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Editorial

A Hindu-Muslim Dialogue : The Great Debate Continues

SOME MONTHS BACK the Deendayal Research Institute circulated a Paper to scores of thinkers and writers all over the country.

In the June 1988 issue of *Manthan*, we carried this Paper under the heading—"RESOLVING RELIGIO-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE SERVICE OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE".

In the *Indian Express* issue of July 7, Shri Asghar Ali Engineer, Director, Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay, took note of the above in these terms : "To my pleasant surprise, Mr. K.R. Malkani of Deendayal Research Institute has prepared a draft document for dialogue with Muslims. This draft document, I must say, is remarkably balanced and certainly can become a basis for dialogue with the brothers of the majority community. Some representative organisation of Muslims should also prepare a similar draft document for dialogue with Hindus. There is sufficient basis in Islamic theory for such an approach. The Institute of Islamic Studies is certainly ready to prepare such a draft document for a dialogue."

Subsequently, Shri Engineer sent us his paper on the above subject, which was duly published in the September issue of *Manthan* under the heading "Hindu-Muslim Problem—A Cooperative Approach : A Document for Promotion of Hindu-Muslim Dialogue".

Meanwhile several other friends had also responded. And we are carrying these responses in this issue.

WE ARE HAPPY to note that the responses—with the unsurprising exception of Syed Shahabuddin—are positive. All these distinguished friends think that this problem must be solved, that it can be solved, and that this Working Paper with its 12-point Action Plan, can be a basis for discussing a just and abiding solution to the problem. These twelve points, briefly are :

"India has always been the land of freedom of thought, expression and life-style. That being the historic context, it should be eminently possible for all people, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, to live together in

peace and amity—given good sense, good faith and consciousness of a Common Manifest Destiny. We will all sink or swim together.

"1. First of all, the history of India written by the British from the imperial angle, and mechanically re-gurgated ever since by Indian authors, should be replaced by one written by Indians from the Indian angle. It should be people-oriented and not king-centred. Such a factual and balanced history of the Indian people will do more to harmonise relations than anything else.

"2. All schools should provide moral instruction with special reference to the life and teachings of great religious leaders.

"3. The life, limb, property and honour of all citizens must be safe and secure. Any social violence must be immediately inquired into, the findings published, the guilty punished and the victims compensated.

"4. The lifeless Minorities Commission should be replaced by a Human Rights Commission at national, state and district levels, to deal with all complaints of discrimination on grounds of caste, creed or language.

"5. Muslims don't have to be more 'Islamic' than Mughals. Like those Muslim rulers, they should join in celebrating Dussehra and Diwali, Basant and Holi. Indeed, just as non-Christians join in Christmas celebrations in Christian countries, non-Muslims should join in celebrating Idd in Muslim countries and non-Hindus should join in celebrating Hindu festivals in Hindu lands.

"6. Also Muslims don't have to be more 'Islamic' than Pakistan. If they are not yet ready for a Uniform Civil Law, they should at least accept such amendments in Family Laws as have been enacted in Pakistan, banning, for example, bigamy.

"7. All organised mass conversions should be banned.

"8. Political parties whose membership is confined to any one community, should be banned. But all minority interests should be helped to protect themselves through a system of proportional representation, as demanded by Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly.

"9. No religious leaders or organisations should be allowed to receive foreign funds—except from persons of Indian origin. Just as Indian religious leaders working outside India, do not get Indian money to spread Hindu thought abroad, Muslim and Christian religious leaders or institu-

tions working in India, should not get foreign money from Arabia, USA, etc.

"10. The Indian Constitution should be worked in the true federal spirit so that units and areas in the Hindustan Peninsula outside of the 'Indian Union' consider it worth their while to join the Indian state on honourable and autonomous terms, for we are all One People.

"11. Article 30 of the Constitution should be amended to provide that while any 'minority'—or even 'majority'—can run educational institutions of its choice, the same must be governed by general rules in respect of admission of students, recruitment of staff and standard of education.

"12. Above all, Hindus, Muslims and Christians must learn to respect each other's religion. As Gandhiji rightly said: 'There is, in Hinduism, room enough for Jesus, as there is for Mohammed, Zoroaster and Moses'.

"If the people of India move in this direction, there will not only be peace in the land, there will be peace in the minds of men; it will also be a rich contribution to world peace. Such a positive National Reconciliation could move India to the front rank of nations, make a valuable contribution to a New World Order and lead to a trans-valuation of human values. A just and fair resolution of the 'minority problem' is the fulcrum on which the lever of the future of India—and of the world—depends. So help us God."

WHILE GENERALLY welcoming the objective and spirit of the Paper, many friends have questioned some of the facts and observations and formulations. All these points can—and no doubt will—be discussed among scholars and thinkers. Here an attempt will be made to meet some of these points only briefly.

Some friends have objected to occasional references to the founder of Islam as simply 'Mohammed', and not either prefixing it with 'Prophet' or suffixing it with 'Peace Be Upon Him'. I wish these friends appreciated that no disrespect was meant. We say Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, Moses, Jesus normally, without any prefix or suffix; and yet there is the greatest respect in uttering these holy names. In Sindh as a young man, I used to refer to Islam's holy book as 'Koran Sharif' and my Muslim friends wondered why I tailed it with 'Sharif'; 'Koran', they said, was enough. But evidently for some Muslim friends, Mohammed must be PBUH. So be it!

Some Muslim friends are shocked that I should compare their Prophet to such mundane characters as Napoleon and Lenin. I wish they had realised that I was only trying to interpret the phenomenon of Islam in rational terms and thereby making it intelligible—and acceptable—to sceptical non-Muslims. For fact is that Mohammed (PBUH) was a great liberator and unifier of Arabs. He is not a primeval god like Shiva, or a conceptual god like Vayu and Varuna; he is a great historical figure, who was as much a product of history as a maker of history. He used religious idiom and religious symbols because he lived in the age of religion—even as the heroes of France and Russia used the revolutionary idiom and the revolutionary style in a revolutionary age. A little sense of history and of humour will make many things clearer.

Many friends have pointed out that the statement attributed to Mohammed (PBUH) that "cow's milk is medicine and cow's flesh is poison" is not there in the Koran. They are right; but it is there in the Hadis. And, for Muslims, Hadis is as sacred as Koran, isn't it?

One friend can't believe what Taimur has been reported as saying—"Plunder in war is as lawful as their mothers' milk to Mussalmans." I can appreciate his incredulity and embarrassment. But many incredible and very embarrassing things have, in fact, happened in history. He can look up Elliott and Dawson's 'History of India as told by its Historians' (Vol. II, P. 395) to satisfy himself on the point.

Some friends question the fact that one of the Prophet's wives was named 'Hind' and that he carried many flags in his life—including, on one occasion, an orange one—but never a green one. This information comes from Dr. Saifuddin Jeelany, the distinguished Arab scholar who was long resident in Calcutta, who used to edit an Muslim English daily from the city, and who later in his life used to write for 'Organiser'. Not many Muslim Indians know that in those days 'Hind' was a very popular women's name in Arabia. Mohammed (PBUH), according to Jeelany, even used to say about his wife Hind, "May Allah bless this Hind, and the country after which she is named."

Some friends have not liked my references to circumcision. There can be two opinions about almost anything. All that I meant to convey was that there is nothing 'Islamic' about circumcision; it is an ancient semitic custom, common to Arab and Jew alike. Nowadays it is also widely practised in the West, for reasons that need not be gone into here. In the days of Islam's expansion, when a conqueror wanted quick local converts to consolidate his power in a given area, he used to waive the requirement of circumcision, which inhibited many people. On other occasions, when the conqueror did not want too many converts to claim

a share in the loot as Muslims, he would insist on circumcision, to keep the number of co-sharers down! I repeat, circumcision is *not* an Islamic injunction, it is a semitic custom, which Muslim Indians have come to look upon as an essential part of Islam.

ONE BASIC QUESTION raised by respected Maulana Waheed-ud-Din Khan and some other friends is: Why should we try to see unity in religions?

I would ask a counter-question: Why should we not?

No attempt should be made to invent or exaggerate any unities of religions. But if certain obvious elements of unity are there, why should they not be pointed out? Why should they be overlooked? Will not such unities provide some good common ground for the emotional unity of people belonging to different faiths?

Orthodox beliefs apart, religions have not dropped from the sky—or materialised out of thin air. Religions have emerged to serve certain material, moral, social, emotional, psychic and spiritual needs of man.

More. Christianity is a child of Judaism and Hellenism. Islam is a child of Judaism, Christianity and Arabism. Even the Kaaba, the Haj, the Qurbani (sacrifice) of Islam are pre-Islamic. All religions adapt themselves to, and/or adopt, the customs of the country or society to which they go. Indian Islam, therefore, is, in addition, a child of Turkey, Iran and of course, of India. Sir Syed Ahmed correctly saw great many similarities between Islam and Christianity. If Dr. Bhagavadas, Bharat Ratna, well-known author of 'Essential Unity of all Religions' (The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras) saw some similarities between Hinduism and Islam etc., why should anybody object? Why this anxiety to keep Islam artificially isolated, aloof, apart and away? Is it the fear of not being able to hold one's own in rational argument? If anybody takes the position—contrary to massive evidence—that Islam has nothing to do with any other religion, and that it stands all alone by itself, then no adult argument is possible. The world is getting smaller by the day. Ideas and philosophies are going to be weighed, tested, tasted, compared and contrasted. Educated men are going to sample Gita, Bible, Koran etc. and judge them. An ostrich-like attitude is not going to help any religion.

Our friend Manzoor Alam has been very candid. He writes to say that the Muslim's relationship to Allah is that of a slave to his master, that according to Islam, there are no different ways to God, that the Koran lays down the law and that that law over-rides custom anywhere.

In the age of slavery, the master-slave relationship came natural to mind. Other ages and other societies have thought of other relationships also. Hindu seers have thought up husband-wife, parent-child, fraternal and friendly (*Sakha*) relationships between man and his Maker. When Christopher Isherwood, distinguished American writer, told his Rama-krishna Mission mentor that he was not able to give up his relationship with his boy-friend, the latter advised him to look upon his young friend as young Krishna, and thus try purify his relationship with him. Every thought has to be re-thought, re-interpreted, and re-formulated, if it is to preserve the spirit that inspired it in the first place. The alternative is stagnation and decline.

As for the relationship of 'law' to 'custom', the universal view is that 'Custom is King'. 'Custom over-rides the law.' The faithful are welcome to their faith that whatever is there in the Koran and Hadis, over-rides any custom on the subject. But the reality on the ground is very different. The Pir and the Durgah are as real to the Muslim as Koran and Kaaba. And Muslims don't have to agonise over this non-issue. The interesting thing to note is that it is only Muslim Indians who see a problem here; the Arabs, the Egyptians, the Turks have no such problem. They are relaxed in their Islam.

As for different ways to God, even the Koran says: "To every people have we given a law and a way, whereby they may reach God" (Li Kullin ja'lna min-kum shira' an). And again: "There are as many ways to God as there are souls, as many as the breaths of Adam's sons" (Al-turqu il-Allahi kan mufusu bani Adam). We don't have to edit Mohammed (PBUH).

ANOTHER BASIC OBJECTION to the Paper is that in the name of peaceful coexistence, it seems to aim at harmonisation, homogenisation, Indianisation, Hinduisation.

Yes—and no. Once it is conceded that there should be peaceful co-existence, how exactly do we do it by emphasising differences and difficulties all the time? Will not differences, left unchecked and uncorrected, lead to dissonance, disunity, disruption? Do we not need to harmonise differences, round off corners?

None of this will lead to 'homogenisation', which is as unnecessary as it is undesirable. India is, has always been, and will always be, a tolerant, pluralist society. As the Urdu poet has rightly put it:

"Kahaan aisee azadiyan hai muyassar,
 " 'An'al Huiq' kaho, aur maat na pao?"
 (Where else—except in India—do you enjoy such
 liberties as to proclaim 'I am God' and not be killed?)

Fortunately we are too many, too varied, and traditionally too tolerant of diversity, for any exercise in homogenisation. But India is also a definite geographical, historical and cultural entity. From the Himalayas to the seas, it is one vast crucible. In this crucible, Hun and Scythian, Turk and Mongol, has got 'Indianised', 'Hinduised'. In this same process, the Hindu has also got partially "Islamised". My good friend A. Vishwanathan, (a Tamilian who had settled down in Punjab and became an MLA there), used to describe Arya Samajists as "Vedic Muslims". And our friend Ashish Nandy (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi), is even of the opinion that RSS with its "hard-faced" search for "organised religiosity, masculine hardness and historical awareness" is more Islamic than traditional mainstream meek Hindu.

More. Like every living culture, Hindu culture also is already composite, having adapted and adopted elements in Islam, Christianity etc. over the centuries. Hinduism today is quite different from what it was a thousand years ago. We don't have to make it artificially more composite. And for the last two hundred years, all Indians, Hindu and Muslim, have been getting Anglicised. These are the facts of history. All these are forces of history, which are still at work. So what exactly is the objection? Is anybody planning to cancel out geography—and stop history in its tracks?

Our good friends, Shri Rizvi, formerly editor 'Radiance', and now with the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, Hamdard Nagar, New Delhi, in a long chat emphasised the primacy of Shariat. That is fine. But Shariat itself has been interpreted differently in different countries at different times. Today no two countries agree entirely on Shariat. In India, for example, Shariat today means what the Privy Council has interpreted it to mean. In this situation, what is the propriety of justifying polygamy and 'instant *talaq*' in the name of 'Shariat'?

And as Syed Nurul Hassan pointed out at the recent "National Seminar in Search of India's Renaissance: Nation-Building, Development and Communication", Shariat is only the first step in Islam, the other higher steps being Tariqat, Maarfat, Haqiqat. Why should anybody insist only on the first elementary step, forgetting all other and higher steps?

At the same seminar, Nurul Hassan Saheb pointed out that Mohammed (PBUH) himself had said that after his death, Islam would split into

73 sects and 72 of these would be false. Is anybody sure that the Privy Council rulings constitute the prophesied seventy-third correct creed?

WE HAD SENT the paper only to thinkers and writers, and not to any politicians. But on a request from Syed Shahabuddin, we sent a copy to him. We are happy he has read it with interest; we only wish he had not responded as negatively as he has. We wish he had shed some light, and not generated only heat. He is angry that we have described India as a "Hindu country". Why this allergy to, and animus against, the word "Hindu"? Does anybody object to Britain, with its millions of non-Christians, being described as a "Christian country"? Does any non-Muslim object to Egypt (with its 10% Coptic Christians) being described as a Muslim country?

Among other things, Syed Saheb wants to know why we distinguish pre-Islamic invaders from post-Islamic invaders. We do so for two good reasons: Huns and Scythians did not try to convert Indians to their faith; actually, they accepted India and became Indians. On the other hand the Arab, Turk and Mongol often forcibly converted Indians to their faith and even made these Indians think that they were no longer Indian. The result was Partition.

He also objects to the many suggestions for harmonisation and says: "I think you should wait until India is declared a Hindu state." If the Shahabuddins of the land continue in this vein, nobody need be surprised if India is, in fact, before long, officially declared a Hindu country. Perhaps they also serve who provoke and offend.

HOWEVER, it is a matter of great satisfaction that other Muslim thinkers and writers have responded positively. As Imtiaz Ahmed has rightly pointed out, we have to draw on basic Indian civilization and society for the solution of our problems. They have expressed their own thoughts, sought certain clarifications and even objected to some points—all in good faith. All honest discussion is welcome. That is what democracy is all about. There is no doubt that thinking men of goodwill can sit together, discuss matters, exchange notes, share experiences and steadily arrive at conclusions that will be increasingly acceptable to more and more millions of Hindus and Muslims. To that task let us all dedicate ourselves.

(K.R.M.)

Hindu-Muslim Problem is Deeper than British Mischief

H.V. Seshadri
General Secretary, RSS
'Keshav Krupa,' 4 Shankarpura,
Bangalore—560 004

AS you are aware, the subject you have taken up is of the deepest concern for persons like me.

Your thesis at the level it is argued—the level of reason, common-sense and spirit of give and take—is eminently appealing.

A couple of observations with regard to certain points may not be out of place here.

On page 1, there is a reference that "remedies inspired by love and understanding tried by Gandhiji failed only because, at that time, the third party was there to sabotage it."

However, the fact that minority problem did not end with the quitting of the British, and the expectation that after paying the terrible price of Partition, curtain would be finally drawn over the problem, has been belied, only shows that there had been other potent factors responsible for it.

On page 24, there is a reference that "minority interests should be helped to protect themselves through a system of proportional representation as demanded by the Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly".

Here, also, history records that it was the pernicious principle of communal representation introduced by the British that lay at the root of separatism ending finally in Partition.

In your note, there is no mention of the vital role of language in bringing about emotional integration right up to the grassroot level. One of the major planks of Hamid Dalwai was with regard to this aspect—that Muslim Indians should take to the local languages just as others do, irrespective of their religious affinity.

Now, a few general observations. Experience tells us that under normal circumstances, the average Muslim and Christian can be made

to happily join the local Hindu in the social and cultural mainstream. But there is a big 'if'; and that is, if only they are freed from the political and religious leadership which is keeping them in its communal and separatist grip. Unfortunately, most of the national political parties also abet it with an eye on the Muslim bloc vote. It is this unholy nexus between separatist Muslim leadership and general political leadership of the country that acts as one of the major stumbling blocks. In a way, the situation partly resembles the one of Muslim League and British axis of yester-years. This only means that unless national political parties are cleansed of their minority-mania, the sustenance to the present fundamentalist Muslim leadership will not cease and their hold over the masses will not be loosened.

Experience also tells us that wherever the Hindus have become sufficiently organised and have been able to overcome their internal differences like casteism, untouchability etc., the local Muslims also have tended to join the mainstream. On the other hand, wherever Hindus are weak and divided into splintered groups, Muslims try to exploit the situation and politicians also abet them. It is significant that even Sri C. Achyut Menon once said, the responsibility for bringing about suitable social reform in the Muslim community rests on the majority i.e., the Hindus.

Now, the new state, Pakistan, projected as a symbol of success of aggressive Muslim separatism, has come on the scene as one more de-stabilising factor so far as the Muslim mentality here is concerned.

These are some vital factors which have to be gone into in depth if an abiding union of hearts has to be brought about among all the children of this country. The main hurdle in the process of bringing into practice the many useful suggestions you have made lies precisely in the play of these factors.

Impressed but Unconvinced...

Khushwant Singh
49-E, Sujan Singh Park,
New Delhi-110 003

I was most impressed with your profound erudition and total objectivity in your approach to the fundamentals of different religions. However, since I reject all religions as irrational and amenable to mischievous exploitation, I do not have your enthusiasm for discovering what they have in common.

The root of the problem is Economic

Lakshmi N. Menon

Former Union Minister of State for External Affairs
'Plain View', Trivandrum-695 001

I owe an apology to you for not sending my opinion on your paper on communal harmony problem. I read it through carefully and was hesitant to express my frank opinion. I do not want to discourage a young aspirant but my conscience tells me that you are not likely to misunderstand me.

You have described at length the unity of all faiths as described by various people, saints and sages. When you come to deal with minorities, the focus is on the Muslims. India has not one but many minorities. What divides them is not differences of faiths but economic disparities and social prejudice encouraged by out-moded tradition. Among disparities, the emphasis should be on land reforms. The violence against Harijans and Scheduled Castes (a division which I disclaim as one of the hurdles to national integration) has its roots in land division—distribution of surplus land from the landlord to the landless. The rich landlord does not accept the policy and he relentlessly uses violence to get back the land by adopting dubious methods of torture and incendiaryism. This is aggravated by Government's indifference and inefficient enforcement apparatus.

My long experience has convinced me of one thing: our masses, being ignorant and illiterate, are swayed by misinformation and vile propaganda. Some of the things propagandists say, are swallowed easily by the poor; being illiterate, they have no other means of getting correct information. So theory of "religion in danger" becomes a sort of "mirch masala" to their humdrum life.

What we want, in my humble opinion, is a rethinking on the subject, accept our responsibility for perpetuating economic and social injustice which gives a handle to the politician and the propagandist to exploit the poor. The only panacea that I can think of is more and more education which will enable the citizen to distinguish truth from falsehood. I am afraid, you are not going to achieve anything by repeating 'Truth is one, different persons interpret it differently', or 'God is one and the same, by whatever name you call him'. They sound nice on the platform or in the drawing-room. I must confess that you have not succeeded in finding a formula for a just and abiding solution and you will succeed when you go to the root causes—economic and social injustice.

Thank you for sending the paper to me and forgive me for being frank.

Let us handle the Essentials and forget the Peripherals

Dr. A.R. Bedar

Director Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library—PATNA

I appreciate your humanistic approach to the national problem of communalism and the spirit of goodwill behind a very sincere effort.

2. We should, however, differentiate between essentials and peripherals—should go straightaway by priorities and concentrate our efforts on such issues that matter lest we might be found entangled in non-issues like circumcision and Arabic names.

Page 3 last line : 'As per Islamic injunction' does not seem to me indispensable either.

3. Myself, peripherally speaking, I would like to know the sources of information regarding :

Page 13 last line : the quotation of Taimur. It does not seem to be correct (nor is it indispensable).

Page 18 : The doors of Ghazni's mosque supposed to be the doors of temple of Somnath were returned to India but given back to Ghazni, as the conjecture was found not to be correct.

Page 21 : Qurān is cited to say that Cow's flesh is poisonous and Cow's milk medicinal.

Page : 23 : Mughals from Akbar to Bahadur Shah Zafar were not circumcised.

4. Page 17 : "Nobody should make a sarcastic remark about Mohammad and his many marriages." The underlined portion has itself become unintentionally sarcastic (not called for either).

Here's a Meaningful Dialogue between Hindus & Muslims

M.V. Kamath

Kalyanpur House, Third Road, Khar, Bombay-400 052

Thank you for your circular letter and the enclosures. May I congratulate you on your excellent paper ? It is beautifully argued and brings out the essential unity of India very forcefully.

Right now I am working on a book for Junior College students for their Foundation Course. Instead of writing a text book, I am doing a series of letters addressed to a grand-niece of mine—in the style of Jawaharlal's Letters to His Daughter—covering a wide range of subjects. I am calling my book *Letters to Gauri*. You have provided me with so much fascinating material of such vital relevance that I wonder whether I can incorporate many parts of your paper in my Letters. I would be deeply obliged if I have your permission to do so.

In your Concrete Plan of Action you suggest that history as written by British or British-inspired Indians should be given up and replaced by a book by Indians looking at history from an Indian angle. That is exactly what I am doing. Your paper will be of inestimable help to me, if I have your permission to use it extensively.

In any event you have embarked on a really meaningful dialogue with non-Hindus and it is about time an attempt was made. I have no adverse comment to make but fully endorse your views. All power to your efforts.

Refreshing Approach to Vexed Problem

P. Parameswaran

Director, Bharatiya Vichar, Kendra Samskriti Bhavan,
Fort, Trivandrum-695 023

I went through your note "A Just and Abiding Solution of the Minority Problem". I was delighted to read it. It is a refreshing, off-the-beat write-up on a vexed problem. I am sure it contains many a novel, but none the less eminently reasonable, proposals, for solving the minority problem. A countrywide discussion by eminent intellectuals on this theme is bound to yield valuable results. The time is also most opportune.

This is my preliminary impression on the first reading of the paper. There are certain points on which, I think, I have to elaborate. That I will do, after making a further study of the write-up.

The 12-Point Plan of Action is Generally Acceptable

Manzoor Alam

Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies,
Vateg Bldg., Nizamuddin West,
New Delhi-110 013

Thanks for sending June 1988 issue of *Manthan* and sorry for the delay in commenting on your article as I was preoccupied in various other works.

Before commenting on your article—I would like to present a brief introduction of Islam.

As the word Islam connotes submission, surrender and obedience, the religion of Islam is unconditional surrender and obedience to the commands and will of Allah.

Allah has not left his creation without guidance. Beginning with Adam (Peace be upon him) and ending at Mohammed (Peace be upon him) we have a chain of prophets. Some of the prophets brought Allah's guidance through revealed books. The Quran, revealed to Mohammed (PBUH) is the last and final of the series of books of guidance and will of Allah.

Islam is not a religion in the western sense of the word. Islam is a faith and way of life, religion and social order, a doctrine and a code of conduct, set of values and principles and a social movement to realise them in history.

Now coming to above-mentioned article, so far I have understood the main thrust of your article is to bring about peace and harmony between various religious communities like Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Christians and Sikhs. I fully endorse this healthy change in your approach.

Your reference regarding modern attack on religion and importance of religion are well researched and well argued. It is a fact that religion in our society is so deep rooted that even known atheists take shelter in religious terminology. Among Muslims the roots of religion are still deeper. This is evident from the fact that Michael Aflaq, the propounder of Baathist theory, had to use Islamic terms to propagate Baathism (Syrian and Iraqi version of Socialism).

To us Muslims, the unity of religions is an alien concept. We do believe in co-existence of religions—and we are instructed by the Quran

and the Prophet (PBUH) to respect other religions and religious leaders—but, to us, Deen is only one, which started from Adam (PBUH) and completed by revelation of Quran. According to Islam the relationship between Creator and Creation is that of Master and Slave. A Muslim has to seek his pleasure. Thus the very concept of reaching God has no relevance to a Muslim. The concept of "different ways of reaching God" is alien to Islam. Also *Moksha* does not fit into the Islamic framework. *Moksha* from what? To us, a Muslim is punished or rewarded hereafter according to his/her deeds.

The first check Islam has put on a Muslim is that of himself and his conscience. The other more apparent check is that of society in every respect. Thus the creation of a healthy society not only minimises social problems but produces a good human being. Quran and Hadith have given guidelines and a broad framework for the society, within which only one is free-believer or non-believer, to move around with respect and dignity. There are no class conflicts, no economic exploitation or rivalries. As a result of which, one lives in peace, the other meaning of the word 'Islam'.

Of course nobody can deny the importance of social customs but at the same time, to us, these customs are of secondary importance. If there is a clash between a particular local custom and basic teachings of Islam, the latter will prevail. Let us not waste time in "Shalwar-Sari" or "Pyjama-Dhoti" conflict or controversy. There is no Islamic Dress as such, every dress is Islamic that is modest.

"What is in a name? A rose by any other name, would smell as sweet."

Before coming to the concrete proposals of action, it is pertinent to mention what Islam stands for.

In brief it can be said that Islam stands for the establishment of justice and welfare of mankind. The mainsprings of social justice are Universal Brotherhood, Equality, Emancipation and Freedom of Thought and Action and Impartiality of Social Institutions.

To conclude, we can say that 'man' is a superb creature of Allah. He is appointed as His "Viceroy" in this world. He has given the (delegated) power to implement the law in this world for the progress and welfare of "Humanity". The power is a trust and it ought to be exercised in accordance with the desires and conditions set by Him. Keeping in view the basic teachings of Islam and the emerging condition of India the following points may be taken as plan for action:

1. First of all, the history of India written by the British from the imperial angle, and mechanically regurgated ever since by Indian authors, should be replaced by one written by Indians from the objective angle, based on facts and with right perspective. Such a factual and balanced history of the Indian people will do more to harmonise relations than anything else.
2. All schools should provide moral instruction and religious education from original scriptures and basic sources.
3. The life, limb, property and honour of all citizens must be safe and secure. Any social violence must be immediately inquired into, the findings published, the guilty punished and the victims compensated.
4. The lifeless Minorities Commission should be given statutory status.
5. Muslims and Hindus may greet each other on their festivals.
6. Muslims should follow the teachings of Quran and Sirat, not the precedents of any Muslim country.
7. One should be free to choose or change his religion according to his understanding and conviction.
8. Political parties whose membership is confined to any one community, should be banned. But all minority interests should be helped to protect themselves through a system of proportional representation, as demanded by Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly.
9. No religious leaders or organisations should be allowed to receive foreign funds, except from persons of Indian origin.
10. The Indian Constitution should be worked in the true federal spirit so that units and areas in the Hindustan Peninsula outside of the 'Indian Union' consider it worth their while to join the Indian state on honourable and autonomous terms.
11. Article 30 of the Constitution should be amended to incorporate the spirit of the guidelines given by permanent Court of International Justice regarding the status of minorities (1935, PCIJ Ser, A/B No. 64, P.A.).
12. Above all, Hindus, Muslims and Christians must learn to respect each other.

We have to draw on Indian Experience for Solution of Indian Problems

Imtiaz Ahmed

72, New Campus,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi-110 067

I do welcome the initiative you have taken to write up this paper as a step towards a dialogue on the Minority Problem. As to the concrete contents, I must state that my own understanding of the questions is so different that I can agree with what you have said only in parts. In my view, we have a limited choice—either to relegate religion to the background (Macaulay's secularists) or accept its vitality. If we accept the first course, the problem will not solve itself. If we accept the second course, many points in your final plan of action would be meaningless and untenable.

There is a strong tendency in our country to gloss over substantive questions while discussing the minority problem and to engage in pleasant reaffirmation of good faith. I think that the solution to this problem would require us to look at, and draw from basic Indian civilization and society and not be either full-blooded secularists or hybrid reactionaries. Unless we realise the basic nature of Indian society we cannot really come to terms with this problem.

I hope that when, if at all, you have a detailed discussion on the paper I would be glad to offer my comments on the paper at length. I enjoyed reading it.

An important contribution to the discussion of a Most Difficult Problem

M.J. Akbar

6, Prafulla Sarkar Street, Calcutta-700 001

I have just received your paper on the Minority Problem of India. While I do not agree with all its aspects, I believe it is an important contribution to the discussion on perhaps the most difficult problem facing us in modern times. As such I would be pleased if you gave us permission to publish the paper on the editorial pages of the Telegraph.

Where even Akbar and Dr. Bhagavandas failed...

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

President, The Islamic Centre, C-29 Nizamuddin West,
New Delhi-110 013

Your analysis of the communal problem is basically correct. I fully agree with your view that religious freedom and tolerance is the only solution to this problem. But in an attempt to provide a rational basis for this view, it is neither necessary nor indeed possible to prove that all religions are one and the same. We have two notable instances of how such attempts (that is, to make people realize that all religions are one and the same) have met with total failure. One such attempt was made by the Emperor Akbar, and another, in the recent past, by Dr. Bhagavan Das. The former was equipped with great political power, and the latter with great encyclopaedic knowledge of all religions. In spite of their best efforts, they failed utterly in this matter. In the light of such experiments, I feel that religious freedom and tolerance can be achieved on a practical basis alone and not theoretically.

Your proposed plan of action is also basically correct. However, your point No. 7, according to me, is not greatly "in harmony with the principle of religious freedom" which has been so powerfully and rightly, advocated by you.

Read with interest but not agreement

V. Gangadhar, Columnist

62-A, Parjat Flats, Bandra Reclamation, Bombay-400 050

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of 'Manthan'. I read with interest your piece on Hindu-Muslim relations despite the fact I don't agree with many of your ideas and proposals. Most of our problems could be solved if we decide to pray at home, ban public celebrations of all festivals and utilise the money saved for other nobler purposes. Taking religion to the streets has harmed the country immensely and reduced the significance of the festivals to showing off, thuggery and nuisance to law-abiding people.

This is just one of my thoughts as loudspeaker music blares all around me. Does Ganesh really need this?

Congratulations!

B.N. Pande, M.P. ex-Governor Orissa

I have received your article as well as the opinions on it. I have cursorily glanced through it. It is a short essay on basic oneness of all religions. My congratulations.

I would draw up a Different Agenda

Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer (Retd.)

'Saugamaya' M.G. Road, Ernakulam, Cochin-682 011

For various reasons I could not find the time to read your long paper on the Minority problem. In the Ayurvedic Hospital where I am going through treatment I rushed through your paper. To say the least, I find it interesting, impressive in places, instructive and informative on the whole. There is a strong case for harmonious living of the various communities of diverse faiths and of atheism.

Generally speaking, your analysis appeals to me although, in a few places, I have disagreements. There is a strong case for Hindus and Muslims and Christians to live together, be their religion what it may. The secular imperative of India does not mean uniform hostility to religions, but friendly co-existence of each, without interference in temporal affairs. The plan of action you have given has some appeal but does not find complete concurrence from me. Of course, I would draw, if given the opportunity, a different agenda. There I would put human rights recognized by the evolving world legal order as fundamental, making it difficult for any religion to claim the right to reject humanism, compassion, egalite and other basic rights. Gender Justice deserves to be included; likewise, a modern Civil Code deserves to be hammered out. It will consist of modern conceptions which may be partly Islamic, partly Hindu and partly just modern and secular. I have dealt with this subject in some of my writings. I agree that mass conversions should be controlled by the State purely from a secular angle, and to preserve public order. Similarly, political parties must be prevented from becoming communal parties. The test will have to be carefully worked out. Likewise, foreign funds which play havoc by operating covertly, must be subject to invigilation, especially when they affect religion.

On the whole, I welcome the discussion that you propose and hope that the leaders who meet will produce a constructive formulation.

Your Suggestions need careful consideration

Dr. Sushila Nayyar

N-1, Tara Apartments Kalkaji, New Delhi-110 019

I have seen your circular letter enclosing your paper on the minority problem on my return to India a few days ago. I have read it with great interest. I agree with you that it is not religion but political exploitation of religion that creates problems.

Your suggestions and plan of action need careful consideration. The idea of calling a conference on the subject is good.

The Major Problem is to define Religion

P.N. Haksar

4.9 Shanti Niketan, New Delhi-110 021

I have just now received your letter together with a paper titled, "A Just and Abiding Solution of the Minority Problem". You probably do not know that the condition of my eyes is such that I can no longer read myself. Consequently, everything has to be read out. This inevitably takes time. In the circumstances I cannot straight-away send you my reactions to the paper.

Certainly, love, compassion and tolerance are and have been, since the dawn of human history on this earth, the noblest aspect of us human beings. However, as you know, human beings continue to respond to hatred, cruelty and intolerance. And more often than not, we do this in the name of God and religion. The major problem, in my humble opinion, is to really define the word "religion". Surely, there is a vital difference between human beings' yearnings in response to matters of spirit, and religion organized by and often getting aligned with, political power or search for political power.

While the Hindu-Muslim divide is culpable enough in our country, that is not the only thing which divides us in our country.

I apologise for these unthought through remarks. Whatever we may or may not do, I would very humbly submit that we must cease to be self-righteous if we wish to establish a sense of common participation among all the citizens of India irrespective of their caste and creed.

A first-rate piece of research

Prem Bhatia

D-364, Defence Colony, New Delhi

Forgive me for not having sent my reactions to your paper on the minority problem in India which you sent to me some days ago. This is really a first-rate piece of research and projection. In fact your paper is one of the best presentations on the issue of secularism. I am glad that you sent a copy to P.N. Haksar who, as you know, is convener of the Special Group set up by the Prime Minister to advise on national integration.

Why not have the paper—in a more brief form—published in one of our major newspapers?

Some Problems in the Way of Hindu-Muslim Relations

By

K.S. SUDARSHAN

Baudhic Pramukh, RSS

84, Ashutosh Mukerji Road, Calcutta-25

AFTER carefully going through your well-reasoned article, I feel that certain vital aspects have not been touched which are so very central for a threadbare analysis of the problem known today as the 'Minority Problem'. I shall try to summarise my observations as follows:

My first submission is that the very concept of minority and majority is not at all compatible with the idea of secularism, which guarantees equal treatment by the state to all its citizens irrespective of caste, creed, language and religion. It was all-right for the Britishers to have used those words with the express purpose of dividing our society into as many conceivable groups as possible and try to pit one section of the society against another. They not only created religious minorities but also linguistic and racial minorities, as well as minorities based on castes. By persisting in the use of the same terminology today, we shall only be allowing ourselves to fall a prey to the machinations of the imperialist and expansionist powers who are making use of the same in furtherance of their global politics.

As such I agree with you that the 'Minority Commission' should be replaced by 'Human Rights Commission' as given in your recommendation No. 4, but find it difficult to agree to your recommendation No. 8, which again speaks of 'minority interests'. The concept of minority-majority should go lock, stock and barrel.

There are backward sections in all religious groups in our country. Some are only economically backward while some have social disability also in addition, just as our scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Special provisions have been made in the Constitution for the upliftment of these sections but because of faulty and insincere implementation of those provisions, new tensions have developed, threatening the unity of our society. Whereas their proper implementation brooks no delay, one more aspect shall have to be considered that those of the S.Cs and S.Ts who have reached a particular level of economic and social progress, should not be entitled to further concessions so that the same opportu-

nity is availed of by other less fortunate members of those communities.

In addition to these provisions for the S.Cs and C.Ts, some provisions should be thought of for the economically backward sections of the society, irrespective of the caste or community to which they may belong. But they should be only for the educational field so that those who are deserving do not feel hindered simply because they cannot afford it.

The general refrain of your article is that the core of all the religions is the same but history and geography have played a major role in shaping them beyond their core, that religion is being exploited by ambitious politicians to serve their economic and political ends and it is they who give a bad name to religion. But complications crop up when religion and politics enter into a wedlock, as has been the case with Christianity and Islam.

You have already mentioned about the emergence of Papal authority, how it tried to play the role of an emperor and how its authority was repudiated by different nations of Europe, and how science came into conflict with Christianity etc. etc. Today no doubt, the Church has lost its pre-eminent position but it has become a willing ally of Western powers for furtherance of their global designs. It was not for nothing that the eminent Gandhian economist Dr. J.C. Kumarappa, himself a Christian, had made the cryptic remark that "The Western Nations have four arms—the infantry, the navy, the airforce and the Church". The Church in its turn is getting sustenance from the Western nations for its expansion and maintenance. Today the Church Missions in India are playing a political game by creating frictions among the different sections of the society. Their designs can be brought to naught if your recommendation No. 9, which suggests stopping all foreign funds, is accepted and implemented.

The case of Islam, however, stands on a different footing. Politics has been so inextricably woven into the fabric of Islam that any talk of separating religion from politics creates an apprehension in the minds of the Muslims, that their identity is at stake. The fortunes of Islam began to rise only when Prophet Mohammed established his republic at Medina and called back his persecuted followers who had taken refuge in Abyssinia. He welded the Muhajirs (immigrants) and the Ansars (helpers) into an Islamic brotherhood and started his military expeditions all around until in the 8th year of Hijra, he triumphantly re-entered Mecca. Ever since the taking of Mecca, the Prophet worked as hard as

the most industrious of sovereigns, organising expeditions, giving audiences, despatching ambassadors dictating letters, besides hearing pleas, administering justice and interpreting the law. Always ready to hear and take advice, whatever the subject, he kept all the reins of power in his own hands and till his death managed both the external and internal affairs of a vast and ever-growing community which he had founded, and of which he was both the spiritual and temporal head.

It is not difficult to comprehend that most of the revelations of Koran had a local context or a particular situational background. It

Plunder, said Taimur, is as lawful for Muslims as 'mother's milk'

was also natural for his immediate successor Khalifs to take recourse to the revelations as also the precepts and directions of the Prophet to keep the community together and crush apostasy and revolt that had raised their head immediately after the Prophet's demise. They had to be ruthless in accomplishing their task and in the process religion and politics got so inter-twined that today it has become next to impossible to tell where the one ends and the other begins.

So when we say that because all this murder and loot was carried on in the name of religion, it gave the concerned religion a very bad name, we are stating only a partial truth. Because it was not only Timur who said that 'Plunder in war is lawful as their mother's milk to a Mussalman', the Prophet himself has made the same observation—"The spoils of war were not lawful for any people before us. This is because Allah saw our weakness and humility and made this lawful for us" (Hadis 4327). Now if Timur says the same thing on the authority of the Prophet, can we blame him for acting against religion? As a matter of fact the plundering of infidels or polytheists is a central concept in Muslim religion and it was the linch-pin in the economy of the Ummah for centuries. Allah made war booty lawful for Muslims—"Eat ye the spoils of war, it is lawful and pure" (Koran 8-69).

Again you are correct when you say that when different societies stand face to face, the interaction can be peaceful and mutually beneficial cooperation if the object is trade. When, however, the aim is to loot and kill, burn and rape, it can only lead to the liquidation of one of the two sides—or a bitter prolonged conflict. But when loot, kill, rape and burn get religious sanction, the consequences are not only disastrous, the perpetrators also have no compunction in committing those crimes.

We have only to glance at a few of the many verses in the Koran to get an idea—

(i) O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them. Hell will be their home, a hapless journey's end.

(ii) Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against disbelievers and merciful among themselves. (48-29).

(iii) Fight them: Allah will chastise them at your hands and He will lay them low and give you victory over them, and He will heal the breasts of folk who are believers (9-14).

(iv) They surely disbelieve who say : Lo : Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said : O children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo : whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers (5-72).

(v) Let not the believers take disbelievers for their friends in preference to believers. Whoso doeth that hath no connection with Allah unless (it be) that ye but guard yourselves against them taking (as it were) security. Allah biddeth you beware (only) of Himself. Unto Allah is the journeying (3-28).

(vi) He said : worship ye then instead of Allah that which cannot profit you at all, nor harm you ? Fie on you and all that ye worship instead of Allah. Have ye then no sense ? (21-66, 67).

(vii) Allah is the protecting friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein (2-257).

(viii) Those who believe do battle for the cause of Allah. And those who disbelieve do battle for the cause of idols. So fight the minions of the devil. Lo : the devil's strategy is ever weak (4-76).

(ix) Worse is he of whose sort Allah hath turned some to apes and swines, and who serveth idols. Such are in worse plight and further astray from the plain road (5-60).

(x) And all married women are forbidden unto you save those (captives) whom your right hand possesses (i.e. those women, whether married or unmarried, who are captured by the Muslims in jihad or holy war) (4-24).

If a faithful takes recourse to loot, murder, rape etc. and cites the above verses in support, can he be said to be acting against religion if the other man happens to be a "disbeliever"? Can he be accused of bringing bad name to religion? Unless, of course, such situational revelations are sifted and declared out of context by the jurists and ulema of the Islamic world, or at least those of India. Is it possible?

Syed Amir Ali has cited a Hadis in his book 'The Spirit of Islam'. The Prophet declared—"Ye are in an age, in which, if ye abandon one-

Idol-worshippers will be reborn as apes and pigs ?

tenth of what is ordered, ye will be ruined. After this a time will come when he, who shall observe one-tenth of what is now ordered, will be redeemed.' I cannot vouchsafe for the authenticity of this Hadis though according to Syed Amir Ali it is given in Jama'ut-Tirmizi and is also found in Mishkat. If it is acceptable to the Sunni theologians also then has not the time come to sift that 'one-tenth' which will redeem the believers in our modern age? If that is done, will it not help in removing the apprehensions from the minds of the Hindus and other non-Muslims who have not had a very flattering experience of Islam throughout history?

There had been attempts in the past at reinterpreting Islam in the changed context but they met with stiff resistance from the entrenched orthodoxy. Jalaluddin Afghani, an Arab born in Afghanistan and who was for long years a teacher at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, emphasised the need to give up the habit of clinging to the past, for the purpose of intellectual progress in harmony with modern knowledge. He claimed that Sunni Islam was capable of adapting itself to both the highest cravings of the human soul and the needs of modern life. However, this could only be done if Muslim thought freed itself from the chains in which it has lain for many centuries. He attacked the autocratic Turkish Caliph's rule which stifled intellectual progress of the Muslims. He also came to India and had impressed a sizeable number of Muslim religious leaders by the force of his logic. But his views were strongly attacked by the Ulema in Turkey. They alleged that Jalaluddin was an atheist and a perverter of religious law. Afghani then threw a challenge to them for a public debate over the different issues raised by them but the Turkish authorities asked him to leave Turkey forthwith.

In our country also Sir Syed Ahmad Khan gave a new interpretation of Koran and on the basis of that made out a case for reforms. For all practical purposes he rejected the Hadis and the Fiqh (Holy sayings and Law of Islam) on the ground that the two were relevant to the society a thousand years ago and were no longer valid. Even the Koran has to be understood on the basis of reason, and some of the injunctions could no longer be considered as applicable and binding. His interpretation of Islam sought to make it thoroughly compatible with modern thought. But here also he was declared a heretic simply because he supported the British annexation of Egypt from the Turkish Empire. Thus the movement for religious reformation started by Sir Syed and directed towards making secular ideology popular among the Muslims in India could not cut much ice with them due to pan-Islamic sentiments aroused during the hostility towards Turkey.

Today also whoever strives to bring about religious reformation, would have to face stiff resistance. But then that has been the lot of all religious and social reformers in all societies. Can we expect the Muslim intelligentsia to rise to the occasion and start a mighty reformist movement if they think that it is called for?

Similarly your statement that "Indian Islam knew Moulavis and Moulanas, but no Caliph", is also partially true. The concept of a central Caliphal authority has always been influencing the minds of the Indian Muslims. The Muslim advent in N.E. India almost coincided with the crystallisation of the concept of Khalifat during the Abbasid dynasty. Mahmud Ghaznavi submitted himself to the spiritual sway of the Abbasid Caliph. In his mind the process of submission to the 'Universal Khalifat' and the invasion and occupation of 'infidel' Indian territory were clearly interconnected. He received investiture from the then Caliph Al-Qadir and his sack of Somnath led to a second capital investiture with more titles and honours. The practice of inscription of Caliph's name on the coins was started by him and it was continued by succeeding Khilji and Tughlaq dynasties. Caliph's name was also recited in the Friday prayers.

During Moghul rule, however, the practice got discontinued but after the decline of the Moghul Empire and rise of the Hindu power of Marathas and Jats, Shah Waliullah Dehlavi led the first modern revivalist movement of Islam. Waliullah of the Naqshbandi Sufi order was the first to utter the cry of Islam in danger in India. He not only wanted the Muslims to regain political power in Delhi but also

advocated the necessity of a unified Caliphate for the Muslim World so that it could serve as a perpetual spiritual and temporal guide for the community and keep the different Muslim rulers under some form of control. He also invited Ahmed Shah Abdali to invade India and asked the Rohilla Chief of Awadh to be ready to help him, whenever the invasion took place.

His son Shah Abdul-Aziz (1748-1824) went one step farther in declaring India 'Dar-ul-Harb'. He established a network in Rohilkhand, Doab, Awadh and Bihar for raising funds and volunteers, groomed one of his relatives, Syed Ahmed Barelvi (1776-1831), for leadership of the

The Caliph specially honoured Mahmud Ghazni for sacking Somnath

New Caliphate. The future Caliph was recognised by the devotees of Abdul-Aziz. Syed Ahmed Barelvi administered oath of allegiance to the Muslim masses during his extensive tours of Northern India. After his return from Haj in 1826, he resumed his task of preaching and recruiting soldiers for the Jihad. With an army of 80,000 soldiers, including volunteers from India and from the local tribes around Naushera, where he first established his government, subsequently shifted to Peshwar, he attacked the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who decisively defeated him in the battle of Balakot in 1831. Syed Ahmed was killed in the battle.

Shah Abdul Aziz had already died in 1824. His grandson, Mohammad Ishaq, who succeeded him, taking a lesson from the disaster at Balakot, reorganised the Waliullah movement and adopted a new programme which stopped the condemnation of the dargahs and gave up the new interpretation of the Shariat in favour of the Hanafi School, the two features which had previously enraged the Pathans who did not support Syed Ahmed's venture. The most important part of the programme was to establish links with the Ottoman Sultanate of Turkey. He left India for that purpose but, before reaching Turkey, he died in Mecca in 1846.

The Faraizia movement of Shariatullah in Bengal was also of a similar nature. It took up the cause of the poor peasants against the exploiting Zamindars. Moulavi Karamat Ali started a movement of pure Islam in Bihar, taking inspiration from Waliullah and Syed Ahmed

Barelvi. Thus we see that the theologian-cum-jurist leaders resented the downfall of the Muslim political power and for them the only hope of arousing the Muslims for re-establishing their rule in India lay in a parallel movement for pure Islam. They kept the concept of Khalifat very much alive in the minds of the Muslim masses and it was because of this that the masses could be swayed during the Khilafat movement in 1921 which was supported by Mahatma Gandhi in his eagerness to enlist the support of the Muslims in his fight against the Britishers for establishing Swaraj. But the working of the Muslim mind can be gauged from the outpourings of one of the Ali brothers, Gandhiji's trusted lieutenants, who said: "Even the most sinful Muslim is better than Gandhi because he believes in Islam and the Prophet". Support of the Khilafat movement by Mahatma Gandhi ultimately drove Jinnah, who had criticised the Khilafat movement, to the orthodox camp and enabled him to become creator of Pakistan, of which even he himself was not very sure.

The pampering of the orthodox Muslims by the political parties even after Independence, with an eye on their bloc votes, has again led them on the path of orthodoxy and today we find that the Shahabuddins and Imam Bukharis are more respected than the Arif Mohammeds and Sikander Bakhts.

I am afraid, it may not help us very much in finding stray similarities between the semitic religions and those under the Hindu canopy, because the approach of both is basically different. Hinduism is a large aggregate of beliefs developed in the course of many centuries evolving from the sacrificial hymns of the Vedas to the philosophical speculation of the Upanishads, the discipline of Yoga, the metaphysical subtleties of Vedanta and the passionate devotion of Bhakti. Islam on the other hand is bound by an austere central discipline, revolving round Koran, the Vox Dei (Voice of God) and Hadis, the Vox Propheta—and whatever speculation it has evolved or borrowed from external sources has been more or less adjusted to these two primary sources of religious authority. As such the very sloka of the Gita (10-20) cited by you in your paper will be considered a blasphemy by the orthodox Muslims simply because a mortal like Krishna says—"I am the self, seated in the heart of things", whereas the Koran says—"He is the first, He is the last." Acharya Vinoba Bhave took great pains in selecting similarly meaning verses from different religious scriptures but could not attract Muslim workers for his Sarvodaya work. Because though the Hindus may

flaunt such verses from the Koran to show the basic similarities between the two religions, they fail to impress the Muslim mind because in his eyes most of those verses are 'mansookh' meaning abrogated, by the 'ayat-ul-saif', the verse of the sword, which says—"Then when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolators wherever ye find them. and take them captive, and besiege them. and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the alms-tax, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is forgiving, Merciful."

This single verse, which was revealed in the 8th year of Hijra, is said to have abrogated 124 previous ayats of Koran which are generally cited as proof of Islamic tolerance.

Citing Sufi poets is also not very helpful. Because, of the seventeen Sufi orders prevalent in India in the sixteenth century, mentioned by Abul Fazl, eight (Habibi, Jumaidi, Tasi, Chisti, Suhrawardi, Qadiri,

The Sufis of Shattari order lived in forests like Yogis

Naqshbandi and Firdausi) were orthodox and closely integrated with the Shariat. In Indian Sufism, anti-Hindu polemics began with Muin-ud-din Chishti. Early Sufis in Punjab and early Chishtis devoted themselves to the task of conversion on a large scale. The only orthodox order which seems to have borrowed Indian elements directly from Yoga and possibly from other forms of Hindu mysticism was the Shattari order, whose followers lived in forests like Yogis on a frugal diet of fruits and herbs and subjected themselves to hard physical and spiritual exercises. This syncretic element is also discernible in its liturgical formulae.

But in India, because of the challenge and risk of disintegration into Hindu mysticism, Sufis took special care to resolve its differences with orthodoxy. In Islamic religious history, the tension between the religious assertion of the transcendence of God and the mystical aspiration for his immanence was perhaps nowhere resolved more thoroughly to a middle of the road position than in India, where Islam was propagated mainly by Sufis with a firm emphasis on the observance of the tenets of Shariat.

Lalla Ded of Kashmir brought Saivism into contact with the Naqshbandi Sufism in the fourteenth century. But in its later develop-

ment in India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Naqshbandi Sufism developed an attitude of uncompromising opposition towards Hinduism, especially so in the teachings of Khwaja Baqui-billah and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi. Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi can be regarded as by far the most outstanding Muslim theologian before Shah Waliullah. From him begins the Indian Muslim tradition of scholarship of Hadis which was to culminate in the works of Waliullah and the Ahl-i-hadis of the late nineteenth century.

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi regards Islam and Kufr (in the context of India, Hinduism) as opposites, antithetical and therefore mutually exclusive. Opposites cannot integrate; one can thrive only at the expense of the other. It should, therefore, be realised that honour and security of Islam is dependent upon the humiliation of unbelievers and their faith. He who holds the infidels in affection and esteem or keeps company with them, dishonours his own religion. He considers it binding on Muslims to hold the infidels and their idols in contempt. Innovations—presumably those inclined towards eclecticism—could be tolerated in the days of the glory of Islam, but not in the age of its (political) decline. He regards 'jezia' not as a poll-tax for the protection of the Zimmis but as an institution symbolising their humiliation. To regard Ram and Rahim identical is the height of folly. The creator and the created cannot be identical. Before the birth of Ram and Krishna, no one called God by these names. How could he assume these names after their birth? Though he did believe that divine grace could not have left India without Prophets to guide it, he suggested, that perhaps they came and went unheeded. Hinduism, as he saw it, was not only antithetical to, but also arch-enemy of Islam and, therefore, he urged Muslims to curse the infidel practices, for cursing is the proclamation of enmity.

Sheikh Sirhindi's doctrine redirected Islam's various streams, orthodox and esoteric, into a single channel; it relaxed the tension between the religious law and the mystical experience. It resolved whatever conflict there was between the Sufis and the Ulema, uniting them in the single synthesis of solidarity.

Waliullah also propagated that Islam in India was facing a crisis due to corruption of Islam by the un-Islamic practices adopted by the Muslims in company with the Hindus. However, in their capacity as the followers of the 'final religion', Muslims were duty bound to resist such corruption in their religion. For this purpose it was necessary to

launch a vigorous campaign against Hindu practices. It was essential that the Muslims should not consider themselves as part of the general Indian society. They should never forget that they were an integral part of the larger Muslim world. Dr. I.H. Qureshi writes: "Waliullah did not want the Muslims to become part of the general milieu of the sub-continent; he wanted them to keep alive their relations with the rest of the Muslim world, so that the springs of their inspiration and ideals might ever remain located in Islam and the traditions of the world community developed by it."

Aziz Ahmed says in his scholarly book 'Studies in Islamic Culture in Indian Environment': "In a way Sirhindi was the pioneer of what modern Islam is today in Indo-Pakistan sub-continent—isolationist,

How the Deobandis control the Sunni mass mind

self-confident, conservative, deeply conscious of the need of reformation but distrustful of innovation, accepting speculation in theory but dreading it in practice, and insular in its contact with other civilisations. This is not surprising because at one time or other, the intellectual leaders of modern Muslim India—Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Iqbal, Abul Kalam Azad—widely different though their religious and political solutions have been, had come under the influence of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi."

Today also the Sunni Muslim mind is controlled by the moulavis of Deoband, the centre started by the followers of Abdul Aziz of the Naqshbandi order. With this conditioning of the general Muslim mind, they not only resist adopting Indian names and traditions and observing Hindu festivals but also see in it the loss of their identity. It is for this reason that a systematic campaign is going on in the countryside to make the Muslims eschew whatever Hindu influences have crept into their life. The example of Mehraj Muslims of Rajasthan is worth mentioning. They were all Chauhan Rajputs, who after the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan, were forced to accept Islam by the Ghoris. They, however, took both Hindu and Muslim names and observed Diwali and Dussehra together with Id and Moharram. But they were exhorted by the orthodox Muslim leadership to shed all un-Islamic accretions to preserve the purity of Islam. This also created a reaction in a section of the Mehrajs who instead of getting rid of the Hindu accretions and

thus cutting themselves away from their roots, thought it fit to get rid of the Islamic accretions and return to their ancient Hindu fold.

There is also no unanimity among the different ulema as to who is a Muslim or a Kafir. In the wake of the Ahmediya riots in Lahore some time after the creation of Pakistan, the Pakistan Government instituted a two-member enquiry commission consisting of Justice Munir and Justice Kayani. In response to the basic query as to who is a Muslim, the ulema's answers were so divergent that Justice Munir had to write :

"Considering all the definitions given by the ulema, we can only state that no two ulema agree on this fundamental question. If we give our own definition, and that definition does not agree with the definitions given by the ulemas, then they will unanimously declare us to be outside the circle of Islam. And if we agree with the definition given by any one of the ulema, then we shall be deemed to be Muslims in the eyes of that alim but all the others will declare us Kafirs." (Munir Report pp. 229-30.)

The Ahmediyas have already been declared as non-Muslims by law in Pakistan and 400 cases have been instituted against prominent Ahmediya leaders under the Prevention of Insult to the Prophet Act, because they do not accept the finality of Prophethood of Hazrat Mohammed. The penalty under this act is death sentence to men and life-imprisonment for women. The recurring Shia-Sunni conflict needs no elaboration. But in an interesting incident last year, even a Sunni mauvi from Bareilly was declared as Kafir and not allowed to enter the Kaaba simply because he belonged to the Bareilvi faction of the Sunni Muslims who believe that whatever is to be got from Allah, should be got thorough the agency of the Prophet. According to the Deobandis, another faction, this amounts to making the Prophet a partner of Allah, which is 'kufir'. And it was because a Deobandi mauvi had informed the King, Shah Fahd of Saudi Arabia, of the impending visit of a "kafir", that Maulvi Akhtar Khan Azhari was denied entry into the Kaaba and kept behind bars for some ten days before being deported to Bombay.

In such a situation how is it possible to set up a proper equation with the Muslim masses who are all the time being swayed either by the mullahs and mauvis or by wily politicians who have a vested interest in keeping the gulf unbridged between Muslims and Hindus ?

The concept of nationalism vis-a-vis Islam also needs deeper

consideration. Nearly all scholars of nationalism have come around to accept nationalism as a 'we-feeling' fostered in a group of people mainly by a common culture evolved in the particular environment prevalent in the land of their ancestors. Muslim thinkers, however, have been unable to evolve nationalism as a logical outcome of the Islamic thought process. Hence they accept nationalism only so long as it does not come into conflict with their Islamic tenets, which generally means the Arabic culture

Basically Islam began as a manifestation of Arab nationalism. We find many verses in Koran where it is expressly stated that the revelations of Koran are for the Arabs.

Pakistan's four hundred court cases against Ahmediyas

"Lo ! we have revealed it, a Lecture in Arabic, that Ye may understand." (12-2)

"Thus we have revealed it, a decisive utterance in Arabic." (13-37)

"A scripture whereof the verses are expounded, a Lecture in Arabic for people who have knowledge." (40-3).

"Lo ! We have appointed it a Lecture in Arabic that happily ye may understand." (43-3)

Naturally Islam has a strong impress of Arabic culture, traditions and customs. If we can persuade ourselves to consider Prophet Mohammad to be a national leader of the Arabs, who wanted to mould the various nomadic tribes into a strong nation, most of his sayings and actions can get justification. But when in the course of its expansion, Arabs began to coerce people of other countries into conformity with the Arabic culture and customs, it created fissures in the Islamic brotherhood and it could not remain the monolith which it was expected to be.

To-day we find each Islamic nation projecting its own form of Islam. Whereas Turkey has amalgamated European culture with Islam, Indonesia has been able to project a fine blend of Islam and Hindu culture, where a Muslim is not inhibited in accepting Ramayan and Mahabharat as his cultural epics and adopting Sanskrit names for indivi-

duals and institutions. Iran has its own blend of Islam and Iranian culture. Today in Pakistan and Bangladesh the same process is discernible. But this is true only for those countries where Muslims are in a majority i.e. Dar ul-Islam.

In those countries where Muslims are in a minority, they exhibit a tendency to withdraw into a protective shell until the day they become a majority there both by proselytisation and procreation. Till then they are not amenable to accept even those changes which have been effected in other Muslim countries. Says Badruddin Tyabji, I.C.S., former Foreign Secretary and India's ambassador in various countries, in his manifesto for the 1971 elections to the Lok Sabha: "The Union Government should not try to bring about any social reform in the Muslim society, even though it may have been accepted in Pakistan, because even after 23 years of Independence, the Government has not been able to win the confidence of 6 erores of Indian Muslim." (Indian Express 7-2-1971). This tendency inhibits the Muslims to accept the culture of the land, which alone would make them a part of the national 'we-group'. A Shri M.R.A. Baig, our erstwhile ambassador to Iran writes in his book 'Muslim Dilemma in India':

"Since Muslims ideologically should have no country, they have to compensate it with an excessive sense of community. This characteristic effectively bars their assimilation in non-Muslim countries, and inhibits a practicing Muslim being either an internationalist or a nationalist or even a humanist. Islam makes him a trans-national communalist who feels at home only in Muslim majority countries."

With such a mental make-up, if Muslims look with suspicion upon all overtures of the majority community to establish a harmonious relationship with them as something to obliterate their separate identity, it is not at all surprising.

All this sounds really pessimistic, especially when we find that sizeable number of social and religious reformers are not forthcoming in the Muslim Society to enable it to face the modern world with courage and confidence. A sustained and vigorous propaganda by the enlightened Muslims on a non-political level is the greatest need of the hour. This will have to be done even at the risk of being dubbed as "Kafir" by the Ulema.

Recently, one Akhtar Hamid Khan, Director of Orangi Pilot Project

in Karachi, was bold enough to state in an interview given to the New York Times, and reproduced by the Urdu weekly of Pakistan 'Taqbir', 19th May 1988.

"Islam has not taught Muslims to live in peace with non-Muslims. The Koran says that there have been scores of such minority communities in the past which ultimately vanquished and dominated the majority communities. Our religion and history do not teach us how to live as a minority. They tell us to go on fighting until victory is ours. The message of Islam to the Indian Muslims is to achieve victory over Hindusthan. This is a suicidal policy.

Akhtar Hamid Khan prosecuted For his New York Times interview

"The minority mentality is the root cause of all the troubles and backwardness of the Muslim community in Hindustan. This does not allow them to compete with others on an equal footing, which inhibits their growth. The Parsis and Jews never hankered after minority status and privileges and they have advanced in every field of life. Even the Bohras, Memons and Khojas have progressed because they took to trade and industry without hankering after minority rights."

Akhtar Hamid's interview is replete with relevant quotations from the Koran. But still the editor of the weekly published the interview with an introductory note in which he accused Hamid of having a Hindu mind and demanded his expulsion from Pakistan.

In our country, however, such reformers would get encouragement from the Hindu society, though that will still further expose them to the charge of heresy by the entrenched ulema. Shri Hamid Dalwai did proceed with a rationalistic outlook through his Satya Shodhak Mandal at Pune which, however, got a serious setback due to his untimely demise. The Muslim society is, however, not devoid of such well-meaning persons who can dispassionately analyse the ills that are affecting their community. The only thing that needs to be done is to come together and start their campaign in an organised manner. They will have to face the wrath of the Ulema and, maybe, also excommunication. But if they stick to their guns they will surely be able to slowly expand their base. Hindus will gladly back their endeavour.

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Hindu Presumptuousness and Self-Righteousness

Says

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

M.P.

I HAVE GONE THROUGH your paper on the 'Minority Problem in India' and take the liberty of making some comments on it, which can be further elucidated only during a discussion.

The case for Hindu-Muslim unity is not on compatibility between Hinduism and Islam or their eventual synthesis, but on peaceful co-existence of religious groups inhabiting the same national territory and the possibility of a *modus vivendi* based on mutual respect and tolerance as well as joint effort for the common cause of the nation. This does not foreclose the possibility of cultural interaction between different religious or ethnic groups and the emergence of a common way of life, save in matters which are strictly based on religious precepts and are considered essential for the maintenance of its religious identity by a particular group. At the same time, we must completely banish from our consideration any forced march towards 'Indianisation' which is just another name, if I can read the mind of the chauvinist forces in Hindu society, for 'Hinduisation'.

Consciously or unconsciously, because of the scratches on our mind, we are insensitive to the religious susceptibility of each other. Insensitivity on one side and fanaticism on the other can be an explosive mixture for any society. I know you do not mean it but let me state frankly that your comparison of the Holy Prophet with Shivaji or his description as the Napoleon or Lenin of Arabs is offensive to the religious susceptibility of the Muslims.

I do not agree that a nation-state is based on cultural unity or that cultural unity is essential for national unity and territorial integrity. I do not have to dilate on this point because many nation-states today are multi-cultural and proud of being so. I do not see why, when religious, linguistic, ethnic, regional and, therefore, cultural plurality is writ large on the face of our country, we should be so anxious about harmonisation or homogenisation, which I interpret as nothing more than the force of assimilation which runs like a thread throughout our history from the advent of the Aryans to the present times.

The sub-continent has been invaded times without number since the advent of history. The last in the series were the Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Moghuls. I do not see how objective history can distinguish between the pre Islamic and post-Islamic invaders and I maintain that invaders must be distinguished from those who made their homes in India. In this sense Mohammed Bin Qasim, Ghaznavi and Gauri are different from Khilji or Aurangzeb.

You speak of the return of historic temples. Let each case be decided on the basis of facts and not on the basis of myths and legends. But then let us trace back the history of each such place of worship and restore it to the worshippers of original religion. I do not know how many Hindu temples all over the country will have thus to be returned to the Jains and the Buddhists. The question is where do you draw the line in history—whether it is desirable to dig up the past, to bleed old wounds? Such an endeavour is not worthy of a living nation which made a new beginning on 15th August, 1947, and which is looking forward to its due place in the world of future. Looking backwards and pondering over past humiliations, real or imaginary, is a pathological state which cannot but detract from our constructive endeavours. And imagine the turmoil it would cause if the wrongs of the past were sought to be balanced against the account of the present.

You have suggested that Muslim Indian should adopt "secular names". Of course, it is only Hindu names which sound secular to you. But let me add that I have equal regard for all names. And indeed in the process of spontaneous cultural interaction many names have emerged as equally acceptable to people of different communities. But why should you be allergic to names whose origin is Arabic or Persian and why should you call upon the Muslim Indian to disown his Islamic heritage?

Your reference to cow slaughter and music before mosque are very interesting. On one hand I am against any demonstrative slaughter with a view to hurting religious sentiments. On the other hand I cannot see why dietary prohibitions should be enforced on any one or why the national economy should pay for the upkeep of unwanted cattle. Apparently you do not see anything objectionable in music before mosque while a congregational prayer is going on. Here again is a case of insensitivity and, if I may say so, bigotry. I would like a general understanding that all religious processions of any community passing before a place of worship of another community at the time of worship, should stop playing music out of respect.

In your enthusiasm for cultural uniformity you want to prescribe a common dress and common fashion. These have nothing to do with nationalism or religion. Styles and fashions go on changing. Even China has grown out of this infantilism.

You also suggest that the Bhagwa Dhvaj should be the national flag of India. There must have been some reason why the Freedom Movement or the Republic of India did not do so. I think you should wait until India is declared a Hindu State.

Finally, you make a very interesting suggestion that Muslims should give up circumcision. I do not see why the Hindus should be horrified when the Muslims circumcise themselves.

"I think you should wait till India is declared a Hindu State"

Coming to your plan of action I broadly agree with your suggestion that history of India should be rewritten from the point of view of the Indian people. The problem, however, is where to find historians who are not 'Hindu' or 'Muslim'. I agree with your proposal of moral instruction in schools with reference to the lives and teachings of great religious leaders.

As for your third suggestion I would like to emphasise that social violence is directed against specific social groups and, therefore, their institutions, including places of worship, instruction and burial, should also be secure.

I do not think Minorities Commission should be replaced. If lifeless, it should be revived with statutory status and appropriate funding. Side by side a Human Rights Commission should protect the rights of individual citizens.

With reference to para 5 it is not clear to me what you mean by "joining in celebrating religious festivals". No Hindu can join in a Namaz nor can a Muslim join in a puja. But surely they can both join each other in a fraternal spirit to share the joys of the season. It is interesting that you describe our country, in this para, as 'Hindu land'.

As regards Muslim Family Code, I have always supported the idea

of codification; it is coming and it will come, but not at the point of the gun.

Change of faith is the privilege of an individual. No State or authority can take away this privilege and the resulting right. As regards the right to propagate religion, what must be banned is attack on other religions which are not only an exercise in misinformation but also liable to cause ill-will and provoke strife.

Regarding communal parties, what is important is not the label because communalism pervades even those parties whose membership is not confined to any one community. Your idea of protection of 'minority interest' (I thank you for conceding this) through a system of proportional representation should be spelt out in greater detail.

As for foreign contribution, I would go further than you have. I would suggest that except for strictly educational and humanitarian relief purposes, all foreign contributions must be banned or all foreign contributions should be routed through a government agency.

I endorse the suggestion in para 10.

With regard to para 11 I also agree that all religious linguistic or cultural communities at any level should enjoy the same privilege of establishing and administering institutions of their choice. And I feel that the establishing community should have the right to reserve upto 2/3rd of the facilities for its own children.

I wholly endorse your view that people of different religions should respect each other's religion. This is why I am against forcible occupation by one community of the places of worship belonging to others.

I may add that there are some inaccuracies of fact in your paper. For example, I am not aware of any such verse in the Quran on the cow that you have quoted (page 21). I am not aware that the Holy Prophet ever used the Bhagwa Dhvaj. I am not aware that the Mughal emperors were uncircumcised. I am not aware that non-Christians perform mass in Christian countries or non-Muslims participate in Id prayers in Muslim countries.

I must add in a spirit of frankness that there is an air of self-righteousness as well as a presumptuous assertion of India as a 'Hindu land' which run throughout the paper and detract from its objectivity as well as from its constructive purposes.

(14, Janpath, New Delhi-110001)

Solving Problems Through Love and Understanding

By

MUFTI SHAMSUDDIN AHMED

Jamat-i-Islami

In response to the request from Mr. K.R. Malkani, Vice-Chairman, Deendayal Research Institute, to offer comments/suggestions on his paper captioned A JUST AND ABIDING SOLUTION OF THE MINORITY PROBLEM, it is given hereunder :

FIRST OF ALL I appreciate the sentiments—"it can be solved through love and understanding", expressed in the covering letter. There could be no two opinions so far as the objective is concerned i.e. solution of minority problem based on justice, which is possible only through love and correct understanding.

Before we proceed, it should be fully realised that it is a very complicated and sensitive issue, where suspicions and misunderstandings, are involved, besides legacy of history and religious susceptibilities. Hence, all care should be taken to avoid anything that may create misunderstanding or hurt others' sentiments and thereby hamper the very objective. And, above all, justice and sincerity is a must, because without that, it will only be a futile exercise as there is no dearth of high sermons, philosophical ideas, political manoeuvring and what not, but there is a lack of sincerity and justice.

Further, it should also be borne in mind, and all concerned should remember that we are all equals, and that none has any right to dictate terms to others. Actually we are members of a grand family, whose destiny is linked together. We are sailing in the same boat and hence all will swim or sink together.

Now coming to what has been suggested in the paper, I would like to suggest as follows :

Regarding 'secularism' in the West, its historical background and analysis, by and large, there should be no difference. The conflict between church and scientific approach gave rise to the trend of opposing religion itself. Whereas, actually there should not occur any such

conflict, because the sphere of science is entirely different from that of religion. However, despite that, there are reservations whereupon the writer has referred to Islam—for example “. . . they (Muslims) could not have hesitated to liquidate the critics of Islam as per Islamic injunctions” (page 3 last para). It is not a correct representation of Islam. Because, Islam welcomes healthy criticism. But to use derogatory language and/or abuse the Prophet or the Holy Quran is entirely a different thing.

The fights between Hindus and Muslims were not of Hinduism and Islam. It has been correctly stated, though with some ‘twist’, that “Even during Muslim rule, the fight was between oppressors and oppressed and not between Muslim Pirs and Hindu Saints (page 4).” Actually these fights were there even before Muslims came to India. We should more elaborately make it clear and remove the flaw, as Indian history, compiled after colonial rule, was motivated. Actually the fight was for power, wealth and territory between two rulers, though sometimes it so happened that the two warring parties belonged to two different religions, but at other times, they belonged to the same religion also. This has to be made very clear, because here lies the spice of bitterness among the two communities. All these fightings were based on political considerations whether between Muslims and Muslims or Hindus and Hindus or between Muslims and Hindus.

Once it is admitted that these fightings have nothing to do with religion, this chapter should be closed once for all. None should ask the other community to condemn this ruler or that. It is useless, rather harmful for the task ahead, to ask Muslims to condemn Mohammad Bin Qasim, Mohammad Ghauri, Babar or Aurangzeb etc. Because the same could be asked from the Hindus about Hemu, Rana Sanga or Shivaji, who fought against the Delhi rulers. They all fought to expand or defend their own kingdoms and territories. Actually it is useless to run after each and every war that occurred in history because it will only instigate and provoke and won't help create national unity and harmony. It is better to let the sleeping tiger of history sleep and proceed on positive lines for a cordial atmosphere and bright future.

Secularism, in the Indian perspective, it should be made clear (in theory and practice, both) as has also been emphasised in this paper—“it means justice for all, and non-discrimination on grounds of creed or religion etc. . .” (page 2). The present state of affairs is not compatible with our solemn declarations.

Representation of Islam and quotations given, are not always

correct. Better, whatsoever is said about Islam, should be based on its source, the Holy Quran and Hadith. Poets, sufis, saints have their own respect no doubt, but they are not standards or scales for any authentic judgment. Besides that even when the Holy Quran is referred to or quoted, our learned writers should base their thought on correct information and understanding. For example, on page 10 it is stated; “Islam has four classes of men—just like four castes of Hindus—(1) Ul-ul-ilm (men of learning); (2) Ul-ul-amr (men who command i.e. Kshatriya warriors); (3) Zurra (Traders); and Muzad-war (Mazdoor)”. It is absolutely wrong. There is no caste (or class) system (Varnashram) in Islam as Hinduism has. Since there is no scope to go into details in this paper, better the learned writer correct his information. Likewise there is no mention in the Holy Quran as “cow's flesh is poison and cow's milk, medicine”, as quoted by you. Also please correct your information, as none of the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) bore the name “Hind” as stated by you.

Hindu-Muslim Wars Were not religious Wars

Other similarities have also been tried to collect from here and there, but it is quite uncalled for. Common religious teachings are more than enough to unite religious people (against anti-religiousness) like faith in God, moral effects of human actions, truth, justice, love and affection towards all living beings, honesty, moral values, respect for life, property and religion and culture of others etc.

The question of national heroes has been raised, but not dealt with in correct perspective. Like Ashoka, Harsh Varuhana, Samudragupta, etc., Mughals (right from Babar to Aurangzeb) consolidated and unified India and gave this country beautiful art, literature and magnificent culture; especially Aurangzeb, under whose rule India's map was the largest one in history, (notwithstanding the fact that some people may differ with some aspects of his policies). Religious affiliations apart, how an Indian national point of view can defend and justify Shivaji's attack on Moghal Empire of Delhi? Please assess the situation without any bias and/or reservation!

Now come to the question of Sri Ramchandraji and Krishanji which has been also referred to. So far as I know they are 'religious leaders' of Hinduism like Mahatma Buddha for Buddhists and Shri

Mahabirji for Jains and not 'national leaders' of India which comprises, among others, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis. Of course our national leaders are Maulana Mohammad Ali, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, etc. or in the recent history Bahadur Shah Zafar, Rani of Jhansi etc. may be termed as such.

One thing also needs clarification i.e. the position of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). First of all I have serious objection to the manner in which the learned writer has described him. According to Muslim faith he was the last prophet of God. And even a gentleman of another faith when he names the prophet, he is expected to maintain the least decency of calling him Hazrat Muhammad or Muhammad Saheb, as generally Hindu brothers call him. Secondly, Muhammad (peace be upon him) according to Muslim faith, was a prophet (recipient of revelation) and *absolutely not* a national hero like Napoleon or Lenin of Arabs as described in the paper. The information of the writer is subject to correction. You may call Khalid Bin Walid, Tarique Bin Zaid, Mohammad Al-Fateh or Salahuddin Ayubi as national heroes of Arabs.

Regarding places of religious worship. Muslims firmly stand for the principle that no mosque should be built on a piece of land which has been occupied forcibly, illegally or the worst, by destroying and demolishing a temple. If such things are proved on the basis of correct evidence and not by myths and stories, Muslims will not hesitate for a minute to vacate it. Likewise no mosque should remain under the occupation of any person or community or even governmental body, depriving the faithfuls of their right to prayers. And to have a 'just and abiding solution' of this problem, it would be advisable to enact a legislation to mark the position of 15th August 1947, the Independence Day of India, as final; and thereby root out one of the causes of persistent quarrel and dissatisfaction.

Suggestions regarding dress, food habits, etc. or advising Muslims to adopt Hindu names (as only they are supposedly Indian names) is nothing but the reflection of one tendency i.e. assimilation of minorities which has been at times termed as 'Indianisation' also. Really this poisonous tendency is the basic cause which has made all minorities, especially Muslims, most suspicious and allergic. This is a chronic disease and it can be cured only if we understand that all communities have equal right to preserve their cultural identity. The formula is "live and let live". India is a country of composite culture and this basic fact has to be realised. Hence, preservation and recognition of the

cultural identity of each community which is the life line, especially for minorities, should be the corner-stone of our policy and national programmes. Since minorities are always in a weak position in a democracy, their suspicion is understandable. It is the large-heartedness of the majority which can create confidence among minorities. As stated by our national leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India has a unique composite culture, but there is unity in diversity. We should be proud of having different religions, cultures, races and languages, but after all we are all Indians.

Something about the suggested Action Plan :

1. Indian history should be re-written with a view to create communal harmony and not to 'divide and rule' or demoralise this community or that.

Our Model is not Arabia or Indonesia, but Koran

2. Our future generation, particularly during school-going stage, should be given value-based moral instruction and/or each community should be imparted its respective religious teachings, but not any particular religion or culture.

3. Agreed.

4. 'Lifeless' Minorities Commission should be given life and statutory status so that it could achieve its assigned goal and redress the grievances and remove injustice, wherever it is found.

5. & 6. One fact has to be made very clear i.e. Muslims do not consider Mughals or Pathans, Turkey or Indonesia or even Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as their ideals to be followed. It is only the Holy Quran and Hadith which is standard for any judgement as stated above, and nothing else is binding for Muslims. Further, India is not a Hindu land, as has been implicitly stated. It is equally a Muslim, a Hindu, a Sikh, a Christian and a Buddhist land. Hence the very premise is wrong. Of course it is welcome that Muslims and Hindus and other religious communities greet each other on festivals and share the pleasure with others, within the limits of every community.

7. Conversion or proselytisation is a matter of personal choice, and

freedom of belief and faith is guaranteed for all in our Constitution. But it should not be effected by force, threat or lure of money. It should also not be widely celebrated or organised on a large scale like functions, lest it hurt the sentiments of another community.

8. Proportional representation of minorities (by the members who really represent and enjoy the confidence of the concerned community) is welcome; and this principle should be adopted not only in politics but also in services—public or private, civil or military, police or administration. I hope if this is implemented honestly, a large portion of minority problem would automatically be solved.

9. Foreign funds, if used for education, economic upliftment or humanitarian services, I don't think there should be any objection, provided it is used for the declared specific purpose, and not misused.

10. SAARC is a good base, if honestly worked and confidence gained, it could help achieve the desired goal.

11. Article 30 of the Constitution should be honestly followed in letter and spirit.

12. Agreed we should respect each other's religion and also refrain from abusing any religion or its founder.

(1353 Chitli Qabar, Delhi-110006)

Wanted ! An Earnest Dialogue

—Asghar Ali Engineer, Bombay

Thank you very much for your letter alongwith a draft article on the question of minority problem. I will certainly go through it very carefully and send my comments to you.

Needless to say, we are equally seriously concerned with this problem and are earnestly trying to promote communal amity in the country upon which depends its integrity and unity.

I very much appreciated one of your articles which you wrote last year in the Statesman, Calcutta and also included it in the appendix of my book on *Delhi-Meerut Riots*. However, I had some reservations about your article on Aurangabad situation recently published in *The Indian Post*, Bombay.

An earnest dialogue is very necessary to promote better understanding between different religious communities. We keep on trying for it at our end.

General Principles are Acceptable But Specifics are Questionable

Dr. Gopal Singh

Governor of Goa, Raj Bhavan, Dona Paula, Goa-403004

I have read your paper on "A Just and Abiding Solution to the Minorities Problem" with the consideration and respect that it deserves.

2. I have always admired your undoubted scholarship, devotion to your motherland and patriotic feelings. I also read some of your articles in the "Statesman" and letters to "The Times of India".

3. I was struck by the balance and the study of comparative religions reflected in the first 17 pages of your thesis. However, permit me to point out, that from page 18 onwards, there are items with which I would like to differ, with due humility. While the Muslim Indians, especially the intellectuals, should dissociate themselves from the memory of men like Mohammed Bin Qasim, Mahmud Ghazni, Mohammed Ghori, Alla-ud-din Khilji and Aurangzeb, we should be careful not to press our advantage too far, to ask the present-day Muslims to return the more historic temples, no matter how forcibly and un-Islamically taken, and converted in the distant past into mosques. This is not the way to bring about a National Reconciliation. It will tear our country to pieces.

4. If a similar demand is made on us, by our neighbouring countries with regard to our frontiers which, according to them, were forcibly tagged down to India by the British, or earlier by the Moghuls, where shall we land ?

5. It is unhistorical to say that the British removed the ornamental doors of Ghazni 'to please the Hindus'. It is the Sikhs who did so. Ranjit Singh had made it a condition of helping Shah Shujah to his throne in Kabul that (i) cow-slaughter will be banished in Afghanistan and (ii) the doors of the Somnath Temple shall be returned to India, to which Shah Shujah at that time did not agree. Later, when the Sikhs and the British together invaded Kabul (1839) it is the Sikhs who insisted that they shall take the doors of the Somnath Temple from Ghazni, in whatever condition, and restore them to where they belonged. Whatever happened later is a different story. I do not think, the Somnath Pujaris refused this offer.

6. It is not necessary for the Muslims to change their names. We are not Bulgaria. Indonesia and Thailand have a different cultural history altogether. One has a Hindu-Buddhist background, and the other a Muslim-majority (with a Hindu past) background. It is the minority status of the Muslims in India that has made them more fundamentalist than in the countries where they enjoy a majority, as in the Arab countries, or even in Afghanistan or Iran.

7. I think alongwith cow-slaughter, we should also ban pig-slaughter. In fact, if you really ask me, we should ban all animal slaughter, inspite of what the Vedas, the Ramayana or the Mahabharata may say.

8. The dress, the hair-styles, the food habits etc. are all changing fast, under the impact of the machine-age. Even names are changing. Unless there are more inter-marriages, we shall not be able to effect the cultural cohesion and oneness that we all desire and need. Will the Hindus also give up caste, and now, their recently-acquired linguistic exclusiveness and fundamentalist outlook? You have not touched upon them. And you have been more than harsh on the Christians. Conventions apart, their contribution to the fresh discovery of our faiths and the challenges they threw to us to reform or go under, has to be taken notice of. Other people have also been influenced by Christianity and the English language, but we have thereby discarded not only our culture, but started hating ourselves. Whose fault is this, if not our own?

9. I have visited Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities abroad very often, and found that they conform to the modern trends much more than we do here. Unfortunately, the fundamentalist atmosphere among the present-day political Hindus is not a reaction to the Minority fundamentalism. It is on account of the majority consciousness (even though divided by caste and language) which is a by-product of our political process, borrowed wholesale from the West.

10. I hope you will not mind these observations.

11. I am sending you my own views on the minority problem. Please do react. As you may have read, I hate the word "minority" based on religion or language and wish to see it removed from our Constitution. Incidentally, my father was a Hindu (a majority-walla) and I, his son, am condemned to be a minority, being made a Sikh by him, through no fault of mine!

We need a Spiritual Intervention

Moazziz Ali Beg

Professor of Psychology,
Aligarh Muslim University,

Zulfikar Manzil, S.S. Nagar, Dohpur, Aligarh—202001

Thank you very much for sending me the document containing your deliberations on the Minority problem. Most of the passages are surely an echo of my own voice and I share the feelings you have expressed. I assure you of my cooperation and the services I can render for this noble and worthy cause.

As far back as 1957-58, I made sincere efforts in the same direction on the intellectual plane and am enclosing herewith electrocopies of two very important letters from authorities who came to grips with the problem of the 'unity of all religions'. Professor Sorokin had opened a Research Centre For Creative Altruism at Harvard and I was in touch with him till his death.

I feel convinced you have caught the point and now let us move ahead, cherishing the hope that the cult of hatred shall vanish before the settled truths of human nature. We must root it out from this soil as a matter of *National Urgency*. Whatever my humble resources, I am prepared to go ahead with you.

I honestly believe that modern man is a victim of nihilism and is dominated by the sensate mentality. He has therefore become disenabed so far as altruism is concerned. A sort of spiritual intervention has now become a necessity. We can possibly take lead if we succeed in rooting out hatred which is telling upon our national dignity.

The closed mind and arrogance of the average Muslim is almost pathological. I have certainly given thought to it and am still exploring a solution. Your writing has been a source of great encouragement to me.

I am also enclosing herewith my paper entitled 'The Possible Role of Islamic Mysticism' etc. which was read at an International Colloquium at Munich in 1984 under the auspices of Arbeitskreis Fur Interkulturelle Kommunikation (Koln) and the Centre For Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, Rome, Italy. Its German translation exists in the proceedings of the said Colloquium. I would appreciate your comments on it.

Miracles do occur now and then

V. K. Gokak

Former Vice-Chancellor Karnatak University,
Meera Cottage, 525, Rajmahal Vilas, Extn.,
Bangalore-560 087

I have gone through your brochure. The plan that you contemplate is a good step to begin with. In the present atmosphere nothing more than this is likely to succeed. A permanent solution can only be found when there is a real change of heart, nation-wide, through the spread of education and culture of the genuine type. Miracles do occur now and then and I am hopeful that another half a century may see us out of the wood.

It is a very practical Paper

Dr. Narayan Samtani
'Buddha Kutir'

Ashoka Marg, Sarnath—221 007

In Banaras a Christian group, who have built a nice MAITRI BHAVAN, is interested in organising dialogues between Hinduism and Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, Jainism and Hinduism, etc. They keep all the pictures of gods and saints of other religions. I shall request them to send you a book on dialogue when they publish.

As regards your paper, I find it very practical. Religion is part and parcel of the life of Indian people. Hence we should find out a solution which sustains religion, but at the same time people prosper. You are right when you say that science versus religion has never become an issue in India and that political leaders have exploited religion for their vested interests.

You are also right when you say that "There is something in the mental make-up of man that rejects a monotonous and deadening uniformity". Not only Hinduism had sects but Buddhism was also divided into 18 sects.

Religious freedom has been our *forte*. You have mentioned that in Chinese tradition, everybody praises another's religion. This was also said by Ashok in his edicts. "One should hearken dharma of other sects and respect them. By doing so he benefits his own sect."

Anyhow, I have liked your paper and wish you all success in your laudable efforts.

I would like to do an Alternative Complementary Paper

Balraj Puri

Director, Institute of Jammu & Kashmir Affairs, Jammu-180 005

I am certainly impressed by your earnestness for a dialogue on a problem the solution of which, as you rightly conclude, "is the fulcrum on which the lever of the future of India—and of the world—depends."

There are many points on which it should not be difficult for a person like me to agree with you. But as far as the main approach of your paper is concerned, I beg to disagree in a fundamental sense. Full discussion on my disagreement would require writing an alternative paper. Here I may refer to my two articles in Hindustan Times which deal with my approach on the subject. One was recently published on 'Religion and Politics' on September 15. The other one was published on July 1, '87. A fuller discussion on the same subject was done in the article in EPW dated July 11, 87. If you are interested and cannot locate them there, I would send you copies of these.

Briefly stated, I have doubts about the practicability and even desirability of attempts at homogenisation of all religious communities, through search of "essential unity of all religions", common names etc.

What is more important, this approach implies that we should respect only those who are similar to us and not those who are dissimilar; whereas the spirit of tolerance and, in fact, basis of a civilised and democratic life, demands respect for dissent. Moreover, theological or philosophical differences have never been a cause of communal tension in this country. By trying to remove these differences we are merely wasting our energy over removing a non-existing cause of the malaise.

The real problem is posed by the role of religion in a community, to which even its agnostic members belong. The relevant question is how far the urge of minorities for a distinct identity is legitimate and what is the legitimate sphere of autonomy of these identities. Further, how to reconcile respective claims of community identities with one another and with that of the nation?

You do come quite close to the distinction I am making between religious and communal approach to problems when you observe that the

demand for partition of India came chiefly from Aligarh boys and not from the Ulema or Pirs. Elsewhere you have also conceded the way religion is connected with customs, ceremonies and the cultural continuum. But you hardly deal with the problem that religion poses as a basis of identity formation and instead concentrate on its role as "an attempt at interpreting the universe" which, to my mind, is the least troublesome part of the problem.

At any rate Hinduism has no problem in not only tolerating but even accommodating within its fold any number of metaphysical, theological or philosophical beliefs. For practically the entire range of such beliefs already exists therein and no particular scripture has an infallible status for all sects and members of the community. Hinduism is in fact not a religion in the strict sense of the term. It has been called a parliament of religions.

Hinduism, however, comes in direct conflict with other religions in its attitude towards nationalism. In essence it is a sum total of ancient Indian heritage. As an evolutionary religion, it also continued to get itself enriched by diverse contributions. In a way Hinduism is a spiritual and religious manifestation of Indian nationalism. Indian mythology, ancient history, national epics, worship of Ganga and Himalaya form essential components of it. Bharat Mata is, undoubtedly, the most sacred "goddess" of Hindus.

Judging by their own attitude towards nationalism—religious, spiritual and emotional—Hindus often find other communities wanting in this respect. They are most tolerant of religious beliefs of others but could be most intolerant if they suspect any other community is lacking in reverence for Bharat Mata. In this sense, it is far more important to know and teach essential difference of Hinduism from other religions than to know and teach their essential unity.

In sum, there are two main issues that are worth debating but are not being debated in the context of inter-community relations, particularly of Hindus with other communities. The first relates to the urge for identity of the minorities which is getting sharpened all over the world on account of the impact of the forces of modernisation. The second relates to the concept of nationalism. How much pluralistic or homogenised should it be? Is it mere patriotism or is it also an ideology, political and religious? What to do with those who do not share an ideological or religious approach to nationalism?

If you concede the relevance of these issues, then our two papers would be more complementary than contradictory.

Wanted Rationality and not Religion

B.K. Nehru

'Fair View', Kasauli—173204 (H.P.)

I am afraid I too am one of those who regard religion as irrational and one of the most divisive forces in human history and society. I fear also that I can not accept the thesis of the unity of all religions.

The Hindu-Muslim divide is not religious in the sense that the observance of the two religions by the believers therein need not necessarily give rise to conflict. But it is religious in the sense that when Indians started to feel the first stirrings of nationalism they were compelled to go back to their roots in order to find a base for that nationalism. The Hindus went back to the Vedas and the Shastras to find inspiration, and the Muslims went to the Quran and the Ahadis. Today, therefore, as Hindus are the dominant majority, it is natural that Indian nationalism should have a preponderantly Hindu content. This is what the Muslims find difficulty in accepting and it leads to a kind of aggressive defence of their separate identity.

The cure will be found, therefore, in the slow growth of rationalism leading to the acceptance of loyalty to a country whose ideal is a society based on reason and justice rather than the authority of the Holy Books.

Authentic and Convincing

M. Rafiq Khan

Institute of Gandhian Studies, Rajghat, Varanasi

Thanks for the letter and the enclosed document entitled 'A Just and Abiding Solution of the Minority Problem'. I have gone through it several times and, I must say, the paper has based itself on very authentic and constructive events and has argued the points very convincingly.

Religious Problem is not Minority Problem

M.R. Masani

148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay—400 023

Thank you for your letter forwarding your paper on Solution of the Minority problems in India. I much regret due to old age and my eye-sight getting weaker, I shall not be able to participate in the discussion you are planning later this year. Kindly excuse me. Since I cannot read any more I had your paper read to me and while I sympathise with the values you stress I have the following comments to make :

1. Your paper is not really about the minority problem of India but about communal or religious problem. The two are not the same. The tribals represent the ethnic problems and Harijans represent caste problem. They are both minority problems, but not religious ones.
2. You do not deal on the issue of discrimination the reservation of jobs in government and seats in colleges. This is called in America "affirmative action".

I enclose a copy of the conclusions reached by our Seminar organised in Bombay by the Indian Liberal Group and the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom.

Wanted a Creative Inter-Faith Dialogue

Dr. Karan Singh

2, Nyaya Marg, Chanakyaपुरi, New Delhi-110 021

I have received and read with much interest your paper regarding Inter-religious Relations in India. This is an area with which I am deeply concerned, and over the last few years I have been active in the Inter-Faith Dialogue in India and abroad. Earlier this year, I delivered a Lecture in London entitled 'Hinduism and World Religions', a copy of which is enclosed.

It is my conviction that a creative Inter-Faith Dialogue is essential, particularly in a country like India where eight of the world's great religions flourish.

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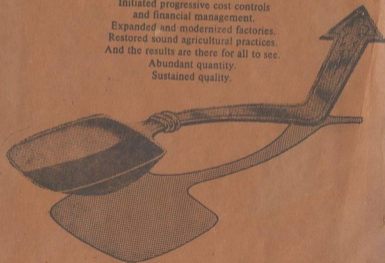
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