The Hindu Phenomenon

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the dominant sentiment among Hindus had not been generally favourable towards him and his broad policies. Independent India saw itself, and defined itself, in Western secular terms as a nation-state and not explicitly in civilizational terms as a Hindu rashtra for a variety of reasons. The Muslim factor was only one and not critically important to them at the deeper level of the Hindu psyche. At that level, Hindus have never seen any basic conflict between their heritage and Western science and technology and therefore the Western emphasis on rationality. The speed with which so many of them took to Western education and more speaks for itself.

Till the eve of independence, Hindu thinkers emphasized the contrast between their spiritual heritage and Western materialism as part of the process of recovering their self-esteem. But in reality they needed to overcome the lopsidedness which an undue emphasis on piety at the cost of two of the central Hindu goals of artha and kama (prosperity and enjoyment) had produced in their lives in the period of their decline when they did not have a state of their own. They had to bury the maya (illusion) concept in its vulgar form in fact, if not the theory.

The central issue that arises out of developments connected with the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 is whether the question relating to the civilizational base of the Indian state has finally been put firmly on the agenda or whether it can again be put off, as it was after the First World War when Mahatma Gandhi took over the leadership of the nationalist movement from Lokmanya Tilak, who soon passed away. In the perspective of history, the answer has to be in the affirmative. The failure of the Marxist ideology in all its manifestations in practice, the collapse of most communist regimes all over the world and the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself have together created conditions in which Indian 'nationalism' can no longer be presented effectively in anti-colonial and civilization-neutral terms. Its civilizational base, structure and character cannot now be kept covered up for long by an ideological shroud. I am aware that a number of assumptions are implicit in these statements. These shall be substantiated as we proceed.

Before I take up this issue pertaining to the confusion of the true nature of Indian 'nationalism', however, it is
necessary to correct the general perspective on the vital
question of the role of Indian Muslims in the last two
centuries which have witnessed the resurgence of India’s
ancient civilization in new forms appropriate to the spirit
of our times. My perspective is different from that of
proponents of Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis or of
composite Hindu-Muslim culture as well as that of
advocates of undefined Hindutva.

This perspective is that Muslim power and therefore
civilization have been on the retreat all over the world,
including India, that this retreat has accounted for all
movements we have witnessed in the Muslim world in
the last two centuries, and that instead of helping check
the retreat, these movements have promoted a ghetto
psychology among Muslims. To put it differently, what has
generally been regarded as Muslim aggressiveness and
separatism, I treat as isolationism and opting out. I am
in this essay, not concerned with the nature of Muslim
conquest and rule.

To grasp the validity of this approach, it is necessary
that we give up what may be called the ‘frog-in-the-well’
approach to history. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru railed
against this narrow approach but not to much avail.
Indeed, in respect of the Hindu-Muslim civilizational
encounter, he too suffered from the same handicap. Thus
we discuss Mohammed bin Qasim’s invasion of Sind in
the eighth century more or less independently of the ex­
pansion of Arab Islam as far as North Africa and the
Iberian peninsula in the west, with Mesopotamia, Syria,
Egypt and Palestine thrown in, and Transoxania in the
north, with the once mighty Iran, Medina, Khurasan and
Sistan included in it. And more often than not we fail to
take note of the fact that while Arab Muslim armies cut
through Christian and Zoroastrian lands like knife
through butter, in southern and eastern Afghanistan, the
region of Zamindawar (land of justice-givers) and Kabul,
the Arabs were effectively opposed for more than two
centuries, from A.D. 643 to 870 by the indigenous rulers,
the Zunbils and the related Kabulshahs. Though with
Makran and Baluchistan and much of Sind, this area can
be said to belong to a cultural and political frontier zone
between India and Persia, in the period in question the
Zunbils and their kinsmen, the Kabulshahs, ruled over
a predominantly Indian rather than Persian realm. Arab
geographers commonly speak of the king of Al-Hind “who
bore the title of Zunbil”. (Zun was a Shaivite God.) Andre
Wink has detailed an equally prolonged resistance on the
Makran coast in his Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo­
Islamic World.¹

Similarly, we discuss Babar’s conquest of parts of
North India without reference to the larger Turkish
upsurge, culminating in the Ottoman empire, which, at
its height, included present-day Albania, Greece,
Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, islands of eastern
Mediterranean, parts of Hungary and Russia, Iraq, Syria,
Palestine, the Caucasus, Egypt, north Africa (as far west
as Algeria) and part of Arabia. This lopsided and parochial
view of history was designed, perhaps deliberately, by
British historians to inculcate in us a deep sense of
inferiority. But whether deliberate or not, the effort
succeeded remarkably well. Many educated Indians have
accepted that everything worthwhile in India, including
Sanskrit, has come from outside and that Indians have
never been able to resist foreign invasions and occu­
pations. Nirad Chaudhuri’s Continent of Circe is perhaps
the best-known expression of this British-promoted view
of us as a degenerate people.

This gap between fact and history, as generally
written and taught, is however, not my interest right now.
I wish to emphasize that by the eighth century, Muslims
had acquired from Spain to India “a core position from
where they were able to link the two major economic units
of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean....Muslims dominated all important maritime and caravan trade routes with the exception only of the northern trans-Eurasian silk route...the Arab caliphate from the eighth to the eleventh century achieved an unquestioned economic supremacy in the world...in monetary terms the result of the Muslim conquests was...a unified currency based on the gold dinar and the silver dirham.... Possession was taken of all important gold-producing and gold-collecting areas...."2

This economic supremacy provided so powerful an underpinning for the Muslim ummah (universal community of believers) and, therefore, civilization that they could survive all internal upheavals, including the Shia-Sunni divide; the decline of the Abbasid caliphate from the tenth century onwards, culminating in the sack of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols; the upsurge of Turks so much so that they can be said to have dominated the Islamic enterprise from the tenth century to the abolition of the caliphate in 1924. (The Safavid rulers of Iran too were Turkic and so were the Ghaznavids in Kabul.)

It follows not only that, to be fully effective, the challenge to Muslim dominance in that vast area had, in the final analysis, to be maritime but also that the ummah and Muslim civilization would find it difficult to survive in a meaningful sense the loss of control of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The Ottoman empire doubtless provided a second powerful underpinning. But its fate too was linked in no small way to the correlation of forces on the high seas.

Mediterranean Europe began to stir in the eleventh century. The crusades, beginning towards the end of the century, were an expression of that upsurge though they took a religious form. But the crusaders were first absorbed in the Muslim population and civilization and then beaten back. So, it was not before the end of the fifteenth century when Vasco da Gama discovered a new route to India via the Cape of Good Hope (out of Muslim control) and landed in India (in 1498), that a serious challenge to Muslim power can be said to have arisen. Though this challenge took around three centuries to mature and get consolidated, the impact on the fortunes of the Turkish empire was evident by the late sixteenth century, when the Dutch and the British were able to completely close the old international trade routes through the Middle East. As a result, the prosperity of the Arab provinces declined. The import of vast quantity of precious metals from the Americas following Spanish conquest and loot of that continent and the conversion of this gold and silver into currency also played havoc with the Turkish economy. Globalization of the world economy is, after all, not a twentieth century phenomenon!

This is a long and complicated story. The details, however significant and fascinating, like the retreat of the Turks from the gate of Vienna following defeat at the hands of the Hapsburgs in 1688, or Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, exactly three centuries after Vasco da Gama’s voyage to India, need not detain us. What is material for our purpose is the steady erosion in Muslim control of the Mediterranean-Indian Ocean trade, the decline of the Ottoman empire and with that the replacement of the Islamic by the European civilization as the dominating reality on the world scene. The dismemberment of the Ottoman empire at the end of the First World War and the subsequent Turkish decision to abolish the caliphate in 1924 can be said to have completed the process. The two developments marked, in a fundamental sense, the closure of the era that opened with the establishment by the Prophet of the first Muslim state in Medina. However bitter and devastating the struggles within it and however painful the setbacks such as the sack of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols, the
ummah had been in control of its fortunes from Mohammed's Medina period till then.

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, Muslim thinkers and men of action have tried to inaugurate a new era in their history. Their failure to do so is obvious. At various places, beginning with the seat of Ottoman power in Anatolia itself, and at various times, beginning possibly with Shah Waliullah in Delhi at the beginning of the eighteenth century, they have tried different strategies -- modernization of the armed forces and administration, Western-style education, reinterpretation of the Koran and return to pristine Islam, Western ideologies from liberalism to Marxism via fascism, pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism. Nothing has worked. (For details see David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle.*)

The reasons for this world-wide failure are many and complex. Among the most important is the nature of Islam itself. Very early in its history, Islam closed itself on itself. By insisting on the finality of Mohammed's revelation and the immutability of both the Koran and the Sunnah, Islam ensured that there could be no place in it for self-renewal and there has been no self-renewal in Islam as its students would accept.

To begin with there was a lot of free debate in Islam. The presence of Mutazilites and Kharijites, the rise of major philosophers such as Ibn Sina and of Sufi orders should help clinch the issue. As a result of Greek, Persian and Indian influences and the consequent growth of philosophy and sciences, early Islam, in fact, produced and sustained an intelligentsia which, in the exercise of free thought, took little account of the literal interpretation of the Koran. Sunni orthodoxy, though formulated early in the Islamic enterprise, took centuries to prevail. But once it did, in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries partly as a result of the work of Ibn Tamiyya, it has reigned supreme.

Surprising though it may seem, the Western impact on Muslim societies has only strengthened the hold of orthodox Islam. In order to appreciate this point, it is necessary to recall that under the cover of a single terminology, two distinct religious styles have persisted among Muslims. As the well-known sociologist and Islamicist, Ernest Gellner, has put it: "Islam traditionally was divided into a 'high' form, -- the urban-based, strict, unitarian, nomocratic, puritan and scripturalist Islam of the scholars; and a 'lower' form, the cult of the personality--addicted, ecstatic, ritualistic, questionably literate, unpuritanical and rustic Islam of the dervishes and the marabouts."

It would be an exaggeration to suggest that the two traditions have always been at war with one another. For a variety of reasons, Sufi Islam has generally been at a disadvantage and has had to accommodate itself to orthodox Islam. Most Sufis, for instance, have acknowledged that the Shariat is immutable and binding on them as ordinary Muslims. Revivalist movements from time to time such as the Wahhabis have reinforced this disadvantage; Wahhabis fought bitterly against the saint cult which is the core of Sufi Islam. Even so, till recent times there had not existed a social base for a permanent victory of orthodox Islam over Sufi Islam.

Unlike earlier times, however, the colonial and the post-colonial states have been sufficiently strong to destroy the rural self-administration units or tribes that provided the base for the personalized, ecstatic, questionably orthodox, 'low' Islam and thus provided the base for a definitive, permanent victory of orthodox Islam over the other. This, Gellner argues, is the great reformation that has taken place in Islam in the last 100 years and in some ways made its hold on believers even stronger than before.
Neither the colonial nor the post-colonial state need have set out deliberately to weaken rural or tribal societies. That is the unavoidable logic of modernization by way of growth of large urban centres, the decline of rural communities and tribes in economic and political, if not in numerical, terms, and the spread of education, transportation and means of communication. Attempts to promote economic development, access to enormous resources by way of oil revenues, especially since the early seventies, remittances by emigrants to oil-rich Gulf states, and foreign aid were also bound to reinforce this logic.

The ascendancy of ‘high’ Islam also accounts for the failure of attempts at secularization in the Muslim world. As Gellner has put it, the presence of this genuinely indigenous tradition has helped Muslims escape the dilemma which has haunted many other Third World societies: the dilemma of whether to idealize and emulate the West or whether to idealize local folk traditions and indulge in some form of populism. They have had no need to do either because their own ‘high’ variant has had dignity in international terms.

Not everyone will agree with this assessment. Some Muslims have sought to emulate the West. Turkey, since the Tanzimat movement in the late nineteenth century, is one example and so is Egypt which was virtually an autonomous province of the Ottoman empire since about the same time. That these attempts failed is, in fact, a critical issue, but that cannot be dealt with here. Broadly speaking, the assessment is valid. Turkey and Egypt too continue to struggle to contain the tide of Muslim revivalism and fundamentalism.

There is another aspect of the Western impact which deserves attention. Millions of those who have been uprooted from the countryside and pushed into crowded slums and/or have found themselves left out of the benefits of modernization and economic development have sought and found solace in Islam. For them the language of Islam has become the means of coping with ‘moral anxiety, social disequilibrium, cultural imbalance, ideological restlessness and problems of identity produced by the economic transformation of the post-independence period’.

The other major cause of the Muslim failure to move ahead is the ummah itself. In order to appreciate why this should be the case, it is necessary to know what the ummah is. This is particularly so because most non-Muslims, especially Hindus, have no idea what this community of believers means to Muslims and how it has managed to survive the rise and fall of dynasties in the past, endless intra-Muslim wars, the presence of around 50 independent Muslim states, the failure of pan-Islamism and other efforts to establish a coordinating centre.

To begin with, we should note, as Professor Francis Robinson has pointed out in his essay ‘Islam and Muslim Separatism’ that the Muslim era does not begin with the birth of Mohammed, as the Christian era does with the birth of Christ, or with the first revelation of the Koran in Mecca, but with the hijra (migration) of the Prophet and Muslims to Yathrib (Medina) whereby the Muslim community was first constituted. This was to be no ordinary community. It was to be a charismatic community. That is why Mohammed could declare: “My community will never agree on error.” That is why it was to function on the basis of ijma (consensus of the Muslim community or scholars as a basis for a legal decision) and suppress dissent. That is why this ijma was to play a critical role in the development and enforcement of the Shariat.

The well-known five pillars of Islam—bearing witness to the unity of Allah and finality of Mohammed's
Prophethood, prayers with special emphasis on collective prayers every Friday with the face always turned towards the Kaaba, zakat (charity) for purposes of the community, fasting during the month of Ramadan and Haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca — continuously reinforce this sense of the community. Much of this is familiar to all those who know anything about Islam. But Professor Robinson underscores a few points which deserve attention.

First, the last act of the Friday prayer itself commemorates the community as the Muslim turns to his neighbour on either side in performing the salaam. Secondly, no one who has lived with Muslims in the month of Ramadan can fail to see the powerful sense of community generated in the joint experience of fasting. Thirdly, the performance of the Haj represents the ultimate celebration of the community; for all pilgrims don two white sheets, the ihram, in recognition of the equality of all Muslims before Allah, and as they live for the first 13 days of the month on the plain of Arafat, they experience the reality of the community as never before despite differences of language and culture.

In addition, the use of the Arabic script has helped create Islamic languages out of non-Islamic ones, the transformation of Hindavi (or Hindi) into Urdu in India being a case in point. Similarly, Muslims use the same decorative patterns all over the world and segregate their women in the same way. Then there is the classical literature which has been carried wherever Muslims have gone and transmitted from one generation to another. This has produced a common cultural heritage which has defied being swamped by the most dramatic differences of environment, and of pre-Islamic cultures as, say, between India and Arabia. The Muslim personality is a reality despite regional and ethnic differences.

In view of the rise and fall of a number of Muslim dynasties, it is tempting to dismiss the ummah as a myth. This temptation must be resisted. Despite the absence of central political control since the Abbasid caliphate, the ummah has been a potent reality and it remains so today. There has been no period in Muslim history when ideas and movements arising in one corner have not reverberated throughout the Muslim world. Non-Arab and non-Persian thinkers have written in Arabic and Persian precisely because they have seen themselves as part of the larger Islamic community of which these have been the languages of discourse and because they have sought influence throughout the Muslim world. Iqbal, for instance, wrote much of his poetry in Persian in British India in this century, though Persian had long ceased to be the language of discourse in this country. As for ideas and movements, if the Wahhabi influence emanating from Mecca dominated the Muslim mind in much of the nineteenth century, Maulana al-Mawdidi in this century can be said to have fathered what is now called 'Islamic fundamentalism'.

Trouble arises because while the ummah cannot throw up and sustain a directing or even a coordinating centre, it robs different groupings of the right to manage their affairs as independent political entities. That so ancient a people as the Egyptians should have abolished the very name of their country at one stage speaks for itself. Egypt continued to be called the United Arab Republic even after the union with Syria arranged in 1958 had been dissolved in 1960. Equally significant, it went to war with Israel in 1967 and invited disaster upon itself for a cause — Palestine — which was not specifically Egyptian. Today, Iranians are ready to put their future at risk in search of leadership of the ummah, because the Islamic revolution derives its legitimacy from that search. We can hear echoes of the Kremlin-Comintern debate in the Islamic vocabulary in Tehran. Turkey, on the other hand, can be said to have opted for an independent...
destiny since the abolition of the caliphate in 1924. In its case, the pull of Europe may prove stronger than that of Islam. But such an outcome is by no means assured in view of the rising appeal of political or radical Islam there too. The hitherto dominant pan-Turkish sentiment has also begun to stir as a result of the rise of independent Muslim states in Central Asia in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

It is a commonplace that the ummah cannot have and does not have a fatherland or motherland. What is not equally well known is that this is as much the result of the persistence of tribalism as of universalism in Islam. Its remarkable military victories first under the leadership of Arabs and then of Turks at once helped validate its universalism and preserve the earlier tribalism of Arabs as well as of Turks. A tribal society is by definition a closed order; disputes among tribes tend to be a zero-sum game in view of the acute scarcity of resources; resort to violence is natural and normal in such circumstances; the outsider cannot be trusted. This face of Islam does not attract the attention the other universalist one does. But it is equally important. The implications are horrendous for Muslims: political communities cannot crystallize and get consolidated; governments continue to be dominated by tribal and clannish considerations; rule of law and democratic governments remain out of the question. The Closed Circle provides frightening details.

By its nature, the ummah has to be conservative. It had no choice but to close the door of ijma (consensus) as soon the judicial structure had been put in place by the four schools – the Shafi, the Maliki, the Hanafi and the Hanbali. All subsequent attempts to permit ijtihad had to fail, especially in the absence of caliphal power which could offset the hold of the ulema. Political power can maintain a measure of equilibrium vis-à-vis the ulema. But there are limits to it as well, as Pakistanis have discovered. For dictators and populist leaders too find it not only useful but also necessary to appeal to the Islamic sentiment which remains pretty strong.

The ummah's hankering after a saviour flows from its character and so does the commitment to return to pristine Islam or the golden age of Islam – the Medina period of the Prophet and the first four 'rightly guided' caliphs, three of whom, incidentally, were murdered. Though a Shia and an Iranian, Muslims were ready to hail Ayatollah Khomeini as Mahdi. The war with Iraq cut him down to size. Saddam Hussain would have been a Muslim hero if he had followed the invasion of Kuwait with that of Saudi Arabia and thereby blocked a Western riposte. He is again trying to recapture the imagination of fellow Muslims by his defiance of the US and the UN and he may well succeed.

In the nature of things, it was only to be expected that fundamentalist groups would arise in several Muslim lands. Whatever its rationale in terms of corrupt and tyrannical rulers and betrayed hopes, this upsurge is an exercise in self-destruction, though others cannot escape the fallout if only because two-thirds of the world's proven oil resources are locked in the Gulf region. All in all, Islam as a civilization is at bay. It is not encircled; it is closed from within. It cannot escape from the closed circle.

We have noted that just as control of the Mediterranean-Indian Ocean trade accounted for the success of the Islamic enterprise from the eighth to the sixteenth century, despite endless wars and rise and fall of dynasties, its loss by the end of the sixteenth century gravely weakened the Ottoman empire, the sword and shield of Islam in its encounter with the rising power of the West. The same factor was to play a critical role in the rise of revivalist movements beginning with the eighteenth century. The implication should be obvious,
though it is seldom drawn, especially by Muslim scholars. The revivalist movements too represent the retreat of Islam.

The history of Muslim revivalism cannot be gone into meaningfully here. It will suffice to draw a distinction between Islamic revivalism and fundamentalism. The two are not interchangeable synonyms, though they are often so treated. They are too very distinct phenomena, belonging to two different periods in history. Revivalism followed the beginning of the decline of the three great Muslim empires - Ottoman in Turkey, Safavid in Iran and the Mughal in India. Political and economic factors had a great deal to do with the decline, though consensus emerged in each case that it was the result of a lapse on the part of Muslims from true Islam and that it could be reversed if Muslims were to return to it.

As Yousef M. Choueiri puts it in Islamic Fundamentalism: “Islamic revivalism was a reaction against the gradual contraction of internal and external trade, brought about by the mercantile activities of European nations.... Slaves, gold, spices, tea and textiles were the major bone of contention between various central Islamic governments and the seaborne empires of Europe.”

With reference to the rise of the Wahhabi movement, which has doubtless deeply influenced the course of Muslim history, Choueiri adds: “More importantly, the dominant position of the British in Indian textiles, spices and indigo diverted the Gujarat-Red Sea trade route away from Arabia. The British ascendancy precipitated the commercial collapse of the foremost Arabian ruler, the Sharif of Mecca. He consequently lost his ability to act as patron of various tribes or to continue to employ those of Central Asia in his trading activities. Wahhabism managed to rally under its banner tribes which were most adversely affected by this turn of fortune.”

Choueiri lists other similar movements resulting from European economic penetration - the Padri movement in Sumatra between 1803 and 1837; the Faraizis in Bengal from 1820 to 1860; the Sunusiyyas in the tribal region between the Mediterranean coast and Chadian territories; and those in Sudan and Somalia. Though not always, as in the Indian case, the revivalist centres of action were often geographical peripheries of areas lying outside the control of central authorities, their social composition consisting mainly of tribal confederacies or alliances organized into new orders.

As such, revivalist movements from Sumatra in the east to Nigeria in the west in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries conducted a purely internal dialogue, centred on the tenets and prescriptions of early Islam. “Thus, there was no reference to other systems of thought, either for comparative purposes or in order to introduce new elements, and no recognition of the superiority of other cultures was contemplated.”

There was another Muslim response to the West in the ascendant - the reformist response which can be said to have begun with the Tanzimat movement in Turkey at the turn of the century and ended in 1967 with the defeat of Egypt under the leadership of President Abdel Nasser. Nasser, as is well known, had forged the pan-Arab sentiment into a powerful movement which, despite its Islamic trappings, did not look to the supposed golden age of Islam and instead sought to relate itself to the present via close relations with the Soviet Union and other communist countries, and via industrial growth through planning and basic industries in the public sector. The movement was flawed from the start. Pan-Arabism denied the legitimacy of territorial states and introduced an element of adventurism into Egypt’s policies. It was too dependent for its legitimacy on hostility to Israel. Planning and heavy investment in public sector enterprises spawned a regime of corruption and failed to produce adequate returns. Even so, it represented a
continuation of the reformist impulse. Its failure left the field open to Islamic fundamentalism.

Under Islamic reformism, Islam was for the first time dissected and re-evaluated; Western norms and concepts were borrowed; and the self-sufficiency of Islam was shattered. Liberty, constitutionalism and public interest came to be regarded as the key to progress and material achievement. The concept of *shura* (consultation), provided for in the Koran, was rediscovered and interpreted to imply parliamentary democracy. *Ijma* (consensus among the ulema) was similarly equated with public opinion. The well-known advocate of pan-Islamism, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, belonged to the group of reformers as much as Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan in India and Muhammad Abduh in Egypt. Al-Afghani, in fact, sought to demolish the edifice of Islamic philosophy by pointing out its anachronism and futility in the age of modern science and technology.

The reformist phase has to be broken up into two — the period of the ascendancy of Western style liberals and that of military officers and others who sought inspiration first from Nazism and fascism and then from communism. The second period followed the failure of the liberals.

The causes for the failure of liberal reformism should be obvious to students of Islam. The reinterpretation of key concepts like *shura*, *ijma* and *ijtihad* involved an attempt to ignore the history of Islam. It was an exercise in make-believe which could never succeed. The principle of liberty cannot possibly be reconciled to the reality of the *ummah* and the belief in the Koran being the immutable word of God to be taken in the literal sense; *shura* (consultation) was a pre-Islamic tribal institution which has not figured in Muslim history which has throughout been dominated by despotic rulers; the alternative has been anarchy, for such is the structure of Muslim society.

Indeed, that has been the rationale for the dominant ulema view that the worst kind of ruler is better than none. Thus when fascism and Nazism rose in Europe in the wake of the First World War, liberalism quickly lost ground in West Asia. This is a long story which is not material to the present discussion. The pertinent point for us to note is that this trend culminated in military takeovers in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Indonesia and Algeria in the post-war period. With the exception of Indonesia, these regimes sought inspiration from the Soviet Union and communist China, which had replaced Nazi Germany and militarist Japan as the powerful opponents of the West. They too failed to deliver and it is this failure that has facilitated the rise and spread of fundamentalism.

Between 1856 and 1950, Muslim scholars attached to Islam all the labels available to them from the West — rationalism, science, nationalism, democracy and finally socialism. After 1970, the fundamentalists have come to reject all that. Unlike the revivalists and the reformers, they are not concerned primarily with rescuing Muslims from stagnation and ossification. They are possessed by the passion to reinstate Islam as the bedrock of the *ummah* in opposition to Western concepts and values, nationalism being one of them. In that sense, it is a contemporary reaction to 'revolutionary' nationalism and relatively secular forms of government as sought to be practised in several Arab lands under the banner of Arab nationalism.

Up to the 1970s, fundamentalism was more of an intellectual current than a serious political movement. Maulana al-Mawdidi is rightly regarded as the initiator of this current. The Iranian revolution in 1979 marked the first major success of the movement. This has been followed by the fundamentalist takeover in Sudan with the help of the army. But it is their sweeping victory at the polls in Algeria in December 1991 that sent warning
bells ringing, loud and clear, in the dominant Western world which determines what the rest of us think and do.

Growing support for Islamic fundamentalism completes the era which began with the Prophet's *hijra* (flight) to Yathrib (Medina) and the establishment of the *ummah*, on the one hand, and the retreat of Islamic power, as represented by the Ottoman empire, that began towards the end of the sixteenth century, on the other. Iran is seeking to reverse this retreat and inaugurate a new era.

This dual significance of the Islamic revolution in Iran has been missed for a variety of reasons. To begin with, it was dismissed as a Shia affair made possible by the tradition of martyrdom in Shiaism, as illustrated by self-flagellation in the observance of *Moharram*, and the autonomy the Shia clergy in Iran, unlike the Sunni ulema, has traditionally enjoyed, *vis-à-vis* the state. Then it was obscured by the war with Iraq, which, to an extent, took the form of the age-old Iranian-Arab conflict. Even when the war was finally over in 1988, no attention was paid to the pre-eminent position Iran had in the meantime acquired in Sudan, which had been converted into a champion of Islamic fundamentalism.

Thus, it was only when Sudan's role, with Tehran's backing in the training of Algerian and Egyptian fundamentalists in particular came to be highlighted in 1991 that Iran's potentiality came to be properly appreciated. Indeed, judging by the media, the spotlight turned on Iran finally in 1992 when it made massive purchases of state-of-the-art weapon systems from Russia and reports began to circulate that it was trying to acquire nuclear weapons and missile capability with the support of China.

Clearly, it is premature to assess Iranian prospects. But two general points can be made. First, fundamentalism is inherently incapable of stimulating and releasing creative energies which can mark the beginning of a renaissance in Iran and the rest of the Muslim world. Secondly, fundamentalism can generate enormous fervour and energy. While it is open to question whether or not it can be channelized, its destructive potential is obvious.

Again, it is too early to say whether Islamic fundamentalism is likely to move up on the West's agenda. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, Westerners are more willing to face this reality than they were before. Indeed, earlier they regarded Islamic fundamentalism as an ally against communism. Witness the US support for the fundamentalists among the Afghan Mujahideen till as late as 1991.

Be that as it may, however, we are probably witnessing a shift in Western policy orientation similar to the one at the end of the war against Nazi Germany in 1945, when the Soviet ally suddenly got converted into a mortal foe. By way of illustration, we may refer to Brian Beedham's article: 'Turkey Star of Islam'. He wrote: "The appropriately crescent-shaped piece of territory that starts in the steppes of Kazakhstan and curves south and west through the Gulf and Suez to the north coast of Africa is notably liable to produce turmoil and mayhem on a large scale in the coming 15-20 years."

Not counting non-Muslim Israel, the area does not yet have a single working democracy. "Worse, it does have an ideology. Now that Marxism has been lowered into its grave, Islam is the 20th century's last surviving example of an idea that claims universal relevance. Not all Muslims are ideologues; probably most are not. Enough are to make Islam an uncomfortable neighbour."

Barry Buzan dwelt on the same ideological theme in 'New Patterns of Global Security in the 21st Century': "The collapse of communism as the leading anti-Western ideology seems to propel Islam into this role...and many exponents of Islam will embrace this task with relish. The
anti-Western credentials of Islam are well established and speak to a large and mobilised political constituency.\textsuperscript{11}

In an article entitled ‘Defending Western Culture’, that was written before the collapse of the Soviet Union, William Lind drew attention to another aspect of the threat to the West: “If the Soviet Union dissolves, the West’s great right flank, stretching from the Black Sea to Vladivostok, will almost certainly be endangered as the Islamic republics seek to join their Muslim brethren.”\textsuperscript{12}

Western analysts are, of course, not insensitive to the fact that Islamic fundamentalism is, in no small measure, a reaction against utterly corrupt and inefficient regimes which have sought to keep themselves in power through slogan-mongering and ruthless suppression of even vague suspicions of dissent. But the emphasis is beginning to shift to the inherent incompatibility between Western values such as democracy and plurality and Islamic fundamentalism with its accent on the Koran and the Hadith as the sole sources of not only morality but also legality.

The emphasis appears, on the face of it, to be misplaced, in view of the fierceness of the Muslim world’s own all-too-numerous conflicts and rivalries. But fundamental changes have taken place in Islam as such, ironically, largely as a result of the Western impact, which give it a long-term militancy and capacity to confront the West, though in the role of a disrupter and not that of an architect of a rival world order. This incidentally was also all that the communists were capable of under the leadership of the Soviet Union.

The point that developments in Indian Islam must be viewed in the larger context of world Islam cannot be overemphasized. For central to Muslims in India, as anywhere else, is the \textit{ummah}, the universal community of believers. This does not mean that Indian Muslims have been at the receiving end in this world-wide interaction of Islamic thought and practice. On the contrary, Indian Muslim theologians have, from time to time, made valuable contributions to the \textit{ummah}. It is not for nothing that one of the best known Arab historians, Albert Hourani, has described the eighteenth century as the century of Indian Islam.

This membership of the larger \textit{ummah} does not also mean that there has been nothing specifically Indian about Indian Islam. It would have been surprising if this had been the case.\textsuperscript{13} But when we talk in civilizational terms which is necessary in view of the universal nature of Islam, issues have to be framed in the broader context.

It seems to me incontestable that, as in the larger Islamic world, Muslims have been on the retreat in India also. While the process of Hindu self-renewal and self-affirmation has been on since the latter part of the eighteenth century no similar process has been in evidence among Indian Muslims since the battle of Plassey in 1757. Indeed since the decline of the Mughal empire, beginning with Aurangzeb’s death in 1707, the first priority of Indian Muslims, albeit not quite conscious and well-articulated, has been self-definition and self-preservation and not self-advancement. All major movements among them, beginning with Shah Waliullah\textsuperscript{14} in the eighteenth century, have been inspired principally by this concern for demarcation from Hindus and Hindu practices which the converts had brought with them.\textsuperscript{15}

On a surface view, the Muslim League’s campaign for a separate homeland, culminating in the state of Pakistan in 1947, cannot be clubbed with movements of demarcation and definition such as the Faraizi, Wahhabi, Tablighi and so on. Indeed, the memory of having been India’s rulers figured prominently in the mental makeup
of the leaders and supporters of the Pakistan movement. Even so, the fear of being swallowed back into the Hindu ‘ocean’ gave it the sweep and power that it acquired even among Muslims who were to stay on in the Indian republic. Political separatism was an offshoot of religious separatism.

Professor Yogendra Singh in *Modernization of Indian Tradition* has compared and contrasted Sanskritization among Hindus with Islamization among Muslims. Both are forms of upward mobility whereby lower sections of society seek to improve their status. But there the comparison ends. Professor Singh notes two differences. First, while “revolt against hierarchy through Sanskritization implies a withdrawal from tradition...and might eventually accelerate the pace of modernization”, Islamization, “as a movement of revivalism of basic virtues in the Islamic tradition...might contribute to greater conservatism by increasing the hold of the religious elites on the population.”

Secondly, he writes, the movement of Sanskritization is in no way approved by Brahmin priests and yet it goes on. Islamization, on the contrary, is not only engineered by the religious elites but results into an enhancement of their hold on the Muslim masses. It is thus a traditionalizing movement par excellence.

Seen in this perspective, two interrelated propositions become obvious. First, the determined bids by Faraizis, Wahhabis, Al-Hadithis and Tablighis to remove Hindu influences and practices from the lives of ordinary Muslims and to block Western ideas and ideals were part of one single movement and, as such, one programme could not be separated from the other. Secondly, the presence of Hindu elements in Indian Islam alone could make its modernization possible by way of exposure to, and acceptance of, Western values; their elimination inevitably closed Indian Islam to modernization. But for the British tilt towards them, necessitated by the compulsions of the Raj, Indian Muslims would have faced marginalization long before 1947.

I would like to discuss here Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan’s role in the modernization of Islam and therefore in checking the general retreat of Islamic civilization. Sir Sayyid was greatly influenced by the Naqshbandi order, Shah Waliullah (the eighteenth century reformer) and Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi, the Wahhabi leader who revived the principle and practice of *hijra* (migration from *dar-ul-harb*, land of war or those lands not under Muslim rule, where, under certain circumstances war can be sanctioned against unbelievers) and *jihad* (holy war against non-Muslims). Sir Sayyid saw the world as a Muslim, as Professor Francis Robinson puts it.

This does not mean that Sir Sayyid’s attempt to interpret the Koran in terms of laws of nature, or Western learning, did not involve innovation. It did. If men such as Jamaluddin Afghani, the leading pan-Islamist of the nineteenth century, ridiculed him as a *nechari* (naturist—his efforts to harmonize the laws of Islam with nature earned him this title), they were justified. But his own intention was to strengthen the appeal of Islam, to “reveal to people the original bright face of Islam”, as he put it, and make it possible for young Muslims to imbibe Western learning and yet remain Muslim.

His intentions apart, however, Sir Sayyid did not have the capacity to impose his view of compatibility between the Koranic revelation and miracles, on the one hand, and modern science, on the other, on the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College which developed into the Aligarh Muslim University. The whole enterprise would have ended in smoke if he had not surrendered control of theological education at Aligarh to Ali Baksh, one of his bitterest critics on that issue.
So fierce was the opposition that Sir Sayyid had to agree not to have anything to do with students in order to pacify his critics. Of his two successors, it may be noted that Viqar al-Mulk was profoundly interested in increasing the Islamic content of education and daily life at Aligarh and Mohsin al-Mulk played a leading role in the politics of the Muslim League.

This brings me to Aligarh's central role as an instrument of Muslim separatism. It produced young men deeply conscious of being Muslims and capable of operating effectively in the modern world, which the ulema, by and large, were not. While the latter could provide support to modern political movements, as they in fact did to the Khilafat movement and the Muslim League's campaign for a separate homeland, they could not promote and lead such movements. The leadership of the Khilafat movement, it may be recalled, centred on Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, both products of Aligarh and not on Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Aligarh students served as the League's storm troopers.

It has long been accepted that the cause of education among Muslims in the then North-West Province would not have suffered if the Aligarh University had not been established. Muslim presence in educational institutions in Bengal was abysmally low. In the North-West Province, if anything, it was in excess of the size of the Muslim population. Aligarh only gave education a Muslim and, therefore, separatist dimension.

Sir Sayyid himself was not a separatist for much of his life though he became one in the last phase. But that issue is not under discussion here. What is important is that Sir Sayyid proved a failure as a modernizer. Instead, his efforts to promote Western education among Indian Muslims produced an explosive mix of 'nationalism' and Islamic revivalism, of which partition of India in 1947 was only the first disastrous result. For Pakistan has yet to learn to cope with it. Islamic fundamentalism is making it extremely difficult for Pakistan to function as a normal nation-state. In ideological terms, fundamentalists dominate the scene; only ethnicity is able to offer some kind of resistance to them.

The second observation I wish to make in the discussion on Indian Islam follows from the first. It seems to me that Indian Muslims view themselves, above all else, as a religious community and a threat to that status, real or imaginary, is what moves them deeply. By that reckoning I do not see Indian Muslims as a political community in being or in becoming. This assessment is contrary to much that has been written on the subject for a long time, especially since independence which is at once surprising and unsurprising. Surprising because the survival of pre-1947 responses and formulations speaks of an incapacity to take into account so significant a development as the elimination, on the one hand, of a powerful agency (the British Raj) which could manipulate the forces at play in the country and, on the other, of the western Uttar Pradesh-centred Muslim elite which could make common cause with that agency. Not unsurprising, partly because events leading to, and following, partition could not but have a traumatic impact on us and partly because partition violated the very concept of territorial nationalism which in the secular realm has served as India's main raison d'être.

Muslim separatism, as it developed in British India, has been discussed extensively and competently. Even so, it is necessary to make some points in order to be able to discuss post-1947 developments in a meaningful way.

First, the British Raj in India was critically dependent on collaborators; it just could not have survived otherwise. The collaborators came from both the old and the new (British-produced) order. If Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan chose
the path of collaboration, so did most leading Hindus of that period. His Persian ancestry is relevant in this context. He spoke for the Persianized Muslim elite centred in western UP which played a crucial role in the rise of Muslim 'nationalism', leading to the formation of Pakistan. There is no similar Persianized Muslim elite in today’s India and there is no power with which such an elite, even if it had somehow survived partition and subsequent modernization, could have combined. Second, even the first step towards Muslim ‘nationalism’ could not have been taken in British India in the absence of separate electorates. This British move did not prove decisive, as the poor performance of the Muslim League in the elections to the state legislatures in 1937 showed; in the Muslim-majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab, the dominant Muslim parties and leaders made common cause with the relevant sections of Hindus — the poor and the landless in Bengal and the Hindu and Sikh land-owning peasantry in Punjab. Even so, separate electorates laid the basis of Muslim separatism. Our founding fathers abolished separate electorates and, mercifully for us, our rulers have not yielded to the pressure for allowing the dangerous scheme to make a re-entry by the back door, which is what the demand for proportional representation amounts to.

Even joint electorates could have left some space for a Muslim political community if there were a sufficiently large number of Muslim-majority constituencies in independent India. But outside Jammu and Kashmir, there are only two such parliamentary constituencies in the whole of the Union of India.

Muslim ‘nationalism’ found its ‘fulfilment’ in the formation of Pakistan if anything so artificial (it was all along propped up by the Raj) and so negative (it arose out of the fear of Hindu domination in free India) could find ‘fulfilment’. Inevitably that ‘fulfilment’ marked its demise not only in India, where the necessary conditions for its rise and growth inevitably disappeared but also in Pakistan. For Pakistan has been an utter failure in terms of the ideology of Muslim ‘nationalism’.

Within a couple of years of the establishment of Pakistan, the Punjabi identity asserted itself over Islamic universalism, provoking the assertion of language-based Bangla cultural identity which culminated in a sovereign Bangladesh in 1971. Interestingly, this was the first case of a country breaking up under the weight of its own contradictions after the Second World War.

And what has remained of Pakistan since voluntarily serves the ends of the United States which must, by the very logic of its being, seek to undermine any Islamic assertion anywhere. Finally, the intensity of intra-ethnic clashes in Karachi and elsewhere speaks for itself. Pakistan is a grand failure in terms of its self-definition and the Indian Muslims know it in the heart of their collective heart even if they do not wish to take note of the total disarray in Muslim West Asia, including the Gulf region.

Seen in rational terms from the perspective of Indian Muslims, partition was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Islam in India. They felt orphaned as they felt orphaned after 1857. And they returned to the collaborationist role that Sir Sayyid had recommended to them after 1857 — this time with the Congress government. Nehru made it relatively easy for them to do so by ignoring their role in the country’s partition and by denouncing as more dangerous the ‘majority communalism’ (his expression) which existed largely in his own imagination. But I for one doubt whether the Muslim response to the new situation would have been very different if Nehru’s pronouncements had been closer to the reality on the ground which was that the Hindus did not constitute a community in any relevant sense of the
term, or if someone else was India's first prime minister, provided, of course, that he fulfilled his obligation of ensuring that the Indian Muslims could enjoy their rights as Indian citizens.

By virtue of its commitment to territorial nationalism which, unlike ethnic nationalism, does not exclude any group from full citizenship, and secularism and democracy based on adult franchise which emphasize the same principles of non-discrimination and equality, independent India at its birth was very different from British India in the nineteenth century. It offered Indian Muslims a unique opportunity to share power with non-Muslims, which is something Muslims in no country have ever done. They have either ruled over non-Muslims or been ruled by the latter.

To be able to take advantage of this opportunity, which has been truly available to them additionally by virtue of the nature of Hindu society, Muslims had to overcome, to begin with, the trauma and shame of partition. In this regard, they have shown remarkable resilience. They overcame the trauma a long time ago and it is now impossible to find a Muslim who feels guilty on account of his community's role in the division of the country. This, however, could not have sufficed, and has not sufficed, to enable them to share power with others in the democratic political order. By and large, Muslims have accepted a passive patron-client relationship with those in office; they have not sought to participate actively in the political process by trying to share leadership.

No political party has succeeded in making Muslims partners in the common enterprise of building a secular and democratic India. Muslims, as a community do not, and, indeed, cannot accept secularism as a legitimate doctrine for the public domain. For them the public domain is not separate from the all-encompassing religious realm. This problem haunts the entire ummah and not only its Indian constituent; it is first and above all a community of believers.

Finally, with the disintegration of the Soviet state, Islam is the only important collectivist ideology to survive in the twentieth century. In no Muslim country can the philosophy of liberalism be said to be in the ascendant. In fact, if anything, the hold of the collectivist approach has increased in recent years. That is what Islamic fundamentalism represents.

That reality inevitably impinges on Indian Muslims, including the intelligentsia. There is, however, a difference in the Indian Muslim situation as it obtained before partition and as it obtains now.

Advocacy of jihad (holy war), for example, is out of the question in India in view of the correlation of forces. Muslim leaders, such as they are, cannot now invoke the concept of ijma (consensus) as their predecessors could and did before 1947. No organization or individual can claim to embody such a consensus as the Muslim League and Jinnah could. In addition, the present Muslim leaders cannot, in today's India, pour ridicule on the politics of numbers as men like Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan could.

To put it differently, even the most adventurist and irrational Muslim cannot question the legitimacy of the political order based on the Constitution, which, in turn, rests on the right of the individual. Many of them are, in reality, opposed to individualism and therefore liberalism and secularism; all three are products of one large revolution. But they cannot bring this opposition into the open since these assure for the community participation in the political process and enable it to preserve and even strengthen its identity. In plain terms, Muslims have no option but to accept the status quo, and, by and large, they do.
The concepts of democracy and secularism can, in theory, threaten to disrupt the community by encouraging individualism and challenge to *ijma*. In reality, they do not. The liberal challenge from both within and without remains and is likely to remain feeble for the foreseeable future. The secularism-pseudo-secularism debate has been and remains a non-Muslim, indeed, essentially, an intra-Hindu affair; so does the desirability or otherwise of a common civil code. The Muslim community has drawn a great ‘China Wall’ around itself which cannot be easily breached.

As discussed earlier, two processes have been on among Hindus since the early nineteenth century—modernization and self-renewal. Of the two processes modernization has in a sense been stronger. For one thing, behind modernization has stood the appeal and power of the dominant Western civilization, which has been all-encompassing as no other has ever been. For another, it has plainly been out of the question to organize the economy and polity on a non-Western basis. All attempts to conceptualize an alternative, beginning with Gandhiji and ending with Jayaprakash Narayan in the 1970s, have come a cropper. For our purpose, the power and appeal of modernization is best illustrated by the easy sway Pandit Nehru acquired in the wake of independence.

Nehru was Gandhiji's lieutenant and heir-designate during the freedom movement. But he stood for a very different India from the master's and, as independence approached, he left the latter in no doubt that he was determined to have his way. The letters exchanged between them on the eve of independence speak volumes. Nehru was dismissive of the Mahatma's approach as outlined in *Hind Swaraj* (1908) and the Mahatma...
acquiesced in it virtually without protest, though it may be recalled, Gandhiji had taken the initiative in raising the question of what kind of India was to be built on achievement of freedom, emphasizing that he still stood by his old vision. Gandhiji did not reply to the issues raised by Nehru.

Perhaps he realized that he had played his role. Regardless, however, of whether he realized it or not, the time was truly up for him. This is not to deny either his heroic role in the struggle to contain passions unleashed by partition or the historic importance of his martyrdom. But, in the final analysis, that only facilitated Nehru's pre-eminence and the downgrading of his only potential rival, Sardar Patel, who, incidentally, was no Gandhian either.

The Sardar had better insight (not just administrative and organizational skill) into India's needs. But the atmosphere was not propitious for him precisely because the Hindu element in his personality was stronger than the modernist with its emphasis on socialism and secularism as articulated by not only Nehru but also other leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia who had come into prominence in the 1942 Quit India Movement. Thus while Gandhism and Gandhians have been a marginal phenomenon in independent India, Nehru continues to dominate the thinking of the Indian intelligentsia three decades after his death. Modernizers are still in command.

Nehru's role in the modernization of India is well known. There is, however, another face of Nehru which places him, even if indirectly, among the proponents of Hindu civilization. This, of course, is not one of Nehru's prominent faces. He rarely allowed it to come to the fore. But unlike most of his followers, Nehru was deeply involved with the problem of the cultural-civilizational personality of India.

Nehru himself spoke and wrote extensively for well over four decades. Much of what he wrote as Prime Minister between 1947 and 1964 is still not available for scrutiny. As such, we have to rely primarily on S. Gopal's assessment of him as spelt out in his three-volume study of Nehru. So far, no one else has been allowed full access to the Nehru papers. There is, however, evidence to show that somewhere at the back of Nehru's mind lurked reservation regarding the path on which he had helped launch India. Though this evidence is available publicly in the collection of his speeches, it has been neglected.

This is particularly surprising because it is well known that Nehru struggled to discover the soul of India as no other Indian public figure did; Gandhiji's struggle was of an altogether different kind, though it was far more valiant. Nehru was handicapped in a variety of ways. He did not know Sanskrit, or for that matter, any Indian language well enough. He did not have direct access to Indian tradition even by way of folklore since Motilal Nehru had deliberately Westernized himself and brought up Jawaharlal in a manner appropriate to an English gentleman. He was educated at Eton and Harrow. Nehru was essentially not a deep thinker. To the extent he was interested in ideas, he was familiar only with ideas current in Britain in his impressionable years; Fabian socialism, for instance.

Above all, he approached India's past, historical as well as spiritual, through British scholars who inevitably saw India through their culturally coloured prisms. Western scholarship was also in its infancy. Much more valuable work was done when Nehru was too deeply involved in public affairs to keep track of it. As it happened, the more valuable work was done by French and German Orientalists who were not accessible to him on account of the language barrier. Many of us still encounter this difficulty.
Nehru's intellectual background led him to take a synthetic (aggregationist) view of Indian culture, though on a more careful reflection, it should have been possible for him to recognize, on the one hand, its integral unity founded on yoga, of which the Veda itself is a fruit, and, on the other, its capaciousness on the strength of the same boundless yogic foundation which placed no limit on the freedom of the human spirit. Inevitably this synthetic view of Indian culture led him — especially in view of the Persianized cultural background of his own forebears and of the Kashmiri Pandit community in the plains and, indeed, in the valley itself — to accept the theory of a Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis. The fact of partition must have provoked some doubt in his mind. He was too sensitive and honest an individual not to be shaken by so traumatic a development.

But, by then, it was too late for him to review and restate his basic position, even if he were so inclined. No political leader in his position could afford to do so. And if it was too late before partition, it was certainly worse after independence when he was charged with the task of covering up the wounds inflicted by the Muslim League in the hope that the cover-up would allow the healing process to take over in course of time. All that makes it truly remarkable that he allowed himself to say as much as he did. Three of his speeches deserve attention in this regard. The first of these was his address to the convocation of the Aligarh Muslim University on 24 January 1948. In it he said:

I am proud of India, not only because of her ancient, magnificent heritage, but also because of her remarkable capacity to add to it by keeping the doors and windows of her mind and spirit open to fresh and invigorating winds from distant lands. India's strength has been twofold: her own innate culture which flowered through the ages, and her capacity to draw from other sources and thus add to her own. She was far too strong to be submerged by outside streams, and she was too wise to isolate herself from them, and so there is a continuing synthesis in India's real history, and the many political changes which have taken place have had little effect on the growth of this variegated and yet essentially unified culture.

I have said that I am proud of our inheritance and our ancestors who gave an intellectual and cultural pre-eminence to India. How do you feel about this past? Do you feel that you are also sharers in it and inheritors of it and, therefore, proud of something that belongs to you as much as to me? Or do you feel alien to it and pass it by without understanding it or feeling that strange thrill which comes from the realization that we are the trustees and inheritors of this vast treasure.... You are Muslims and I am a Hindu. We may adhere to different religious faiths or even to none, but that does not take away from that cultural inheritance that is yours as well as mine.

In view of his bitter experience of events leading to partition, it is inconceivable that Nehru could be so naïve as to believe even vaguely that educated Muslims could possibly regard themselves as 'sharers and inheritors' of the cultural heritage he was speaking about. In fact, it would be reasonable to infer that he said what he did precisely because he knew that the opposite was true.

Nehru posed another question to his audience: "Do we believe in a national State which includes people of all religions...and is essentially secular as a State, or do we believe in the religious, theocratic conception of a State which regards people of other faiths as somebody beyond the pale?" He, of course, did not remind them that only a few months earlier many of them had sympathized with, if not actively worked for, Pakistan. But he did speak of "one national outlook" which would inform the working
of the Indian state, though he did not spell out the source for the development of that "one national outlook."

In a different way and in a different context, though, Nehru expanded on this theme. In his address at the inauguration of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in New Delhi on 9 April 1950, he said:

One can see each nation and each separate civilization developing its own culture that had its roots in generations hundreds and thousands of years ago. One sees these nations being intimately moulded by the impulse that initially starts a civilization going on its long path. That conception is affected by other conceptions and one sees action and interaction between these varying conceptions.

Culture, if it has to have any value, must have a certain depth. It must also have a certain dynamic character. If we leave out what might be called the basic mould that was given to it in the early stages of a people's growth, it is affected by geography, by climate and by all kinds of other factors. The culture of Arabia is intimately governed by the geography and the deserts of Arabia because it grew up there. Obviously, the culture of India in the old days was affected greatly, as we see in our literature, by the Himalayas, the forests and the great rivers of India among other things. It was a natural growth from the soil....

The individual human being or race or nation must necessarily have a certain depth and certain roots somewhere. They do not count for much unless they have roots in the past, which past is after all the accumulation of generations of experience and some type of wisdom. It is essential that you have that. Otherwise you become just pale copies of something which has no real meaning to you as an individual or as a group....

This emphasis on roots, depth, past, basic mould and soil must come as a surprise to all those who are not familiar with this little known face of Nehru. It must also raise the question why he did not develop this theme and indeed why he kept this face of his, by and large, so well covered? Many answers are possible.

The last of the three addresses I have in view was the Azad memorial lecture Nehru delivered on 22 February 1959. He said:

When Islam came to India in the form of political conquest it brought conflict; it encouraged the tendency of Hindu society to shrink still further within its shell. Hence the great problem that faced India during the medieval period was how these two closed systems, each with its strong roots, could develop a healthy relationship.

The philosophy and the world outlook of the old Hindus was amazingly tolerant. The Muslims had to face a new problem, namely, how to live with others as equals. They came into conflict with Christendom and through hundreds of years the problem was never solved. In India, slowly a synthesis was developed. But before this could be completed, other influences came into play.

Typically, Nehru skirts inconvenient issues. He does not tell us why the Christian-Muslim encounter did not lead to a synthesis despite the common Semitic origins of the two faiths, or how Hindus and Muslims could move towards one if both were truly closed systems, or why Hindus shrank into their shell before the onslaught of Islam since they had not faced a hostile civilization earlier. He also uses the wrong concept of tolerance in relation to Hindus and Hinduism in place of the proper one, which is 'comprehensive' or 'all-embracing' or 'total'. Hindus were ‘amazingly tolerant’ because their dharma
(worldview) provided for every possible expression of the human spirit and indeed they so remained in spite of their decline for centuries for the same reason.

We can, however, let all that pass. The statement is notable for us, on the one hand, for its admission that the Hindu-Muslim conflict had not been resolved when the British arrived on the scene to produce new complications, and, on the other, for its diagnosis of the cause of the Hindu decline and the cure. Nehru, as is well known, generally avoided the first and was preoccupied with the second problem. The same, incidentally, was true of the Mahatma, with the difference that while he saw a resolution of the problem in social reform, with heavy emphasis on removal of untouchability, Nehru regarded the development of science and technology through the mediation of a strong state and contact with the West, which for him included the Soviet Union, as the key to India's future.

Thus, it is possible to take the view that Nehru put aside the issue of the pre-eminence of Hindu civilization because he was convinced that Hindus needed first to overcome the weakness resulting from their lagging behind in the field of science and technology. It must be remembered that he grew up in Britain in the age of optimism before the First World War when the Western man entertained little doubt that limitless progress was possible, if not inevitable, and that science based on reason and technology were the instruments of that march into the future. Nehru, it may also be recalled, spoke frequently of the need to overcome 'superstition' and to cultivate the scientific temper. He did not identify Hindus as his target audience. But they were his target audience.

It is inconceivable that Nehru was not sensitive to Muslim resistance to modernization and secularization. Indeed, it can safely be assumed that he left them alone in respect of their Personal Law and did not seek to bring them into the orbit of a common civil code precisely because he was aware of the depth of their opposition, though that is clearly an essential part of a modern polity based on the principle of equal citizenship. Perhaps he expected that their attitude would change in course of time under the pressure of forces unleashed by the spread of education, economic development and the democratic political process. If he ever spelt out his views on how the Muslims would come out of their ghetto psychology after independence, it has still not been made public. Alternatively, it is possible that he was too busy managing the affairs of the state of India on a day-to-day basis to be able to pay attention to this problem. We just do not know Nehru's views on a long-term resolution of the Muslim question.

Nehru spoke often of the need for 'national integration'. But if he ever defined what that called for by way of change among Muslims in practical terms, I am not aware of it. The addresses quoted earlier do not contain any action programme. He denounced communalism. He was particularly harsh on what he called 'Hindu communalism' on the ground (as he explained in a letter to Dr. K.N. Katju, at one stage his home minister) that it would be far more dangerous in view of the power of Hindus in independent India. In reality, his perspective provided for nothing nobler than co-existence between Hindus and Muslims. His was basically a programme which would help avoid riots, which understandably revolted him as they did other sensitive Indians. Indeed, the policy of secularism cannot realistically be interpreted otherwise, the grandiose theories notwithstanding. It certainly did not provide, even in theory, for a cultural synthesis. It sought to bypass the civilizational-cultural issue altogether.
It is beyond question that no issue occupied so much of Nehru's time and energy as Kashmir. This was clearly an obsession with him so much so that it would be no exaggeration to say that he allowed his whole foreign policy to be heavily influenced by it. The reasons for this are complex and need not detain us in the present exercise. Three points may, however, be made in respect of his handling of the problem. First, having placed himself in a vulnerable position by offering to hold a plebiscite, he allowed himself to be blackmailed by Sheikh Abdullah. The evidence is overwhelming. The near independent status he conceded to Jammu and Kashmir violated his very concept of the kind of Indian state which could protect India's unity. It would be relevant to recall his opposition to Punjabi Suba in this connection. Similarly, the manner in which the Sheikh rigged the election to his Constituent Assembly could not but have caused the deepest hurt to Nehru. It negated his commitment to democracy.

Secondly, Nehru effectively used the Kashmir issue to silence his critics. It is truly remarkable that as India's position in the state became precarious, necessitating the overthrow and imprisonment of the Sheikh and maintenance, by New Delhi, in power in Srinagar of one corrupt regime after another, the more successful was Nehru in using the Kashmir card at home. Clearly, the Indian people acquiesced in this self-deception. The psychology behind this acquiescence needs to be explored. It has not been, to the best of my knowledge. It, however, seems to me that our presence in Kashmir served as a substitute for cultural self-assertion for Hindus, especially for the Western-educated elite engaged, albeit unconsciously, in a desperate search for an ersatz substitute. In plain terms, Nehru or no Nehru, we have not been ready for a genuine cultural self-affirmation.

Finally, once he had accepted, whether of his own volition or under coercion, a constitutional arrangement for Kashmir which would preserve the 'identity' of Kashmiri Muslims, above all a product of their relative isolation from the rest of the country on account of geographical factors, he had also acknowledged, even if only by implication that he could not use the Kashmir 'experiment' to promote a change in the attitude of Muslims in the rest of the Indian Union. This brings me to the point I made earlier regarding Nehru's lack of confidence in his ability to persuade Muslims to get out of the psychological and cultural ghetto of their own making and join the mainstream brought forth, in his view, by the process of modernization. It does not follow that Nehru's secularism was phoney; but it does mean that it was lame. To borrow the Chinese phrase, it did not walk on two legs. It wobbled on one, though Muslims provided him a crutch in the shape of electoral support which facilitated his and the Congress party's stay in power.

The Nehru order, however, did not rest on the secular pillar alone. It would have collapsed long ago if it had. The Nehru structure has stood mainly on three pillars in conceptual terms — socialism, secularism and non-alignment — and these concepts have been interlinked. Nehru's was an integrated worldview. As such, it is only logical that if one of them becomes dysfunctional, the others must get into trouble. In my opinion, they have.

Socialism was clearly central to Nehru's worldview. For, it shaped his views on nationalism, democracy, secularism and non-alignment as well. Nehru, it may be recalled, was the first Congress leader to define nationalism in terms of anti-imperialism and link anti-imperialism to the Soviet leadership's effort to fight capitalism both at home and abroad. No significant non-
Marxist Congress leader bought this proposition when Nehru began to propound it in the twenties because they were opposed to socialism at home. But they could not produce an alternative definition of nationalism for the simple reason that they could not explicitly link it with the country's cultural past for fear of offending the Muslims. So, finally, Nehru's formulations prevailed. The triumph became complete when he came to dominate both the ruling party (after Sardar Patel's death in 1950) and the government and gave an anti-Western tilt to the country's foreign policy in the name of non-alignment.

It is possible that Nehru, a man of moderation, would not have gone as far as he did if, for one thing, Krishna Menon, who had spent much of his adult life in London amidst socialists of different varieties, had not come to exercise enormous influence on him and if, for another, the West under Britain's inspiration had not tilted towards Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

It follows that the concept of secular nationalism more or less divorced from the country's cultural heritage could not have been a viable proposition if it was not girded by the promise of a brave new socialist world of equality. As far as I know, Nehru never spoke of creating a new Indian. Mother India stuck to him as he said she stuck to every Indian whatever he may do or think. On account of the same restraint, he did not think in terms of dragooning India into the socialist Utopia as Stalin did in the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong in China. There was also another side to his personality which linked him to India's past. He was more than a deeply moral human being. He yearned for spiritual light. He was particularly drawn to Swami Vivekanand and the Ramakrishna Ashram. It is known that he sought solace from Anandmai to whom Indira Gandhi also turned. Once he visited Sri Aurobindo Ashram as well and met The Mother. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of the Indian Republic, disclosed that in the last years of his life, Nehru used to come to him frequently to listen to the Upanishads which, as The Discovery of India shows, always fascinated him. Even so, it cannot be denied that his programme was intended to produce a new Indian in the style of the new Soviet man or China man.

For Nehru, freedom was meaningful mainly if it paved the way for economic growth. He said so publicly again and again. Similarly, for him, democracy was meaningful if it facilitated movement towards economic and social equality. His was a commitment not so much to liberal democracy which prizes liberty more than equality as to democratic socialism which reverses the order of priorities. Nehru did not play havoc with the Constitution in his search for socialism. He was too imbued with the spirit of liberalism to do that. It could not occur to him that non-democratic means would be justified in the pursuit of socialism. But by emphasizing equality and, in the process, undermining the concept of the liberty of the individual, he created an atmosphere in which it became possible for his successors, Indira Gandhi foremost among them, to play with the Constitution and the constitutional arrangement. The emergency would have been inconceivable if demagogues, sired by Nehru, however unwittingly, had not prepared the ground.

This, however, takes us too far afield. I am here interested in establishing that socialism, however vaguely defined and implemented, was the linchpin of the Nehru system and that the system cannot possibly survive the disappearance of this linchpin. The linchpin has clearly disappeared. The collapse of the Soviet system and state and the opening of the Chinese economy to multinationals would by themselves have settled the issue. As it happens, the threat of bankruptcy as a result of the mismanagement of the economy since the very start of planning in the early fifties and more particularly in
recent years has forced the Government of India to make a volte-face. It has abandoned all the dogmas and shibboleths of the Nehru-Indira Gandhi era. And the irony of it is that a Congress (I) government is presiding over this great reversal.

I am not unaware of the fact that this is not the popular interpretation of Nehru. And I cannot possibly insist that this is more valid than the popular one. Indeed I could not have put it forward if I had not become sensitive to the concept of the power of the time spirit in recent months. This has led me to the conclusion that much more could not have been successfully attempted by way of reaffirmation of Hindu civilization in the period in question.

It is not particularly relevant to speculate on the 'ifs' and 'buts' of history. So, I would not wish to speculate on what turn India could have taken if Sardar Patel, or C. Rajagopalachari, or Rajendra Prasad had taken over as prime minister in place of Nehru, except to say that each of them would have been out of tune with the dominant sentiment in the Third World and among the Indian intelligentsia.

The real, as Hegel said, is rational. Things are what they are because in the given interplay of forces, they could not possibly have shaped differently. And it is the correlation of forces that shapes history not ideology. On the contrary, an ideology itself is a product of those forces. On this reckoning, our cultural-civilizational reaffirmation had to await the collapse of communism and its Third World expressions such as Arab nationalism, and the acquisition of a certain measure of scientific, technological, economic and military strength by us. Islamic revivalism-fundamentalism is, of course, not a direct offshoot of communism; it antedates the latter by centuries. But in the post-war era it has been as critically dependent on Soviet power as has been pan-Arabian.

Thus, it is possible to think of Hindu self-affirmation and self-renewal as a process to which Gandhiji and Nehru contributed considerably and to conclude that L.K. Advani, with his quiet but confident assertion of the primacy of Hindus and Hinduism in India, fits in this unfolding progression. Advani too can ask Muslims the same questions Nehru posed at Aligarh in 1948.

The fact that the Nehru order was under strain since the Chinese attack in 1962 and in visible decline in recent years is seldom recalled in the public discourse on the Ramjanambhoomi issue. But that only shows how lopsided the discourse is.

The Chinese attack knocked down two myths: one, that communist states do not commit aggression which is supposed to be the peculiarity of imperialism, and two, that the policy of peaceful co-existence could help avoid the need for military preparedness. If it were not for the bitter dispute between the Soviet Union and China, which obliged Moscow to befriend New Delhi, it would have put paid to the policy of non-alignment as such. That, however, only postponed the demise. It materialized in 1989, when the Soviet Union itself disintegrated.

Nehruvian socialism has been in deep trouble for quarter of a century. By 1967, it was obvious, except to Marxists and fellow travellers, that all that it had done was to have spawned a regime of corruption, slowed down economic growth, degraded the country's public life and generated enormous tension in society.

The pursuit of these two policies has been a reflection of the partial nature of the Hindu recovery. A more
confident Hindu psyche would never have spurned the US offer of cooperation [President Eisenhower's offer in 1954 of 'proportionate' military assistance, proportionate that is, to India's size, importance and potentiality, in comparison to Pakistan, with which the US had then concluded a mutual security pact and embraced the illusion of friendship with China in the occupation of Tibet. China 'repaid' Nehru with (1) demands on Indian territory in disregard of the internationally recognized watershed — the highest mountain range principle; (2) friendship with Pakistan; and (3) an outright attack on India in 1962] and allowed Pakistan to seek military parity with, if not superiority over, this country. Similarly, such a psyche would never have reconciled itself to an economic philosophy which would stunt the growth of the agricultural as well as the business community.

This un-Hindu disregard for power, economic and military, and the illusory belief that social equity is possible in conditions of economic weakness is also the product of minds nurtured in the tradition of Chaitanya's Bhakti movement which Bankim Chandra Chatterjee criticized in Anandmath. It is not an accident either that this tradition among Hindus has weakened since independence, as Hindus have grappled with the problems of the state, as it weakened among the Sikhs when they battled the Mughals and the Afghans, or that it is invoked by all those who swear by a 'composite culture' and are alarmed at the reintroduction of the Kshatriya element in the urban Hindu's personality. In my view, the second phase of the freedom struggle, 'the struggle to regain its Hindu identity', will involve a reconstitution of the fragmented Hindu personality along lines different from the one pursued so far, so that the missing Kshatriya constituent of the old Hindu personality is restored. As for secularism, supposedly the third leg of the Nehruvian tripod, two points have to be made. The first is the usual one, which is that Hinduism is tolerant and, therefore, secular. This is valid and it is sheer dishonesty or naivety to suggest, as is being widely suggested these days, that Hinduism can admit of theocracy. That is a Muslim privilege which no one else can appropriate.

Secondly, the dominant concern of Hindus over the last 200 years has been with achievements in the secular realm — education, trade, industry, equality with the British before independence and with the West since independence. The upsurge I have been speaking about, in fact, relates wholly to the secular realm. This does not mean that our spiritual-religious heritage has no place in this scheme. But it does mean that Hindus have recognized once again, as they did in the past, that the secular realm has to be secured if a culture and a civilization has to flourish. Swami Vivekanand emphasized the importance of secular achievements and so did Sri Aurobindo.

Society and culture, it need hardly be said, are interlinked. Social changes brought about by secular forces are duly reflected in culture in course of time. That has been happening in the case of Hinduism. It is not being Semitized and it cannot be Semitized as a result of a deliberate design on the part of some individuals or groups. But from being a confederation of ways of life, it has had to move towards being a federation. To put it differently, the small society has had to give way to larger ones as small economies and polities have had to give way to larger ones. Only a secular and modern intelligentsia could have presided over these changes. The task would have been beyond the reach of traditional elites. That is the true significance of secularism. It may be called the 'midwife of Hindu nationalism'.

The concept of secularism and the secularization process have, of course, not been a Hindu monopoly.
Members of other religious groups have also pursued them but essentially as individuals. Muslims as a group have certainly shunned the concept as well as the process to the extent they can in a larger modernizing and, therefore, secularizing society. This is evident from the rapid expansion of traditional mosque-attached madrasahs (schools), opposition to one common civil code and adherence to the Shariat. Faith can never be a private affair for most Muslims. As such, political parties and leaders have to woo them as Muslims. This has inevitably produced a backlash of which the Ramjanambhoomi issue has become one major expression.

I do not criticize Muslims for their reluctance and even refusal to take to the secularization process. Nor can I applaud Hindus for their participation in this process. For while the spirit of liberalism and pluralism, which the West represents, is alien to Islam, as it has developed since the eleventh century when the orthodox ulema triumphed over philosophers, Sufis and other kinds of innovators, they are in conformity with Hinduism which revels in plurality. But this divergence creates a serious problem for both which the self-proclaimed secularists have refused steadfastly to face.

Finally, it is a pity that there does not exist the slightest awareness, either among Hindus or Muslims, that Muslims need the rise of Indian civilization as much as Hindus, if not more. Indeed, such is the grip of the misrepresentation of Hindutva in anti-Muslim terms that its proponents, including some leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party, themselves, speak of it defensively.

History knows of any number of instances when a community has needed to be protected, or liberated, from, its own ‘leaders’: Germans under Hitler; Russians under Stalin; Chinese under Mao Zedong; and, more recently Iraqis under Saddam Hussain, for example. Hitler and Saddam Hussain first let loose a reign of terror at home and broke the spirit of their own peoples before they went to war with other countries. Indeed, the war at home is central to all dictators. Stalin got an opportunity to extend his tyrannical rule to eastern Europe only towards the end of the Second World War. Earlier he, like Mao later, had to be ‘content’ with mass massacres at home, and he was about to return to that ‘sport’ at the time of his death in 1953. To extend the argument further, while the West has doubtless celebrated the collapse of communist tyrannies in eastern Europe, the principal beneficiaries have been the peoples of those unhappy lands.

Indian Muslims, I am convinced, after many years of reflection, too, like Hindus, need self-renewal; unlike Hindus, they have proved incapable of engaging in such an exercise even under the stimulus provided by British rule, and only the triumph of Hindutva can help create a milieu which obliges them to try and overcome the inertia of tradition reinforced by the ulema.

I must confess that, like many others, I too have tended to think in terms of leaving Muslims to their ghetto mentality, and to oppose the demand, by BJP leaders, among others, for a uniform civil code. My argument has been that so large and obstinate a community cannot be pushed against its will, that any attempt to do so would aggravate existing tensions and that such a risk should best be avoided. I have also had no reason either to believe that ‘modernizers’ in the community are anything but an utterly marginal phenomenon or to dispute that the ulema continue to represent it. That, incidentally, was also why I was not opposed to the scandalous piece of legislation known as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act which, in fact, denies even utterly destitute Muslim divorcees the right to alimony from their former husbands.
Incidentally, this attitude is also proof that our secularism has become a euphemism for callous indifference to the fate of Muslims. V.P. Singh and others may woo them in their search for power, but they cannot offer them a way out of the ghetto mentality. The BJP offers them such a way, though it too does not know the glorious implications for Muslims of the Hindutva platform and harps on the old demand for a common civil code.

A common civil code can be, indeed is, part of a nationalist platform which, on the one hand, demands that all citizens live under the same laws, and, on the other, entitles Parliament, or any other legally constituted body, to enact such laws for all citizens. But it cannot figure prominently in the Hindutva platform which must, by its very nature determined by the Hindu civilization’s unlimited catholicity and broadmindedness, seek to influence by way of example and not engage in coercion. The Hindu temperament also militates against uniformity and coercion. Unlike Muslims, Hindus have never sought to fix a mould in which Hindu personality must be shaped. Indeed, in the case of Brahmins, the personality shaped by the tradition of memorizing texts is yielding place to a different one, better attuned to critical analysis. Pandit Nehru could recite no Sanskrit shloka. That apart, however, the proponents of ‘secular nationalism’ cannot sidetrack certain questions. Since they too cannot deny that Muslims, on the whole, have remained frozen in their attitudes, as illustrated by their passionate adherence to the Muslim Personal Law, they owe it to themselves to explain why this remains the case after more than four decades of life under a secular political order, and what they propose to do to end this stagnation. They should not beat about the bush and indulge in tirades against Hindu ‘communalism’, or fascism, or whatever new term of abuse they can borrow from the West; for they also cannot be so ridiculous as to argue that it in any way accounts for the prevalence of the ghetto mentality among Muslims.

It is common knowledge that, if anything, the revivalist, fundamentalist sentiment among Muslims has become stronger in the past decade or so when hundreds of millions of petrodollars have poured in from Saudi Arabia, Libya and other oil-rich countries, and that the terrorist menace we now face in Kashmir is one offshoot of this revivalist fundamentalist upsurge. For, it cannot be disputed that the Jamaat-i-Islami played a key role in whipping up initially an anti-India hysteria in the valley and that hundreds of madrasahs under its control, generously financed by its patrons abroad, have provided the recruiting ground for Pakistan-backed terrorists and secessionists.

I understand from Muslim reformists, a rare species, that the position of poor Muslim women has deteriorated as a result of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, which Rajiv Gandhi pushed through Parliament in 1986 under pressure from the ulema, because it has taken away from them what little protection Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code had given them earlier. This may or may not be the case. The condition of poor Muslim women has been too bad to deteriorate much further. But it is indisputable that Hizb-i-Islamia, an underground outfit in Jammu and Kashmir, has forced even educated Muslim women to return to the burqa. No secularist Hindu is likely to lose his sleep on such an insignificant development! But they cannot deny that this constitutes a violation of the spirit of rights conferred by the Constitution as much on Muslim women as on anyone else.

It is sheer escapism and worse (dishonesty) to talk of bride burning or maltreatment of women among Hindus in this specific context. Apart from the undeniable fact
that Hindu women are coming into their own in millions as a result of education and employment outside the home, laws exist and more stringent ones can be enacted to deal with such problems among Hindus. Muslim women cannot be given similar protection under the existing dispensation. Moreover, no one can possibly suggest that Hindus have insulated themselves from the winds of change. On the contrary, Hindu society is being, as it were, reconstituted and there is no organized resistance to it.

One of the greatest problems of Hindu society, and, by that logic, of Indian society, is the fragmentation of the Hindu social order into more and more castes. Inevitably, our fundamental struggle is to restore a kind of unity, without which, it makes little sense to talk of Hinduism. We have to produce a sense of coherence in an order which has become, over the centuries, increasingly fragmented and chaotic. All our social movements in the last 200 years and all our political movements in the last 100 years should be seen in that context. So viewed they would not look divisive and, therefore, unhealthy. I do not, for instance, regard Kanshi Ram and the Bahujan Samaj Party which he has launched as a disaster in spite of his spiteful attacks on Brahmins who have helped preserve our heritage under extremely trying circumstances. This is part of a larger struggle to reverse the process of fragmentation and restore the original *chaturvarna* (fourfold) order to the extent it is viable in the present context. The struggle is going to be long and painful. It requires large minds and large hearts to be able to accommodate so many currents which are addressed to a common purpose, the common purpose being a new sense of coherence, a new sense of unity without break in continuity.

It would be premature yet to sound an optimistic note, but I sense, even if still vaguely, the possibility of a profound change in Indian Muslims also. The issues involved in this formulation are clearly too many and too complex. So, I will limit myself to a few observations.

First, no worthwhile attempt has been made for decades to define Indian nationalism in *Indian* terms for the simple reason that no one has been able to accommodate the Muslim factor within the framework of Hindu civilization. Nehru talked of a Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis but one has only to refer to his address to the Aligarh Muslim University in 1948 and to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in 1950 (mentioned earlier) to know that he came to entertain serious reservations about it.

Secondly, the Indian intellectual-political elite sought to fill the void arising out of the absence of a conscious articulation of a nationalist ideology with the talk of secularism. This strategy worked for so long on two counts. First, there existed, in the Congress, an organization which could represent Hindu aspirations in the secular realm and treat Muslims as its clients in all but name. Second, the Hindu recovery of self-confidence and, therefore, need for self-affirmation in civilizational terms was of an order that it could be accommodated within the Congress framework.

Surely, these conditions no longer obtain. The Congress has grown weak over the years; with the arrival of the Janata Dal and its offshoots on the scene, Muslims have got another option and therefore want to be wooed rather than treated as clients; and, above all, Hindu recovery, going back to the eighteenth century, has finally acquired such power and momentum that it cannot be content to operate in disguise which is all that was
possible under the Congress umbrella. So they have erected their own institutional arrangements with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh as the base and the BJP, the VHP and other organizations as its arms.

Thirdly, a series of developments—the collapse of pan-Arabism, or Arab nationalism, symbolized currently by the defeat of Saddam Hussain's Iraq; return of Western powers to the Gulf; disappearance of a rival anti-US power centre in Moscow; renewed tensions between Sunni-dominated Baghdad and Shia Iran; failure of the Islamic revolution in Iran to justify itself in terms of results; and the power struggle in Tehran—must create for Indian Muslims a psychological situation the like of which they have not faced. Since the beginning of the decline of the Mughal empire in the early eighteenth century, a critical point for Indian Islam, there has existed for them a centre of hope and reference. No such reference-hope centre exists now.

Leaving aside the implications of the rise of the RSS-BJP-VHP combine as a significant factor in Indian politics, it is about time we pay attention to the hitherto neglected question of the impact of Hindi on Muslim youth in North India. For all we know, a return, even if slow, to one-culture situation may have begun. The process cannot but be prolonged and painful and the pace may not be good enough for modernists. But obsession with speed is alien to Indian civilization which underwrites the Indian nation-state.

I for one see no alternative to it. This is my view of the place of Muslims in India—one strand in the multistrand Indian civilization interacting with others. This is also my interpretation of what Pandit Nehru meant by cultural synthesis. Only he did not attach to language the importance I do.

1992 will doubtless go down in Indian history as the year of Ayodhya. This is so not so much because recent events there have pushed into the background all other issues such as economic reforms and reservations for the ‘other backward castes’ as because they have released forces which will have a decisive influence in shaping the future of India.

These forces are not new; they have been at work for two centuries. Indeed, they were not even wholly bottled up. But they had not been unleashed earlier as they have been now. It is truly extraordinary that the demolition of a nondescript structure by faceless men no organization owns up should have shaken so vast a country as India. But no one can possibly deny that it has. These forces in themselves are not destructive even if they have led to some violence and blood-letting. They are essentially beneficent. They shall seek to heal the splits in the Indian personality so that it is restored to health and vigour.

Implicit in the above is the proposition that while India did not cease to be India either under Muslim or British rule despite all the trials and tribulations, she was not fully Mother India. And she was not fully Mother India not because she was called upon to digest external