punish the culprits, including police officers responsible for dereliction of duty, in the violence against innocent Muslims in Gopalgarh (Bharatpur) and elsewhere in Rajasthan, representatives of Rajasthan's Muslim minority under the banner of the Rajasthan Muslim Forum (RMF) led delegations to the National Commission for Minorities and met ministers in the central government in June 2012 to submit a detailed representation in this regard. In what appears to be a clear instance of contrary messages being sent out by the United Progressive Alliance, a month before the RMF felt compelled

to take such steps and meet senior functionaries of the UPA in Delhi, union minister Salman Khurshid and Congress general secretary Digvijay Singh had in a public meeting in Jaipur on May 6, 2012 urged the chief minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, who was present on the dais, to give prompt and fair justice to the victims of the Gopalgarh violence and punish the guilty.

The press release issued by the RMF on June 26, 2012 tragically encapsulates the attitudes of the state (Congress) and central (UPA) governments towards the punishment of the perpetrators of communal violence in a state under their rule.

### *Summary of demands*

The victims of the Gopalgarh violence of September 13-14, 2011 and concerned citizens and social workers appeal to the government of Rajasthan (GoR), the government of India (GoI) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to give fair and prompt justice to the victims. Documentary evidences and the attitudes of officers show that the victims are not only *not* getting justice but have been made to suffer further injustice, discrimination and harass-

ment due to delays and arbitrary procedures. Thus victims are made to fend for their own security and legal defence whereas the accused are given a clean chit due to faulty investigations and delays. Ten Muslims died due to police firing and burning and several were injured. Many houses and shops were looted and damaged while the police looked on.

None of the officers responsible for such flagrant dereliction of duty, including the district magistrate (DM) and *superintendent of police* (SP) of Bharatpur, have been punished. In

fact, they have now been reinstated by the state thus demonstrating its desire to shelter them. This is one of the reasons why Rajasthan has witnessed increasing violence against Muslims, in the regions of Marwar, Mewar, Hadoti and Mewat, in recent months. No officer has so far been punished for these incidents of anti-Muslim violence.

The law of the land must apply equally to all, irrespective of class, status and religion.

### *The adverse roles of the CBI and the state*

➤ Using subterfuge (e.g. calling victims for assessment of losses for compensation and then arresting them in Bharatpur), Muslim victims of violence have been treated as perpetrators; they have been arrested and are being harassed by the CBI and police. This is done with the desire to immobilise victims, to undermine their commitment to fight for justice and file first information reports (FIRs) against the accused and officers who conspired with perpetrators and/or committed gross dereliction of duty which resulted in deaths and massive loss of property.

➤ Ignoring the clear instructions in two government (GoR and GoI) notifi-



cations, the CBI took a biased approach while dealing with Muslim victims and guilty officers like the DM and SP; the FIRs filed by Muslim victims were ignored while those filed by the police were investigated and action was taken on them.

➤ The CBI is intimidating witnesses to the violence. It is asking Muslims only two specific questions ('How many Muslims were in the masjid?' and 'Who instigated the violence?') without allowing them to narrate the sequence of events which would reveal who cast the first stone. Why is the CBI not interested in a complete chain of circumstances when such an investigation would expose the preplanning and conspiracy behind the violence and bring in the calculated assault on the imam of the Jama Masjid and other Muslims on September 13, 2011 which occurred before passions were allowed to build up and violence erupted? The approach of the CBI is selective, to say the least, and reveals a biased approach in the investigation itself.

➤ Despite the assurances given to Muslims by the chief minister of Rajasthan, he has not taken strict action against the officers accused of dereliction of duty and others who indulged in arson, looting and killing i.e. those responsible for the loss of Muslim life and property.

➤ Although the DM and SP of Bharatpur were suspended from service in late September 2011, serious administrative loopholes in the orders passed have ensured that they and other officers could not be punished. The state government deliberately failed to issue show-cause notices to or file charge sheets against the two officers either before or during their suspension. Worse, the state government consciously chose not to intervene before the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT); hence it was not heard before the CAT delivered its interim order. The government did not file a review application against the judgement delivered by the CAT nor has it to date appealed against the CAT judgement in the high court, explaining forcefully the reasons for the officers' suspension.

➤ Soon after the DM and SP were suspended, representatives of the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service associations in the state

met the then chief secretary to protest against the suspension, claiming that this had demoralised their officers. Such belligerence reveals a disturbing mindset among the senior bureaucracy in the state – where firm action following criminal dereliction of duty is interpreted as a cause for loss of morale. In fact, the suspended officers had violated their constitutional duty and the code of conduct that enjoins IAS/IPS officers to uphold the fundamental rights to life and equality before the law.

➤ There is a nexus between the various arms of the bureaucracy that is protecting guilty officers responsible for the carnage in Gopalgarh.

➤ Compensation for the loss of property has been calculated in accordance with the GoR (home department) rules of 2008; these amounts are miserably low and do not reflect the price index. Most victims have refused to accept the compensation offered. It has been a consistent finding that during communal violence and one-sided violence

### **The CBI is determined to protect bureaucrats somehow. It has managed to give them a clean chit despite evidence of their complicity and incompetence. The government of Rajasthan has aided this**

against Muslims, it is the Muslims who suffer the most in terms of loss of life and property. The corollary then is equally disturbing: while the compensation paid to Muslims for loss of life and property ought to be much higher, it is in fact unrealistically low. This shows a deep-seated prejudice against minorities. The rules were framed during the Congress regime in 2008 when Ashok Gehlot was chief minister. Such norms must be reviewed and upgraded realistically (as has been done in the case of victims of the 1984 Sikh massacre in Delhi or the 2002 Muslim massacre in Gujarat).

➤ The victim community's requests for an appointment with the chief minister had not been successful.

#### *Background*

➤ GoR notification F-19 (13) Home-5/2011, dated September 21, 2011, mentions five FIRs registered (thus far) at the Gopalgarh police station. However, the notification contains clear in-

structions that *all* FIRs in the case: "All cases registered at police station Gopalgarh, district Bharatpur, and attempts, abetments and conspiracies in relation to or in connection with the above-mentioned offences and any other offence or offences committed in course of the same transaction or arising out of the same facts" must be investigated.

GoI notification F. No. 228/65/2011-AVD-II, dated October 11, 2011, refers to the GoR notification above and repeats verbatim GoI instructions which include *all* cases/FIRs for CBI investigation.

➤ However, going against the explicit instructions in the GoR/GoI notifications, SS Kishore, *additional superintendent* of police, CBI, registered (and thereafter investigated) only five FIRs on October 11, 2011, deliberately excluding the 14 FIRs filed by victim Muslims against the DM, SP, local officers and Gujjars/Hindus, accusing them of conspiracy and of abetting the crimes committed against the victims on

September 13-14, 2011. The CBI was quick to register a fresh case on October 11, 2011 but it did not take cognisance of the 14 FIRs that had also been registered at the police station before that date and which it deliberately ignored. This shows that the CBI had acted *mala fides* in its willingness to protect bureaucrats accused of gross dereliction of duty. This despite the fact that the divisional commissioner of Bharatpur had indicted these officers for dereliction of duty, stating that the investigation must be conducted by an inspector-general of police.

➤ The GoR notification mentions 20 FIRs, including the 14 FIRs filed by Muslims, and the same instructions (i.e. to investigate all cases/FIRs relating to the incident) were reiterated to the CBI in October 2011.

➤ About three and a half months later, on January 20, 2012, the GoI issued another notification which mentioned 18 FIRs, including the 14 FIRs

## FOCUS

filed by Muslims. There was no need to do this, as it was a mere repetition. This appears to have been done with deliberate purpose. It gave the CBI a handle to protect the DM and SP while maintaining that it (the CBI) could begin investigations into the 14 FIRs (which named the DM and SP among other accused) only *after* the (second) GoI notification of January 20, 2012. This time lag of over three months (October 11, 2011 to January 20, 2012) also allowed the CBI to file a charge sheet against those accused in the five FIRs first registered by it without delay. Since the DM and SP were not mentioned in these FIRs (at least two of which were filed by policemen), both officers could be given a clean chit; there was nothing to incriminate them. The damning accusations against these officers were contained in the 14 FIRs filed by victims which had been registered earlier but which the CBI had deliberately overlooked.

➤ Moreover, the CBI did not act promptly even after the GoI's second notification had been issued on January 20, 2012. It only registered the cases on February 24, 2012 after a deliberate delay of one month. This amounts to a total delay of five months if the initial GoR/GoI notifications are taken into consideration. In contrast, the CBI acted on the GoI's first notification (albeit selectively) the very same day i.e. October 11, 2011. It appears that for the CBI, the 'accused' named in the five FIRs that were first registered (which include Muslim victims who were attacked in the market and those whose property was looted) are more serious offenders than the high-profile 'accused' (the DM, SP and other officials) named in the 14 FIRs filed by Muslim victims. This shows a clear bias towards the powerful accused and a communal bias against the victims. The conduct of the investigation, the CBI's selective promptness and delays, served to protect the district administration, particularly the SP and DM, while the victim Muslims were further

victimised. While the victim Muslims were in jail, or nursing their injured kinsmen in hospital, the accused were allowed to roam free.

➤ The 14 FIRs filed by Muslim victims in the incidents of September 13-14, 2011 were registered between September 25 and 27, 2011 after curfew was partially lifted and only after the victims, occupied with the treatment of the injured and the burial of their dead, could muster the courage to do so. There was thus a 12-day delay in the registration of these FIRs. This is not an insurmountable delay in law.



Meanwhile, the policemen and Gujjars were at an advantage; they had nothing to fear and were able to file FIRs immediately. (The very fact that the entire police staff of the Gopalgarh police station was transferred to the Bharatpur police lines about a week after the incident points to their complicity in the violence.)

➤ If all 19 FIRs had been clubbed together for the CBI investigation as per the explicit instructions in the state and central government notifications, the dereliction of duty and collusive roles of the district administrators and others accused by the victims would have become clear, in particular the mala fide intent and conduct of the DM, the SP and other local officials.

➤ In sum, the CBI is determined to protect bureaucrats somehow. It has managed to give them a clean chit despite evidence of their complicity and incompetence.

The GoR has aided this. As mentioned earlier, it did not file charge sheets

against or issue show-cause notices to the DM and SP before or during their suspension, allowing the CAT to give a verdict in their favour. Nor did the state put its views on the conduct of these officials before the tribunal. The GoR had enough evidence against these officers for dereliction of duty as a result of which precious lives were lost, property damaged/looted and communal and social harmony jeopardised or destroyed.

The officers' failures and culpability were manifest in:

a) Their failure to take preventive measures on September 13, 2011 by arresting those named in the FIR filed by Abdul Gani for assaulting his family and the imam of the Jama Masjid (before the violence had escalated);

b) Their deliberate failure to impose prohibitory orders, or Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (powers to issue an order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger), on the morning of September 14, 2011 when a crowd had assembled to protest against the assault on the imam; and

c) The DM and SP's failure to resolve the graveyard land dispute by referring the same to the revenue department and Wakf Board expeditiously.

By their deliberate inaction, passions were allowed to build up.

Among the signatories to the representation are Quari Moinudin, Nazimudin Engineer, Mohd Saleem and Prof M. Hasan (all of the Rajasthan Muslim Forum) along with victims of the Gopalgarh violence, including Abdul Rashid, the imam of the Jama Masjid who was brutally assaulted on the evening of September 13, 2011, as well as several prominent members of the Muslim community across Rajasthan. Prof HC Bhartiya, Prof RC Bhandari, Prof HC Rara, Prof Surendra Singh Chaudhari, Prof NC Jain, Prof RP Bhatnagar and Prof CH Hada (all formerly of the University of Rajasthan) and Prof SS Shukla, formerly of the Government College, Ajmer, are also key signatories. ■

## ■ ■ ■ DALIT DRISHTI

### Four Dalits slain in Srikakulam

**S**RIKAKULAM (AP): Four Dalits were killed and 25 injured in an attack, allegedly by members of a backward class community, at Lakshmipeta of Vangara mandal, 55 km from Srikakulam, on June 12. The condition of four, admitted in the Rajam area hospital, was stated to be critical.

As the majority of police personnel had been drafted for by-election duty in Narasannapeta, the attackers, backed by 'village elders', took advantage of the situation to indulge in a bloodbath. Police reached the spot two and a half hours after the attack that took place at 8 a.m.

According to the police and locals, differences arose between the two communities over the use of leftover land alienated for the Madduvalasa reservoir.



The government acquired lands for the reservoir but a portion remained vacant. With both sections claiming ownership, the district administration's efforts to bring about a rapprochement did not bear fruit. A police picket had been posted in the village to avert clashes. But after several police personnel left for poll duty at Narasannapeta, the dominant section went on the rampage, attacking the Dalits with crude bombs, sickles, hatchets, axes and other weapons. The shocked Dalits could neither retaliate nor run for safety.

Dalit associations, in support of Left parties, took out mass rallies in Rajam and Vangara mandals, condemning governmental inaction. The state govern-

ment decided to inquire into the Lakshmipeta incident under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The government will pay compensation of Rs two lakh to each bereaved family member.

*The Hindu, June 13, 2012 and The Asian Age, June 14, 2012*

### Manual scavenging figures shocking: Jairam Ramesh

**N**EW DELHI: Union minister for rural development Jairam Ramesh has termed as shocking the figures about the number of manual scavengers highlighted by the census this year but also accepted that the government had not yet discussed the issue in Parliament. According to the census data, there are 7.5 lakh families involved in manual scavenging in the country.

Mr Ramesh was speaking at the release of a book on manual scavenging, *Adrishya Bharat (Invisible India)*, in New Delhi on June 8. The book was released by four women – Narayanamma from Andhra Pradesh, Mahjabeen from Jammu and Kashmir, Saroj from Haryana and Maya Gautam from Uttar Pradesh – engaged in

eliminating manual scavenging.

Mr Ramesh said earlier he was under a false impression about the status of manual scavenging in the country due to the stands of different states that they had abolished it. "The census figures this year were shocking. It is a serious issue... but we have not been able to discuss this in Parliament yet."

He was surprised that the problem of manual scavenging existed even in states which are otherwise considered progressive, like Kerala. He said the proposed Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Bill 2012 is being drafted but added that the problem would not be rooted out by legislation alone and

needed campaigns and social transformation.

Journalist Bhasha Singh, author of the book, said: "The issue of manual scavenging is deeply related to the larger issues of caste and untouchability in India. After exploring manual scavenging being practised in the country, I can say this practice still continues all because of the casteist mindset of political leaders and policymakers."

"It is such a shame that in the last budget, Rs 100 crore was allocated but not even a single rupee was spent for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers. What kind of 'rehabilitation' is this when their children, who have stopped being one, do not get scholarships? Do you want them to continue with the practice of carrying human excreta?" asked Ms Singh. She said the plight of manual scavengers in states like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Gujarat was worse.

*The Hindu, June 10, 2012*

### Untouchability in Jammu and Kashmir

**J**AMMU: A single bench of the Jammu and Kashmir high court on June 13 directed the state government to ensure that members of a particular community did not face harassment for using water from the village well in a village of Kathua district.

The directions were issued in a petition filed by inhabitants of village Rasoo, tehsil and district Kathua, seeking directions to the state to proceed against the members of the upper caste who, according to them, were committing atrocities against members of the scheduled caste community for using the village well for drinking water. The petitioners claimed that untouchability was being practised at the village well, within the knowledge of state officials.

Justice Mohammad Yaqoob Mir issued notice to the chief secretary, Jammu and Kashmir, financial commissioner (home), director general of police, Jammu and Kashmir, divisional commissioner, Jammu, deputy commissioner, Kathua, senior superintendent of police (SSP), Kathua, and station house officer, Lakhanpur police station, returnable within three weeks. In the meanwhile,



## ■ ■ ■ DALIT DRISHTI

the court directed the deputy commissioner and the SSP, Kathua, to ensure that the petitioners are not subjected to any type of harassment and inconvenience. "They will also file their affidavits indicating therein as to what steps they have taken as against the allegations contained in... the petition," the court held. The petitioners contended that in a democratic country like India, it is unfortunate that even in the year 2012 such a practice of untouchability and casteism was being allowed and the culprits are left free.

*Greater Kashmir, June 13, 2012*

### Dalit paraded half-naked by Gujarat cops

**A**HMEDABAD: In an incident of police atrocity, a Dalit man was thrashed and allegedly paraded half-naked by the police at Ved village in Kautambha taluka of Panchmahal district on June 10. When Dalits of the village protested, the police assaulted them in a lathi charge. As if this were not enough, the police took the half-naked Dalit to Kautambha police station and registered a case against him for obstructing a public servant in the discharge of his duties. Moreover, the police allegedly did not allow him to wear any new clothes for the whole night.

According to eyewitness accounts, the victim, Raman Vankar, 38, was brought to the centre of Ved village at around 1 p.m. on June 10. Here the police allegedly stripped him of all his clothes, leaving him with nothing but his underwear. He was taken to the police station at around 3 p.m. Kanti Vankar, a Dalit man who lives in Ved village, told *DNA* that he was allowed to give some clothes to Raman at the police station only the next morning.

Further, despite the efforts of relatives and Dalit leaders, the police have not registered Raman's complaint in the matter. The Dalits have accused a retired police inspector, GP Joshi, and a head constable, Dharmendrasinh Somsinh, of stripping Raman and beating him up.

Kanti Vankar said that after Raman was taken from the village, he was kept in the police lock-up overnight only in

his underwear. Earlier: "The police took off his shirt and pants and beat him up in front of the whole village. No one was allowed even to go near police officials," Kanti said.

Bharat Ghoi, 40, a resident of Ved village, was an eyewitness to the incident. "Raman was brought to the centre of the village, his clothes were taken off and he was beaten up. He was then taken to the police station in the same condition," said Ghoi, who is a labourer.

The conflict between the Dalits and the police started after Joshi allegedly used abusive language against scheduled castes and hit one Arvind Vankar, a Dalit, on the head with an iron rod for releasing drainage water on the road. When Arvind protested, he was beaten up by Joshi who also called the police, including Dharmendrasinh.

*Roxy Gagdekar in DNA, June 13, 2012*

### Orissa Dalit rape victim dies

**B**HUBANESWAR: The 19-year-old Dalit girl from Puri district in Orissa, whose alleged gang rape stirred the conscience of the nation and cost a minister his job, died in hospital on June 21 after undergoing treatment for more than six months. "She died as a result of septicemia, acute respiratory distress syndrome and cardiorespiratory failure," Bhubanananda Moharana, superintendent of SCB Medical College Hospital, Cuttack, told reporters.

The alleged gang rape victim was found by the side of a road in a village under Pipili police station in Puri district, about 15 km east of Bhubaneswar, on November 28 last year. She had since slipped into a coma and been struggling for life at SCB Hospital. Police have arrested four persons in the case.

The alleged gang rape of the girl had snowballed into a major controversy in the state with demonstrations by political parties, women, students and social organisations. The then agriculture minister Pradeep Maharathi, who represents Pipili assembly constituency, came under opposition fire after news surfaced that the Pipili police had not taken action even after the woman's family members lodged a complaint. The

woman's family, social activists and opposition parties alleged that Maharathi was protecting the suspects and the ruling Biju Janata Dal headed by chief minister Naveen Patnaik found itself in the vortex of a political storm.

Following the intervention of the Orissa high court, the State Women's Commission and the State Human Rights Commission, local police registered a case on January 9. The state government directed the police Crime Branch to investigate the case and later instituted a judicial probe. Maharathi also resigned as agriculture minister following public outcry over the issue while the Pipili police station inspector in-charge was dismissed from service.

*Priya Ranjan Sahu in Hindustan Times, June 21, 2012*

### SC/ST discrimination: Low conviction rate a concern

**C**HENNAI: The centre has expressed concern over the low conviction rate in cases relating to discrimination against SC/ST community members in Tamil Nadu and asked the state government to ensure that various steps were in place to address the issue. A suggestion had been given on including a compulsory paper in state government examinations regarding relevant legislation, social justice and empowerment minister Mukul Wasnik told the media.

According to 2010 statistics, the conviction rate, especially in relation to the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, was a little over 24 per cent, he told reporters. "We have asked the state government to ensure there was no underreporting of cases, timely investigation and charge-sheeting, constant review of the performance of special public prosecutors and prosecution," he said on the sidelines of a review meeting on implementation of the relevant acts in the state.

While the relevant legislation allowed officers "wilfully" negligent in discharging their duties to be penalised, the state government has not found a single officer guilty under it for the past 22 years, he said.

## ■ ■ ■ DALIT DRISHTI

"We have suggested that there be a compulsory paper in state government exams (held by the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission) to make candidates well aware of the provisions in the legislation, as they are the ones who will be implementing them (after being recruited)," he said.

PTI, July 3, 2012

### Land recovery main focus at Dalit meet

**M**ADURAI: A year ago when Chellammal questioned a non-Dalit for executing a lease deed on her paddy land in Narasinganallur village in Tirunelveli after getting a thumb impression from her alcoholic husband, she had to face the wrath of upper-caste members. Attacked by a group, one of her eyeballs came out with the impact. So great was the force that the 50-year-old succumbed to her injuries the next day.

Chandra, another Dalit, faced stiff opposition from non-Dalits when she conducted the marriage of her son V. Ayyanar, an MPhil holder. They even tore the interview cards being sent to Ayyanar from various companies. The non-Dalits who grabbed Chandra's paddy land in Vellalakudi in Vazhapadi wanted the only Arundathiyar family to leave the village.

So when the deceased Chellammal's son, Lakshmanan, and Chandra along with 27 other Dalits raised their issues before the People's Tribunal for Legal Redressal, an informal jury comprising activists, professors and writers, what they all wanted was their paddy lands back. The main focus was the grabbing of *panchami* land by the non-Dalits from the Dalits. At least 28 cases of land rights violation were heard at the tribunal conducted by Evidence, an NGO based in Madurai, on June 30. Among the 300 Dalits taken for study from the villages of Tamil Nadu, almost all were subjected to violations related to land rights.

About 3.2 lakh acres of *panchami* land were distributed to Dalits in 1892 thanks to the initiative by JHA Tremenheere, the then district collector of Chengalpet. A study conducted by Evidence claims there are only

1,26,113 *panchami* lands in Tamil Nadu now. "Only 3,000 acres of land are in the hands of Dalits. The remaining were grabbed from the Dalits over time," says the study.

The jury however advised the victims to be more practical in taking their decisions. "If we ask you to come for a workshop or function, you will first ask whether we get food or travel allowance. You should realise the potential of the *panchami* lands and the role played by them in our lives. So you have to unite. If you don't, you will not be able to reclaim your lands," said P. Sivakami, founder president of Samuga Samathuva Padai.

Talking about an episode from her own life, the Tamil writer said it was her father's decision not to sell his paddy land which helped her get into the *Indian Administrative Service*. "My father didn't sell the paddy land. He was aware of grabbing. So I could complete my study from income we got from the land," she said. At least 300 Dalits from various parts of the state participated in the event. Grabbing of *panchami* land and other lands of Dalits is on the rise, according to Prof Palanithurai of Gandhigram University, a jury member.

MT Saju in *The Times of India*,  
July 1, 2012

### Steep decline in asset poverty of Dalits, tribals

**N**EW DELHI: The past decade has seen the weakest sections of society make rapid gains in their material well-being, acquiring assets such as cellphones, televisions, two-wheelers and bank accounts though almost half the population of scheduled castes and tribes continue to live by the light of the humble kerosene lamp, much more than the national number of 31 per cent.

The latest data of census 2011, released recently, shows that the asset poverty of Dalits and tribals has declined substantially. In fact, the decline in the number of Dalits and tribals without any assets is comparable to the numbers nationally. In 2001, 42.6 per cent of SC were without any of the 13 assets specified in the house-listing survey of the cen-

sus. In 2011 this had come down to 22.6 per cent. Nationally, the percentage of households without any assets came down to 17.8 per cent from 34.5 per cent.

This means that nearly 80 per cent of Dalits had one of the specified assets, which include a bank account, radio, television, bicycle, car, telephone, mobile, computer and Internet connectivity. While half the Dalit population has a bank account, 40 per cent have TV sets and 51 per cent have telephone connectivity. In 2001 just 25 per cent had bank accounts and 21 per cent had a television while a phone connection was available with just 3.5 per cent.

The decline in asset poverty of Dalits has been striking in the erstwhile 'Bimaru' states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. While 67.5 per cent of SC in Bihar had no assets in 2001, this has halved to 38.9 per cent now. In Uttar Pradesh, where 26 per cent had no assets a decade earlier, the figure has come down to 15 per cent.

In Kerala, where the figure was 47 per cent a decade before, it is now 11 per cent. In Bengal, where 38 per cent had no assets earlier, it is 28.3 per cent.

Ownership of motorised vehicles has increased from 5.3 per cent to 11.9 per cent.

In the three states of Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, as well as in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, where the tribal population has been facing the brunt of Naxal-state cross-fire, asset poverty has declined.

About 37.3 per cent of ST households all over the nation were found to be without any of the specified assets in the house-listing survey done as part of census 2011. In Orissa, it was 37 per cent; in Chhattisgarh, 35 per cent; in Jharkhand, 27 per cent. In Maharashtra, which has a sizeable tribal population, households with no assets were 43 per cent. However, 10 years before, ST households with no assets comprised 55 per cent of the community in Orissa, 49 per cent in Jharkhand, and 44 per cent in Chhattisgarh.

Today 22 per cent of ST households own a television set, 33 per cent have



## ■ DALIT DRISHTI

landline phone connections or a cellphone and 44 per cent have a bank account.

However, the majority of SC and ST still have no electricity. In Uttar Pradesh, 74 per cent of SC households depended on kerosene for light. In West Bengal, it is 56.4 per cent; in Orissa, 63 per cent; in Jharkhand, 60 per cent. Nationally, the dependence on kerosene as the sole source of light was only 31 per cent.

Census commissioner C. Chandramouli, who said the findings on asset poverty showed improvement in the lot of the SC and ST over 10 years, agreed that the lack of electricity and other basic amenities overshadow other gains. "That is the significance of the census. It tells you the gap between putting an electric post in a village and bringing electricity to a house," he said. The fact that more than half the population of Dalits and tribals rely on kerosene for light reveals that electric posts have not become electric connections, he said.

*Business Standard, June 22, 2012*

### Orissa temple a statement for Dalits and womanhood

**D**HAMRA (Bhadrak): The Maa Dhamarai temple in Bhadrak district is more than a typical Hindu place of worship; it goes against two trends in Orissa. The temple is not only accessible to Dalits but also has women priests – again Dalits – in a state where a patriarchal society frowns on this very concept.

Denial of access to Dalits has been a rule, usually unwritten, in a number of Orissa's countless temples. In July last year the chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, PL Punia, was denied entry to a temple to goddess Kali in Puri district. In 2005 four Dalits had faced massive opposition from upper castes when they tried to enter a 300-year-old Jagannath temple in their village in coastal Kendrapara. Those Dalits did gain entry a year later, following a directive from the Orissa high court, but the general trend continues elsewhere.

The standout Maa Dhamarai temple is on the outskirts of Dhamra, a fishing

village about 20 km from the ballistic missile launch pad of Wheeler Island.

"Before Maa Dhamarai, there is no caste or gender discrimination. She is a woman, after all," says Rabindra Nath Majhi, who looks after the temple's day-to-day affairs. "It is the priestesses who are allowed to perform certain rituals. We men don't even dare look at the goddess in the dark. Only a woman can look at her from up close," says Nityananda



Maa Dhamarai temple: Zero discrimination

Das of the temple management.

At the break of dawn every day hundreds of Dalits as well as upper-caste members from villages through the temple as priestesses Bimali Majhi and Laxmi Behera perform the rituals, chanting hymns and making offerings to the goddess. The temple caters to villages under Dhamra and Jagula *gram* panchayats which are dominated by Kaibartas, a fishing community. There is also a legend around how Dalits came to have their "own" temple.

According to local folklore, the goddess, a vegetarian living at a place called Satabhaya, had five sisters who were non-vegetarian. The legend goes that they disliked their sister's food habits so much that they pushed her into the sea. Some five decades ago when some members of a fishing family cast their net, it became so heavy that they could not lift it for days. When they finally managed to do so, what they found in the net was a large rock. The king of Kanika, Sailendra

Narayan Bhanjadeo, under whose kingdom the Dhamra panchayat fell, claimed to have had a dream the same night, in which the goddess had sought a temple built for her near Dhamra. The stone was first worshipped in a thatched house and later shifted to a concrete temple in 1998. One of the goddess's specific wishes was that she should be worshipped by widows from the fisherfolk community.

That is how Bimali Majhi got her job. Majhi, over 70 and a Dalit, is a widow from a village in Chandbali block of Bhadrak district. Married in her teens, she lost her husband to a violent land dispute a decade later, came back to her parents' home and looked after her three children as well as those of her brothers. Shortly after the children married, the presiding *dehuri* (village

priest) of the temple died and the search for a new one stopped at Majhi's door. Her roots lie in one of the two fisherfolk clans that had been "ordained" for the job.

"I don't know any formal hymns like the Brahmins do in pujas. For me, it's a heart-to-heart talk with the goddess," says Majhi, who has been serving in the temple for 15 years along with co-priestess Laxmi.

For fisherfolk, the goddess is the only insurance for a successful trip into the Bay of Bengal. "All fisherfolk who make a trip to sea offer their prayers at the temple before they start out in the morning. I have never seen any fisherman who has gone to sea without visiting the temple," says Sudarshan Behera, an elderly villager. "I have even seen scientists from the *Defence Research and Development Organisation* offering prayers at the temple before they go for the launch of a ballistic missile."

*Debabrata Mohanty in The Indian Express, July 3, 2012*

# Out of control

*Morsi's victory has done nothing to calm fears among Egyptians or to rein in the army*

BY ROBERT FISK

A COUPLE of hours after Mohamed Morsi's supporters greeted the democratic election of the first Islamist president in the Arab world with cries of "Allah-o-Akbar", a young Egyptian Christian woman walked up to my coffee table and told me that she had just been to church. "I have never seen the place so empty," she said. "We are all afraid."

I'd like to say that Morsi's placatory speech on June 24 – CNN and the BBC made much of his all-inclusive message because it fits in with the western narrative on the Middle East (progressive, non-sectarian, etc) – was a pretty measly effort in which the army got as much praise as the police for Egypt's latest stage of revolution.

Put bluntly, Morsi is going to be clanking down the road to Egyptian democracy with tin cans dangling from his feet, fear and suspicion mingling among the old Mubarakites and the business elite and, of course, the Christians, while the uniformed bulldogs of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces – its acronym, SCAF, is somehow appropriate to its inefficiency – go on biting off the powers that any president of Egypt should hold. He's got no Constitution, no Parliament and no right to command his own country's army.

Morsi's friendly tone towards Iran on June 25 will, of course, enrage the same beasts. The Saudis allegedly poured money into the Muslim Brotherhood campaign and now they find Morsi smiling upon the Shia regime they so much detest and suggesting they resume "normal relations". The Brotherhood must at least be happy that Crown Prince Naif – the scourge of the Brotherhood and the man who could still entertain Mubarak's ex-security boss last November – is dead and buried and can never be king of

Saudi Arabia. And anyone who doubts the dangers to come should reread the vicious coverage of the presidential election campaign in the Egyptian press. *Al-Dostor* claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood planned a massacre if Morsi won while *Al-Fagr* claimed that the Brotherhood planned an "Islamic emirate" in Egypt. The novelist Gamal al-Ghitani vouchsafed that "we are living a moment that may be similar to Adolf Hitler's rise to power", an exaggeration that would have been less offensive if a certain Anwar Sadat had not once been a spy for Rommel.

Clearly, the Brotherhood has to watch out. Saad al-Katatni, the short-lived speaker of the democratically elected



Egypt's presidential elections 2012: Mural of candidates

Parliament – its throat cut by the SCAF last week – has been insisting that Egypt won't see an "Algerian war" even if the army has legalised their almost exclusive power for years to come. When Algeria's generals cancelled the second round of elections in 1991 – because Islamists would have won – they ignited a war against their political enemies that left 2,00,000 dead. "The Egyptian people are different and not armed," he said. "We are fighting a legal (sic) struggle via the establishment and a popular struggle."

Egyptians may be different than their Algerian cousins – whether they are unarmed is a quite different matter. And the Brotherhood has itself been drawn, in the

words of the Egyptian journalist Amr Adly, "into the web of legalistic and procedural entrapment set up by the military".

For as the army has shut down the Parliament, taken over budgets, produced an interim Constitution taking away most of Morsi's power and reintroduced martial law – not to forget the dishonouring of its own promise to stand down after presidential elections – so a strange but not unfamiliar phenomenon has reappeared in Egypt: fear of the foreigner. Public service broadcasts, Mubarakite in their witlessness, have urged Egyptians to watch what they say in front of foreigners. Cameras in the hands of foreigners are increasingly regarded as spy machines. Egyptian film-makers meeting in Paris have described how the explosion of popular "image-making" during last year's revolution is now being effaced as distrust

grows.

And civic law is being flouted across Egypt. In the Delta, for example, a small-pox of illegal building sites has spread across agricultural lands – 5,000 alone in the last few weeks, according to farmers – after Morsi's opponent, ex-Mubarak prime minister Ahmed Shafik, reportedly said that "those who have built houses in violation of the law on agricultural lands will be indemnified and their situation legalised". Since Egypt's agricultural land is

growing smaller by the year, this is, in the words of one Egyptian agronomy professor, "a crime against all citizens".

For the "real" revolutionaries, the young of last year's rebellion against Mubarak, are going to have to connect with the poor of Egypt who voted for Morsi and abandon many of their slogans. It was the Tunisian leftist Habib Ayebe who told an Egyptian journalist on June 24 that those who called his country's uprising the "Jasmine Revolution" failed to realise that the original Tunisian revolutionaries of Sidi Bouzid had probably never seen jasmine in their lives. And there are many Egyptians today who believe they never saw an "Arab Spring".

# The long view

*A rigged ballot and a fox's tale that has all of Cairo abuzz*

BY ROBERT FISK

HERE is a fox in Tahrir Square. Bushy-tailed and thickly furred, he claims to hear everything. And this is what he says: that 50.7 per cent of Egyptian voters cast their ballot for Mubarak's former prime minister, Ahmed Shafik, in last month's elections; that only 49.3 per cent voted for Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party; but that the military were so fearful of the hundreds of thousands of Brotherhood supporters who would gather in Tahrir Square, they gave the victory to Morsi.

Now, foxes can be deceitful. But this is a well-connected fox and he claims that Morsi actually met four leading members of the SCAF in Egypt four days before the election results were proclaimed and that he agreed to accept his presidency before the Constitutional Court rather than the newly dissolved Parliament – which is exactly what he did on June 30. He says there will be another election in a year's time although I have my doubts.

Now, behind this piece of Reynard-gossip is a further piece of information – shattering if true – that the Egyptian army's intelligence service is outraged by the behaviour of some members of the SCAF (in particular, the four who supposedly met Morsi) and wants a mini-revolution to get rid of officers whom it believes to be corrupt. These young soldiers call themselves the New Liberal Officers – a different version of the Free Officers Movement which overthrew the corrupt King Farouk way back in 1952.

Many of the present young intelligence officers were very sympathetic to the Egyptian revolution last year – and several of them were shot dead by government snipers long after Mubarak's departure, during a Tahrir Square demonstration. They admire the current head of military intelligence, soon to retire and to be replaced, so it is said, by another respected military officer with the unfortunate name of Ahmed Mosad.

I have to say that all Cairo is abuzz with "the deal" and almost every news-

court case against Shafik going back to Mubarak's era.

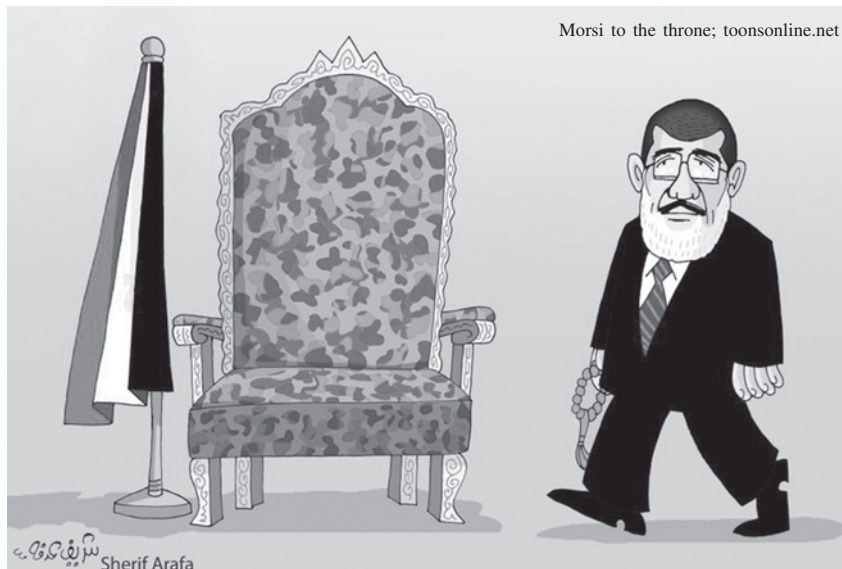
One man who was not present at the Morsi-SCAF meeting, says the fox, is Mohamed ElBaradei but he may well be asked to be Morsi's prime minister. The Nobel Prize winner and former nuclear "watchdog" has expressed a profound lack of interest in such a role. ElBaradei's appointment would help Morsi keep the streets calm and allow Egypt to come up with an economic plan to persuade the International Monetary Fund to loan the country the money it needs to survive. There is also talk of great tensions between the military intelligence and the

staff of the interior ministry, some of whom are fearful that another mini-revolution will have them in court for committing crimes against Egyptian civilians during the anti-Mubarak revolution.

There are persistent rumours that the plain-clothes *baltagi* thugs who were used to beat protesters last year were employed to prevent Christians voting in some Egyptian villages. Interestingly, when Farouk Sultan

(head of the election commission) ran through election irregularities before announcing the presidential winner on June 24, he said he didn't know who prevented the village voters getting to the polling station.

All of which is quite a story. Not the kind that can be confirmed – but Egypt is not a country which lends itself to hard facts when the Egyptian press (a mercifully wonderful institution after the dog days of Mubarak's newspapers) makes so much up. But one fact cannot be denied. When he wanted to show that he was a revolutionary animal, the fox held out his back paw. And there was a very severe year-old bullet wound in it.



paper has a version of how Morsi got to be president – though I must also add that none have gone as far as the fox. He says, for example, that the military intelligence services – like some of the SCAF officers – want a thorough clean-out of generals who control a third of the Egyptian economy in lucrative scams that include shopping malls, banks and vast amounts of property. Where does Morsi stand in relation to this? Even the fox doesn't know.

Nor is there any plausible explanation as to why Shafik set off for the United Arab Emirates the day after the election results were announced, reportedly to perform the Umrah pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. There is much talk of a



# Looking back for answers

*Zaghloul might be missed today, after an election in which the words 'Islam' and 'security' seemed like interchangeable platitudes*

BY ROBERT FISK

WHILE 50 million Egyptians were waiting on June 24 to hear that they had elected a Muslim Brotherhood mediocrity over a Mubarak bag-carrier, I paid a visit to the home of Saad Zaghloul. Not for an interview, you understand (Zaghloul died 85 years ago and is buried opposite his house in a mausoleum styled like a pharaonic temple), but as a pilgrimage to a man who might have served Egypt well today, a revolutionary and a nationalist whose Wafd Party stood up to the British empire and whose wife, Safeya, was one of the country's great feminists.

Mohamed Morsi is no revolutionary. No feminist. Not much of a nationalist. And the army elite has already laid its traps for him. But the "deep state" represented by his opponent, Ahmed Shafik, receded yesterday. Up to a point – and only up to a point – Zaghloul would have approved.

My shoes squeak on the wonderful, polished old wooden floor of his two-storey home, a reassuring memento of an age before Cairo became a canyon of traffic. Zaghloul's photograph hangs on almost every wall – there, at least, he has something in common with Egypt's dictators – and at the top of the stairs sit the remains of his two pet parrots, tied (not nailed) to their perches. There is even a canary in a cage that went to meet its maker in the 1920s.

I am shown into a room with a vast, pink-covered bed and shuttered windows: "10 p.m., 23 August 1927", it says in the corner. "This is the bed where he passed away," a lady in a black veil says softly, as if the old boy is still lying there.

It is the same bedroom into which British soldiers stormed, on December 23, 1921, to send him off to exile in Malta; the guide wrongly claims we packed him off to Aden but there is an air of unreality about the whole place. The Zaghloul bathroom, for example, with a wicker chair to sit in while showering, and all those photographs of the early Wafd members, a fez on every one of them. There is even Zaghloul's ceremo-

nial dress as prime minister, a cross between a major-domo's coat and an opera jacket, with the gold livery of a field marshal embroidered down the front.

Unlike Morsi however, Zaghloul wanted to live in a modern, progressive, secular Egypt, saying of his party in 1919 that "the present movement in Egypt is not a religious movement – for Muslims and Copts demonstrate together – and neither is it a xenophobic movement or a movement calling for Arab unity". Egypt for the Egyptians. You can see why he might be missed today, after an election campaign in which the words "Islam" and "security" seemed interchangeable platitudes.

Zaghloul wasn't a perfect man. He failed to make any impression on delegates to the Versailles peace conference after the first world war (they foolishly ignored his demands for independ-

**Mohamed Morsi is no revolutionary. No feminist. Not much of a nationalist. And the army elite has already laid its traps for him**

ence) and he has been accused of cheating on his expenses during his trip to Paris. He abused one of his closest friends by claiming he was only brought into the Wafd because he was rich. In later days, he grovelled to the British.

After assassins shot dead Sir Lee Stack, the military governor of Sudan, the British demanded, and got, a formal apology and an indemnity of £500,000. Stack survived for two days in the house of Lord Allenby but Zaghloul thought it was all a plot against him. "The bullet that took his life was not aimed at his chest but rather at mine," he said. Someone did try to kill Zaghloul at Cairo railway station. His grey jacket hangs behind glass outside his bedroom, his blood still staining the material.

But the ordinary people, the street-sweepers and the villagers and the poor, loved him. His lean, mustachioed face with the inevitable fez on top was as familiar to Egyptians as Arafat's was to Palestinians. Huda Shaarawi, perhaps a greater feminist than Safeya, wrote an infinitely sad letter to Zaghloul in 1924, quoted at length by her biographer, plead-

ing with him to resign as prime minister.

"The country does not want to let you go," she wrote. "It made you its leader in the hope that you would keep your promise of achieving the total independence of both Egypt and the Sudan. However, the longer you stay in power, the greater is the distance between the reality of what is happening in this nation and what you promised. In the light of your failure as a statesman, I am urging you not to become an obstacle yourself." Zaghloul, said Shaarawi, "should rid us of the embarrassment to which we have been subjected by stepping down..."

In the great 1919 revolution Zaghloul led against the British, hundreds of Egyptians were killed while Safeya and Huda led protest marches through Cairo, banging on the doors of foreign embassies and demanding independence. Safeya's library is still intact – a French edition of Alfred Milner's *England In Egypt* nestles beside volumes on Turkey and a book intriguingly titled *The Psychology of Contemporary Eng-*

*land*. It is, of course, the psychology of contemporary Egypt we must now study, an Arab nation whose army commanders will try to ensure that Morsi's powers, such as they are, will be further stripped from him. Zaghloul might have glanced at the crossed-sword epaulettes of the Egyptian generals and been reminded of General Allenby. Armies know how to safeguard their own power.

And, for a man born long before his time, it is a dismal fact that Zaghloul died despairing of his own people. "Cover me, Safeya," were his last words, uttered on that pink-covered bed. "It's of no use." ■

*(Robert Fisk, an English journalist and author, is the Middle East correspondent of the UK newspaper, The Independent. The above articles were published in The Independent on June 26, July 2 and June 25, 2012 respectively.)*

Courtesy: *The Independent*;  
www.independent.co.uk

# The colour of patriotism

*The fourth of July and my American son*

**BY GARY YOUNGE**

**D**URING my first week in the US I went to the Mall in Washington, DC, for the fourth of July. With flags billowing and picnic baskets disgorging, I remember hearing John Wayne's voice over a loudspeaker, extolling the nation's innate virtues, followed by a huge cheer. Within half an hour, he was joined by some Martin Luther King championing, once again greeted by applause.

I admit I was confused. Which America were they rooting for? The gun-toting, swashbuckling land of the settler or the non-violent home to the struggle for equality? Or was there more than one?

This is what I've always found both impressive and enraging about American patriotism. I love its flexibility – the notion that however problematic, majorities of every race, ethnicity and religion found a place for themselves in the national story. The trouble is that story all too often slips from a celebration of shared citizenship to a proclamation of genius – as though being an American is in itself a higher form of human being.

This has always struck me as a virus that can find its home in any political body. For many, being American is understood not as a starting point from which a greater understanding of the world might be achieved but an end point, after which the rest of the world ceases to exist. Badges and placards announcing that "Peace is an American value" or that the war in Iraq was somehow "un-American" make me every bit as uncomfortable as the more traditional bellicose and belligerent jingoism. In

my experience, sentences that start: "As an American..." rarely end well.

In Britain, patriotism is an altogether rather embarrassing and more rigid affair. Generally speaking, flags and anthems are for sporting events, royal weddings, jubilees and nationalists – all of which in some way hanker for former glory. I don't begrudge the joy of thousands who braved the rain to watch the flotilla of boats float along the Thames last month but I don't share it and have never found a way to relate to it. British patriotism, it seems, exists not so

tion-love I can do without. It harks back to a time before I existed and effectively celebrates it because I wasn't there.

Britain doesn't have an Independence Day; it simply looks askance as most of the rest of the world celebrates independence from it.

For me, growing up, it felt that there was no way to *become* British. It was an identity you either accepted wholesale or did without. I did without.

So I have long looked upon the fourth of July with a twinge of envy. If there must be national states then I would rather there be a national identity I can relate to. If I'm going to pay taxes, I might as well get the badge.

But more recently, I have come to relate to it with more than just anthropological interest. For I now have an American son. Over the five years since he was born I have made my peace with the fact that I will eventually lose him to a vaguely familiar world of little league, dental braces and phonetic spelling. But the notion that I may also have to give him up to the unwieldy beast of American identity is far more tricky.

Not only have I never been a patriot. Before I came to the US, I'd actively avoided them. So how to make sense of the fact that I might be raising one?

For while I understand the appeal of Independence Day, there has long been tension between black America and American patriotism. In his famous speech, 'What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?' in 1852, the abolitionist Frederick Douglass explained to his mostly white audience: "This Fourth of



The fire and the glory: America's fourth of July

much as love for your country but for its past. We are great, goes the logic, because we were better. Hence the football chant when Britain plays Germany – "two world wars and one world cup" – reaching back almost 50 years for some sense of cultural superiority.

As such, British identity – and this goes for most other European national identities – has long suffered from the illusion not of genius going forward but purity going backwards. Being British, in the minds of many, is not a work in progress but an artefact inherited from the past. As a black Briton whose parents came to the UK from Barbados in the early 1960s, this is the kind of na-

July is *yours*, not *mine*. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony... What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim."

But I have also seen that while African Americans may be far less prone to patriotism than most other Americans, and whatever scepticism may exist, they are far more patriotic than any other black minority I have ever seen and, I would argue, far more patriotic than white Britons. Just as Martin Luther King's dream was "deeply rooted in the American dream", so the African American challenge to the national polity has long been for it to live up to its promise rather than to live down its past.

So when the fireworks are set off and the anthem is sung, do I tell my son to do like his peers and put his hand on his heart and sing along? When the flags are handed out, will I encourage him to take one? When he asks to hang one from the front door will I wince?

Or will I just be relieved that – unlike me – he has never had to experience the automatic dislocation between race and place, in the knowledge that none will see any incongruity between the colour of his skin and the crest on his passport? Given that most Americans of his generation are not white, he'll grow up in a country where minority is a purely political designation, not a demographic one. True, as a black boy, his odds of going to prison will be higher than those of his going to university. But the bottom line is that whatever he thinks of America or being an American, he will never feel like a guest in his own home.

He will never be in any doubt that he is American. Nor will other Americans. And that's saying something. ■

*(Gary Younge is a feature writer and columnist for The Guardian based in the US. This article was published on guardian.co.uk on July 4, 2012.)*

Courtesy: *The Guardian*;  
guardian.co.uk

## Independence Day

– A Song

By George Washington (*Washington's Blog*)

The king's men  
Have betrayed us  
Tricked us out of  
Our homes

No one else  
Gonna save us  
We must stand up  
On our own

Divided  
We've been conquered  
For too long  
We've played their game

*United*  
*We'd be invincible*  
*So rise up*  
*And shake off our chains*

We've been fooled  
By the banker  
The sheriff  
And the priest

We've been ruled  
By the con man  
The scoundrel  
And the thief

Divided  
We've been conquered  
For too long  
We've played their game

*United*  
*We'd be invincible*  
*So rise up*  
*And shake off our chains*

Feel  
The power  
Streaming out  
Through our souls [*Note: if you're an atheist, think of it as our source of courage, or just change the last word to "soles"*]

Now's  
The hour  
Come together  
And let's roll

Here we are  
In the meadow  
It is time to  
Decide

From afar  
The army's nearing  
Are we slaves or  
Will we fight?

Divided  
We've been conquered  
For too long  
We've played their game

*United*  
*We'd be invincible*  
*So rise up*  
*And shake off our chains*

Feel  
The power  
Streaming out  
Through our souls

Now's  
The hour  
Come together  
And let's roll

[www.washingtonsblog.com](http://www.washingtonsblog.com), July 4, 2012

*Notes on the music:* The drums are similar to U2's *Bloody Sunday*, the guitar similar to U2 in some parts and the main riff from Little Steven's *Freedom* in other parts and there are elements of Simple Minds' *Sanctify Yourself* or *Don't You Forget About Me* and – I know, I know – Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*.



# A nation's self-deception

*For most Israelis, the military oppression of Palestinians is out of sight and out of mind*

BY ALON LIEL

THE Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems more stuck than ever. In the present stalemate, recent efforts by several foreign governments – including South Africa and Denmark – to insist on a clear distinction between products originating in Israel and those from settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are significant. These efforts can help pave the way to peace.

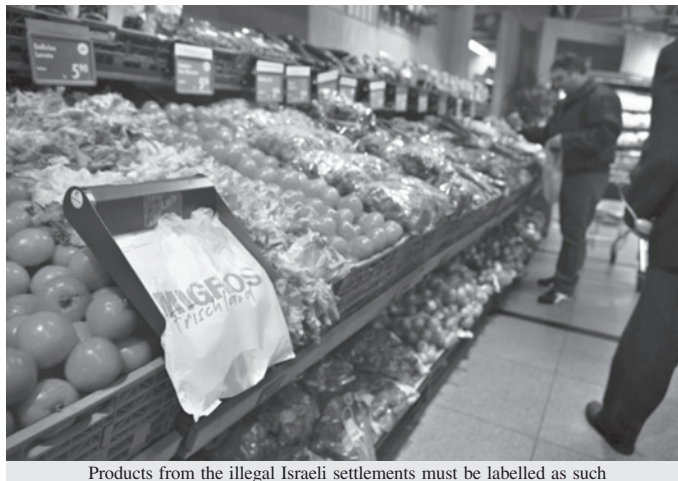
In May, the South African and Danish governments announced their intention to prevent goods produced in settlements from being labelled as 'Made in Israel', following the United Kingdom, which has requested its supermarkets to label settlement goods differently since 2009. The Swiss retail chain Migros has now also decided to do so.

These actions should be applauded and other governments and companies should follow suit. Why? Because the settlements are not Israel. They are built on occupied land outside Israel's internationally recognised borders and are illegal under international law. Labelling produce from settlements as 'Made in Israel' misleads the consumer and implicitly condones the expansionist policy of Israel's right-wing government led by Binyamin Netanyahu.

Right now the Palestinian West Bank is being gobbled up by growing settlements, erasing the Green Line – the internationally recognised pre-1967 line which is the only viable basis for peace. At the time of the signing of the Oslo peace accords in 1993 we had around 2,50,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied territories. By 2000, when I was director general of the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, the number stood at 3,90,000. Today it is over 5,50,000. Following Prime Minister Netanyahu's

rejection of US President Barack Obama's plea to freeze settlement growth, we have seen a major acceleration in settlement construction. Only last month Netanyahu announced plans to build another 851 settler homes, many of them deep inside Palestinian territory.

It seems that we Israelis have come to the conclusion that we no longer need peace. Behind the separation wall and with the army's might, we are more or less safe without peace. The economy is growing and Tel Aviv is booming. The occupation is not a source of great moral discomfort



Products from the illegal Israeli settlements must be labelled as such

to us. Except for the minority which does combat military service, the military oppression of Palestinians is out of sight and out of mind for the average Israeli. Many of us tend to believe that the conflict can be managed forever and Israel no longer has a "Palestinian problem".

However, this is pure self-deception. The continuing settlement expansion threatens to make a two-state solution to the conflict impossible. Israel is sliding into a situation where, short of apartheid or expulsion of the Palestinians, a one-state solution with equal rights for all could become the only possible way out of the conflict. This is the South African model.

As Israel's past ambassador to South Africa, I feel able to venture a view on

the applicability of that model to Israel-Palestine. Unlike in South Africa, where urbanisation brought black people to the cities in such numbers that they eventually became the majority, in Israel, there is substantial territorial separation and significant replacement of Palestinian labour by foreign workers, especially from Asia. Whereas in South Africa, almost every white child was cared for in infancy by a black "nanny", there is little contact between Israelis and Palestinians at all.

Despite my deep admiration for the way South Africa brokered its own peace, a "South African-style" solution for Israel-Palestine would be the end of the Jewish state. The two-state model remains the only way to fulfil this dream of at least the last four Jewish generations.

So if we want to stick to the two-state solution then we must begin to seriously tackle the settlement expansion which poses an existential threat to it. Here lies the relevance of the symbolic act of preventing settlement products from being marked as 'Made in Israel'. By denying this label to settlement products, international governments protect and reinforce the pre-1967 border. Moreover, they give their own consumers the free choice of whether to buy products from settlements.

This simple act reminds us that settlements are a grave violation of international law and an instrument in a dangerous project of de facto annexation. By defining and promoting the conflict's solution along the pre-1967 line, the international community confirms that the goal is two states, not an Israeli apartheid state. ■

*(Alon Liel is the former director general of the foreign ministry of Israel and Israel's past ambassador to South Africa. This article was published on guardian.co.uk on June 27, 2012.)*

Courtesy: *The Guardian*;  
guardian.co.uk

PAKISTAN

**Blasphemy law claims one more victim**



ISLAMABAD: A frenzied mob stormed a police station, snatched a man away from the police, beat him to death and burnt his corpse after he was accused of desecrating the holy Koran. The ugly incident took place in Ahmedpur East

area of Punjab's Bahawalpur district.

According to the police, the victim, who seemed to be mentally unstable, was arrested after residents said he threw pages of the Koran into the street. While the man was being questioned, some people started making announcements over mosque loudspeakers, urging residents to go to the police station and punish him.

Within hours, thousands gathered outside and demanded the man be handed over to them. According to the police, they tried to protect him but the mob turned violent. They burnt several police vehicles and wounded seven officers before grabbing the man and dragging him into the street where he was beaten to death and his body set on fire. The mob also attacked the house of an area police chief and burnt his furniture and possessions.

It was unclear whether the man was Muslim, a member of Pakistan's Christian minority or belonged to another religion. His name was not released.

Pakistani Christians live in fear of being arrested under the blasphemy laws which critics say are often misused to settle personal scores or family feuds.

Efforts to change the laws have made little headway. Last year two prominent Pakistani political figures who spoke out against the blasphemy laws were killed in attacks that raised concerns about the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan.

During a visit to Pakistan in May (2012) Gabriela Knaul, the UN's special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, said lawyers are often reluctant to defend clients accused under the blasphemy laws because of intimidation and judges are often pressured to convict.

*Dawn, July 4, 2012*

KENYA

**Muslim groups to protect churches**



MUSLIM leaders in Kenya resolved to form self-defence groups to protect churches following a deadly attack on July 1 on churches in Garissa, a town near the border with Somalia, in which 15 persons were killed. Kenya's border

region has been tense since it sent troops into Somalia to pursue al-Shabaab Islamist militants.

Adan Wachu, head of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, told the BBC the attacks were acts of terrorism. "There are people out there who are determined to make Kenya another Nigeria," Mr Wachu, who also chairs the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK), told the BBC Network Africa programme.

"It's not going to be allowed, to have a sectarian division in this country – whoever wants to do that will, of course, fail." Mr Wachu said that at a meeting of the IRCK on July 3 it was unanimously agreed the church attacks were acts of "terrorists and terrorism". "Therefore we all resolved to stand together as one united front," he said. "We decided as solidarity that the Muslim youth will provide a vigilante service to the churches not only in Garissa but in any other places that the Christians may deem fit." He added: "Muslims felt that because those Christians are a minority in their domain, they must be protected at all costs."

Most of the people living in and around Garissa are ethnic Somalis and Muslims.

Last October Kenyan troops entered Somalia in pursuit of al-Shabaab militants accused of being behind various kidnappings on Kenyan soil and of destabilising the border region. But since then, al-Shabaab, which has joined al-Qaeda, has been blamed for a further string of grenade and bomb blasts across Kenya. The group's officials have not responded to accusations that it was behind the Garissa attack.

*BBC, July 4, 2012*

CANADA/INDIA

**Best and worst for women**



POLICIES that promote gender equality, safeguards against violence and exploitation and access to health care make Canada the best place to be a woman among the world's biggest economies, a global poll of experts showed

in mid-June.

Infanticide, child marriage and slavery make India the worst, the same poll concluded.

Germany, Britain, Australia and France rounded out the top five countries out of the Group of 20 in a perceptions poll of 370 gender specialists conducted by TrustLaw, a legal news service run by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The United States came in sixth but polarised opinion due to concerns about reproductive rights and affordable health care.

At the other end of the scale, Saudi Arabia – where women are well educated but are banned from driving and only won the right to vote in 2011 – polled second worst after India, followed by Indonesia, South Africa and Mexico.

"India is incredibly poor, Saudi Arabia is very rich. But there is a commonality and that is that unless you have

## III OBSERVATORY

some special access to privilege, you have a very different future depending on whether you have an extra X chromosome or a Y chromosome," said Nicholas Kristof, journalist and co-author of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, commenting on the poll results.

"In India, women and girls continue to be sold as chattels, married off as young as 10, burnt alive as a result of dowry-related disputes and young girls exploited and abused as domestic slave labour," said Gulshun Rehman, health programme development adviser at Save the Children UK, who was one of those polled.

TrustLaw asked aid professionals, academics, health workers, policymakers, journalists and development specialists with expertise in gender issues to rank the 19 countries of the G20 in terms of the overall best and worst to be a woman. Respondents came from 63 countries on five continents and included experts from United Nations Women, the International Rescue Committee, Plan International, Amnesty USA and Oxfam International as well as prominent academic institutions and campaigning organisations. Representatives of faith-based organisations were also surveyed.

*Katherine Baldwin, Reuters, June 13, 2012*

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### **Militant Sikhs ruin wedding**



A BRIDE'S wedding day was ruined after a group of 40 militant Sikhs locked themselves inside a temple to protest her interfaith marriage. The mob of hardliners stormed the building to prevent the marriage between Sikh Susan Momi and

Christian Kenny Lawrence who is believed to be of West African background.

The group arrived in a fleet of vans at 7 a.m. on the morning of June 30, locked the doors and gates at the gurdwara and stayed until 2 p.m. In a statement online, the group in Swindon, Wiltshire, claimed they had acted peacefully to stop an interfaith union at the temple.

Susan's devastated mother Harbhajan said: "Words can't express how I feel – we are all in shock. They went inside the temple, locked the doors and switched the security cameras off. They ate all the food and then told him [the groom] 'go or we'll kill you'. We also had relatives from other parts of the world turn up for the wedding who didn't know what was going on."

The ceremony had been agreed by the gurdwara's managing committee but the militant group claimed the couple were not permitted to be married in the temple, as they were from different faiths.

The bride's family say couples from different religions have married before at the gurdwara without incident and

claimed the protests were racist. Harbhajan said: "This had nothing to do with religion. There was nothing to stop the ceremony in the gurdwara. This was all to do with the colour of his [the groom's] skin."

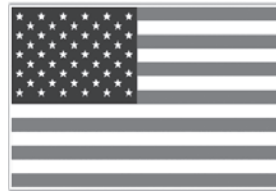
A civil ceremony between the couple did go ahead at another venue.

Ragbir Bains, a committee member at the Punjabi Community Centre, said: "Nearly everybody in the Sikh community in Swindon is absolutely against what took place. We live in a multicultural society and if that's the wish of the girl and her parents then it should go ahead. The majority of the hardliners were from Birmingham and Southall and they have been responsible for damage to another temple in Walsall."

*Andrew Snell in The Sun, July 4, 2012*

### USA

#### **Dressing with faith, not heat, in mind**



WHEN the mercury passes 90, most New Yorkers start to wilt. Many resort to shorts and tank tops even in the office. More than a few bankers and lawyers reach for their seersuckers. Yet amid all the casual summer wear, in some neighbourhoods

more than others, Hasidic men wear dark three-piece suits, crowned by black hats made of rabbit fur, and Hasidic women outfit themselves in long-sleeved blouses and nearly ankle-length skirts. To visibly cooler New Yorkers, they can look painfully overdressed.

Some New Yorkers who are not Hasidic surely ask themselves: How on earth do they stay cool?

The answer is a mix of the spiritual and, yes, the creatively physical. The Hasidim will tell you they have learnt to live comfortably in all seasons with their daily attire.

"I think I'm not as hot as other people because the sun is not on me," said Chany Friedman, who was shopping recently in Borough Park, Brooklyn, with two of her five children in tow, wearing a sweater and dense stockings in addition to other concealing clothing. "If I'm covered, the sun is not on me. I'm happy that I'm not exposed to the world." Using a Hebrew name for god, she added: "That's what HaShem wants from us."

In the Hasidic world, the traditional fashion code and interpretations of ancient Jewish law dictate modesty for a woman – a concept known as *tzniut* – so even on sizzling days women conceal their necks, arms and legs and married women don wigs, headscarves or turbans to hide their real hair. While Hasidic men do not feel the modesty obligation to the same degree, they believe that it is a mark of humility and respect for others to dress formally when encountering the world.

*Joseph Berger in The New York Times, June 28, 2012*



## BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

### BOUQUETS

#### Riot victims spread harmony

**A**HMEDABAD: Forty-three years past, memories of the 1969 communal frenzy still brings tears to Aziz Gandhi and Rafiq Nagri's eyes. But the violence that robbed them of their businesses and snatched their roofs could not instil hatred in their hearts. Moved by the gesture of Hindus who rescued them, the two are today messengers of peace, leading a life full of *sadbhavna* (communal harmony).

Residents of Dariapur, the two Muslims are instrumental in fostering peace in the communally sensitive vicinity. Active members of the Mohalla Peace Committee, Gandhi and Nagri have ensured smooth sailing for the *rath yatra* in Dariapur for 35 years now. In fact, they respect the sentiments of devouts by welcoming the procession in the area. "Initially, we faced protests from a few members of our community. But they soon realised the importance of harmony and joined us in our efforts," said 69-year-old Gandhi.

"My family used to live at Kalupur Tankshal Ni Pol in 1969. But we lost our business and house in the riots. In those difficult times, a Hindu came to my help. He rescued me and kept me in hiding at his house. Had that Hindu not saved me, I would not have lived to tell you this *sadbhavna* story," said 60-year-old Nagri.

Gandhi's tale is no different from Nagri's. "I had a grocery shop and a house but lost them in the violence in 1969. A Hindu woman, to whom I had given grocery on credit, as she was poor, risked her life and came to my help. She gave me the reason to believe in peace. And since then, spreading the message," said Gandhi.

*Zahid Qureshi in The Times of India, June 22, 2012*

#### Kutchi Muslim busies himself for *rath yatra*

**N**AVI MUMBAI: The saga of the ethereal love between Lord Jagannath, elder brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra who travel together well-ensconced atop a colourfully decorated *rath* (chariot) during their annual vacation, popularly known as the Jagannath *yatra*, has struck a chord with the siblings of a Panvel-based Kutchi family.

Hanif Kutchi and his two brothers in Kharghar were giving the finishing touches to the wooden chariot from atop which the deities will themselves reach out to the people in a public *darshan* during the annual *rath yatra* on June 21. Hanif's sisters – Shabana, Ameena and Suraiya, all married and staying in different places (the other two being Nisar and Najir) – are still in touch with their brothers, inquiring over the phone about the progress made in shaping the chariot. "Our whole family, under the guidance of our father, who inherited the trade of making bullock carts, has been shaping the chariot for the trust based in Kharghar that organises the *rath yatra*," said Hanif.

"The relationship of brother and sister is unique since time immemorial and is laced with stories of love, fights and



care for one another. This remains a perennial story and we all wait for the day when the *rath yatra* begins. I pray for their success and wish my brothers well," said Ameena.

Blessed with the art of making wheels and bullock carts, the Kutchi family made forays into the world of making chariots. The first one they made was for the Kuldevi of Jaitapur in Satara district of Maharashtra and thereafter for Kashti Kuldevi in Ahmednagar district, Hanif said. The family has never looked back since and is now well known for making the chariot of Lord Jagannath in the satellite city.

*Sanjay Banerjee in The Times of India, June 20, 2012*

#### Make mothers first guardians: Panel

**N**EW DELHI: In a move to empower women, a government panel wants the mother to be listed as the first guardian for all official purposes instead of the father, arguing that she primarily looks after the children. "Since normally it is the mother who primarily looks after the children, she should be listed as the first guardian," the Planning Commission's Working Group said in its report.

The panel has recommended a review of all laws to make mothers equal guardians of their children. Currently there is a practice of mentioning the father as the first guardian in all official documents such as school admission forms, birth certificates, etc. The group has suggested that all existing regulations and rules ought to be revisited to ensure that the mother's signature as a guardian is universally accepted in all official records.

The recommendation is part of a slew of measures suggested by the group to make laws more gender sensitive. It also asked the government to revisit laws related to maintenance and guardianship to ensure that separated women get adequate maintenance and custody rights over their children.

The suggestion, if accepted, would ensure a woman's first right over a child, whether she is married or divorced, said a member of the group. "Once all laws are re-looked at in the light of the recommendations, women will not be forced by any government or private agencies such as schools or passport offices to mandatorily disclose husbands' names," she said. "The existing laws on the issue are archaic and were conceptualised with a patriarchal mindset," said another member.

## ■■■ BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

The group, headed by the women and child development secretary, wants to re-look at all laws that do not treat guardianship rights of the mother on a par with those of the father. The panel, which argued that family law reform has been neglected, said the laws need to recognise a woman as an equal partner with her husband and her contribution to the household or the productive nature of work that the fairer sex does.

The path-breaking recommendations would ensure that mothers have an equal right in caregiving as well as in crucial decision-making processes, financial or otherwise, affecting children's lives.

The Law Commission in its 83rd report submitted in 1980 had suggested amendment of guardianship laws. "The Guardians and Wards Act 1890 was enacted 90 years ago. At the time women had scarcely any rights: for them, there was only social and legal degradation, material insecurity and other manifestations of dominance and false superiority of men," it had said. The commission also recommended the amendment of Section 6 of the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act 1956 to allow the mother custody of a minor till s/he is 12 years old. "It is necessary to allow the mother the custody of a child till it attains the age of 12 to prevent the father from using the child as a pawn for securing complete submission of his wife," the report added.

*Mahendra K. Singh in The Times of India, April 11, 2012*

### 'Mass weddings break caste barriers'

**C**HENNAI: Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa presided over a mass marriage ceremony at Tiruverkadu, a temple town on the outskirts of Chennai, on June 18. The event, organised by the Hindu religious and charitable endowments department, is the fifth mega event of this kind to be held under her government, including those held under previous regimes. As many as 1,006 couples got married at Tiruverkadu, famous for its Karumari Amman temple. Between 1991 and 1996 the chief minister conducted marriages for 2,500 couples in Chidambaram and 5,004 couples in Tiruchi. Her second regime witnessed the mass marriage of 1,008 couples in 2002 and another 1,053 couples in 2003 in Tiruverkadu.

"These marriages transcend the barriers of caste and creed," the chief minister said after blessing the couples. The beneficiaries included 11 differently abled couples and 611 couples belonging to the Adi Dravidar community, 34 couples from scheduled tribes, 183 couples from the most backward classes, 132 couples from backward classes and 46 from other categories. Besides *mangalsutras* in gold and *mettis* (toe-rings) in silver, the brides and grooms were given gifts which included silk saris, dhotis, utensils and Kamakshi lamps. The menu for the marriage was selected by Ms Jayalalithaa herself.

"Life is a challenge and married life is full of challenges. Those who run away from challenges cannot succeed in life and only those who face them win the race. Society welcomes only those who are prepared to take on challenges," she said in her address.

Chief secretary Debendranath Sarangi, assembly speaker D. Jayakumar, Hindu religious and charitable endowments minister MSM Anandan and officials of the department participated in the event.

The marriage evoked strong criticism from *Pattali Makkal Katchi* founder S. Ramadoss who accused the government of wasting money when innumerable temples in the state lacked resources even for one puja a day.

*The Hindu, June 18, 2012*

## BRICKBATS

### Man beheads daughter in Rajasthan

**J**AIPUR: A man beheaded his 20-year-old daughter with a sword in Rajasthan's Rajsamand district on June 17. According to the police, the incident took place in the Charbhujia area of the district, some 400 km from Jaipur.

"The man, Omkar Singh, was spotted roaming in the village with a severed head. The villagers brought him to the nearby police outpost with the head and a bloodstained sword," a police officer told IANS. Omkar Singh was allegedly outraged over his daughter's alleged relations with several men.

"Omkar Singh told the police that his daughter Manju had relations with several men. He had asked her to mend her ways several times in the past. However, she did not pay heed. Out of pure rage, he chopped off her head with the sword," said the officer. A police team found the girl's body at his house. "We have arrested Singh," said the officer.

*IANS, Indo-Asian News Service, June 17, 2012*

### Man murdered for marrying Muslim girl

**N**AGERCOIL (TN): A 24-year-old man was hacked to death allegedly by the brother of a Muslim girl and his associates for marrying her, triggering tension in Edalakudy area of the district, the police said. Ramesh, a goods carrier operator based in Nagercoil, had married the girl belonging to Edalakudy some months ago though her family had opposed it, they said.

On June 14, two persons stopped Ramesh's vehicle and took him to Edalakudy where a seven-member gang, including the brother of his wife, attacked him with iron rods; he succumbed to injuries at a hospital the next day. As the news of his death spread, a group indulged in stone-pelting in some localities in the area while some people blocked traffic to protest the violence. The police rushed to the spot and dispersed both the groups.

Six hundred police personnel had been deployed in the affected areas while additional reinforcements had been rushed from Rajapalayam and Palani, the police said. Shops in Edalakudy and Elangadai areas remained closed. Two persons were arrested and a hunt is on to nab the remaining five accused. The situation was tense but under control in the area, the police said.

*PTI, June 16, 2012*

## I “nationalist”, You “casteist”

– By *Badri Raina*

I do nationalism in Gujarat,  
You do casteism in Bihar;  
Which of the two, I ask you,  
Is better for the nation, *yaar*?

You target our own Hindus,  
I fix the Muslim enemy;  
Surely, I serve the twice-born well,  
While you serve the OBC.

I develop for those that matter,  
You bleed for the poor;  
You may be an inclusive tinker,  
I am the Zarathustrian doer.

But coalition being our conjoint fate,  
Be thou the lame to my blind;  
My fury knows no right or wrong,  
You help me direction find.

Let casteist-communalist seal a pact  
To keep the secular out;  
Let corporate oil be our arsenal,  
Let deadly be our clout.

Let party take a poodle fate,  
And the people do as told;  
Let Modi-Ramdev-Anna be  
Constitution, Parliament, Judiciary,  
And treasury full of gold.