

## HINDUTVA AND EXPLOITED, OPPRESSED SECTIONS OF SOCIETY

### A. Workers



#### **Myth**

**The RSS labour wing Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) was formed to protect the interests of workers.**



#### **Fact**

During the independence struggle, workers were organized by communists. The Communist Party's ideology is based on the understanding of 'irreconcilability of class interests' and the need to organise workers to fight for their rights in a society divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The Sangh Parivar founded the Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh (BMS) to counter the influence of the communists amongst workers.

The BMS rejects the class-struggle theory. It is critical of capitalist greed for profit but not of the system which gives rise to the capitalists and their absolute control over the means of production. It puts forward the 'Hindu' alternative - the ideal of converting enterprises into occupational families (i.e., accepting the inherent patriarchal power relations in an enterprise). Workers are to participate in management under the patriarchal supervision of industrialists. According to the BMS, workers should cultivate harmonious relations with the owners of enterprises. BMS rejects international solidarity of labour. In practice BMS operates as a milder form of trade union, especially amongst white-collar workers. It never undertook any militant struggles. Also it mobilized workers for 'Kar Seva' to demolish the Babri Masjid. It is conspicuous by its absence amongst agricultural labourers, poor peasants and adivasis. Currently its major demand is swadeshi, which does favor small and local industrialists to some extent. But the BMS is totally quiet about the condition of workers in these 'swadeshi' enterprises. These 'swadeshi' enterprises practice extremely repressive methods in their dealings with the workers and the working conditions and the wages in them are abysmally bad.

### B. Women



#### **Myth**

**The RSS believes in equality of men and women.**



#### **Fact**

When women relatives of RSS members wanted to join the RSS, an exclusively male organization, they were advised to form a separate Rashtrasevika Samiti. (Note





that RSS is National Volunteers Organisations, whereas Rashtrasevika Samiti means Committee of Servants of the Nation). This was formed in 1936. It draws subtly from the Manusmriti, where the womb is equated to a field, in which men sow seed, making the produce of the field theirs. Women are understood as dependents and under the protection of father, husband and son in different stages of their lives. Women are denied access to upanayan (beginning of sacred learning of males), marriage for women is prescribed as a substitute for learning, and serving the husband running the household is equated to studentship.

According to Golwalkar, disparity is an indivisible part of nature and we have to live with it. According to him, 'harmony' and not equality should be organizing principle of society. Women should primarily be 'ideal' mothers and bring up children within RSS framework of samskaras (rituals). A.B. Vajpayee in an interview to Hindi weekly Dharmayug (1990) said, 'Women who want to become like men are worth ridiculing.' The Sangh Parivar regards women primarily as mothers in their social role. The subordinate position of women gets reflected in various ways.

Mridula Sinha, ex-President of BJP Mahila Morcha, in an interview in Savvy (April 1994), states:

1. A woman should not work outside the home unless her family is economically deprived.
2. I gave dowry and received dowry.
3. I oppose women's liberation as it is another name for 'loose morals'.
4. We oppose of equal 'rights' for both sexes.
5. There is nothing wrong with domestic violence against women: very often it is women's fault. We advise women to try and adjust, as her 'non-adjustability' creates the problem.
6. Women's future lies in perpetuating the present, because nowhere else are women 'worshipped' as they are in India.



One of the past vice-Presidents of BJP and a prominent functionary of the BJP Mahila Morcha, Vijaya Raje Scindia, led a band of supporters in a protest march against 'anti-Sati' legislation, asserting, 'It is the fundamental right of Hindu women to commit sati, as it is in preservation of our past glory and culture.'

Nearly 20,000 'Kar Sevikas' helped the 'Kar Sevaks' assembled to demolish the masjid, by cooking and cleaning for them. Some of the women belonging to different 'women wings' of Sangh Parivar fronts and the Shiv Sena exhorted their male 'brethren'



to participate in communal violence in Bombay. The Rashtrasevika Samiti has an ambivalent stand on dowry and bride-burning. Samiti members help each other to raise the dowry. They disapprove of divorce and there is no provision of legal counselling to women fighting against their families for their rights. In response to their coming into newer spaces of social life, the Sangh Parivar tries to restrict their role as ideal mothers and wives, subordinate to the males. They do not have any concept of women's rights.



**Myth**

**Women had a very honourable place in the past, and the Sangh Parivar wants to restore this place to Hindu women.**



**Fact**

While propagating these Hindutva votaries purposefully forgets the place, which Hindu women had in the past. This is very well depicted by Manusmriti, which spells out that woman is the property of man and has to loyally serve him irrespective of his whims and fancies. Forgetting Manusmriti, votaries of Hindutva concoct the myth that women had a more honourable place in Hindu society; it is only to protect them from being the 'prey' of aliens that restrictions on their social life were imposed. SP wants to relegate women to subordinate roles to men in society.



**C. Dalits:**



**Myth**

**Savarkar and Ambedkar had a similar approach to the caste system.**



**Fact**

The Sangh Parivar is making a big attempt to appropriate and iconize Ambedkar, and these assertions are a part of that attempt. Savarkar opposed the caste system but did not support or participate in any of the campaigns against untouchability launched by Ambedkar. The Sangh Parivar tries to equate Savarkar and Ambedkar, saying that their teachings are similar, as both wanted to reform Hindu society. Savarkar did not fight against social oppression. Ambedkar stood for liberty, equality, fraternity and democracy, and organized untouchables to fight for their social and economic rights. Similarly Ambedkar's attempts to get entry into temples also went unsupported by the



Hindutva votaries who are today claiming to be opposed to these practices.



### **Myth**

**The RSS and Ambedkar both wanted to reform Hindu society.**



### **Fact**

Ambedkar made all efforts to struggle against the humiliating treatment given to Shudras in Hindu society. His campaigns for access to public drinking water (Chavadar Talav, Mahad), Manusmriti Dahan and Kalaram Temple were not supported by the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha. He undertook to burn Manusmriti, while Golwalkar chose to write eulogies in praise of the same book. According to Golwalkar, Manu was the first and greatest lawgiver of the world, whose code had asked all people all over the world to learn wisdom from traditional Brahmins. Manu had converted the division of labour into the caste system, according to which the only duty of Shudras is to serve Brahmins, who in turn should give him leftover food, discarded clothes and utensils. If Shudras try to study, their tongues should be chopped off and if they happen to hear the Vedas, molten lead should be poured into their ears. The Purush Sukta states that Brahmins are the head, Kshatriyas are the arms, Vaishyas are the groin and Shudras the feet.

The movement against untouchability was never on the agenda of the RSS. In December 1992 the Dharam Sansad of the VHP passed a resolution stating that the Indian Constitution is non-Hindu and should be replaced by a 'Hindu Constitution'. According to the Sangh Parivar, the Manusmriti has provided justice to all - the laws therein are more important than Constitution of India. Ambedkar states that Hindus are neither a nation nor are they a society. The reality of the social life of Hinduism is the caste system, because of which there is a lack of dialogue and opportunities in cultural life, and there is no feeling of togetherness. Due to social, economic and educational contradictions, Hindus cannot

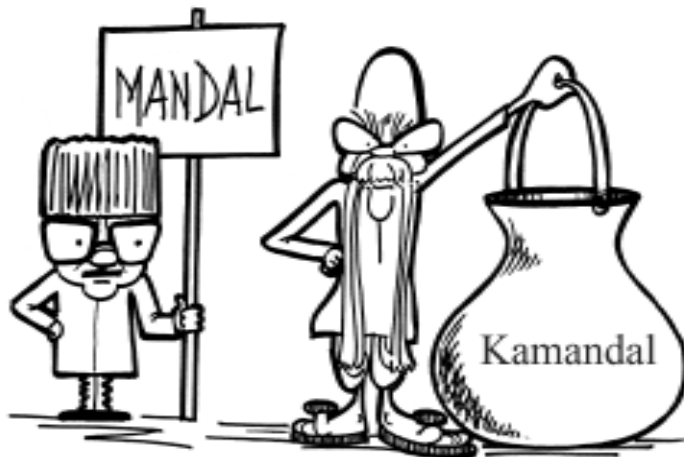




become a nation. After his initial support to the idea of Pakistan on the grounds that Muslims are a separate nation, he realised that formation of Pakistan would increase the possibility of a Hindu Raj). This realization made him change his opinion, saying 'If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt be the greatest calamity of this country. No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost.'



The inadequacy of the policies of the previous government has resulted in the failure to bridge the social gap between the low caste/oppressed class and other sectors of society. Mandalisation has unleashed a process of assertion by the lower castes and OBCs; frightened by this the upper castes are equating 'casteism' with communalism. Communalism is the virus spearheading the interests of the elite of society, the upper castes. The 'casteism' of the lower castes has an anti-exploitative, liberatory potential, a potential to usher in secularization, a potential to strengthen democratic norms in society. It gives them an identity, a ground to struggle for their social and economic rights.



On the face of it the Sangh Parivar asserts equality, but in a subtle way it sustains the chronic, low-intensity warfare against the lower castes. The BJP has couched its views and attitudes towards Dalits in a very clever way. It will not criticize Dalits but whenever faced with their movements, demands and cultural upsurge, it will start beating the drum of abolishing reservations and upholding merit. There is a whispering campaign against reservations for Dalits. The BJP could not oppose Mandal for electoral reasons, so it decided to distract the social focus to the Ram temple.

Dalits have realized the designs of the Sangh Parivar, and except for a few upwardly mobile elements from amongst them, others do not fall prey to their 'social engineering' tactics.



**Myth**

**The RSS Sarsanghchalak is correct in saying that Ambedkar supported RSS ideology.**



**Fact**

Sudarshan's assertion that Ambedkar drafted a Western constitution under the pressure of Congress insults Dr. Ambedkar in a deeper way. Ambedkar was not one to buckle under pressure. He had values and ideas of his own; an the example of this was when he resigned from the Cabinet because the Hindu Code Bill drafted by him did not pass, and also because he was side-tracked in other matters of policy and planning. Sudarshan's comment is derogatory to the thinker and leader who did all possible to ensure that he stands for his values and ideas rather than compromises for the sake of power and pelf. At the same time Sudarshan seems to be promoting his own postulate that the Indian Constitution is based on Western values and should be replaced by one based on Hindu holy books. It is with this intention that the BJP-led NDA coalition appointed the constitution review committee, which of course was a dismal failure, thanks to the opposition of RSS formulations by most of the people of this country. Ambedkar did not buckle under pressure from anybody while drafting the Constitution as he was committed to the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity which have been enshrined in this book. Also it was the Constituent Assembly, a representative body of the Indian people, which guided the Constitution, and not Western influence. One can go on to say that the Constitution itself was one of the major contributions of Babasaheb.

Sudarshan also asserts that Dr. Ambedkar stuck to Hindu culture while embracing Buddhism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. By no stretch of imagination one can call all the tendencies prevailing in India as Hindu.





The dominant tradition which passes off as Hinduism is Brahmanism. Dr. Ambedkar called Hinduism as Brahminic theology and went on to say that he was born a Hindu and that was not in his hands, but surely he would not die a Hindu. Buddhism is not a part of Hindu culture. The central part of dominant Hinduism is the caste system, while Buddhism stands for social equality.

According to Ambedkar the clash between Brahminical Hinduism and Buddhism is a major part of Indian history. He divides Indian history into three parts. First came the revolution - the coming in of Buddhism to oppose Brahminical caste and gender hierarchies. This was followed by counter-revolution, during which Brahmanism attacked Buddhism at the ideological level through Shankaracharya and at the social and political level by the onslaughts of kings like Pushmitra Shunga and Shashank. It is due to this that Buddhism became extinct from India till Dr. Ambedkar brought it back.

He chose this religion, while rejecting Hinduism, mainly because of its values of liberty, equality and fraternity. To present him as supporter of the RSS and RSS ideology is a clever deceit, a political move, to win over sections of Dalits to RSS-Hindutva politics.



### **Myth**

#### **Ambedkar was anti Muslim!**



### **Fact**

Pursuing aggressive Hindutva, Vinay Mr. Katiyar (BJP leader) has been going hammer and tongs spreading anti-Muslim sentiments. And to buttress his venom he has been using selective quotations from Ambedkar's writings showing him as anti-Muslim.

One can safely say that Ambedkar was a giant of an intellectual with a prolific contribution to different aspects of Indian politics. His writings and speeches spread over 16 volumes cover practically all the aspects of social and political problems faced by India. He wrote with depth and went to the root of problems.

What are being misused are selective quotes from his books on Partition. A complete reading of the book reveals that he studied the problem in its multiple dimensions and in his summary he went on to say two major things. 'Strange as it may appear Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Jinnah, instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue, are in complete agreement about it. Both agree, not only agree but insist that there are two nations in India - one the Muslim nation and the other the Hindu nation.' He continues, 'They differ only as regards the terms and conditions on which the two nations should be. Jinnah says India should be cut up into two, Pakistan and Hindustan, the Muslim nation to occupy Pakistan and the Hindu nation to occupy Hindustan. Mr. Savarkar on the other hand insists that, although there are two nations in India, India shall not be divided into two parts, one for the Muslims and the other for Hindus; that the two nations shall dwell in one country and shall live under the mantle of one single constitution: that the constitution shall be such that the Hindu nation will be enabled to



occupy a predominant position that is due to it and the Muslim nation to made to live in the position of subordinate co-operation with the Hindu nation' (Thoughts on Pakistan, Third section, chapter VII).

He was for composite Indian nationalism: 'Is it not a fact that under the Montague Chelmsford reforms in most provinces, if not in all, the Muslims, the non-Brahmins and Depressed Classes united together and worked for the reforms as members of one team from 1920 to 1937? Herein lay the most fruitful method of achieving communal harmony among Hindus and Muslims and of destroying the danger of Hindu Raj. Mr. Jinnah could have easily pursued this line. Nor was it difficult for Mr. Jinnah to succeed in it' (Thoughts on Pakistan, p. 359)

Rather than being anti Muslim, he tried to project that both Hindu and Muslim nationalism are not democratic Nationalism. While chairing the drafting committee of Indian constitution he picked up principles which were totally opposed to the ideologies of communal Nationalism. In addition he was concerned about safeguards for both minorities and Dalits.

#### D. Adivasis



##### **Myth**

**Adivasis are Hindus!**



##### **Fact**

Adivasis have their own culture. They practice nature worship and are animists.

From 1987 the RSS has activated its offshoot Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) into higher gear. Adivasis, the most neglected part of society, are being wooed through newly devised cultural mechanisms.

To begin with, the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram used the word Vanvasi, instead of the correct nomenclature, Adivasi. The claim put forward by Hindutva is that these are parts of Hindu society who went to the jungles to escape conversion by Muslim kings. Due to their long stay in jungles they became untouchables and drifted away from the fold of Hindu society. This assertion kills many birds with one stone. On one side it tries to project that despite Aryans coming here from outside, they are not foreigners like the Muslims and Christians. Then the aggressiveness of Muslim kings is restated and the inner cruelty of Brahminical Hinduism is hidden, with the Adivasi 'problem' projected to be coming from outside. A shifting of the 'blame' of inner ills to outside forces! Another aim achieved through this formulation is to bring Adivasis into the Hindu fold and claim that it is not a conversion but mere Ghar Vapasi (returning home) of these wretched of the earth. At the same time, in aid of the political project of intimidating the Christian missionaries working in the villages, grounds are prepared to attack them as foreigners.

The forays of the RSS in Adivasi areas intensified from the mid-80s when it was realized



that directly attacking Dalits, the way they were attacked in 1980 and 1986 in Gujarat through caste violence, would be counterproductive at electoral level. The strategy evolved was to use them as foot-soldiers against Muslim minorities. At the same time electoral arithmetic brought to their attention the substantial population of Adivasis trying to come up through modern education and thereby disturbing the status quo. It is here that the Christian missionaries were perceived as a big threat to the project of the Sangh, which wants to maintain status quo vis-a-vis Adivasis, Dalits and women. Through the network of schools spread in the tribal areas these missionaries were/are instrumental in getting a section of Adivasis empowered, and in the process the upper-caste affluent base of the Sangh was getting jittery.

The posting of RSS volunteers for work among Adivasis was very systematic. Apart from attacking the Christian missionaries as foreigners, Ghar Vapasi was brought in on a big scale in all the Adivasi areas scattered from Gujarat to MP to Orissa. Around this time many swamis descended upon these areas - Lakkhanand in the Phulbani area, Aseemanand in Dangs, disciples of Asaram in Jhabau, and many other such efforts were unleashed. In Adivasi areas they resorted to intimidation, saying that you are Hindus, Hindu rituals are like this, and so these have to part of your life. Dilip Singh Judeo (of 'God is money' fame) in Chhattisgarh, had the record number of Adivasis converted to to Hinduism by newly devised baptizing techniques.

At the same time Hanuman was popularized as a God in this area, and of late Shabri, the destitute women who had the privilege of offering wild berries to Lord Ram, is being projected as the Goddess of Adivasis. The cultural symbolism cannot be missed in the selection of these deities. Hanuman was the unquestioning devotee of Lord Ram, with muscle power as his main virtue. He is capable of flying while carrying a huge mountain. But he is carrying the mountain because he cannot identify the herb needed for treatment of Laxman, Ram's's younger brother. This is what is the signal to Adivasis: unquestioning loyalty to Lord Ram, no need for education. So what are the Christian missionaries doing here? Why should they be trying to educate you? They are foreigners. And thus Pastor Staines is targeted and brutally murdered along with is two young sons.

Shabri, the embodiment of poverty, is being glorified on purpose: 'Your great ancestress had the privilege to offer wild berries to the Lord. She is your role model, poor, powerless and with blind reverence and devotion to the upper castes.' The recently held festival in Subir, Dangs district of Gujarat, celebrated Shabri, and lakhs of Advasis were brought from neighbouring Adivasi areas for the festival. The local people were scared that the RSS festival may create trouble and they may try to forcibly convert tribals to Hinduism. It was declared that Christians and Muslim are foreigners and a threat to the Hindu religion. This Kumbh was meant to protect Hindus from foreigners. In the beginning it was announced that conversions were the aim of the Kumbh and than silence was kept on this point once various groups questioned their motives. This was boldly stated in the CD produced by the Shabri Kumbh organizers. By the time the court ruling came to ban this



CD was given, lakhs of copies had already been circulated and had the desired effect of threatening the Christian community.

The Shabri Samiti distributed saffron flags to the villagers and spread the word that those who do not put up the flag will be regarded as anti-Hindu, and those who do not visit the Kumbh will also be regarded as anti-Hindu. In this intimidating atmosphere the intervention of human rights groups resulted in the central government sending its observers. The Adivasi leaders also realized the game being played by the Sangh and mercifully a large section of native Adivasis kept away from the festival. But the Sangh has succeeded in sowing the seeds of hate and intimidation far and wide.

The native Adivasi festivals and gods are being undermined in various ways. Adivasis never used to have temples or places of prayer within four walls; most of their Gods were in the open. The festivals, dancing and feasting also were held in the open. With the new influence things are changing. The rift between the 'Hindu' and 'Christian' Adivasis is widening, which surely will have an adverse impact on the life in the area. In pursuance of the same tactics, a summer festival and Anjani Mahotsav (festival) are now being planned. Anjani, mother of Hanuman, was never the object of veneration. Now she will be occupying a place amongst the deities.

From the villages young girls in the age group 14-15 are being picked up to be trained as Sadhvis who can give recitation of Ramayana and other Hindu scriptures. The whole emphasis is on the cultural manipulation, and the basic issues of Adivasis like land, education and health are being cleverly sidetracked through this culturo-religious manipulation.

One can see the social engineering in practice. The positive experience is that it seems that intervention of human rights groups can partly change the direction of events in a healthy direction. Just before the Kumbh, human rights teams had investigated and put out a report, which was taken note of by the authorities and local leaders. This put the Gujarat government and Hindutva forces on the defensive. The expected turn-out did not materialize and even the Ghar Vapasi was muted. The feeling of fear amongst the minorities in such areas has intensified.

## **E. Minorities**

### **1. Muslims**

At the time of partition of the country, the elite of Muslim community left India for Pakistan, and mainly poor Muslims and a few professionals and traders were left behind. With further worsening of the status of Muslims, Muslim fundamentalists came to the fore, unconcerned about the real material problems of the community. The community remains poor, backward and in the grip of orthodox elements.



**Myth**

**Successive governments pampered and appeased the community**



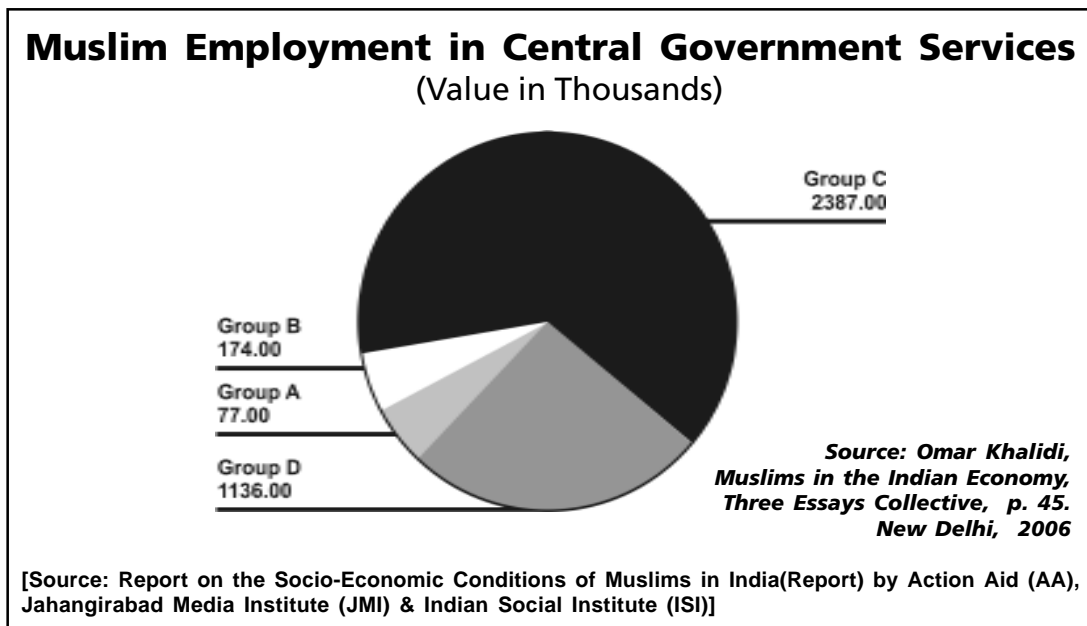
**Fact**

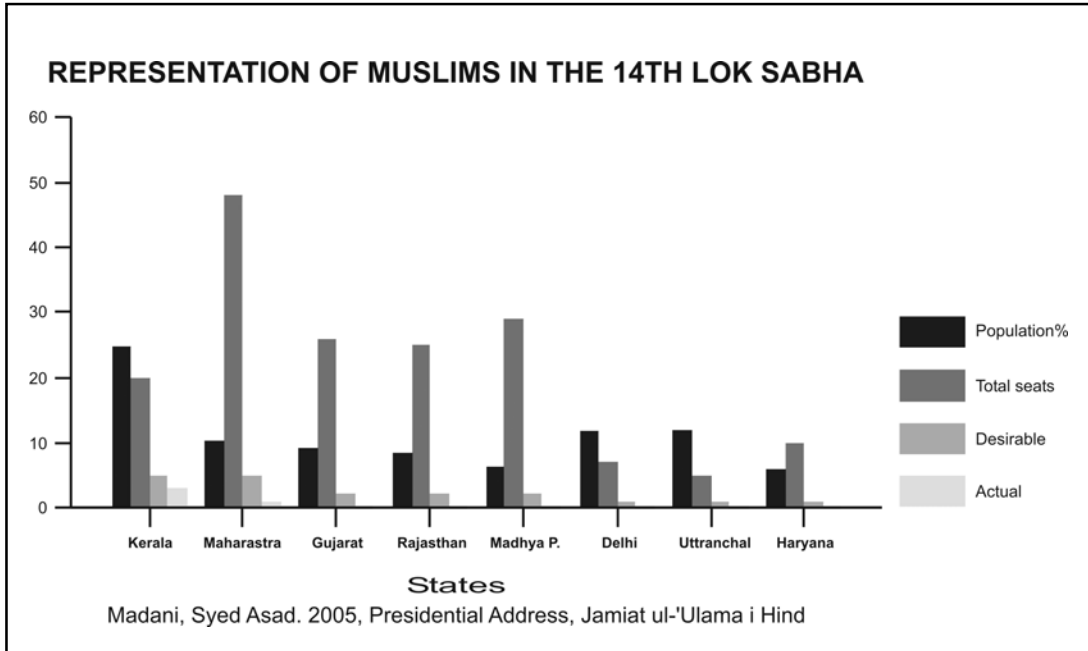
Their status in employment and other parameters is a good index of their social status and 'appeasement'.

<b>Muslim Employment in Central Government Services: 2000</b>			
Group	Estimated Strength	Percentage of total strength	Muslim representation in 1992 (in %)
A	77,680	2.05	1.61
B	1,74,675	4.63	3.00
C	23,87,625	63.22	4.41
D	11,36,686	30.09	5.12
Total	37,76,666	100.00	

Source: Omar Khalidi, *Muslims in the Indian Economy*, New Delhi, Three Essays Collective, p. 45.

The Sachar committee appointed by the Govt. highlighted the economic social and political plight of Muslim community.





## Summary of SACHAR COMMITTEE Report



### Comments on Rajinder Sachar Committee Data

The only concern shown for the Muslim community has been in matters of security and appeasement of the Maulanas. Muslims are grossly underrepresented in all sectors of



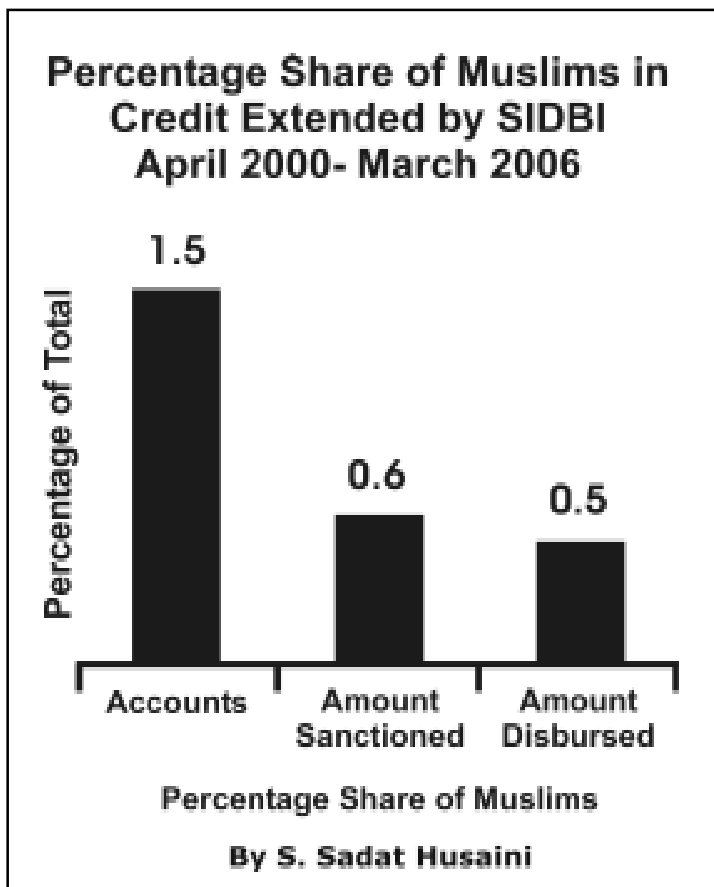
employment and social facilities. Their under-representation in the judiciary, coupled with rank poverty and marginalization in society, has resulted in their over-representation as those accused in cases or jailed on some or the other charges. While Muslim population is 13.4 per cent, amongst jail inmates they are 23.4 per cent. On the plight of Muslims, Justice Varma remarks, 'It's not the democracy alone that can sustain a society like India. It has to be an inclusive democracy. All sections of society have to be properly represented and have a voice in all aspects of governance and policy making. Democracy today is not just the rule of brute majority. It can last and be resilient only if all sections of society are co-opted and taken along'(Indian Express, 28 Oct 2006). Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah says, 'Higher number of Muslims in jails is also a reflection of the fact that Muslims are poorer generally and are more likely to be picked on by the police because they are easy prey due to fewer entitlements. Prejudice amongst them also exists but gets compounded because of poverty.' It can be said that their condition is like that of the Afro-Americans in the US. In US their proportionate share in jails is much more than their population-share. Less opportunities in the formal channels is one of the reasons for some of them putting in their best to shine in films, music and sports. This also may

be the reason form some of them landing up in crime.

Sachar Committee data shows that Muslims are worse off than Scheduled castes when it comes to education they significantly lag behind Other Backward Classes (O.B.Cs) virtually in every field education and employment. Amongst them poverty levels are comparatively higher and land holdings lower.

**Muslims in the Private Sector**

In the private sector, including the two top business and industrial houses of the Tatas and Birlas, it was found that the Muslim employment came to 8.16 per cent, while for the Scheduled Castes it was





11.5 per cent. In the executive cadre Muslims were only 1.5 per cent, while in the clerical class it was 8.28 per cent.

### Muslims: Socio-Economic Condition

Muslims have also not been able to take advantage of various government schemes for such groups as small farmers, marginal farmers, agricultural laborers, landless laborers, etc. This is due to discrimination and indifference on the part of planning and implementation authorities as well as lack of awareness and knowledge of such schemes among Muslims. Consequently, the limited progress that some sections of Muslims have been able to make in recent years is due almost wholly to their own efforts. Overall the economic conditions of most Indian Muslims are unenviable, to say the least. Most of them eke out a hand-to-mouth existence either by way of self-employment in petty trade or by working in the unorganized sector. They are engaged mostly as construction labourers, rickshaw, taxi and truck drivers, handcart pullers, coolies, barbers, tailors, carpenters, pavement hawkers, or at best as mechanics, fitters, plumbers, electricians or welders.



Also credit extended to them is very low.

### Literacy Levels by Religion and Gender

Religion	Male	Female	Total
Hindu	76.16	53.21	65.09
Muslim	67.66	50.09	59.13
Christian	84.37	76.19	80.25
Sikh	75.23	63.09	69.45
Buddhist	83.13	61.69	72.66
Jain	97.41	90.58	94.08

Source: Census of India 2001.



**Political Representation:** There is a heavy decline in Muslim representation in Parliament and legislative assemblies.

The representation of Muslims in jobs is also very poor; the more we go up the ladder the more the representation comes down.

### Successful Muslim Candidates in Civil Service Examinations

Year	Total	Selected Candidates	Muslims
1995-96	638	22	-
1999	Not Available	15	-
2001	417	12	-
2003	431	11	-
2005	422	08	

Source: Omar Khalidi, *Muslims in the Indian Economy*, New Delhi, Three Essays Collective, 2006, p.46



#### Myth

**The rate of population rise is higher amongst Muslims. They marry four times and shortly their population will exceed the population of Hindus and this country will become a Muslim state.**



#### Fact

The dominant communal forces over the years have propagated these myths. The communalists have on purpose projected the fear of Muslim population growth to consolidate their own electoral majority and towards this strategy they have effectively combined half-truths, ideological concoctions and rumour-spreading techniques to entrench these myths in the popular psyche.

First let us take the myth that the rise in Muslim population is tremendously high and so they will outnumber the Hindus. The census surveys totally negate this firmly held popular belief. Religion is one of the markers used in these surveys. As per 1971 survey Hindus constituted 82.7 per cent and Muslims 11.2 per cent of the population. The corresponding figures for 1991 census are Hindus 82.6 per cent and Muslims 11.4 per cent and for 2001 80.5 and 13.4 respectively (Malayalam Manorama). The 1991 data of Muslims does not include the data of Kashmir, so the rise from 11.2 to 13.4 is not surprising, as large sections of Kashmiri Muslims were left out from the 1991 data. At the time of Partition the Muslim population was 11.6 per cent. Even in the current data there are some holes. To begin with, many Adivasis have now got themselves registered in the

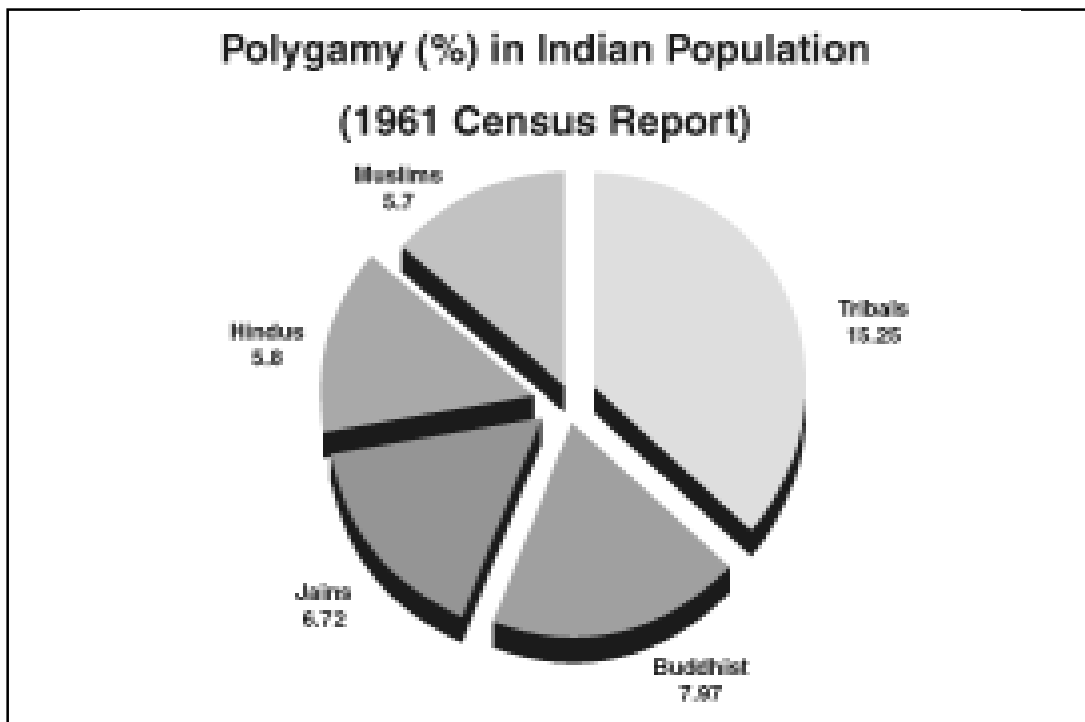


category, 'other religions', rather than the previous 'Hindu' which was automatically put in front of their names. This time Jains have also been put as a separate category so this decline in the rate of rise of Hindu population is not as big as it appears.

As such one is also amazed by the correlation drawn between population and religion. The rise of population is more an index of poverty and lack of education rather than related to the teachings of any religion. And no religious community is uniform all over India. The population growth rate amongst Kerala Muslims is very low compared to Muslims in other parts of the country. As Muslims have suffered a lot of discrimination, their overall rate of population growth is higher. As awareness is spreading it is coming down.

The last two decades in particular have seen an increased intimidation and ghettoisation of the Muslim community due to communal violence, the worst of which was seen first in Mumbai riots in 1992-93 and in Gujarat in 2002. In such an adverse situation, social reforms and progress take a back seat. The need is to provide an atmosphere wherein the community can live their social and political life with security and dignity.

That apart, even if the current differentials persist, it is not only unlikely but impossible for the Muslim population to overtake the Hindu population. On the contrary, if the prevailing growth rates are analysed, it will be clear that between 1961-71 and 1971-81, rate of Hindu population increase went up from 23.71 to 24.42, while in the same period the rate of Muslim population increase went down from 30.85 to 30.20. If these rates of





change are extrapolated a hundred years forward from 1981, Hindus and Muslims will record a decadal growth rate of 30.71 and 30.55 respectively by 2081 - i.e., growth rates of Hindus will be higher.



### **Myth**

**Muslims do not practice family planning because of their religion.**



### **Fact**

It is true that a section of the Islamic fundamentalist clergy does pass occasional fatwas disapproving of family planning, but a section of clergy can neither be equated to Islam, nor to the Quran nor to emerging Islamic practices as such. On the contrary many Ulemas of different countries have actually favoured temporary forms of family planning. In his book *Family Planning and Legacy of Islam*, Islamic scholar A.R. Omran of Cairo dispels the myth that Islam is inherently against family planning. According to him there is no text in the Koran prohibiting prevention of pregnancy. In Islamic countries like Turkey and Indonesia, family planning methods are quite popular. In Turkey, for example, 63 per cent of the population in the reproductive age group uses contraception and in Indonesia the figure is 48 per cent. In India the number of Muslim couples in the child-bearing age practising family planning in 1970 was 9 per cent (Hindus 14 per cent) and in 1980 it was 22.5 per cent (Hindus 36.1 per cent) (Operation Research Group, Baroda, 1981). Thus the number of additional Muslims taking to family planning is keeping pace with the number of Hindus doing the same. Like all other social programmes, family planning is also linked with socio-economic status, level of general social awareness, etc. A large number of Muslims, being in the lower socio-economic strata, share these statistics with other socially disadvantaged sections of society.



Pampered Minority !



## MUSLIM FERTILITY FALL-SHARPER THAN REST

The Sachar Committee report on the Muslim community has nailed the lie on the issue of Muslim reproduction and the 'prevailing Muslim conspiracy' to reduce Hindus to minority status. The report, quoting extensively from Census reports and the National Health Survey, highlights how the last decade has witnessed a sharp decline in Muslim fertility rates as against the rest of the population. Estimates show that the total fertility rate (TFR) among Muslims declined from about 4.3 to 3.6 in the 1990s, a reduction of about 0.9 points. During the same period fertility rates for the population as a whole declined from about 3.4 to 2.9, a reduction of nearly 0.5 points. The decline in fertility among Muslims was, therefore, sharper than average. Dr Rakesh Basak, an economist with IIM Ahmedabad and a member of the committee, points out that at present 'there is (only) a 0.7-point difference between the Muslim and the average fertility rates. While the average fertility rate is 2.9, for Muslims it is 3.6.' Dr Basak emphasises that 37 per cent of Muslims use contraceptives against a national average of 48 per cent. Therefore, contraceptive usage is about 10 percentage points lower among Muslims than the average. However, there are significant regional variations. The use of contraceptives amongst Muslims is more widespread in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh than amongst Hindus in these states. In Gujarat, there is hardly any difference in the use of contraceptives across religious communities. In general, the report observes, contraceptive usage goes up with education and development and all communities benefit from such changes. Of course, the availability of various contraceptive options also plays a major role in enhancing contraceptive use. Dr Basak says, 'Data shows that on an average Muslims prefer using reversible methods of family planning as compared to *nasbandi* (sterilisation). This is true of several Hindu communities as well.' He adds, 'If there are severe supply-side constraints in the availability of the preferred contraceptive options, adoption may suffer. There is evidence to suggest that the unmet needs of the Muslim population for reversible methods of family planning are high'

- (Asian Age, New Delhi, 19 February 2007).



### **Myth**

**Muslims often have more than one wife.**



### **Fact**

The myth of polygamy amongst Muslims is also very firmly rooted in the popular mind. The correlation of polygamy with increase in population is the most simplistic concoction to have taken grip of our psyche. Overall the number of children born depends on the number of women in the reproductive age group and is limited by that. It is immaterial whether a man has one or more wives as the total number of children depends on the number of women, which does not get influenced by polygamy. If at all, the adverse sex ratio has more to do with the prevalence of social practice of female infanticide and 'bride burnings' in the areas where the practice of extortion called dowry is prevalent. Second, the male/female ratio cannot permit the 'luxury' of four wives to Muslim males unless three-fourths of them go without marriage. As per the 2001 census the male/female ratio for Muslims was 936 and for Hindus 931 - i.e., for every 1000 Muslim males there are 936 Muslim females. One has to engage in gigantic mental acrobatics, in the light of these statistics, to believe that all Muslim males can have four wives.

As such, slightly earlier but highly relevant statistics on polygamy from the 1961 census report totally smashes the myth of Muslim polygamy, unless the social trends have worsened drastically, which they obviously have not. According to this data, the incidence of polygamy is highest among the Adivasis (15.25) followed by Buddhists (7.9), Jains (6.72) Hindus (5.80) and, last of all Muslims (5.70)! Research carried out by Mallika B. Mistry of Gokhale institute of Pune concludes that 'there is no evidence that the percentage of polygamous marriage (among Muslims) is larger than for Hindus.' A comparison of patterns for Hindus and Muslims shows great similarity - the incidence of polygamy has been declining among both Hindus and Muslims.

From the above it will be interesting to infer the religion-based fertility patterns. These patterns differ within Muslim community itself - they vary from region to region as per the socio-economic and educational levels of the community concerned. Those in the better socio-economic and educational strata have lower rates of population growth, while those on the lower rungs of the socio-economic and educational ladder have higher rates of population growth. This conforms to regional, urban and rural distribution as well. Birth rate in the Malabar region of Kerala, where the Muslim population is high, is significantly lower than those in Uttar Pradesh with a Muslim population of 15 per cent. The contrasting case is that of Kashmir, a Muslim majority state. Here the fertility rate of Hindus is almost twice that of Muslims. Here again the birth rate was lower - 31.4 per thousand than in U.P (36.5), MP (36.4), Bihar (34.8) and Rajasthan (33.4).

The overall rate of population increase in educationally and socially advanced states



like Kerala, Tamilnadu and Karnataka is overall lower, both for Muslims and Hindus, than the rest of the country. Also let us have a look at the urban-rural divide. More than a third of the Muslim community is concentrated in the peripheral and decaying areas of urban economic life. The incidence of urban poverty is higher among them by 17 per cent vis-à-vis Hindus. The number of Muslims living below the poverty line is close to 44 per cent while the national figure for all communities is 28 per cent. They generally live in older areas of modern cities, which are known for poor sanitation, lack of health facilities and basic amenities. On the top of this the repeated outbreaks of communal violence against them are 'ghettoising' them with the result that improvement in their lot is becoming more and more difficult.

Overall one observes that there are multiple factors determining the rate of population growth, religion being very low in weight-age if at all. Socio-economic betterment and education are the foremost factors helping in the control of population growth. A feeling of insecurity and poor socio-economic status counter the efforts to promote family planning, and these two factors are far more important than the religious factor. In such a complex scenario, the propaganda machine of the Sangh Parivar has done a remarkable job by making 'Ham do, hamare do; Woh panch, unke pachees' (We (Hindus) practise the two-children norm, they (Muslims) practise the four-wives-twenty-five-children norm) a part of social common sense. One has to complement the Goebbelsian methods of the Hindu right, which have concocted this offensive slogan far removed from the truth.

## 2. Christians



### **Myth**

**Christianity is a foreign religion.**

### **Fact**



In the 1st century AD itself, Christianity entered India through the trading ships from the West. The legend of St. Thomas has been associated with coming of Christianity to India, as he came twice on a mission to India. His second mission, for which there is stronger evidence, was around 52 AD to the Malabar Coast. He

established a series of Syrian Orthodox churches along the coast.



### **Myth**

**The angry local people who are opposed to the forced conversions being done by the Christians are attacking Christians.**

### **Fact**



The attacks on Christians have been more marked from 1997 onwards. These attacks are being orchestrated by different organizations linked to the Sangh Parivar and a general hysteria is being created against Christian missionaries in particular. In 1998-



99 many priests were humiliated. Fr. Christudas was paraded naked in Dumka, and Pastor Graham Staines was burnt alive along with his two sons aged 9 and 7. Many churches have been damaged in attacks, Bibles have been burnt and nuns have been raped in places. This has occurred in the backdrop of anti-Christian propaganda, according to which Christianity is a foreign religion; missionary activities are merely a ploy for



inducing people to adopt Christianity; their schools and Hospitals are mere tools for the same; the CIA is planning and the Pope and Christian agencies are out to evangelize the whole country, whereby Hindus will become a minority. Inquiries by social activists, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Minorities Commission have shown that different organisations affiliated to the Sangh Parivar are behind these attacks, and the attacks are taking place mainly in the BJP-ruled states, Gujarat in particular.

Christian missionaries have been setting up churches, seminaries and schools since a long time. They learnt Indian Languages, set up printing presses and published religious as well as secular literature to spread literacy and their faith. In the process they adopted Indian languages for communication and the Church adopted number of native practices. Despite 2000 years of Christian presence, and 200 years of British rule, the population of Christians in 1971 was 2.6 per cent, and in 1981 it was 2.44 per cent, declining in 1991 to 2.32 per cent and to 2.3 per cent in 2001.

The anti-Christian bogey of their population overtaking the Hindu population comes at a time when the anti-Muslim pogroms have more or less achieved the target of permanently intimidating and ghettoizing them. Also the Sangh Parivar realizes that if it has to break the electoral jinx to be able to come to power on its own, it needs a newer vote bank, and for this Adivasis have been seen as the ones having the best potential. There is also a growing realization in the Sangh Parivar that after conversion to Christianity

the Adivasis become more educated and aware of their rights, and this is a big threat to the status quo. These two factors seem to be the major ones in the current strategy of intimidating the missionaries. The calculation is that after this type of 'treatment' they will be reluctant to go to remote places and that will make the SP's job of wooing Adivasis to its fold comparatively easy.





**Letter of a woman BJP functionary (Mrs. Philomina) who resigned from BJP to Mr. Yediyurrappa, BJP Karnataka President, in the wake of attacks on Christians**

'We as Indians have to hang our heads in shame when forces close to the BJP attack Christians, burn missionaries and rape women. The Hindu fundamentalist outfits call Mother Teresa a traitor and brand Christians and Muslims as anti-national. The sad part is that you (BJP) do not condemn their acts.

'It hurts to hear Christians praying in the churches for those who desecrate their places of worship and commit atrocities on them. I just cannot be part of this system, which is the cause for all these atrocities, and the division of our great country.'

