

The Muslims of India: Policies and Practices

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Abstract

The Indian Muslims have been facing serious setbacks since the independence despite the Indian government declared to have secular system. In many domains of life, the Indian Muslims are being deprived of their legal rights. Having profound percentage of the population, they played excellent role in divergent fields of life but their services are hardly appreciated by their governments.

Key words: Muslim, India, Congress, secular, minority

The Muslim community constitutes over 12 percent of the total population, the second single community in the Indian Union and the third largest Muslim population in the world. A study about the Indian Muslims can be done on linguistic, political, economic and religious basis.

Political parties play vital and significant role in the politics of the country. In India there is multiparty system but the Congress had been ruled throughout India. The Congress emerged as the single party after independence as natural instrument it was dominate party committed to socialization and to protection of minorities. Muslims supported the Congress and it is evident from the number of the Muslim votes received the Congress candidates in general elections.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India soon after the partition in his speech declared:-

All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India. We cannot encourage communalist or narrow-mindedness. No nation can be great whose people are *narrow* minded in thoughts or action. It is an India permeated by this spirit, even alter the partition of India and creation of Pakistan, that 50 million Muslims continue to live and enjoy all the rights and privileges of full citizenship (Gauga, K.L, n.d.:19).

After the independence, the assessment of the riots reveals that they were planned by the business rivals, politicians and criminals who wanted to benefit from these riots. At another occasion, Jawaharlal Nehru stated:

The fate of India is largely tied up with the Hindu outlook. If the

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present Hindu outlook *does* not change radically I am quite sure that India is doomed. The Muslim outlook may be and, I think, is often worse. But it does not make very much difference to the future of India (Khalidi Omar, 1996:26).

We can divide our study about Congress and Indian government's policies dealing with the minorities especially Muslims into two phases, the first start from 1947-1977 and second from 1977-2004.

First Phase 1947-1977

Rajni Kothari who developed the model of Congress system asserts that the Congress party based upon a broad consensus and was able to accommodate diverse interests and factions within its fold. These factions competed with each other but usually reached compromises without creating any breakdown of the system.

Whereas Gandhi is called father of the nation, Jawaharlal Nehru is credited with building India's modern political institutions and laying the foundations of its economic and foreign policies. In 1947, Nehru became independent India's first Prime Minister, and held this dominating position until his death on May 24, 1964. Shastri became the Prime Minister of India on the same platform. It was a crucial and painful period when his government introduced family planning which was deadly opposed by the Muslims.

Jawaharlal Nehru's commitment to the democratic institutions and his faith in science, technology, and the industrialization for the development of his country was deeply influenced by his political thought. He valued individual freedom and believed that only in a democratic system an individual can realize his or her full potential. Although the introduction of a parliamentary system in India based on the British model may be attributed to the collective efforts of western educated elite. It was Nehru, as the first Prime Minister who put it into practice.

As a modernist, Nehru considered science-based technology the key to the future prosperity and transformation of Indian society. He thus initiated policies that resulted in the establishment of a score of scientific institutions for all the people without any discrimination based on religion, race or cast in India.

Jawaharlal Nehru also permitted the democratic process to operate in the states. He was willing to accommodate the Congress Party's Chief Ministers, even when they disagreed with him. He rarely intervened in their affair as long as they broadly followed the party platform and he was willing to

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accommodate the demands of the regional leaders even if they did not belong to his party. In addition Nehru withstood pressure front the right wing of the Congress, which after the creation of Pakistan was less willing to treat Indian Muslims as equals of the Hindu majority. This right-wing faction wanted to modify Nehru's vision of a secular state in favour of Hindus. Ultimately, however Nehru prevailed, granting Muslims and other minorities' equal rights in the constitution of India. Nehru likes Mahatma Gandhi and he never appealed to the regional or religious sentiments to keep himself in power. In addition to his authority based on the constitution, which Quaid-i-Azam's successors in Pakistan lacked Nehru had charisma and soon became a folk hero. He enjoyed the support of the masses, but he also had a very large following among intellectuals, especially among the English-educated and westernized intelligentsia who were committed to his ideas of religious tolerance and secular political culture.

During the independence movement, the Congress always claims that it is not only representative of Hindus but also a representative of all the other communities of India. After the independence, it proved practically that the Congress is only Hindu Party and there is no importance of Muslims. The Congress ruled from 1947-1977 continuously as secular party and could not satisfy the economic and social life of the Muslims in India. The Muslims suffered a lot in every aspect of life and could not maintain their status in India.

As it is recorded that:-

The Muslim minorities in India were after the partition too demoralized and too disillusioned to complain. They were also powerless to influence and quite unable to resist invasions on their statutory and constitutional rights and privileges (Gauga, K.L., n.d.: 230).

The subject matter of the two Aligarh Acts of 1951 and 1965 therefore, would appear to be clear infringement or the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution (Gauga, K.L., n.d.:235).

In future, there is no hope of betterment for the Muslims of India under Hindutva's policy. All the Hindus extremist parties like Janata Party, BJP and even the Congress displayed their hatredness on different occasions against the Muslims. They want to see India as a Hindu country. At present, the Congress seems secular and has shown its sympathies to the Muslims. During elections Congress made promises that after elections it would decrease the problems and create better opportunities for the Muslims and other minorities.

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But they did not bother about their commitments and promises.

During the election campaign, the press regularly reported accounts of the forced vasectomies:

Among the victims are a forty-five year old Muslim and his younger brother who was forced to undergo sterilization last November. The circumstances in which the incidents took place make it even more tragic. Their mother had just died and they had gone to the town to purchase a piece of white cloth to cover the coffin. A couple of policemen dragged them into a jeep and took them to the health center where they were forcibly sterilized despite protests and tearful ples (Weiner, Myron, n.d.: 37).

Regarding Harijan, another painful incident happened in India:

A sixty-five year old Harijan widow sat next to this reporter in a Gohana-bound bus. She was going to meet her daughter married to a municipal sweeper. When asked if she knew the elections to the Lok Sabha were around the corner. She said, Babuji you will see what this lady gets this time! She had rendered my four sons and three sons in-law impotent. Her neighbor had hid her sons in a sugar cane field for some time. "It was their bad luck" she sighed "that they were caught after a few days and were sterilized (Weiner, Myron, n.d.:38).

It was an ugly incident occurred in the university under pressure from the parliamentary enquiry committee and University grant Commission and prodded by the Vice Chancellor himself, the Academic council on 12 April 1965 decided to reduce the number of "Internal" students in the university's colleges of engineering and Medicine from 50% to 75%. The decision which seriously affected the future of Muslim, as well as non-Muslim students of the University was bitterly resented by them. This resentment erupting into a demonstration by some 300 students on 20 April 1965 when the University court met to confirm the decision. The police was presently called resulting in a student police clash. Some of enraged students managed to attack the Vice-Chancellor, Nawab Ali Yayar Jung who received some serious injuries. Two students were injured in the police firing, and the

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University was closed (Sharif ul Mujahid, 1970:180).⁷

Government of Pakistan sent a delegation to India for the dialogue with Indian government after the serious Hindu Muslims riots, so that the remedies or solutions might be found. This delegation also met on September 1975 Zakir Hussain President of Republic of India and he said that,

“Please take some steps to detain these cruel activities against the Muslims of Hindus.” He replayed do you think that I am a real president of India and what is my real position I know only (The Daily *Jang*, 1983).

It is an open confection against the Indian secularism this is unfortunate that the Muslim members of Congress support the Congress and Indian government against the Muslims political parties. They thought it was the question of their survival. If we do not show our sympathies to them, we could not be able to attain these positions in the government political system. So we make access these Muslim political leaders that how much are they helpless and useless for their communities. They are granted these political positions on certain conditions in which they could not take any positive steps for their communities. According to Nehru, in the post-independence period:

Generally speaking, the Muslims do not and cannot think of any deliberate aggressive activity. Both by virtue of their numbers and their general position in the country, they are frustrated and weak and they know well that any aggression on their part will lead to their own suffering (Klialidi, Omar, 1996:26).

The formation of the Indian National Congress was the brain work of Mr. Allan Octavian Hume, who is known as the architect of this national organization. Though the Indian National Congress was formed to cure the political unrest growing against the British nationalist movement which was widely represented by the Indian National Congress. It was the Congress organization that fought its struggle for freedom of India from the British rule and attained the status of an independent, sovereign country in August 1947. The prime objective of Congress was to safeguard the rights of the people of the sub-continent.

Political Phase II, 1977-2004

The Congress, therefore, declared that any constitution which may be agreed to on its behalf should provide, or enable the Swaraj Government to provide for the following fundamental rights and duties e.g.

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- i. Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely.
- ii. To profess and practice his religion.
- iii. The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.
- iv. All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools, etc. the state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.
- vi. The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.
- vii. The state shall provide free and compulsory primary education.

The above mentioned points which aims at securing to all citizens of the country justice, liberty and establishing a socialist secular and democratic republic embodies Congress ideology. While the fundamental rights grant equality of opportunity and all cherished freedoms to citizens of India, the directive principles of state policy have laid the foundations for a socialist society on democratic lines. The judiciary has been separated from the executive. The constitution has established a federal republic and a parliamentary system of government both at the center and in the states. The formation of Indian union could be possible only after the integration of the native states with the rest of India. For this achievement, great credit goes to Sardar Patel. Here, mention may also be made of the reorganization of states, creation of all India services which are so essential for cementing Indian unit and other reforms in the administrative set up of the union as well as of the states and union territories. Last but not the least Important is political leadership provided by the Congress in governmental and other spheres of public activity. The Congress formed ministries in eight Provinces under the scheme, of provinces autonomy and even in February 1947 the interim government was formed by Jawahar Lal Nehru, in which Muslim League nominees stayed in it for some time. Ever since independence excepting the short period of Janata rules the Congress has run the union government and governments in most of the states for most of the period. Even the Janata Government was headed by a Congressman and it consisted of a majority of formers.

A serious communal situation developed in Rai Bareilly where the Hindus destroyed the city's historic Eidgah at night and also set fire to nearby Muslim houses. A Jan Sangh procession shouted highly provocative slogans against the Muslims, branding them as traitors and holding out threats

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that if Congress Muslims tried to save their political interest. According to Al-Jamiat of Delhi. Hindu students of Ali Garh University took out a procession and "under a well-throughout plan" set fire to Muslim shops and attacked their occupants. Most shops were looted or burnt. Significantly, the local authorities though did not take any action (Mujahid, Shariful, 1970:96).

Indian political parties and the party system have been by the pluralism and cultural diversity of the country. The habitations of the nationalist movement, the contrasting styles of party leadership, and clashing of ideological perspectives. Despite the umbrella charter of the national movement, the pre-independence Indian national Congress was completely successful in encompassing all of Indian's diversity within a single organization.

Political forces based on ideology, cost community and region existed fighter as separately organized groups within the Congress. The Indian National Congress became the dominant party of the post independence India; these political forces emerged after 1947 as the core of a fragmented multiparty system.

Despite the dominant role played by the Congress since 1947. India always had an electorally change but divided group of non-Congress parties reflecting Indian ideological and cultural diversities. This garmented multiple system has evolved through two distinct periods. The first period from 1947-1977 and the second period from 1977-2004 was noted for the creation of the Janata Party. The first successful but short lived effort at forging a national contest alternative to the Congress. During 1980 to 1989 was characterized by renewed fragmentation of parties and a return to the pattern of shifting alliances, splits and mergers. In the last, which began in 1989 was marked by a decline in Congress support, a second but unsuccessful effort to forge a national, centrist alternatives to the Congress, a growing rationalization of parties, and the increasing importance of coalition and alliance politics.

Congress was a national party, which based on the following points:-

- Social reforms.
- To improve the status of minorities.
- Development of women affairs.
- Hindu Muslim Unity.
- Free and compulsory education for the people without any discrimination (Khalid, Mrs. Rain, 1999: 91).

Jawaharlal Nehru ruled in India about 17 years without any

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constrictive criticism in the party. He wanted Socialism in the country without using this word secularism in India. After the death of Patail Narain and Losing left the party. Nehru completed his political desire as Prime Minister of the country. Congress party based upon a broad consensus was able to accommodate diverse interest factions within fold. These factions competed with each other but usually reduced other but reached compromises without creating any system (Oberst, Robert C., 1998:61).

It was against this backdrop that, in the summer of 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suffered two major blows. On June 12, Mrs. Gandhi was found guilty by the High Court of Allahabad of election code violations. The High Court decision was the result of charges brought four years before by Raja Narain, Mrs. Gandhi's Socialist opponent in the parliamentary constituency of Rae Bareli in Uttar Pradesh. The court dismissed the more serious charges, including bribery and intimidation, but found the Prime Minister guilty of two relatively minor technical violations of the law. If the offenses were minor, the consequences were not under Indian law. Mrs. Gandhi had been convicted of "corrupt electoral practices". Her election in 1971 was declared invalid in losing her seat in Parliament she would have to resign as Prime Minister. The law furthermore barred her from elective office for a period of six years. In order to permit an appeal to the Supreme Court, the sentence was stayed for 20 days.

The court ruling was followed a day later by the results of the state assembly elections in Gujarat. Which dealt the congress? Gandhi a severe blow. The state had been under President's Rule April 1975, Morarji Desai began a "fast unto death" in; order to force the Prime Minister to call elections. Mrs. Gandhi yielded to the man who had once, been her principal rival for Congress party leadership. With elections set for June, four opposition parties, the Congress, the Jana Sanah, the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) and the Socialist Party entered an uneasy alliance. With a common program a single set of candidates and the blessing of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Janata (Peoples) Front stood against the Congress in Gujarat. Mrs. Gandhi campaigned actively in the state and placed her prestige on a Congress victory. The Congress defeat was massive.

Opposition parties called for the Prime Minister's resignation. Several national news papers urged her to step down, as did a few members within her own party. The events of the two weeks following the Allahabad judgment remain unclear. but Mrs. Gandhi is believed, at least for a time, to have seriously considered temporarily stepping down in favor of a caretaker government while awaiting the result of her appeal to the Supreme Court. Those close to her counseled against such action, and her 29 years old son, Sanjay was adamant

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that she remained in office.

Demonstrations and rallies were staged on the Prime Minister's behalf. Government employees were pressed into service. Buses and trucks were, in effect commanded to bring demonstrators from all over Delhi and the neighboring states. On one occasion, all 983 buses of the Delhi Transport Corporation were taken off their routes and directed to converge on the Prime Minister's house in a show of support.

On June 24 Justice Krishna Lyer, the "vacation judge" of the Supreme Court rejected the Prime Minister's request for "complete and absolute" stay of the judgment against her. Instead, he granted a conditional stay until the court could convene to consider her appeal. He ruled that Mrs. Gandhi could remain in office as Prime Minister, but she could neither vote nor participate in; the proceedings of parliament (Sharp, Ansel M., 1996:88).

Emergency 1975- 1977

Imposition of Emergency Rule on the following evening, June 25 a mass rally was held on the Ramlila festival grounds in New Delhi. Leaders of the opposition including Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Dcsai called for a nationwide movement to unseat the Prime Minister's denouncing Indra Gandhi as "moving toward dictatorship and fascism" J.P called upon the people of India to resist the corrupt and illegitimate government. As he had done before he urged the police and the armed forces to refuse to obey "illegal and immoral" orders and to uphold the constitution against those who would destroy it.

One night, in the home of the Prime Minister' final plans were made for the declaration of emergency. The list of political leaders to be arrested had already been drawn up, and during the day those state chief ministers counted as personally loyal were advised of the decision by Mrs. Gandhi. The decision itself was taken within the household. Mrs. Gandhi's inner circle and cabinet members had been consulted and it was not until late on the night of the 25 that the Home Minister was informed of what was to be happened. He told the Prime Minister that an emergency already was in force, imposed in 1971 during the Bangladesh crisis and never rescinded and that the government has sufficient powers to deal with the situation. His argument was to no avail. The proclamation was already in the hands of the President. The conspiracy, she asserted threatened to disrupt the "normal functioning" of government. Moreover, it constituted a "threat to stability that would affect production and prospects of economic development".

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Rigid press censorship was imposed from the first day of the emergency more complete than at any time under the British. Initial pre-censorship was replaced by "Guidelines" and ultimately by legislation for the "prevention of publication of objectionable matter". The Indian news services were merged into a single, government controlled agency, Samachar. Most of the press acquiesced, some resisted insofar as possible and a few journals of opinion, like Seminar and Mainstream, chose to cease publication rather than accept censorship. Under the emergency regulations of the Defense of India Rules, 26 organizations were banned. The organizations were associated with four "extremist- groups: the Anand marg, a Hindu religious sect; the Jamaat-Islami, an orthodox Muslim group; the Naxalites. Most revolutionaries and the RSSs. Mass arrests followed the ban, with the largest number of all those jailed from the RSS.

During the 21 months of the emergency, a total of 110,000 people were arrested and detained without trial. By presidential order, the right of any person to seek constitutional protection through the courts was suspended. India's bill of rights was, in effect, abrogated. Persons arrested were not advised of the charges against them, nor were the police required to inform judicial authorities of the reasons.

The emergency "Mrs. Gandhi declared, "provides us with a new opportunity to go ahead with our economic tasks. "Her 20 points program of economic and social reforms offered something for everyone: "To the poor it promised land reform, liquidation of rural indebtedness, new minimum agricultural wages and abolition of bonded labor. For the middle class there were promises of tax relief and price reductions. The rich were impressed by promises of liberalized investment procedures and a welcome absence of talk about further nationalization or higher taxes. Mrs. Gandhi's 20 points program was largely a rehash of long unimplemented Congress policies but rhetoric was now accompanied by the benefits of two good monsoons.

The Rise of Sanjay Gandhi:

The Prime Minister's Program was augmented in 1976 by Sanjay Gandhi's 5 point program: Limit families to only two children. Never accept dowries as a condition for marriage. Teach one illiterate person to read and write, and plant one tree every year. From the time of the Allahabad decision. Sanjay had assumed increasing influence within the household. 'Fainted by the scandal surrounding the manufacture of the Maruti (a small car). Sanjay had an unsavory reputation, and his rise was viewed with apprehension in Congress party circles. Sanjay provided access to housemother, however, and was reputed to have considerable influence over her. As his bandwagon gained

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momentum, newspapers gave front page space to his every word and movement. State Chief Ministers greeted him with garlands and accolades, without political experience and holding no public office. Sanjay was touted as the hope of India. Clearly he was being advanced as the heir-apparent.

The organizational vehicle for Sanjay's expanding power was the Youth Congress. Under his leadership and richly financed it grew in importance and reached a claimed membership of more than 10 million. Sanjay brought his friends into high places- like Bansi Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana who became Minister of defense and a member of the Prime Minister's inner circle. He sought to undermine those who opposed him, as seen in his successful ouster of Nandini Satpathy as Chief Minister of Orissa. Currying the favour of the right Sanjay attacked the communist party and despite its support for Mrs. Gandhi, denounced its influence within the Congress.

Sanjay's favoured cause was family planning in Delhi and the Hindi speaking states of northern India, the government's vasectomy program was aggressively pursued by inducements and disincentives. Central government employees with more than three children, for example, were ineligible for government housing until they produced a sterilization certificate. Some states imposed vasectomy quotas on government officials. Their pay and promotion depended on producing evidence that they had induced the requisite number of persons to undergo sterilization. Quotas provided the impetus for compulsory sterilization. Widespread stories recounted raids on villages by government officials and roundups from the weaker sections of society, the poor and uneducated untouchables and Muslims. There were reports of resistance and police firings, "The most notorious incident, later to symbolize emergency "excesses occurred at Turkman Gate in Muslim old Delhi. In an anti-vasectomy riot, six persons were killed by the police. Rumor placed the figure at 400."

Often in concert with forced sterilization, slum clearance in Delhi was another of Sanjay's pet projects, and demolitions were often carried out under his personal supervision. The Muslim squatter settlements around the Jamia mosque were raised, and their dwellers transported to new housing miles from the city and their place of work.

The 1977 elections and Congress Defeat:

On January 18, 1977, having twice postponed elections, Prime Minister Indra Gandhi announced that parliamentary elections would be held in March. The rules of the emergency would be "relaxed", press censorship lifted, and public meetings permitted. Thousands of members of the political opposition were released from jails.

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The political intelligentsia, professors, lawyers, journalists, lived in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Of whatever class Indians had experienced the exercise of arbitrary government. The emergency had put the lid on discontent and had silenced opposition. With no political barometer other than her own intelligence sources, Mrs. Gandhi had called elections with the conviction that the Congress would win. The formation a (the Janata Party and Jagjivan Ram's defection had surely cut into the expected margin of victory, but Congress remained confident. Most observers gave Congress the edge even as the polls opened on March 16.

The results were stunning Janata and its allies won 330 of the 542 seats in Parliament and a secure clear majority. Its leadership routed, Congress was reduced to 154. Mrs. Gandhi lost to Raj Narain by a *wide* margin, and Sanjay was overwhelmingly defeated. The overall shift in the vote was substantial, Janata increased its strength from 27.6 percent of the vote in 1971 (representing the combined strength of its constituent parties) to 43 percent in 1977. Congress fell from 43.6 to 34.5 percent of the vote. In the 1977 results, there were no significant differences between rural and urban voting results.

The pattern of support revealed a dramatic regional schism. Janata swept North India, but made virtually no inroads into the South of its 298 seats, 222 were from the Hindi speaking region of northern India. Janata won only 6 seats in the four southern states. In contrast, 92 of the 154 Congress seats were in the south. Congress won only two seats in the Hindi North (Weiner, Myron, n.d.:71).

The pattern in reflected the rigor with which the emergency had been imposed. North India had been much more deeply affected-especially in the excess of arbitrary arrest and forced sterilization. The far generated by the vasectomy campaign was probably the most important factor in accounting for the Congress's massive losses in the North. It is ironic that the principal victims of forced sterilization, as of Sanjay's slum clearance demolitions, were untouchables mid Muslims who in 1971 had been among Mrs. Gandhi's most ardent supporters.

The Congress had been dramatically swept from office, but it had secured 34.5 percent of the vote- a decline of only 9 percentage points from its 1971 victory- and with 154 seats in Parliament, it was the major opposition party.

In the one-party-dominant system that operated in India from

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1947-67. Congress exercised a commanding influence on Indian politics with substantial majorities in the central parliament as well as continuous control of virtually 311 states. The legislative superiority rested on the party's unmatched organizational dominance throughout the country. The unevenness of its success in voter support was masked by the substantial majorities that the party managed to obtain in parliamentary representation due to the vagaries of India's single member, simple plurality electoral system. The system of politics was genuinely competitive. But Congress was the center of political gravity as a centrist, aggregative (or so it scented at the national level), and pragmatic party that embraced a surprisingly wide range of India's diversity. The existence of many factions competing with one another made the party attentive to the concerns of social groups and responsive to their demands. Often, the demands would be articulated by opposition parties. The net result was to make the Congress the "party of consensus" and the opposition groupings the "parties of pressure (Thakur, Ramesh, 1998).

"The ruling period from 1947 to 1977 of Congress exposes the Congress's differences in policies and practices. Sometimes Jawaharlal Nehru seemed lenient towards Muslims but practically could not implement such policies regarding Muslims and other minorities. He always admitted and accepted the real picture of Muslim but could not take any positive measures to control the situation in country.

Second Phase 1977- May 2004

The general elections were held in 1980 and Congress once again attained clear majority in the Lok Sabha and proved its political strength in the country. Indira Gandhi became prime minister of the Republic of India. She continued her old policies with slight amendments especially regarding the minorities. But on 31 October 1984, she was assassinated by her own Sikh Guard. After her demise, her son Rajive Gandhi took the control of the country as prime minister by gaining the sympathies of the public regarding his mother's death. Congress got record 396 seats in Lok Sabaha. Rajive was competent, accommodative and sincere to the Congress affairs as well as for country.

Rajive got defeat in the next general elections which were held in 1989. So V.P Singh got the control of the country as prime minister. But he could not

maintain his position and removed through no confidence movement in 1990. Rajive contested the next elections but could not become the prime minister. After death of Rajive, Narsima Rao became the prime minister of India.

Babri Masjid

The demolition of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya was the most critical exposition of Hindutva and Hindu fundamentalism. The Babri Mosque question has become a core issue in the Indian politics since mid 1980s. The Hindu fundamentalist parties upheld that the Babri Mosque, built in 1528 during the period of Emperor Baber, was actually constructed on the site of Lord Rama's birth where a temple had existed. So it is the religious duty of Hindus to locate the site and construct the Ram Janambhoomi it was the VHP that launched a movement in 1984 to restore the Babri Mosque to the Hindu community and build a grand temple in its place. All Hindu extremist groups have taken a united stand on the construction of the Ram Temple at the disputed site and have put the issue on the top of their agendas.

With the passing of every day, Kar Sevaks responded zealously to a call by the BJP, RSS and VHP and gathered at the Babri Mosque site on December 6, 1992. They were more than 300,000 in number and raised the Mosque to the ground, using tridents, daggers and even bare hands. They occupied the site till December 8. The communal violence blew up as a result of destruction of Mosque costing more than 1200 lives and about 5000 people were injured. Ayodhya had a blood bath. There were also reports of killings and attacks on Muslim and Hindu holy shrines throughout the length and breadth of India. The sectarian violence, the worst ever since independence, exposed the real face of Indian secularism (Ejaz, Ahmad, 2003:57).

The Congress government of Narsimha Rao played a very dubious role in the drama enacted for the demolition of the Mosque. As the December six 1992 deadline was drawing to close, the already aggravated communal tension in UP and particularly in Ayodhya was speedily escalating. Despite different calls and appeals from various political and religious parties of India, calling upon Rao government to either take over the disputed site or dismiss the UP government. Rao government remained stuck to its strategy of 'wait and see' which provided the Hindu zealots a free hand to add fuel to the flames. About 200 official guards posted at the disputed site silently abetted the Hindu militants who attacked the Mosque and demolished this 16th century historic monument with all impunity.

Hindus demolished the Babri Mosque on 6th December 1992 with genuine

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support of the government and extremist political party BJP. It was a sentimental attack on the Muslims which was condemned by the entire world. Those Hindus who insisted on demolishing Babri Mosque and constructing a Ram Mandir should realize that a modern nation state has its own logic and majoritarian attitudes weaken it rather than strengthening it. A modern nation state could be run only on the basis of a constitution and secular laws. Any attempt to impose majoritarian perspective can result in serious problems for the democratic governance. Not only this could the majoritarian mindset be destructive of the healthy spirit of nationalism. A modern democracy cannot succeed until the minorities feel completely secure. It is part of the culture of democratic governance.

The majority should realize that the more secure the minorities feel, the more they will contribute to the process of nation building and prosperity of the country; and the minorities should realize that the more they contribute to the process and consolidation of nation building the more they will be respected and only both together can ensure better quality of democratic governance in the next century. It is very strange that even after the Indian court's decision the administration (executive) could not implement the decision of the court. So it is proved that these political pressures can create obstacle in the executive affairs of the government and they are more powerful than government. Recently L.K. Advani visited Pakistan and accepted that,

The demolition of Babri Mosque was great political sin of my life which cannot be forgotten in my life (Cheema, Parvez Iqbal, n.d.).

In fact it is the open confession against the secularism and fundamental rights of the minorities in India. The BJP has just completed twenty years of its existence. It was founded in 1980 after the fall of the Janata government led by Morarji Desai. The fall of the Janata government in 1979 was quite dramatic. It fell on the question of the dual membership controversy raised by the socialists like Madhu Limaya, Raj Narain and others. In fact the Janata party was fanned at the instance of Jai Prakash Narayan by merging parties like the Congress.

Symbolic of the change in its credo. The BJP, as the Jan Sangh was renamed made Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its president since Vajpayee has a moderate image. Muslims took a sigh of relief and peace about their future plans after the end of Congress defeat in 1990s.

But this moderate phase of the BJP was short lived. The rapid political developments did not allow the BJP to adhere to its new fangled ideology and

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it soon began to race back to its original positions. Apart from the breath taking development which were taking place on political scene. the RSS did not permit it to sever its umbilical cord. In fact the dual membership controversy became cause of the fall of the Janata party government precisely because the RSS would not permit the Jan Sangh members to give up their RSS membership.

The BJP now totally reversed its policy adopted in 1980 reverted to its original communal ideology. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was replaced by Lal Krishna Advani who adopted militant attitude and retrieved the original Jan Sang political discourse. The BJP bosses were convinced that they could win the hearts of hard core Hindus. The BJP thus put a question mark on the Nehruvian concept of secularism under the leadership of Advani, who maintained that the Nehruvian secularism was not only influenced by the Western concepts but also amounted to appeasement of minorities.

The BJP also was catering to the aspirations of upper case middle class Hindus with aspirations for higher economic positions and jobs. The Muslim League used Islamic rhetoric and designed its political discourse accordingly. The BJP also used Hindutva rhetoric under the leadership of L.K Advani and aroused the feelings of these classes against so called over privileged, minorities specially the Muslims. It greatly pleased the Hindu Ashraf. Various developments were exploited to the hilt by the BJP. The Shah Bano controversy and Ram janma bhoomi controversy proved to be godends for it. The Muslim leaders exploited the Shah Bano controversy for their own political needs and to negotiate their own political course.

The blackest day in the history of the BJP since its formation was the demolition of the Babri Mosque on 6th December 1992. followed by the Bombay riots of December 1992 and January 1993. The BJP demolished the Mosque despite its assurances to the contrary in the National Integration Council and its affidavit to the Supreme Court that kar seva would not amount to demolition of the mosque. But these were hazards of such confrontationist and communal politics. But the BJP was determined to capture political power whatever the cost, and it did though ultimately it had to do that by tempering its confrontationist posture. The BJP could come to power at the centre ironically by abandoning its Hindutva agenda and forming alliance with secular parties. The way the BJP adopted Hindutva agenda to come to power (after pledging itself to secularism and Gandhian socialism) and the way it abandoned it without batting an eye laid.

Thus the BJP is playing a complex game with full knowledge and approval of the RSS. The BJP leaders also know that Laxman's invitation to Muslims to come

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to the BJP will not create any big response from the community. Some have suggested that the speech by Laxman was not so much aimed at Muslims as liberal Hindus. This may or may not be true. But in this era of coalition politics the BJP wants to clear the decks for its coalition partners. It may also induce a few Muslims to join the BJP. The BJP today has no Muslims in the party worth the name. Sikander Bakht has been alienated for various reasons and Mukhtar Naqvi is a political light weight and does not count much in the world of power politics.

The crushing defeat of the BJP in the recent elections in UP Uttaranchal and the Punjab is in fact, defeat of communalism. The BJP for long had been playing double game. It pretended to be secular before the Indian people in general but maintained its communal face before its hard core cadre. It is not possible to deceive the people forever its leaders, including the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The BJP failed on all fronts. Its slogan was “bhay”. Bhok aur bhrashtachar se mukti, i.e. freedom from fear, hunger and corruption. It was nothing more than a deceptive slogan. The BJP governments in all three states-Gujrat. U.P and Uttaranchal. indulged record corruption. In Punjab too, along with the Akalis it was partner in corruption. It had several criminals among the elected representatives and even in the Cabinets. In Gujarat the VHP and the Bajrang Dal repeatedly attacked the minorities. Who including Muslims and Christians, have been living in perpetual fear in Gujarat. In U.P they had to moderate their attacks on minorities as they ruled in alliance with other secular parties. The Gujarat was referred to as the laboratory of Hindutva by the supporters of the BJP.

This quotation is open example of the maker of Indian constitution regarding discrimination against the Muslims and other minorities in India. Dr. Ambadekar said:

The constitution permits us to treat different communities differently, and if we treat them differently, nobody can charge the government with practicing discrimination (Mujahid, Sherif ul, 19970:12).

Protection of Minorities Comments United Nations

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection

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against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (Journal of South Asian Studies, 2004).

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language (Journal of South Asian Studies, 2004).

In fact all the communities should have each other's goodwill. The safety and security of the country depends on harmony among all the communities. That is self evident. However, no community, whether in minority or majority, can insist that its security depends on the goodwill of the other community. All communities and all individuals have equal rights according to the Indian constitution. Every Muslim has as much rights as every Hindu. According to the constitutional theorists these rights do not occur at the generosity of the constitution makers but they are inherent rights inherent in individuals as human beings.

Bharatiya Janata Party manipulated its thoughts and behavior towards Muslims in the last phase of her government by establishing friendly relations with Pakistan. Atal Bihari Vajpayee and many other delegations visited on 2nd January 2004 to Pakistan just to attain the political support of the Muslims of India. They made various promises with Muslims and other minorities against the party's agenda especially on the eve of elections to attain the political support in the Lok Sabha. On the behalf of this political confidence BJP lost election in May 2004 and of course it was a great political shock for the BJP.

India cannot become a great nation by having nuclear weapons. It can become great only by ensuring implementation of constitutional provisions. It cannot prosper by creating one controversy after the other against minorities. It can become great only by winning the hearts and minds of all, including minorities.

End Notes

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