

Documentation

COMMUNALISM, HINDUTVA AND TERRORISM

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The October issue of *Integral Liberation* contained various articles on communalism, Hindutva fascism, the anti-Christian attacks, secularism and pluralism, the struggle against communalism, etc. The documentation of this issue focuses on four themes: Understanding Communalism and Hindutva (I), Hindutva's Violent History (II), Terrorism of All Origins and Forms (III), and The Manifold Facets of the Struggle (IV). We are aware that these issues are complex and controversial, and we do not offer these reflections as definite answers, **but in a spirit of search and dialogue.**

I. Understanding Communalism and Hindutva

1. Communalism and Its Impact on India¹

The renowned historian KN Panikkar spoke of the above subject in his 1997 Montreal Lecture at CERAS, a forum of South Asians committed to the defense of secularism. Despite political differences and fighting on borders, "there is a common share of culture and identity" in the sub-continent. *Yet, communalism is a widespread and forceful problem.* It is both coercive and irrational. Contrary to the RSS views, the anti-colonial movement had "very, very positive aspects"; but it was also a "period of communalisation of Indian society. It is a paradox in many ways but that is very true... *The emergence of communal politics in India is a consequence of this communalisation.*"

The references to newspapers and reviews are given in the text itself with DH (Deccan Herald), EPW (Economic and Political Weekly), H (The Hindu) and TOI (The Times of India) as abbreviations. The numbers in the parentheses indicate the day, month, year and page. We also use the following abbreviations: BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation/state), RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), and VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad).

The Hindutva project aims at "establishing what they call cultural nationalism in India. That is really a re-interpretation of the Indian nation, an Indian nation which is based on Hindu culture, and in which others have no place now... They want to remove all the legacies of the anti-colonial struggle (like democracy and secularism), and install the idea of a cultural nationalism based on Hindu religion. To my mind, *this has very major implications for the sub-continent as a whole because this will undeniably lead to continuous tensions... and foster major antagonisms.*"

2. Theories on Communalism²

In July 2007, Ornit Shani from the University of Haifa, Israel published a book entitled **Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat.** Whether one agrees or not with his thesis, the *Introduction* contains several insights on existing theories.

"Communalism has been an important theme in Indian politics since the 1880s. During the first three decades after Independence..., no political force gained substantial power in the name of Hinduism. *From the mid-1980s, there has however been a resurgence of a belligerent and new kind of Hindu nationalism in India's public life and in its political institutions...* The ideology and politics of *Hindutva* – the quality of being a Hindu – was accompanied by a rapid increase in large-scale communal (Hindu-Muslim) riots... Gujarat turned into a nerve centre for the Hindu nationalist movement and has come to be seen as the Hindutva laboratory."

"Communalism has conventionally been understood by scholars, colonial administrators and policy-makers as a sectarian conflict between Hindus and Muslims. In recent years, a significant scholarship has questioned the sectarian nature of this conflict. This book is a contribution to this literature... *Its central hypothesis is that the recent growth of communalism... did not lie in Hindu-Muslim antagonism alone... (It) was in fact an expression of deepening tensions among Hindus, nurtured by an instability in the relations between castes...*"

"The rise of Hindu nationalism since the 1980s was surprising. Hindu nationalism was able to attract widespread support

despite several underlying contradictions. *The notion of a monolithic Hindu identity, no more than a homogenous Muslim identity, is inherently implausible.* Hinduism has been the bearer of diverse theological interpretations. Hindus have been deeply divided as much by caste as by ritual observance and sectarian differences. It is therefore unclear why distinct groups of Hindus would mobilise on the basis of a unitary Hindu nationalism. Moreover, the idea that there are two homogenous communities of Hindus and Muslims in India that are hostile to each other is not borne out by historical evidence. The partition of India in 1947 was not a result of an enduring Hindu–Muslim strife at the national level of Indian politics. Finally, Hindu revivalists have rallied around the claim that the Muslim minority in India has been appeased by the state and is a threat to Hindus. Yet, Muslims have not organised themselves politically as a single community since Independence, nor is it clear that they ever did so before. The general impoverishment of the Muslim minority in India also makes it difficult to explain why and how the rhetoric about its peril to the Hindu majority became so persuasive.”

“*Scholars have broadly offered either a culturalist or a materialist explanation for the rise of communalism and the formation of a Hindu identity, or they have tried to find a golden mean between these two approaches.* In the culturalist view, communal identity is often characterised as existing prior to, and independently of, the conflict. From a materialist standpoint, the appeal of communalism is attributed to economic and social factors or to manipulations of the masses by political elites, or even by the state. In the golden mean approach scholars have attempted to negotiate a way through the shortcomings of these dichotomous explanations...” *Ultimately, all these “approaches inevitably arrive at the predicament of endemic violence that derives from the communities’ cultural traits.”*

“While Hindu nationalism gained power and communal violence between Hindus and Muslims intensified, there was also a considerable increase in caste conflicts around redistributive policies for the lower and backward caste Hindus, particularly over the reservation of places in educational institutions and government jobs. *Moreover, conflicts between the forward and backward castes sometimes appeared to be closely linked with communal tensions.* Either they occurred

at the same time, or, at a more complex level, caste conflicts turned into communal violence. This happened in Gujarat in 1985 and at an all-India level in 1990. **This book explores the relationships between caste conflicts... and the rise of communalism.**”

“The coincidence of the rise of communal violence with the growth of caste conflicts seems paradoxical. While militant Hinduism tries to promote the principle of a unitary Hindu identity, caste conflicts demonstrate deep divisions among Hindus.” *Furthermore, the upper-caste and urban middle-class Hindus who “propelled Hindu nationalism were also the primary generative forces behind caste agitations”.* “*This book argues that both caste and communal conflicts, despite the potential contradiction between them, stem from similar social processes... It was precisely these caste conflicts that fostered communalism in the 1980s and 1990s.*”

3. A Social Critique of Hindutva

In an article in *Frontline* (Aug. 28-Sept. 10, 1999), A.G. Noorani reviewed the book, *The Concerned Indian’s Guide to Communalism*, edited by K.N. Panikkar. **Quoting several passages, Noorani offers a pertinent social critique of Hindutva.** *Panikkar thus denounces the historical obscurantism of Hindutva:* “The Hinduised history is a deliberate construction which seeks to valorise the Hindu in the chequered history of the nation. It traces the lineage of the nation to the ancient Hindu past (and) claims... the Indian civilisation as superior to every other civilisation... The political history of India is interpreted as a record of the heroic Hindu resistance against foreigners and the last one thousand years as a period of continuous conflict between the Hindus and Muslims.” *Hindutva “is primarily engaged in defining the nation as Hindu through a process of cultural homogenisation, social consolidation and political mobilisation of the majority community, and by stigmatising the minorities as aliens and enemies.”*

Romila Thapar also refutes the communal interpretation of India’s history: “The tragedy is that the study of the past actually sends us very different messages, but we choose not to read them. *Indian society has always been a multi-religious, multi-cultural society where identities have inevitably been multiple.* Such a society is not in itself secular but is conducive to the evolving of a

secular society protecting the civil and human rights of all its citizens. Our history has been very different from that projected in the two-nation theory and the Hindutva ideology.” *A more sensitive reading of our history “would contribute to avoiding a fascist future”.*

Noorani observes: “What Nehru wrote of the Hindu Mahasabha applies to the RSS and its political front, the BJP. Their communalism ‘masquerades under a nationalist cloak’. ‘The test comes when a national and democratic solution happens to injure upper-class Hindu interests.’ *It is a test in which the Mahasabha ‘repeatedly failed’. So have the RSS and the BJP, repeatedly.*”

In her incisive analysis of the economic underpinnings, Jayati Ghosh writes: “In the Hindutva worldview, the only internal enemies are those determined by social and cultural differences. There is no recognition of classes or even of domestic economic antagonisms in this perspective, and therefore no understanding of the constraining role on development which can be played by certain classes such as large landed interests and big capital.” Though its rhetoric is majoritarian, *the Hindutva brigade “represents the interests of a very small minority – typically male upper-class and upper-caste – and even of a relatively small sub-section within that group”.*

“Tanika Sarkar’s essay exposes ‘the gender predicament of the Hindu Right’ with a wealth of documentation... She points out a curious feature of its behaviour... The Sangh Parivar consciously projects women to the forefront, *but ‘the women who are thus exalted do not come from women’s organisations... They are also quite indifferent to women’s issues, problems and demands.’*”

4. The Different Character of Gujarat Communalism³

Imtiaz Ahmad (H, 12/4/02) **highlights the new character of communalism since Gujarat:** “What happened in Gujarat is not a recurrence of the old and familiar phenomenon of violence between Hindus and Muslims for which the word communalism was originally invented. *It is an entirely different phenomenon.*” *This is so because of “the differential role of the state.* Communalism, as historically understood, arose in the context of a colonial state required to act neutrally between conflicting communities. The state acted to restore peace without being swayed by the consideration of which community was perpetrating violence and which was targeted. In

this sense, communalism was a phenomenon that essentially belonged to civil society and the state sought to control it. *The Gujarat phenomenon is different because the state abandoned the time-honoured principle of even-handedness and sided with one community.*”

“Majority communalism can mask itself as a ‘nationalist force’ and can leverage state power. Minority communalism lacks this capacity. It grows under perceived threats to community identity... Under the colonial state and for a considerable time thereafter, the inherent propensity of majority communalism to become ascendant and take control of state power was held in check by **the neutrality of the state.**” There were undoubtedly deviations and distortions in the past. Yet, “if the state fell victim to the communal tendencies inherent in civil society, it was able to banish the communal forces... to the margins of state power. Now, the state has been so taken over by majoritarian forces” that it is willing to protect them in their pogroms against the ‘others’. **“What happened in Gujarat is a brutal manifestation of the takeover of state power by communal forces.** The state allowed organised groups to go around perpetrating violence in full view of the law and order machinery.”

The logic of majority communalism is to “polarise society, reap electoral benefits and consolidate its hold over state power to shape the nation and society according to a majoritarian vision. *Obviously, this is unlikely to go unchallenged by the minority communities.* Sooner or later, they too are going to throw up lunatic fringes, which would seek to challenge the hegemonic domination of the state by majoritarian communal forces. *As this happens on an increased scale, the country will witness the spiralling of communal hatred and violence.*” “The state will gradually lose even a limited pretence to neutrality” and the “minority communal forces will increasingly see in this discriminatory attitude a fair rationale for engaging in violence as the only means available to redress their complete oppression”.

The state will then “condone majority communalism as a legitimate expression of a powerful national sentiment and penalise minority communalism as a kind of terrorism directed against the state. *This will bring forth increased reprisals against minorities, leading to*

large-scale genocidal violence in which the state will openly seek to legitimise majoritarian violence.” **The state thus shifts the blame on the minorities and its actions become “a part of the majoritarian communal forces’ strategy to achieve their vision of the nation and society”.**

II. Hindutva’s Violent History

1. The Story in Orissa⁴

Angana Chatterji, an associate professor of anthropology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, wrote (*Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 36, 13/9/08): **“The Sangh’s history in post-colonial Orissa is long and violent.** Virulent Hindutva campaigns against minority groups reverberated in Rourkela in 1964, Cuttack in 1968 and 1992, Bhadrak in 1986 and 1991, and Soro in 1991. *The Kandhamal riots were not unforeseen.* Since 2000, the Sangh has been strengthened by the BJP’s coalition government with the Biju Janata Dal. In October 2002, a Shiv Sena unit in Balasore district declared the formation of the first Hindu ‘suicide squad’. In March 2006, Gouri Prasad Rath (General Secretary, VHP Orissa) stated that ‘the security measures initiated by the Government (for the protection of Hindus) are not adequate and hence Hindu society has taken the responsibility for it’.”

This is the Sangh’s strength in Orissa: “The VHP has 125,000 primary workers. The RSS operates 6,000 *shakhas* with a 150,000 plus cadre. The Bajrang Dal has 50,000 activists working in 200 *akharas*. BJP workers number above 450,000. The BJP Mohila Morcha, Durga Vahini (7,000 outfits in 117 sites), and Rashtriya Sevika Samiti (80 centres) are three major women’s organisations. The BJP Yuva Morcha, Youth Wing, Adivasi Morcha and Mohila Morcha have a prominent base. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh manages 171 trade unions with a cadre of 182,000. The 30,000-strong Bharatiya Kisan Sangh functions in 100 blocks. The Sangh also operates various trusts and branches of national and international institutions to aid fundraising... (as well as several) sectarian development and education (societies)... – cementing the brickwork for hate and civil polarisation.”

“This massive mobilisation has erupted in ugly incidents against both Christians and Muslims. In 1998, 5,000 Sangh

activists allegedly attacked the Christian dominated Ramgiri-Udaygiri villages in Gajapati district, setting fire to 92 homes, a church, police station, and several government vehicles. Earlier, Sangh activists allegedly entered the local jail forcibly and burned two Christian prisoners to death. In 1999, Graham Staines, 58, an Australian missionary and his 10- and 6-year-old sons were torched in Manoharpur village in Keonjhar. A Catholic nun, Jacqueline Mary was gang-raped in Mayurbhanj and Arul Das, a Catholic priest, was murdered in Jamabani, Mayurbhanj, followed by the destruction of churches in Kandhamal. *In 2002, the VHP converted 5,000 people to Hinduism.* In 2003, the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) organised a 15,000-member rally in Bhubaneswar, propagating that Adivasi (and Dalit) converts to Christianity be denied affirmative action. In 2004, seven women and a male pastor were forcibly tonsured in Kilipal, Jagatsinghpur district, and a social and economic boycott was imposed against them. A Catholic church was vandalised and the community targeted in Raikia.”

After mentioning several other instances of violence, the author adds: *“In 2008, the Hindutva discourse called Christians ‘conversion terrorists’...* They claim there are rampant and forced conversions in Phulbani-Kandhamal. But the Christian population in Kandhamal is 117,950 (22.3%), while Hindus number 527,757. Orissa Christians numbered 897,861 in the 2001 census – only 2.4% of the state’s population. Yet, Christian conversions are storied as debilitating to the majority status of Hindus, while Muslims are seen as ‘infiltrating’ from Bangladesh, dislocating the ‘Oriya (and Indian) nation’.”

2. 2006 Findings of the People’s Tribunal⁵

The Sept. 2006 87-page Report of the Indian People’s Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights” (IPT) thus explains **the mandate of the 2005 People’s Tribunal on Communalism in Orissa:** *“to investigate the allegations concerning the present situation of increasing criminal activity and human rights violations in the state by Hindu right-wing organisations; the consolidation of these forces; and the related growth of social violence against disenfranchised caste, class, ethnic and other social groups, and religious, gender, and sexual minorities, and women and children. An eight-member panel for the People’s Tribunal... led by Justice K.K.*

Usha, former Chief Justice, Kerala High Court was convened by the IPT” (p. 1). The Tribunal Convenors and Report Editors were Dr. Angana P. Chatterji and Advocate Mihir Desai.

This was the premise of the People’s Tribunal: “**Majoritarian communalism**, in this context, refers to extremist, right-wing nationalism mobilised by Hindu supremacists in India. Although such people and groups identify themselves as ‘Hindus’, *their ideology and behaviour undermines Hinduism in propagating violence and discrimination against minority communities. These groups hold distorted views of history and religion.*” In fact, many Hindus object to their intolerant understanding of Hinduism. “The aggressive and violent nature of the activities of communal organisations often intimidates the secular viewpoint, suppressing its expression, and even distorts its perspective” (p. 2).

“*Majoritarian communalism operates with an explicit mandate to maintain dominance and Hinduise non-Hindus, and other marginal and secular groups, including Christians, Muslims, Adivasis, and Dalits, with the goal of creating a Hindu state in India. Communal groups generally propagate violence against sections of Indian society and hence pose a threat to internal peace and security. Communal groups and their affiliates and cadres often operate outside the purview of the law, actively dissuading citizens from discharging their fundamental duties*” as delineated in the Constitution of India (Art. 51A, e). “The promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion is a recognised criminal offence under the Indian law” (p. 3).

“*The Tribunal notes its strong opposition to communalisation as instigated by majority or minority groups. While both minority and majority communities may be involved in fostering communal violence,*” many studies “in India, South Asia, and elsewhere point to how **majoritarian nationalism and its links to state power undermine the rights of minorities.** *It is through drawing on this work that the Tribunal determined to prioritise an investigation of issues and injustices that serve and maintain majoritarian communalism in Orissa*” (p. 3).

After a detailed study of the Violence against Christians and Muslims and of the situation in various districts, towns and villages,

the Report (pp. 69-70) **thus sums up the Tribunal’s Findings:** “The Tribunal examined the extent of violent events and day-to-day communal violence in Orissa. It assessed the spread of communal organisations in Orissa, which has been accompanied by a series of small and large events and some riots. *Such violations are utilised to generate the threat and reality of greater violence, and build an infrastructure of fear and intimidation.*”

“The Tribunal notes with solemn concern **the extent of mistreatment** perpetrated by majoritarian communalist organisations and their cadres, and the grievances recorded by minority and disenfranchised people impacted by majoritarian communalism, along with the failure of the Government of Orissa to take appropriate and timely action. The investigations of the People’s Tribunal confirm that **the local, state, and central authorities, and (their) mechanisms... have been negligent**” in fulfilling their administrative, legal, and moral responsibilities. “Citizens also have a responsibility to respond to violations in order to challenge the existing culture of impunity that generally protects perpetrators of communal violence from prosecution.” Hence, the People’s Tribunal wants to highlight “*the need for the Government of India, the Government of Orissa, and citizen’s groups to oppose such (human rights) violations, (and) to prevent further and future violence.*”

“*The facts presented in this Report describe the heightened preparation undertaken by communal organisations to bring about a Hindu Rashtra.* The Report also describes in considerable detail how the cadres of majoritarian communal organisations are indoctrinated in hatred and violence against other communities they hold to be inherently ‘inferior’. If the communalisation... in Orissa is indicative of the future of the nation, then the signs are truly ominous for India’s democratic future.” **The Central and State Governments must therefore “treat the communal situation in Orissa as on par with an emergency, and act promptly to address the injustices...”**

3. The Well-Planned Hindutva Strategy in Karnataka⁶

The Alternative Law Forum published around 2004 a 30-page **Database on Communalism in Karnataka.** *This document*

highlights the well-organised character of the Hindutva Communal Strategy.

Gujarat communalism should “not become the only focal point, since **the manifestations of fascist Hindutva are spread throughout the country** and are evidenced in various processes of saffronisation of common people, regional political parties, education, bureaucrats, police, and military... in almost all states. In fact, the activities of the Sangh Parivar have also been hectic in southern states, especially Karnataka. *Moreover, what happened in Gujarat was not a knee-jerk spontaneous reaction as the Sangh Parivar makes it out to be, but the implementation of a reasoned, well-planned strategy...* It is in this light, therefore, that one must understand the threat of the fascist forces that ‘Karnataka will be the Gujarat of the South’.”

In this study, we have analysed **the growth of communalism in Karnataka**. This is an important task to understand the method followed to spread this evil and even to identify some leads to fight communalism and its forces. “We have tried to differentiate the various communal incidents on the basis of the violence intensity, spread of the influence area, communal historicity” and causes. In the light of such factors, we have found it useful to discern **three stages in the build-up of communalism**: 1) *the initial process of communalisation* through the spreading of communal attitudes, prejudices and ideology, especially among the youth, by Hindutva organisations often linked to educational societies and influential individuals; 2) *the eruption of limited communal incidents* through communalised persons and groups; and 3) *the organisation of full-fledged communal riots*.

III. Terrorism of All Origins and Forms

1. The Mumbai Terrorist Attack

On 26th November evening, ten places in South Mumbai were attacked in quick succession. In three horror-filled days, about 200 people were killed (including 21 foreigners), and over 300 injured; 600 people were however rescued by the security forces. 477 commandos were deployed in the 60-hour siege, and two lost their lives, while 9 terrorists were killed and one captured. The terrorists

had apparently planned to kill 5,000 people. *Some citizens and police officials responded in extraordinary ways to the violence and terror*. Later on, Indian citizens manifested their anger and indignation as never before, **and they are making unprecedented pressures on the Government (and all political parties)** to take the best possible measures to punish the guilty, prevent future attacks, and ensure India’s security (*The Week*, 14/12/08/16-46).

An EPW *Editorial* (No. 48, 29/11/08, pp. 5-6) stated: “**The reality India confronts is of a terrorist threat that has climbed to an entirely new dimension.**” *Many are thus calling for “extraordinary legislative measures and the empowerment of the security agencies”*. *Major repercussions for the Indo-Pakistani relations and the world’s struggle against terrorism are unfolding. There is also “much that India needs to address in the fundamentals of its approach to terrorism”*. Instead of creating “new wellsprings of resentment from which terrorism gains nourishment”, it must ensure the allegiance of the larger public. *Fortunately, all political parties now seem to speak a new language of unity against all terrorisms.*

An *Editorial* from *The Hindu* emphasised the need for “broad-based cooperation among the intelligence systems of various countries”. *It moreover welcomed “the Prime Minister’s stress on preventive measures, including strengthening the police and intelligence machinery (and the surveillance of public places) and curbing the flow of funds to suspect organisations”*, rather than reintroducing draconian laws (H, 28/11/08/12). According to a *TOI Editorial*, “the political class must ensure that communalism of all varieties is kept out of politics” (28/11/08/14).

2. Hindutva’s Terrorism Links

An EPW *Editorial* (No. 46, Nov. 15-21, 2008, p. 5) dealt with the above theme. In the early 2000s, many contributed to develop the catechism of all official investigations on terrorism in India. Nobody did it more than Narendra Modi with the mantra: “even if all Muslims are not terrorists, all terrorists are Muslims”. *This widespread prejudice “was broken late in October 2008 by the discovery of an elaborate network of terrorism involving the faithful of the Hindutva flock”*. “What has long been suspected is now in the pen.”

“The Hindutva political fraternity, stung to the quick, reacted with allegations of a frame-up.” Propagandists “sought to draw a distinction between ‘terrorism’ and ‘vigilantism’ – the one born in the stated desire to destroy the nation state, the other spawned by the growing sense of frustration... at the State’s failure to safeguard lives and liberties. What all the sophistry fails to cover up is that *the reflexive belief – those of the Islamic faith alone are responsible for terrorism – has created a cloak of impunity under which every manner of atrocity has flourished.*”

“With the discovery of Hindutva’s terrorism link, **there is a possibility... of a paradigm shift in perceptions – a shift of potentially far-reaching benefits for all.**” This will only be realised if the processes of accountability demanded by the rule of law are followed.

3. Terrorism of Saffron Variety⁷

We give here an outline and a few extracts of Anupama Katakam’s article in *Frontline* (Vol. 25 Issue 24, Nov. 22-Dec. 5, 2008). After listing several bomb blasts, Katakam thus reflects on the Malegaon ongoing investigation: “What seems to be emerging is that **there are... Hindu extremist outfits in Maharashtra...** (with) a single-point agenda – combating *jehadi* terror with terror. Political observers and secularists believe that the saffron brigade, which is known to cause terror through communal rabble-rousing, has now adopted a different form of violence. *The establishment must, in the same way it cracks down on jehadi terror cells, pay attention to the rising saffron movement and suppress it before it is too late.*”

“‘Until now, the police were under the assumption that only Muslim groups would carry out terror attacks. Ever since the Parbhani blast and the Nanded incident, we (human rights groups) have been asking them to look elsewhere, too. Why would a *jehadi* group place a bomb in a mosque on a busy prayer day, where a number of Muslims would be killed? They do not gain anything by this,’ said Asghar Ali Engineer, a Muslim scholar and human rights activist. He added: ‘I am certain that the arrest of the sadhvi and others is just the tip of the iceberg. *If the police are left to do their job without any pressure, we will soon see exactly what these so-called Hindutva groups are responsible for.*’”

After describing the terror trail and questioning why Nanded was not taken more seriously, Katakam speaks of **‘Hindu’ extremism**: “*The arrest of... right-wing activists by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) is enough cause for concern about the rapid growth of extremist groups in Maharashtra.* A police officer told *Frontline*: ‘In the name of protecting Hindutva and the perceived threat to it, these groups are becoming very popular. They attract cadres by making dramatic speeches during Hindu festivals. Clearly, their base is expanding and one has to watch out for them.’” Many activists were “brainwashed into believing that they could save their country by carrying out right-wing plans”.

The author comments: “The RSS, which has its headquarters at Nagpur, has deep roots in the state. Generations have grown up on its ideology. In contemporary times, the Shiv Sena’s stunning rise in Maharashtra was to a great extent dependent on the Hindutva ideology... ‘It is deeply worrying that Army personnel are involved in such terror activities,’ said Engineer. **‘It just goes to show how deep the infiltration is in this country.’** According to Engineer, *constant indoctrination over decades* by the VHP, RSS, Bajrang Dal and BJP *has resulted in this kind of violence...* ‘*During the six years of BJP rule, they infiltrated into crucial areas: the police force, the army and the education department. We are seeing the results,*’ said Engineer.”

4. Confronting the Reality of Hindutva Terrorism

The EPW (No. 47, 22-28/11/08/10-13) published a hard-hitting article of Praful Bidwai with the above title. It thus begins: “The Maharashtra police have unearthed what has all the makings of *an organised, well-ramified, ideologically driven and politically evolved network of fanatical Hindutva activists* cutting across different Sangh parivar groupings, which allegedly planned and executed a series of recent bomb blasts targeted at mosques, whose victims were primarily Muslims.” After describing the various attacks, the evidence and four categories of activists, Bidwai speaks of **the state’s remarkable indulgence for the extremism or terrorism of the saffron variety** – “witness the kid gloves handling of the Bajrang Dal, VHP and the Shiv Sena, despite their owning up to hate speech and hate crimes for decades. *The assumption seems to be*

that Hindutva extremists are basically nationalists and patriots, even if misguided ones. Their violence and killing of unarmed civilians must be treated differently from the insensate killing of civilians by Muslim extremists. Violence is contingent to Hindutva, but essential to Islamic fanatics.”

The author moreover highlights the Hindutva’s challenge to secularism and pluralism: “Hindutva seeks to radically reshape society by violent means, by overthrowing secularism. *Its Hindu-supremacist ideology challenges India’s quintessential character as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious society to which pluralism is central.* It wants to militarise Indian society. It sees this as the key to creating a strong sense of national identity... Crass militarism and violence directed at non-Hindus have long been at the heart of the ‘cultural nationalism’ project... The principal difference between Hindutva extremism and other forms of religious extremism is that the former tries to pass itself off as nationalist by virtue of claiming to speak for a majority of the population, which by definition cannot be separatist or anti-national. *This view is dangerously majoritarian and exclusivist, and hence profoundly anti-democratic.*”

Bidwai then links the current events to the original Hindutva project. Today’s activists still “want to settle scores with the Muslims who (in their eyes) continue to ‘perpetrate atrocities’ upon Hindus – by creating an ‘armed’ India and burying Hindu *sahishnavad* (tolerance) through aggressive ethno-religious nationalism.” Like the Hindutva icons, Savarkar, Moonje and Hedgewar, they believe “in militarising Hindu society, which has been rendered ‘effeminate’ by masculine ‘Islamic conquerors’”. “Hindutva militarism is reflected in the numerous camps that the VHP and Bajrang Dal organise for their cadres, which impart training in the use of arms and close combat, and include gory rituals based on trishuls and swords.”

The article continues by criticising the shift in the BJP stance after the revelations of terrorism, “*The BJP, to its abiding disgrace, has moved from embarrassment over the disclosures about the Hindutva terrorist network to a defiant posture which brazenly defends it.* The ‘moderate’-sounding view advanced by

the party’s prime ministerial hopeful L K Advani, that ‘terrorism has no religion’ and that ‘the law must be allowed to take its course’ no matter what the offenders’ religion, has effectively yielded place to the line of party president Rajnath Singh, itself strongly backed by the RSS, which holds that those arrested by the ATS are innocent and are being victimised for political reasons.”

The various components of the argument are then elaborated and refuted as specious. “It stretches credulity to hold that the Maharashtra ATS would have acted on such a ‘sensitive’ and politically explosive issue and arrested relatively high-profile parivar activists like Thakur and Purohit without substantial evidence. What has been publicly disclosed so far suggests the opposite. Going by decades-long experience, the Congress Party errs on the side of abundant, usually excessive, caution while dealing with the parivar...” *Resorting to terrorism is no more justified for Hindus than it would be for the unjustly treated Muslims of Gujarat.* “The history of ‘cultural nationalism’ is nothing but one of assassinations, bloody riots and pogroms targeting the religious minorities, increasingly with state complicity or collusion.”

The author clearly denounces the BJP’s responsibility: “Three other points are in order. The rise and growth of Hindutva terrorism and rabid militarism cannot be seen in isolation from the climate of divisiveness, parochialism and chauvinist nationalism and the culture of hate that the BJP has consciously promoted in its cynical pursuit of power. *Violence is integral to this culture. Indeed, it is part of the party’s strategy of political mobilisation.* This culture has percolated over the years into countless institutions of the state, including the police and the national security apparatus, which views terrorism through the prism of Islamophobia.”

Second, the BJP may even harden its rabid Hindutva posture. It is wishful to think that “incumbency in power would impel the BJP towards ‘moderation’, sobriety and responsibility. The BJP, quite simply, is not that kind of party... **Yes, the BJP can get worse.**” “Third, it is imperative that the police get to the bottom of the saffron terror operation and investigate it impartially and with thorough professionalism... *The government must pursue the case seriously and urgently act to ban the Bajrang Dal and the RSS, and to*

prosecute BJP members connected with these organisations. **Nothing less can reaffirm the secular spirit of this society and the Indian Constitution.**”

5. The Dangerous Politics of Coercion

Mahesh Gavaskar thus concludes his reflections on **Raj Thackeray and the Danger of Competing Regionalisms** (EPW No. 44, 2008, pp. 8-10): “Thanks to the government of Maharashtra’s soft approach, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) led by Raj Thackeray has been able to develop the aura of an anti-establishment party that espouses the legitimate demands of the Marathi-speaking population in the state. Pressure from the centre belatedly forced the state government to arrest Thackeray, but the local parties are unable or unwilling to fight the MNS politically. A more dangerous and larger implication of the MNS ‘success’ in capturing attention is that **regional parties everywhere... may feel emboldened to bully the centre and make it a site for competing regionalisms to settle their scores.**”

An *Editorial* of the same EPW issue (p. 5) analyses the implications of the MNS crisis. In several places and on many occasions, *political parties increasingly adopt postures of competitive populism. “Worse, politics seems to be unfolding in a majoritarian space....* What is happening in Mumbai and Maharashtra is not very different from what is happening elsewhere. Different majorities are claiming the center-stage in states and at the all-India level – the only difference is in the issues involved and in the intensity of claims. Another larger issue that the latest episode from Mumbai throws up is the manner in which we conduct politics and whether there is room for debate and difference in our public life. *More and more, coercive and violent forms of action are gaining currency as instruments for resolving public political disputes.*”

The *Editorial* concludes: “**The politics of coercion and collective violence has two dimensions.** In the first place, it is *justified in the name of public anger and the exercise of democratic rights*, thus making it difficult for the law and order machinery to deal with it effectively. Rioters are considered political actors and therefore entitled to deference. This, in turn, enhances the efficacy and attraction of violence to articulate demands. *In the second*

place, the politics of coercion and violence unfortunately hold a certain value as spectacle. Hence, there is tremendous media coverage of such instances. Images of violence depicted in the electronic media ad nauseam bring into sharp focus the effectiveness of the act and the ‘bravery’ and anger of the actors involved. **It seems that bad politics is becoming good business, not just for the organisations engaged in it but for many others as well.**”

IV. The Manifold Facets of the Struggle

The previous issue of *Integral Liberation* highlighted several measures to combat communalism (esp., pp. 186-8, 208-10, 227-8 & 236-7). We add here many other suggestions, including those of some of the authors who analysed the problems of communalism, terrorism and violence in the above Sections. Put together, all of them provide many insights into *The Manifold Facets of the Struggle*.

1. India’s Ideal

“If you want your’s country’s well-being,
Don’t look upon any compatriot as a stranger.”

(Altaf Husain Hali, 1888)

Ravindra Kumar writes: “Mahatma Gandhi devoted his entire life to propounding communal harmony. He wished in ‘The India of his Dreams’, ‘I shall die for an India, in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; *(and above all) an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony.*” Kumar adds that advancing on the path of peace “*is only possible when all from the majority and minority communities walk hand in hand.*” All must take into account the national interests and discharge their duties.⁸

Intolerance and mistrust are however rapidly spreading in our country. Denouncing the Orissa situation, Kuldeep Nayar recently deplored the “decline of the secular idea” in India. “*Tolerance and the spirit of accommodation are wearing thin.*” “*But there is no alternative to pluralism*” (DH, 12/9/08/10). “Political-scientist Muzaffar Assadi has also observed that society was moving towards civil war because of the growing mistrust among people of the three major religions.” “The Government must take steps to contain the

growing intolerance” (H, 17/9/08/10). On 6th Dec., our Prime Minister added: “*Today, we are witnessing an unacceptable rise in intolerance. Our society seems more divided, more angry, and, tragically, more violent*” (DH, 7/12/08/9).

“Tracing India’s history of a tolerant civilisation, Dr. Manmohan Singh stressed: **‘We must ourselves be tolerant** of those who might think differently, who worship other gods, or speak in a different tongue. *It is the fundamental right of all to follow their religion, practise their culture and hold to their views.* But it is nobody’s right to deny anyone this right, or to dictate faith and opinions to others. *The essence of a democratic polity is that we can disagree, but still work together.*”

2. The Importance of Defending Human Rights⁹

Antara Dev Sen wrote about **the difficulty of standing for human rights when confronted with the reality of terrorism** (*Asian Age*, 2/10/08). “*With bombs going off every few days and our threat perception spiralling, it’s not easy to root for civil rights.* Logic and ethics get all tangled up, as fear spooling out of bombed markets and grieving neighbourhoods flood our senses. *Where does one draw the line between safeguarding human rights and supporting terrorism?*”

We “can’t deny that there is (much) Muslim terrorism in India... And it is naive to pretend that it is always in retaliation against discrimination and abuse, or to romanticise the murder of innocents. *But to prop up Muslims as ‘the enemy’, or suggest that every Muslim is a potential terrorist, is ridiculous.* For decades, we have faced terrorism from non-Muslims, from Punjab to the Northeast to the recent rash of terror across India by Maoists or Hindutva extremists. We have lost one Prime Minister to Sikh killers and one to Hindu terrorists... **Yet, the trend today is to equate terrorism with Islam.**” We love stereotypes, which promote quick-fix solutions through their biases. “*Religious profiling has been part of our anti-terrorism drive, and with their socio-political deprivations, Muslims are easy targets.*”

“Apart from violating the constitutional guarantee of equality, **religious profiling hinders the fight against terror.** It diverts attention from those who are linked to terrorism but do not fit the

religious profile... *Stereotypes about Muslim terrorists make us ignore State-sponsored Hindu terrorism like in Gujarat, where justice was so beyond reach that the Supreme Court had to transfer the 2002 ‘riot’ cases outside the state.*” Stereotypes also feed “the continuing terror attacks on Christians in Orissa...”

“*Once free from stereotypes, the police can efficiently counter terror. But stereotyping terrorists is easier.*” “The loyalty of Indian Muslims is regularly questioned – from India-Pakistan cricket matches to national politics. In a terrified society, officially branding them anti-national is easy. *To prevent our strained social fabric from falling apart, we need to pursue the truth, not myths, and protect civil rights. That does not make us supporters of terrorism, it helps us curb it.*”

3. The Need for Secular Action

What is needed to curb communalism (cf. above, I.1) is “**the creation of secular action**”. *We must “create a secular movement which addresses grassroots problems and build local secular communities.* These will not necessarily be involved in anti-communal activities but will develop a secular consciousness by taking up problems which are close to the everyday life of people, whether it is sanitation, water or the environment. *It is only through those secular communities that a secular consciousness can be created.*” Fire-fighting is neither sufficient nor very effective. We must adopt a long-term perspective and strategy.

People-to-people contact is moreover a must. In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, professional and voluntary groups are at work. There has to be a coming together of teachers, lawyers, doctors, peasants, workers, etc. Ultimately, it is not just a question of eliminating religious communalism; “the demand for secularism is not only a demand for unity or harmony among Hindus and Muslims. *It is a much greater and wider problem in the sub-continent, for it concerns the growth of the democratic culture.*”

4. Going Beyond the ‘Categorising’ Worldview

The contemporary communalism à la Gujarat (cf. above, I.4)¹⁰ “operates within the framework of an enhanced desire of majority communalism to control and manipulate the leverage of state power.

This form of communalism became prominent in the 1990s as a result of a deep legitimacy crisis of the Indian state in the face of economic liberalisation. Merely dislodging majoritarian forces from state power will not suffice to stamp out this type of communalism. Nor can it undermine its social and cultural hegemony. *One must understand the link between modern thinking and 'daily-life' viewpoints in civil society to deal with it.*"

"Since Independence, India has been pursuing the ideal of nation-building based on secularism. Indeed, the process of modernisation has always had as its focus the reduction of barriers between religions, languages and castes (or tribes) by establishing a secular state and ultimately a unified nation." Yet, the achievement of this ideal "has been hindered by realities... To truly understand communalism, one must go beyond the present interpretations that view it as a conflict of interests between religious groups." In fact, "*communalism is caused by the repression of the 'daily-life viewpoint' by the dominance of a 'transcendental viewpoint' inherent in modern thinking.*"

In the former viewpoint, "a person regards someone he has never met as a stranger", while in the latter, *the 'magic of categorisation' makes us assume that all "individuals belonging to one category are siblings and share a common identity.* For instance, any individual once categorised as Hindu immediately develops a strong affinity to others who similarly describe themselves, including strangers in remote places." Thus, "other persons are always categorised into either friends or foes in an inflexible manner, regardless of individual differences within each category. The best way to attenuate communalism is to stay away from its trap... *We must change our worldview that categorises objects and people in a uniform view. We must get rid of the one-dimensional, inflexible state of identities, which emphasise consistency.*"

5. The CBCI Demands

The whole Statement of the Executive Body of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) on **Violence against Christians** on Sept. 26, 2008 is enlightening (*Vidyajyothi*, Nov. 2008, pp. 814-17). Expressing "their utter disappointment at the apathy and inaction of the Governments at the Centre and in the States", **the members made the following demands:**

"• *That stronger and stringent action be taken against all kinds of anti-social and anti-religious elements that violate human rights and terrorise innocent people;* • *That culprits should be brought to book and legal action be taken against them;* • *That adequate compensation be immediately given to the affected people and institutions;* • *That a CBI inquiry be immediately ordered to investigate the Orissa incidents and their nexus to attacks on Christian communities in other States.*"

"• *That a ban be imposed on fundamentalist groups that train 'terrorists' under the banner of Hindutva or any other name;* • *That the leaders who act on a communal agenda, or who inspire organised violence against persons of another community, or who use religion for political purposes be restrained;* • *That in the event of people taking the law into their own hands, the police be instructed to act in accordance with the demands of law and order, with justice and without prejudice.*"

6. Three Major Recommendations on Orissa

Angana Chatterji makes three major recommendations to help counter the *Hindutva's Violent History in Orissa* (cf. II.1). "**The draconian Orissa Freedom of Religion Act (OFRA), 1967 must be repealed.** There are enough provisions under the Indian Penal Code to prevent and prohibit conversions under duress. But consenting converts to Christianity are repeatedly charged under OFRA, while Hindutva perpetrators of forcible conversions are not. The Sangh contends that 'reconversion' to Hinduism through its 'Ghar Vapasi' (homecoming) campaign is not conversion but return to Hinduism, the 'original' faith. This allows them to dispense with the procedures under OFRA. **The Orissa Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, 1960 should also be repealed.** It is utilised to target livelihood practices of economically disenfranchised groups, Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, who engage in cattle trade and cow slaughter."

Moreover, "a CBI investigation into the activities of the VHP, RSS and Bajrang Dal is crucial as per the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Groups such as the VHP and VKA are registered as cultural and charitable organisations, but their work is political in nature. *They should be audited and*

recognised as political organisations, and their charitable status and privileges reviewed.”

7. The Recommendations of the People’s Tribunal

In the light of its findings (cf. II.2), the People’s Tribunal on **Communalism in Orissa** urged “that **the following recommendations be acted upon expeditiously...**” Under the heading **Law and Order**, the Tribunal lists the same recommendations as Chatterji (cf. IV.6) and adds: “We recommend that the disparagement, demonisation, and vilification of any religion should be statutorily prohibited and held punishable under the Indian Penal Code (IPC).” And that the Central and Orissa Governments “take adequate and expeditious steps to ensure that those who convert voluntarily to Christianity, Islam, or any other faith be allowed to practise their religion”. We also urge that “urgent steps should be taken to stop (the) Hinduisation (of Adivasis and Dalits) by means of coercion or duress. We recommend that the police and courts act immediately and authoritatively to **stop communalists from enacting forcible conversions or ‘reconversions’**, and that the police be required to submit regular and public reports documenting their work.”

Under the heading **Institutional Issues**, the Tribunal states: “We recommend that **the Government of Orissa must establish and activate the State Human Rights Commission and State Minorities Commission...** This must be made a priority. We recommend that the Government of Orissa **appoint a task-force**, with requisite participation from civil society, for a comprehensive assessment of communalism in the state, with particular attention to Hindu communalism... (And) that the Government of India, in conjunction with the National Human Rights Commission, investigate, assemble, and release **a status report regarding the issue of (re)conversion of Christians to Hinduism...**”

The Tribunal adds several recommendations regarding **Political and Social Concerns**, and many others that are specific to certain districts. The **Conclusion** condemns the “significant human rights abuses” and “the unchecked cruelty inflicted by communal organisations... *These injustices also highlight the severe hierarchies of caste, class, tribe, religion, gender, and sexuality*

in the state, and compound social suffering and cultural violence... **We recommend that the Indian state must take preventative action to uphold the rule of law, justice, right to life and livelihood, freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of inquiry, and the right to information in Orissa.**”

8. Should the Govt. Enact ‘Tougher’ Anti-Terror Laws?

According to an EPW *Editorial* (No. 40, 2008, pp. 5-6), “**making the anti-terror law ‘tougher’ is likely to further institutionalise the prejudices against the minorities**”. In fact, “the two anti-terrorism statutes that the BJP today makes much of – the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act of 1987 (TADA) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002 (POTA) – have been instruments of State terror and victimisation of the vulnerable, rather than credible mechanisms of justice. Convictions secured under TADA were a dismally low proportion of the total number of cases lodged. And the only significant case prosecuted under POTA – the 2001 attack on India’s Parliament compound – ended in a fiasco, with some of the country’s most senior lawyers arguing the case for the accused in the Supreme Court and denouncing the Delhi police for flagrantly concocting evidence.”

“To allow confessions made to the police as evidence in terrorism trials would deepen institutional prejudices against the religious minorities and enlarge the scope for criminal collusion between police forces all over the country and the agents of majoritarian mayhem and disorder.” **What is needed is “a firm reiteration and institutionalisation” of the equality of all before the law.**

Harish Dhawan and Nagraj Adve, Secretaries of the People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), New Delhi moreover discuss **whether the VHP and Bajrang Dal (BD) should be banned**. They finally wonder whether such a ban would be enforced: “With no action being taken against the fountainhead of these organisations, the RSS, the cadres of the BD and VHP can quite simply disappear by being moved to a variety of organisations that have been promoted by the RSS, thus proving the ban to be futile. If the state is sincere and keen to curb the criminal activities of the BD and VHP, then **it**

should start prosecuting” all those who are guilty of communal violence (EPW, No. 42, 2008, p. 4).

Several individuals and groups are however convinced that *the State should give up its double standards and add the Hindutva organisations that prone and use violence to the list of the 32 organisations that are proscribed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.*

9. The Muslim Fatwa and JUH Appeals

An EPW *Editorial* (No. 47, 2008, p. 6) thus reflects on **some positive developments within Islam in India**: “In February 2008, the Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband organised an anti-terrorism convention in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, attended by Islamic scholars from all over India, which was followed in June by a fatwa against terrorism signed by three prominent clerics.” In early November in Hyderabad, “the Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind (JUH) convened a convention that was attended by 6,000 clerics who endorsed the earlier stand and also called for a redefinition of *jihad*, which they saw as wrongly identified with terrorism.”

The JUH moreover “appealed to other minority groups – the Christians, Dalits and Tribals – to form an alliance and fight against ‘Hindu’ extremism”. Until now, relations between organisations representing the Christians and Muslims have not been marked by much solidarity. Indeed, a worrying aspect during the 1990s was that the organisations representing the Christians were silent about the Hindutva campaign against Muslims... With the Christian community now reeling under the violence inflicted on it by the Sangh parivar groups, it would seem as if the JUH appeal should evoke a positive response, even if there are distinct socio-cultural and economic differences between the two communities. Similarly, while a unified forum of Muslims, Dalits and Tribals also seems feasible, widespread and substantive social and political collaboration among these three groups has not been common.”

More than ever, every religion and community in India, and our nation itself, needs a relevant leadership. And, as M.J. Akbar points out, “*leadership means lifting a nation (or a community) from the quagmire of its own prejudices and inconsistencies*” (DH, 3/11/08/8).

10. Countering Fascism and Protecting the Minorities¹¹

In Oct. 2008, “the Delhi-based human rights group Anhad, along with some 90 other organisations, held a two-day National Convention on **Countering Fascism: Defending the Idea of India.**”

In his talk, the legal expert Prof. Upendra Baxi “demanded that the International Convention against Genocide be incorporated into the Indian Constitution and law, and that the state’s ‘anti-terrorism’ policy be made ‘ethical and constitutional’. Deploring the lack of political will to punish the perpetrators of violence against minorities..., he also insisted on *the need for a ‘legal framework through which the obstruction of the administration of justice is made a serious and punishable offence’.*”

Expressing fears regarding the communal biases of sections of the government, police, intelligence agencies, judiciary and media, Prashant Bhushan suggested *the establishment of an independent statutory body* which could prosecute the police for abuses, and *the setting up of an independent police complaints authority.* He also recommended *that an independent judicial complaints authority be set up.* He moreover argued that India, like most other countries, should sign the treaty of the International Criminal Court, so that serious cases of persecution of minorities could be taken to the International Criminal Court.

For his part, **Swami Agnivesh “emphasised the need for a united political struggle for social justice and communal harmony, and against capitalist depredation and Hindutva fascism...”** According to the social activist Teesta Setalvad, “*protests are critical to counter the communalisation of the entire social fabric*”. *Resistance is a must* (H, 23/9/08/6).

11. Combating All Communalisms and Terrorisms

An ‘equal’ opposition to all types of communal violence and terrorism is a must. “*No organisation can take the law into its hands and indulge in indiscriminate violence*” (DH, 12/9/08/8). “*‘Mob-terror’ has to be condemned in the same way as ‘bomb-terror’ is*” (Mahesh Bhatt, DH, 17/9/08/4). “*Terrorism of any ideological persuasion is unacceptable and political parties should make that clear to their cadres*” (TOI, 14/11/08/14).

“Terrorism has no colour, politics, religion or region.” “Terror is terror, whatever be the religion of the terrorist” (DH., 20 & 5/11/08/8).

There are many “shades of terrorism” and all must be firmly dealt with. *“Terrorism is now a pan-India phenomenon... Home-grown extremists – whether of the Islamic or saffron variety – are deepening religious divides. At the same time, Naxalite carnage is beating previous records. Now, regional chauvinism of the Raj Thackeray kind threatens to blow up into an interstate conflagration.”* (Dalits, Tribals, women, and the poor and marginalised are often ‘terrorised’ in many ways.) **We must “stand united against terrorism of every kind”** (TOI, 31/10/08/12).

The CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat adds: “Between 2004 and 2008, India has been the victim of at least 25 major bomb blasts in which 717 people were killed and hundreds injured... *Strong action must be taken against the guilty through legal, transparent procedures...*” “Although extremist groups (often) act in the name of religion, the vast majority of believers, whether Muslim or Hindu, abhor violence that kills innocent people. This is the abiding strength of our country. Terrorism cannot be ascribed to any one religion. **The politics of secularism is the only means to ensure the unity of India in the fight against terror**” (TOI, 11/11/08/12).

One cannot deny that terrorism is an issue of electoral significance, but **it should not be made a partisan issue.** The Indian electorate conveyed this message in the recent Assembly elections in five states (cf. 9/12/08 DH, H & TOI Editorials). *Voters rejected the politicisation of terror* (Rajdeep Sardesai, DH, 12/12/08/11).

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