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Posted by Sid Harth - 2009/09/08 17:57

I know religious profiling works both ways: Emraan Hashmi Submitted by admin4 on 10 August 2009 - 1:55pm. By Subhash K. Jha, IANS, Mumbai : As he awaits the verdict of State Minorities Commission (SMC) on his complaint against a south Mumbai housing society, Bollywood star Emraan Hashmi says he know religious profiling is practised by people in more than one community. Emraan has complained he was not allowed to buy a house in the society because he is a Muslim. The problem of being denied property on grounds of religion is prevalent all over the country. Now so many Muslims have come forward claiming the same. And mind you, I know religious profiling works both ways. I know of Muslim colonies where Hindus are not allowed to stay. I spoke out as a segregated citizen, not a Muslim. I want all discrimination in property allotment to go. Otherwise why do we call ourselves a democracy? Emraan told IANS. The actor alleged he was denied permission to buy a house in the upmarket Pali Hill area of Mumbai because he was Muslim. Pali Hill's Nibbana Cooperative Society, he said, refused to give him a 'no-objection certificate'. He filed a complaint with the SMC, demanding action against the society members. The society reportedly has mostly Hindus and a couple of Catholic families. There were more developments in the case Sunday, when a Mumbai resident accused Emraan and film director Mahesh Bhatt of fomenting communal tensions to gain cheap publicity. The two had held a press conference to highlight the complaint. Emraan has been forced to beef up his security. He moves around with a lot of securitymen. It's a precautionary measure. His house is looking like a fortress, said a source close to the actor. The complaint doesn't deter Emraan at all. It's an age-old ploy to silence you. No one can accuse Emraan of inciting communal disharmony. Religious discrimination in buying and renting property has been going on a very long time. No one talked about it openly. It's a sensitive issue. Office-bearers of the housing society have been changing their statements repeatedly. They said he was kept out because he was serial kisser, the source said. For some reason they also made up an absurd allegation that Emraan's parents barged into the office of the property dealers. Emraan's parents had taken a proper appointment and gone and they were treated badly. They were told the housing society people were busy. Emraan was enraged because his parents were badly treated. Emraan had earlier bought an apartment in 2007 in Pali Hill. But there was no such problem. This was his first real encounter with discrimination. Now the man from whom Emraan wanted to buy the house has backed out. The prospective property seller now says he doesn't want to sell. But for Emraan it is no longer about personal hurt. He's standing up for an issue. People have accused him of doing this to gain publicity. Let them say what they like. Emraan doesn't care what the cynics say, said a friend of the actor. Asked why the actor had received so little support from the film fraternity, the friend said: He wasn't expecting any real support. Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi have spoken on it. Also, Saif Ali Khan. Emraan is prepared to take the issue to its logical conclusion. He hopes people will no longer keep quiet about being denied property in spite of being law-abiding citizens and paying taxes. The actor is currently busy shooting for Ekta Kapoor's Once Upon A Time. ...and I am Sid Harth

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'Miscommunication by agent led to actor housing dispute' Bharati Dubey, TNN 11 August 2009, 03:07am IST MUMBAI: The Maharashtra State Minorities' Commission has resolved the Emraan Hashmi case by making a scapegoat of his realty agent. The commission concluded that a miscommunication created by the estate agent gave rise to the dispute. The panel heard both parties-Hashmi and housing society-though the person found guilty" was not called for the hearing. On July 30, Hashmi had complained that members of Nibbana, a housing society in Pali Hill, had refused to give him an NOC even after he paid Rs 1 lakh for a flat. Commission vice-chairman Abraham Mathai said, Both parties resolved their problems. The society secretary, J P Chatri, assured us that they would welcome Hashmi if D N Suvarna or anyone else sold him a flat." The agent, Jagjit Arora, said he was happy that the row was over but added he was not told about the hearing". Hashmi told TOI that he stood by what he had said earlier. That's exactly what I told the panel," he said. Now, if it wants to resolve the issue peacefully, peace is what I want." ...and I am Sid Harth

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<http://www.newageislam.org/NewAgeIslamArticleDetail.aspx?ArticleID=1048> ...and I am Sid Harth

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I've had it with the Arabs and Muslims and Islamic militancy. Forgive me but I am throwing in the towel. I couldn't write back to her. She grew up in Mumbai and is upset. She went on to say: The Muslims and Islam have a problem and only they can solve it. If they do not, the whole world will turn against them. If this is how our most loyal friends feel, imagine the sentiments and reactions of the rest of the world. Can you blame the world if it's turning against Muslims? What do you expect when not a day passes without the name of our faith being dragged through the mud by fellow believers around the world? I know that Muslim leaders, including those in the highest echelons of power, have lately started speaking out against the extremists. The Darul Uloom Deoband in India, one of the oldest and most respected centres of learning in the Muslim world, issued a fatwa against terrorism at a large gathering of Islamic scholars in June. Last month, nearly 5,000 scholars backed the edict at a huge congregation in Hyderabad. The Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), and Saudi Arabia have, of late, been vehement in condemning these repulsive acts of violence targeting innocents. But clearly, we need to do more to be heard. The great irony of the Mumbai attacks is the killing of ATS chief Hemant Karkare, a brave officer trying to establish the link between Hindu extremists and the Malegaon blasts. He was killed outside the Cama hospital on Wednesday night. Obviously, some Muslims do not know their friends from their enemies. It's all very well for us to say Islam has nothing to do with extremism and terrorism. We can go on deluding ourselves that these psychopaths do not represent us. However, the world finds it hard to accept this line of argument as it sees the extremists increasingly assert themselves and take the centre-stage while mainstream Islam turns into a moderate fringe. Aijaz Syed is Opinion Editor, Khaleej Times Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?id=ca0ddccc-f7...>

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Posted by bademiyansubhanallah - 2009/09/08 17:57

Hashmi's U-turn, blames miscommunication for controversy Posted: Monday , Aug 10, 2009 at 1610 hrs Mumbai: In a U-turn, actor Emraan Hashmi, who had alleged that he was denied a flat by a housing society because he was Muslim, claimed there was no discrimination against him and the controversy arose because of a miscommunication . The dispute between me and the members of Nibbana housing society has been resolved. The society had not discriminated against me. There had been a miscommunication, Hashmi, who had sparked a furore with his allegation of religious profiling, told reporters after a hearing on his complaint at the State Minorities Commission. Hashmi's lawyer Majeed Memon said that a broker Jagjit Arora had told the actor that the society had refused to sell the flat as Hashmi was a Muslim. The secretary of the society today told Emraan that they had not discriminated against the actor and that if anyone in the building wants to sell their flat then Emraan can buy it, Memon said. Secretary J P Chatri told the Commission that they would not refuse the actor on religious grounds as there are several other Muslims residing in the building, the lawyer said. The owner of the flat D U Suvarna, who was also present during the hearing, said he would be more than happy to sell the flat to the actor who is like a son to him. I have not decided on what I will do with my flat. But if I decide to sell the flat then my first choice would be Hashmi, Suvarna said. On July 31, the actor approached the Minorities Commission accusing the housing society in posh Pali Hill of religious profiling by refusing a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to him to purchase a flat in the society. The society houses film and television actors including well known villain Prem Chopra. The issue has been blown out of proportion by the media. It was a miscommunication and has been resolved after all the parties sat across the table, Naseem Siddiqui, Chairman of the Minorities Commission said. ...and I am Sid Harth

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Rethinking Islam Monday, August 10, 2009 Destroy Lashkar Camps: Why Indian Muslims are an existential threat to Pakistan? Islam, Terrorism and Jihad 04 Dec 2008, NewAgeIslam.Com We have no way of knowing precisely what message US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is carrying from India to Pakistan. Like millions of Indians, I hope, the government has made it clear that now that we have incontrovertible evidence against Lashkar-e-Tayyaba's involvement in the recent terrorist attack on India, we will ourselves take steps to destroy the terrorist camps in POK as well as Islamist Markaz Ad-Dawa-wal-Irshad brainwashing camps at Muridke and elsewhere unless Pakistan takes concrete action against these criminals and destroys their camps for good. There are suggestions that the response be internationalised. But let not such suggestions merely confuse, obfuscate and delay the response. If there is one phrase the world has heard from Indians of all hues repeated again and again and again, throughout last week, it is: Enough is Enough! We, the Muslims of India, have particular reason to demand that these dens of evil be closed down and destroyed. There is not the slightest reason to doubt the known fact now that these Pakistani terrorist organisations are particularly after the destruction of the Muslim community in India. The very idea of Indian Muslims

living peacefully and marching towards prosperity strikes at the very root of Pakistan's existential philosophy. The very existence of a prosperous Muslim community in India destroys the Two-Nation Theory on which the state of Pakistan is based. The very fact that Muslims in India not only live peacefully among themselves but also in harmony with a variety of other religious, linguistic, ethnic communities while Muslims in Pakistan are deeply divided among themselves and constantly at each others' throats is a profoundly destabilising factor for the very existence of Pakistan. That Pakistan's Muslim Sindhis, Baluchis, Pathans, Saraikis, and indeed Mohajirs would love to join the Indian mainstream, given half a chance, cannot possibly be lost on the Pakistani establishment that has spawned these terrorist organisations to further its dubious strategic imperatives. We the Muslims of India, by our very existence, more so on account of our peaceful and prosperous existence, are an existential threat to Pakistan. And not just to its terrorists, which are in any case a part of the establishment. We can't help it. There is nothing we can do about it. That is why it is in our particular interest, in the interest of Muslims of India, that these terrorist camps are destroyed and the criminals who have wreaked so much havoc on our land are brought to justice. For more concrete evidence and background information on Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, read on.... Sultan Shahin, editor, NewAgeIslam.com *****

Lies of the Lashkar By Yoginder Sikand Not possessing a television set myself, it was only just now that was I able to listen to the recording, hosted on the Internet, of a conversation which took place some days ago between a terrorist holed up at Nariman House in Mumbai and calling himself 'Imran Babar' and reporters of the India TV channel. (<<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=QhO6rynb1C8>) It is plainly evident from the conversation that the terrorist was a Pakistani, most likely a Punjabi. This obvious from his accent and the sort of Urdu he speaks. One can easily make out that he had been carefully tutored by his mentors who masterminded the deadly terror assault on Mumbai to intersperse his hate-driven harangue with some Hindi words (shanti, parivar etc.) and to use Urdu words in the typical Hindi way (jabardasti, instead of zabardasti, etc.) so as to give the misleading impression that he and the other terrorists with him were Indian Muslims, not Pakistanis. The terrorists claimed to belong to the 'Deccan', in India, but it is obvious that this was not at all the case. There can be no doubt that these Pakistani terrorists were trained to lie that they were Indian Muslims who were allegedly resorting to terror in revenge for the atrocities committed on Muslims in India. Why the Pakistan-based terror outfit behind the attacks would do this needs no explanation. The aim of the attacks was probably to destabilise India, fuel Hindu-Muslim violence, instigate Muslims to take to terror in response to attacks by Hindus and then drown India in flames. This, indeed, is precisely what several Pakistan-based self-styled Islamist groups have been consistently plotting to do for decades, although, mercifully, by and large, the Indian Muslims have refused to fall into their trap. It is to the credit of the Indian Muslims that, barring some stray exceptions, they have consistently opposed all forms of terror, including that committed in the name of Islam, despite the growing menace of Hindutva-driven fascist terror across India, sometimes abetted by the state, of which they are the principal and worst-hit victims. The Lashkar-e-Tayyaba has never made any bones about its dastardly plans of destabilising and destroying India. It has gone to the ridiculous extent of claiming that it will not rest till the 'Islamic' flag is hoisted atop the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi and till India is absorbed into what it calls in its lunacy 'Greater Pakistan'. In order to gain theological legitimacy for its deadly project it even claims that the Prophet Muhammad is said to have declared that Muslims who participate in a war with India would be saved from the fires of hell. There can be no doubt that this sort of horrendous misuse and deliberate distortion of Islam by the Lashkar has played a major role in attracting vast numbers of would-be terrorists in Pakistan to its fold who are fed with the poisonous propaganda that by participating in what it calls a holy war against India they would win a ticket to heaven. The Pakistani state, it must be noted, has taken no action whatsoever against this heinous propaganda, and elements of the ISI are said to be in cahoots with the Lashkar and other such hate-driven self-styled Islamist groups in the country. In the wake of the Mumbai attacks, and when asked what action Pakistan had taken against the Lashkar, the Pakistani President hurriedly shrugged off the question by claiming that the Lashkar had been 'banned'. If that is indeed the case—which it is obviously not—then how does Mr. Zardari explain the fact that, as the Lashkar's official Urdu website itself announces, on the 29th of November the Lashkar's supremo Hafiz Muhammad Saeed addressed what it termed a 'mammoth' convention at 'New Saeedabad' (a locality named after him?), organized by the Sindh unit of the Markaz Dawat ul-Irshad (the 'religious' and political wing of the Lashkar). It was held, of all places, in the premises of the local Government Degree College. The Lashkar's website is replete with news about the whirlwind tours of Saeed and his cronies across the country, delivering rabble-rousing speeches, thundering against India and non-Muslims in general. And the outfit, Mr. Zardari wants us to believe, is 'banned'. Having been writing on Indian Muslim issues for years now, I can say with some confidence that the general Indian Muslim is completely fed up and fiercely opposed to the gross misuse of Islam by the Pakistani state and Pakistan-based self-styled Islamist outfits. Deep down inside, most of them lament the very creation of Pakistan, based on the discredited 'two nation' theory, for it has left them permanently helpless in the face of Hindutva aggression. They know full well that, despite its bombastic claims, Pakistan is far from the 'Islamic state' it claims to be—with its problems of poverty, illiteracy, mounting inequalities, endemic violence, and lawlessness, its corrupt American puppet politicians who have reduced Islam to a plaything to be employed for their own purposes, and so on. They face the brunt of mounting Islamophobia stirred up by Hindutva fascist forces that play upon Pakistan's dubious Kashmir policy and the heinous crimes of Pakistan-based self-styled Islamist radicals to whip up violently anti-Muslim sentiments in India. The general Indian Muslim's undisguised disgust of the terror in the name of Islam that groups like the Lashkar are seeking to spearhead is amply evident in the news that is pouring in of Muslims across the country roundly denouncing the Mumbai attacks and even insisting that the dreaded terrorists not be allowed to be buried on Indian soil. India's Muslims need to be seen as a potential asset, rather than a liability, in the struggle against terrorism. Scores of Indian ulema or Islamic clerics are now openly castigating all forms of terror, organizing mass rallies and even issuing fatwas to get the message across. The Indian state and civil society urgently needs to realize that hounding the Indian Muslims, instead of seeking to listen to their voices and concerns and genuinely

dialoguing with them, can only play into the hands of outfits of groups like the Lashkar. The fact that Hindutva terror and Islamist terror only feed on each other must also be urgently acknowledged. Our very future as a country crucially depends on all communities, particularly Hindus and Muslims, presenting a joint front to work together for peace and security. That would be a fitting reply to both Hindutva and radical Islamist forces, whose very existence is based on the frighteningly Manichaeic notion of perpetual antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. Backgrounders: LeT emerging as Qaida's successor 6 Jul 2005, 0156 hrs IST, Indrani Bagchi & M Saleem Pandit, TNN NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR: Tuesday's Ayodhya attack is a deadly reminder of Lashkar-e-Taiba's core ideology — it goes well beyond opposing India's sovereignty in J&K. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, the Lashkar's agenda, as outlined in a
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<http://pakteahouse.wordpress.com/2009/08/12/minorities-have-played-a-...> August 12, 2009...10:41 am "Minorities have played a vital role in the creation and then development of Pakistan," Minister Bhatti Jump to Comments By Aamir Latif, IOL Correspondent KARACHI – Only three days to its 62nd birthday, Pakistan is celebrating on Tuesday, August 11, Minorities Day, a move many see as part of the South Asian Muslim country's efforts to polish its image after a recent bloody attack on Christians. "The decision has been taken not only to show solidarity with all minorities, including Christians, who are the equal citizens of Pakistan, but also to highlight their role in the creation and development of the country," Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti told IslamOnline.net. Different programs, including rallies, seminars and conferences have been chalked out by the government and NGOs to express solidarity with minorities nationwide. Jammāt-e-Islami, the country's largest religious party, is going to hold an interfaith dialogue, which will be attended by Muslim, Christian, and Hindu leaders, to promote interfaith harmony. "Minorities have played a vital role in the creation and then development of Pakistan," insists Bhatti, a Christian. "And they are proud of their services." Christians make up 3 percent of Pakistan's 170 million population, followed by Hindus who make up 2 percent. A majority of Christians, who are mainly involved in education, health and sanitary sectors, resides in Punjab, the country's most populous and richest province. Hindus, mostly involved in businesses, are considered much richer than Christians and mostly live in the southern Sindh province, the second largest province. "We have decided to observe this day on August 11 because it has a special significance," said Minister Bhatti. "On that day in 1947, the founder of the nation (Mohammad Ali Jinnah), while addressing the first constituent assembly of Pakistan, announced that no Pakistani would be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sect, race, caste or creed," recalled the minister. "They all will be equal Pakistanis." Messages "I never felt myself vulnerable here. This is my own country, where my forefathers were born and are buried," Vijay, a Christian, told IOL. Bhatti, also a central leader of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), asserted that the Minorities Day will send several messages. "This will give a message to the perpetrators and masterminds of Gojra incident, that there is no place for religious hatred in Pakistan." Six Christians were killed last week by a violent mob over a reported desecration of the Quran. "The government will fully protect the lives and properties of minorities, and will not allow any group or individual to use religious sentiments to hurt them." The minister said dedicating a special day for minorities also promotes the image of Pakistan. "By observing this day, we want to give a clear message to the world that the Pakistani society is based on religious harmony, social justice, and human equality." Though shaken by the Gojra incident, members of religious minorities generally feel protected and comfortable with their Muslim countrymen. "It was, no doubt, a horrible incident, but I would say it was the act of some sick individuals," Vijay Dravid, who works as a sanitary worker at a local club, told IOL. "It is a matter of satisfaction for us that the majority of Muslims, including religious scholars, not merely condemned that attack but also helped the victims." Vijay and his family live with seven Muslim neighbors, who too are employees of the same club. "I never felt myself vulnerable here. This is my own country, where my forefathers were born and are buried." Amr Lal, who works as a peon at a local firm, agrees. "Hundreds of Muslims were killed in Indian Gujrat a few years back, but not even a single Hindu was killed in Pakistan," he said referring to the killing of some 2000 Muslims, many hacked and burned to death, by Hindu extremists a few years ago. "Being a Hindu, I remember the last anti-Hindu violence in Pakistan in 1992, following the demolition of Babri Mosque in India," recalled Lal. "Since that, there has been no violence against Hindus." Lal, however, calls for more development funds and scholarships for minorities. "We don't have access to quality education, though most of the prestigious schools and colleges have been set up by Hindus and Christians before partition (in 1947). Therefore, the government should provide more educational facilities to the minorities." ...and I am Sid Harth

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[http://pakteahouse.wordpress.com/2009/08/12/5448/August 12, 2009...11:19 am](http://pakteahouse.wordpress.com/2009/08/12/5448/August%2012,%202009...11:19%20am) We are Sorry Mr. Jinnah By Adil Najam (Courtesy All Things Pakistan) Today is August 11. Sixty-two years ago, on this day, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Founder of Pakistan, made one of the most important speeches of his – and of Pakistan’s – life. A speech in which he laid out – in the most unambiguous terms – his vision for Pakistan and the rationale for that vision. In this speech Mr. Jinnah laid out a detailed case for his argument and famously proclaimed: ...in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the . Read full text and a detailed analysis of the speech here. Today is August 11. Barely ten days ago in Gojra, in Mr. Jinnah’s Pakistan, over 50 houses belonging to Pakistani Christians were burnt down by a mob and at least half a dozen Pakistani Christians were murdered for still unproven charges under a draconian law neither whose intent nor whose vigilante implementation Mr. Jinnah could ever have tolerated. Today is August 11. Our government has declared today to be ‘Minorities Day,’ but neither our government nor we as a people are willing to repeal the draconian laws that enable the bigots amongst us to persecute the vulnerable and the marginalized amongst us. Today is August 11. Today, once again, we will shower platitudes on Mr. Jinnah’s vision of a tolerant Pakistan and then conveniently ignore that vision. A Pakistan for all Pakistanis, irrespective of, as he would say, “caste and creed.” A Pakistan where neither Mr. Jinnah’s vision nor our Pakistaniat would be high-jacked by the sanctimonious custodians of righteousness, the self-styled gate-keepers of morality, and the arrogant arbiters of patriotism. We are sorry, Mr. Jinnah. We are sorry that we have not been able to actualize the Pakistan of your vision. At least, not yet. Cursed by the very intolerance that you had warned us of, we have not only failed to bridge the divisions that existed already, we have worked hard to create new divisions. We have not only failed the minorities that were, we have created new ones by legislating exclusion. We are sorry, Mr. Jinnah. We are sorry for being so drunk in intolerance that we made ourselves the arbiters of who was Muslim enough to be Muslim, or Pakistani enough to be Pakistani. We are sorry, Mr. Jinnah. We are sorry not only for the Gojra that happened ten days ago. We are sorry for the Gojra that happens every day in the Pakistan you created. <http://pakteahouse.wordpress.com/2009/08/12/my-country-too/> August 12, 2009...10:19 am My Country Too By Abhijay Patel Pakistan’s religious minorities have shared equal status with majority Muslims and allocation of special funds by the present government bespeaks of its resolve to minorities uplift. Living with native communities, the minorities enjoyed all kind of freedom and ensured on their part that they contribute to socio-economic development and prosperity of the country. To live with this spirit, the minority communities and the government would renew their commitment for a prosperous Pakistan when they will observe the Minorities’ Day on August 11. In line with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, minorities particularly, Christians have been playing vital role in country’s progress. One can also not forget their active role in creation of Pakistan and extending full support to the Muslim League and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. “We took pride in our role to create Pakistan and its our national duty to continue working for its solidarity and integrity,” said Karamat Gill, a retired government official. Pakistani minorities have lived in complete peace and harmony with their Muslim brethren despite scattered incidents by vested interests and enemies of the state to create a rift among them. The tragic incident in Gojra is a stark reminder of such nefarious designs when some anti-state elements created disharmony by killing Christians and burning their properties in the name of desecration of the Holy Quran. The government has already ordered a high-level inquiry to probe the incident and has expressed its resolve to bring to justice the people behind the gory incident. Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani visited Gojra and announced Rs. 100 million for the rehabilitation of the affected people. While demanding punishment for the culprits, the Christian community remains committed to avoid recurrence of such unfortunate incidents, also reiterating to promote harmony, following the footsteps of Christian leaders who fought along their Muslims colleagues for an independent Pakistan. This reminds us of Dewan Bahadur S P Sangha who played a pivotal role in making Christians to vote for Muslim League. There were certain areas in the undivided India where Hindus would have gained majority vote had the Christians not voted for the Muslim League Party. After Independence of Pakistan, Sangha made the first Urdu movie “Teri Yaad Main” (In your memory). Christians served Pakistan in different areas and also laid down their lives fighting for the country as army personnel. Hats off to brave Christians like Squadron Leader Peter Christie who embraced “shahadat” in the Pakistan-India war in 1971. Cecil Chaudhry is another brave Pakistan Air Force pilot who fought for the country in 1971 war and currently is the Principal of St. Mary’s Academy, a prestigious Christian institution in Rawalpindi that has produced many notable persons for the country. Former Chief Justice A. R. Cornelius stands as a distinguished figure, when it comes to the judicial history of Pakistan and there are many others who will be long remembered for their immense contribution in the field of health and education. While the government has acknowledged the contribution of Christians in the development and progress of Pakistan, still there are many who have been ignored and not duly honored. “Streets and roads have been named after many martyrs, though none yet has been named after any Christians hero like Peter Chrisite, who laid down his life for the country,” said Dr. David John, a prominent Christian leader in Rawalpindi. But, there had been several good news for minorities in recent years like annulment of separate electorate and re-introduction of joint electorate system for minorities, to help them bring into mainstream. Allocation of five percent jobs quota for minorities by the present government has fulfilled their long-standing demand. Christian community has hailed this decision and the contribution of Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, with hopes that the decision is implemented in letter and spirit. “We hope that President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani will take personal interest to ensure that the decision of five percent quota for minorities is implemented in letter and spirit,” Dr. John said. Dr John also demanded to introduce job quota at provincial level and said, it would help promote inter-faith harmony. The minority communities appreciate all these measures though they are apprehensive of the blasphemy law as they describe it a discriminatory law towards minorities. They refer to various incidents where blasphemy cases were framed but the sentence has never been carried out as convictions have always been overturned by higher courts for lack of evidence. However, these leaders were worried

about killing of minority members by mob in the name of blasphemy. "This should be stopped to further promote the present harmony among followers of all religions and provide them space to fearlessly contribute towards nation building." ...and I am Sid Harth

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<http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2009/08/14/news0708.htm> Habib Tanvir: Citizen of the world Sudhanva Deshpande (From previous issue) Mitti ki Gaadi, his Chhattisgarhi adaptation of Sudrak's Sanskrit classic, was done in 1977; Bahadur Kalarin, an oral rural Oedipal tale, followed soon after. Shajapur ki Shantibai (Brecht's Good Person of Schetzuan), with the incomparable Fidabai in the lead, was done in 1978; and Lala Shohratrai (Moliere's Bourgeois Gentleman) in 1981. In other words, by about the mid-1970s, Habib Tanvir had already evolved his distinctive idiom of modern theatre, and subsequent years basically saw him elaborating this idiom, refining it, polishing it, rather than evolving a new form. Those who came to watch and love his theatre after this time tended to take this idiom, his style, for granted. It can, therefore, be quite easily forgotten that it took him 14 long years, from 1958 to 1972, to come to it.

FROM RURAL TRADITIONS On Habib Tanvir's theatre, it is quite common to hear two views. One sees a development of the IPTA legacy in him, the other sees him as a practitioner of folk theatre. Both are incorrect. IPTA sought to build an all-India network of revolutionary cultural groups in close association with the communist movement. Habib Tanvir, after his early years with IPTA, never again did that kind of work. Certainly in his theatre practice there was not a whiff of IPTA: while IPTA used folk forms essentially as carriers of revolutionary ideology to the masses, Habib Tanvir fashioned a popular modern theatre, borrowing elements from rural dramatic traditions that have been more often than not utopic rather than revolutionary. Habib Tanvir got his first set of six rural actors in 1958. He did several plays between then and 1972, but most were, as he put it, failures. These failures led him to wonder why the rural actors are fabulous when they do Nacha in their own setting? What makes them stilted and trite when they act in his plays? He identified two main faults: mother tongue and freedom of movement. . . . after many years, that I was trying to apply my English training on the village actors - move diagonally, stand, speak, take this position, take that position. I had to unlearn it all. I saw that they couldn't even tell right from left on the stage and had no line sense. And I'd go on shouting: 'Don't you know the difference between the hand you eat with and the one you wash with?' . . . I realised that those who were for years responding to an audience like this could never try to unlearn all this and rigidly follow the rules of movement and that was one reason why Thakur Ram, a great actor wasn't able to be natural. Another reason was the matrubhasha - he wasn't speaking in his mother tongue, so it jarred on my ears, because he was speaking bad Hindi and not Chhattisgarhi, in which he was fluent, which was so sweet. This realisation took me years - naive of me, but still it took me years. Once I realised it I used Chhattisgarhi and I improvised, allowed them the freedom and then came pouncing down upon them to crystallise the movement - there you stay. And they began to learn. That quite simply was the method I learnt. That was the method all right, but it was to be used to channelise the rural actor's energy to tell modern stories. His dramaturgy and stagecraft are also modern. His Kamdev ka Apna, Basant Ritu ka Sapna (Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream) is played on a bare stage, the only element of set being a hand-held, beautifully embroidered half-curtain which sometimes reveals, sometimes hides, and sometimes becomes a backdrop to, the action. With its simplicity, its directness and minimalism, Habib Tanvir's theatre would have been considered avant-garde had it not been so popular, and so funny. If you talk to his actors, they all, without exception, make the distinction between Nacha, where they originally trained, and theatre, that is, Habib Tanvir's theatre. His is a theatre of modern sensibilities, of modern concerns. Besides his own plays, look at the range of dramatists he has tackled. The ancient Sanskrit writers Sudrak, Bhasa, Visakhadatta and Bhavabhuti; European classics by Shakespeare, Moliere and Goldoni; modern masters Brecht, Garcia Lorca, Gogol and Gorky, and even Wilde; and Indian writers Rabindranath Tagore, Sisir Das, Asghar Wajahat, Shankar Shesh, Safdar Hashmi and Rahul Varma. He has adapted stories by Premchand, Stefan Zweig and Vijaydan Detha for the stage, besides adapting oral tales from Chhattisgarh. The stories he tells are the stories of our times, told with the simplicity and directness and energy of the rural performing traditions. Habib Tanvir, then, was a citizen of the world, borrowing, reading, soaking up influences indiscriminately, but he became, through a long, hard, creative struggle, a resident of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh is the prism that refracted his creative expression. He was writing his autobiography, Ek Matmaili Chadariya - a life woven with multiple threads, a life the dusty colour of earth. He was a Midas turned upside-down: whatever he touched lost its sheen, it became rough and turned to Chhattisgarhi. As Brecht once put it: True art becomes poor with the masses and grows rich with the masses. This is the man the Hindu Right has hounded since the early 1990s. To argue, as the Hindu Right did, that Habib Tanvir is anti-Hindu and, by extension, anti-Indian, is of course a reflection not on the man and his work, but on the depraved, pea-sized world view of his attackers. Yet Habib Tanvir was no revolutionary. He, along with a large number of intellectuals and artists close to the Communist Party of India (CPI), flirted for a while with the Congress (I) in the 1970s. He campaigned for the party in the 1971 elections with a play called Indira Loksabha. In what some saw as a return of the favour, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha the following year, and, to the dismay of those to the left of the CPI, he did not resign his seat when the Emergency was declared in 1975. It is only later, in the 1980s, that he became, in private conversations at least, more critical of the Congress. Habib Tanvir was an enemy of parochialism, of bigotry, of fundamentalism, and of the kind of development that crushes the poor. If Ponga Pandit critiques the caste system, superstition and priestcraft in the lively, robust

manner that Habib Tanvir has perfected, the other play that he has been extensively performing attacks Muslim fundamentalism: Asghar Wajahat's Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya Voh Janmya hi Nai, the story of a Hindu woman left behind in Lahore after Partition. His last production, Raj Rakt, based on Tagore's Visarjan, is also a critique of superstition. An earlier play, Moteram ka Satyagraha, based on a Premchand story and written in collaboration with Safdar Hashmi, is a humorous look at what happens when religion starts meddling with politics. In the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, he produced for a Delhi group Sisir Kumar Das's Baagh, an allegory on the communal tiger on the prowl. In 1999, he wrote and directed for Jana Natya Manch Ek Aurat Hypatia Bhi Thee, on the fourth century A.D. woman mathematician from Alexandria, who was lynched on the streets by Christian bigots. Sadak, a short play, is a comic critique of development that ravages villagers, tribal people, their land and their culture. Hirma ki Amar Kahani is a more profound look at what development has meant for tribal people. An early short children's play, Gadhe, is a rip-roaring take-off on the education system that produces asses. His production of Rahul Verma's Zahareeli Hawa is a fictional recreation of the Bhopal gas tragedy. Then there is Dekh Rahe Hain Nain, perhaps his most refined play philosophically, the story of a king's futile quest for a calling that will harm no other being. This, then, was Habib Tanvir, a man who represents two great traditions of Indian theatre - the tradition of the actor-director-playwright-manager and the tradition of an active involvement, from the Left, in larger social and political causes. The first tradition is now extinct with Habib Tanvir's death. The second tradition happily survives, and some of the credit for this must go to Habib Tanvir himself, for showing the way. o (Sudhanva Deshpande has co-directed, along with Sanjay Maharishi, 'Gaon ke naon Theatre, mor naon Habib', a documentary film on Habib Tanvir and Naya Theatre.) ...and I am Sid Harth

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http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601091&sid=aia5Wl8A1_dl Pakistan Hopeful of Reviving India Peace Talks, Gilani Says By Khalid Qayum Aug. 14 (Bloomberg)

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<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pa...> PM Gilani felicitates nation on Independence Day Friday, 14 Aug, 2009 | 02:07 PM PST | Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani waves during the flag hoisting ceremony in Islamabad on August 14, 2009, to mark the country's Independence Day. — Photo by AFP Pakistan We are against terrorism, not religion, says Kayani AUDIO SLIDESHOW Pakistani women rise up ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday participated in the flag hoisting ceremony in Islamabad to mark the country's Independence Day. Gilani vowed to win the war against terrorism as Pakistan celebrated its 62nd anniversary of independence with prayers, a national minute of silence and low-key festivities. Gilani later addressed a gathering during the Independence Day ceremony celebrations in Islamabad. Earlier, on the eve of Independence Day, the Prime Minister extended his warmest felicitations and best wishes to all Pakistanis. In his message, the Prime Minister said 14th August marks the culmination of a long driven struggle the Muslims of subcontinent had launched to protect their separate identity, to strengthen their society, to flourish their own culture in the broader perspective of their religious ideals and practices and to augment their own vibrant economy. He said the day reminds us of the gigantic challenges the people of Pakistan had so willingly and wilfully taken up 62 years ago. The nation had rendered unprecedented sacrifices to achieve the goal of political independence and ideological freedom, he said. The day of August 14 symbolises the leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who inspired the nation to achieve what looked an insurmountable task, he added. This year, he said the Independence Day celebration is still of greater significance as we have been able to rekindle the light of democracy in Pakistan in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the nation. The process of revival of democracy could not have successfully completed without the active participation of the people. Gilani said the country and the people are confronting a serious challenge posed by terrorists and militants. However, it is heartening to note that the entire nation has stood up against these elements. The objective of the people's government is to strengthen the country and to make it prosperous, he said, adding that this is the basis of our different programmes designed for the welfare of Pakistanis. To achieve this objective, we are focusing on addressing and solving every problem, he added. 'On this day of rejoicing, let us pay homage to our leaders of the independence movement who struggled with great courage and perseverance to win us a country of our own. Because of their sacrifices today, we are enjoying the fruits of freedom. It is surely an occasion for immense gratitude. It is the day for renewing our pledge to the country', he said. 'On this happy occasion, I wish to extend my warmest felicitations and best wishes to my Pakistani brothers and sisters at home as well as those living abroad,' he concluded. <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pa...> Is Gojra our Godhra? By Murtaza Razvi Friday, 14 Aug, 2009 | 08:29 AM PST | A lot of what is wrong today stems from the rhetoric of our

rulers and their lack of action. — Photo by Reuters Pakistan This Independence Day our heads hang in shame once again. The ideologues who later sat down to chronicle the birth pangs of Pakistan mixed a good measure of indoctrination and self-righteousness as they retrospectively defined the rationale for the creation of this country. Eliminating communal violence, for one, became the rallying cry of the Pakistan Movement in its final months, which sought to safeguard India's minority Muslims' rights against the majority community. Had Pakistan treated its minorities with dignity, we wouldn't be ashamed today. Though violence targeting minorities is not the norm here, the survivors of such violence will tell you it marks the end of their lives as bona fide, full citizens of the state. This is because, besides widespread social discrimination, the state by enacting laws that readily work as tools of oppression against minorities has been a partner in crime. What happened earlier this month to the Christian Almas Hameed's family in a Punjab town, Gojra, mirrored the brutal burning alive of a Muslim baker's family in India's Gujarat state in 2002 at the hands of a charged-up anti-Muslim mob. Six of Hameed's family members, mostly women and children, were burnt alive by enraged fanatics who were allegedly egged on to punish Christians for desecrating the Quran by a PML-N leader. The Indian Gujarat baker had to suffer death and destruction for the alleged burning by Muslims of a train packed with Hindu pilgrims at the Godhra station, miles away. Likewise, Hameed's family bore the wrath of a Muslim mob for the alleged desecration of the Quran by some Christians in a nearby village. Punjab's ruling party has responded by just suspending the membership of Qadeer Awan, a local president of the PML-N, who the party admitted was behind the anti-Christian violence. The spokesman said the PML-N was 'embarrassed' at his conduct. And only that. Will the brave, new, independent judiciary take note of and express its displeasure with the Hudood Ordinances, the Law of Evidence and the blasphemy laws that incriminate innocent minority members before any verdict is pronounced? Will the killers of Gojra ever be brought to justice? Will the PML-N lead a long march on Islamabad of the wronged minorities as victims of systematic brutality against them? Not a chance. It's not just the Taliban who have their sympathies elsewhere; the so-called and perceived enlightened, educated and clean-shaven politicians who keep mum on issues of discrimination against a sizable section of society do the country no service either. But as the rights activist Asma Jahangir aptly pointed out in an interview with the BBC, 'It is not just political parties. There are radicalised individuals and supporters of militant groups within the judiciary, the education system, the bureaucracy and the police....' At 62, Pakistan is a study of what has gone wrong with a state that started out as a dream for a large section of pre-independence India's minorities. It can be argued today that the Muslim minority that started the new country proved itself inept at handling its own affairs — as even the initial years showed. In the new Muslim-majority country, we created political and ethnic minorities as the new bêtes-noire where none had existed before. The Bengali majority was politically treated as a minority by denying it due representation in state institutions. Even as that long, sordid chapter came to an end with the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the travails of Sindhis, Pakhtuns and Baloch nationalists have continued. So who today is a Pakistani first and a Sindhi, Baloch, Pakhtun or a Punjabi next? The answer is scathing, and we all know it. A lot of what is wrong today stems from the rhetoric of our rulers — make no distinction between the elected and the dictatorial — their lack of action when it is needed and the textbooks we teach our children from. Madressah education aside, a pumped-up majoritarian religiosity seeps through the textbooks in subjects like social studies, language teaching and even handwriting exercises, linking Pakistani identity with a religious one. Pakistan Studies books take the cake with their anti non-Muslim sentiment. There is little at variance in the content and the narrow-minded thrust of textbooks taught in the public and the so-called elite English-medium schools today. This systematic social engineering is based on a post-Jinnah, trumped-up ideology, which in the words of the Quaid-i-Azam himself would have served its purpose as soon as Pakistan was achieved when he declared before the first Constituent Assembly that every Pakistani thenceforth was an equal citizen of the state. The historic speech, which defined the contours of the state that should have emerged from the 1940s' struggle by Indian Muslims for political equality, used to be part of the university syllabus. Not anymore; because the state subsequently did the exact opposite by enacting laws that discriminate against minorities. More Gojras, and the like, cannot be prevented unless they are actively taken up for prevention. Pakistan's minorities will remain on the wrong side of the state, and a people fed on a dangerously communal rhetoric that has been reshaping the soul of the state as it were. A nation's need for repeated reassurance is a malady. It cannot be treated by putting down all that it perceives as being alien. Exclusion of any one group, or sets of religious and ethnic minorities, only breeds contempt, at best a forced conformity. Only inclusive societies can realise the promise of achieving their collective aspirations. This, in our case, was equal opportunity for all citizens regardless of their caste, creed, gender or faith — the very fault-lines we have religiously drawn and maintained to divide ourselves along. A fragmented, motley crowd hardly makes a nation. ...and I am Sid Harth

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Posted by Sid Harth - 2009/09/08 17:57

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pa...> Gojra and education By Zubeida Mustafa
Wednesday, 12 Aug, 2009 | 09:35 AM PST | A man returns to find his house destroyed in Gojra. —Reuters Media
Gallery The future of Pakistan celebrates its past AUDIO SLIDESHOW Pakistani women rise up Talking to a Dawn
panel several years ago, Asghar Ali Engineer, head of the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai, had
commented that every communal riot in India that he had investigated was found to be rooted in economic factors.
Invariably the majority community attacking a minority wanted to undermine it to gain an unfair economic advantage.

But the whole incident was garbed in communal terms. We will not know the underlying reasons for the horrendous event in Gojra until the episode is investigated from that point of view. HRCP's findings confirm that the violence was premeditated as is traditionally the pattern in cases of seemingly mindless killings. But there is usually a method to the madness. That within the span of a few hours seven Christians should have been consumed literally by fires born of communal hatred and 70 or so of their homes burnt down is most telling. What, however, also emerges from the terrible events in Gojra — and also Sangla Hill in 2005 and Shantinagar in 1997 — is how very easy it is for the perpetrators of such crimes to incite people in the name of religion. Thus they can veil their ulterior motives by making an incident appear as an emotional reaction in the face of a provocation, that could well have been concocted. It is worrying that popular passions can be inflamed at the drop of a hat. A rational mindset and the ability to reason created by good education can go a long way towards developing interfaith harmony, tolerance and understanding of other religions. The week Gojra happened, this paper carried another report that seemingly had no relevance to the tragedy that followed. But the connection between the two was not lost on those who have observed closely the obscurantist proclivity in our national psyche and its close link with the education we impart to our children. It was reported that the Pakistan Coalition for Education, a network of civil society organisations and individuals, had expressed its strong disapproval of the government's failure to expedite the announcement of the new education policy that has been in the works for several years. A visibly upset Kamleshwer Lohana, PCE's member from Sindh, had remarked cynically, 'The education policy is not a priority for the present government. This policy will be applicable only to the poor people — those who are dependent on government educational institutions.' Since the elite control the government they are not concerned. This is exactly how Javed Hassan Aly, the author of the 2007 White Paper on education also felt. He added, 'The government, presently under clouds of public scrutiny, is shy of tackling what it may consider contentious issues. The elite and the for-profit private sector are happy with the status quo which allows them to entrench themselves more securely.' Why should they want a new policy? Now it seems the delay had an added reason behind it. A revised policy has now been posted on the ministry of education's website and is to be presented to the cabinet. Compare the draft rejected by the cabinet earlier and the present document. You will discover a new chapter titled 'Islamic Education: Duty of the Society and the State'. The earlier draft had recognised explicitly the need for educational interventions to be based on the core value of Islam as identified by the constitution's chapter on principles of state policy. Apparently that was not found to be adequate. Four extra pages now spell out in detail the Islamic contents of the prescribed courses when earlier a paragraph had sufficed to capture the Islamic spirit to be injected into education in Pakistan. The emphasis on religion in the new draft is overly exaggerated. It is a forewarning that we can expect to see more of the earlier approach that has been responsible for creating the mindset that resulted in Gojra. Numerous surveys have confirmed that. In fact, it is now conceded that the curricula and textbooks in the regular school system have caused more pervasive damage than the madressahs have, given the small numbers which attend them. The policy draft with specific reference to NEP 1998-2010 speaks of an 'integrated education system in which Islamic values, principles and objectives are reflected in the syllabuses of all the disciplines in general'. It would be pertinent to recall here that NEP 1998-2010 spoke of evolving 'an integrated system of national education by bringing deeni madaris and modern schools closer to each stream in curriculum and the contents of education'. This was to be achieved by introducing Nazira Quran as a compulsory component. How all this translates into practice for the religious minorities is evident from the eye-opening observations made by Prof Anjum Paul, chairman Pakistan Minorities Teachers Association, on the biases against his community. He analysed 12 Urdu language textbooks for class I-XII, and 'found 235 chapters and poems out of 409 having a strong Islamic orientation'. He identifies the biases and discrimination against the religious minorities of Pakistan in textbooks, educational institutions and admission processes. Take the case of Muslim students being awarded 20 marks for nazra (reciting the Quran by heart). This makes it difficult for the minorities to compete for seats in higher education. Even the textbooks for ethics (a subject introduced a few years ago in lieu of Islamiyat for religious minorities) are written by Muslims who obviously cannot identify with the teachings of other religions resulting in bias against Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and others. This has failed to create social and inter-faith harmony, Prof Paul says. Recently compulsory training courses for teachers in subjects including qirat were announced. The PMTA regards this as discrimination against teachers from minority communities. We may repeat ad nauseam the Quaid's proclamation on 'religion or caste or creed' having nothing to do with the 'business of the state', but if we continue to have education policies that preach religious hatred, many more Gojras can be expected. ...and I am Sid Harth

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Posted by Sid Harth - 2009/09/08 17:57

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/wo...> US panel says India fails to protect minorities Thursday, 13 Aug, 2009 | 06:17 PM PST | Former Gujarat state minister Maya Kodnani, center wearing yellow sari, accused of leading mobs that attacked Muslims during some of the country's worst religious riots, comes out of a Metropolitan court in Ahmadabad. -AP File Photo World UN report slams violation of Indian minorities' rights NEW DELHI: A US panel on religious freedoms has placed India on its watch list of countries where such freedoms are at risk, noting that there has been a 'disturbing increase' in violence against minorities in the South Asian country. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent congressionally mandated panel that provides recommendations to the government, said in a statement Wednesday that India's response to attacks on

Christians in the eastern state of Orissa in 2008 and against Muslims in western Gujarat state in 2002 was 'largely inadequate.' The panel had recommended that India be placed on the more serious 'countries of particular concern' list after the 2002 riots, but it was removed in 2005. In Orissa's Kandhamal district, widespread trouble began in late August last year after the killing of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, a hard-line Hindu leader who advocated that Christian converts return to Hinduism. Police blamed local Maoist guerrillas for the killing, but Hindu militants quickly turned on local Christians and the rampages left at least 40 people dead, thousands homeless and dozen of churches destroyed. In Gujarat about 1,000 people, most of them Muslims, were killed when Hindu mobs rampaged through Muslim neighborhoods, towns and villages in the state from February to April 2002. The riots were triggered by a fire that killed 60 passengers on a train packed with Hindu pilgrims. The religious violence was among India's worst since its independence from Britain in 1947. The Gujarat state government is controlled by Hindu nationalists of the Bharatiya Janata Party who have been accused of not doing enough to stop the violence and at times stoking it. Officials there, however, said they did everything they could to quell the rioting. 'In both Orissa and Gujarat, court convictions have been infrequent, perpetrators rarely brought to justice and thousands of people remain displaced,' the statement said. There was no immediate response from the Indian government. Countries are placed on the watch list or the more serious 'countries of particular concern' list because their governments either discriminate against people for religious reasons or are unwilling or unable to stop religious violence by their citizens. The other countries currently on the list are Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, Laos, the Russian Federation, Somalia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Venezuela. The statement added that the panel issues its annual report on religious freedom in May and this year's India chapter was delayed because the Indian government refused to give visas to panel members.

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<http://rethinkingislam-sultanshahin.blogspot.com/2009/08/babri-masjid...> Rethinking Islam Thursday, August 13, 2009
Babri masjid dispute: Finding a solution Islam and Politics 10 Feb 2009, NewAgelIslam.Com That any temple built at Ayodhya will have been built on the blood of so many innocent lives, and by imperilling so many moral and constitutional principles, ought to be a matter of shame for most Hindus who care about Ram. This is an issue on which there is unlikely to be any settlement that appears just, and there are no guarantees that even a settlement will lay many of the murderous edges of Indian politics to rest. But it will take a divisive issue off the agenda and potentially transform our politics. There is no option other than to try. As a society we long gave up on justice. At the present conjuncture, we can only hope that we will at least opt for prudence.

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Posted by bademiyansubhanallah - 2009/09/08 17:57

<http://pakteahouse.wordpress.com/2009/08/14/pakistaniat-the-crisis-of...> Pakistaniat : The Crisis of Identity Bradistan Calling What can I give to Pakistan as a present on its 62nd Birthday, What else than an article on its chequered history and identity. Bertrand Russell famously said, "There are three great civilisations in East i.e. India, China and Islam". Pakistan is blessed to be located at the crossroads of all these great civilisations. In my humble opinion this is the biggest strength of Pakistani identity. Celebrating the T20 victory in Bradford, I left my intellectual hat at home and donned the green flag to go on the street and celebrate with the Bradistan boyz and girlz, not that I consider myself a "flag waving nationalist". My loyalties might be a bit shaky but I would never dream of waving a tricolour of Republic of India. It is a different story when it comes to patriotic movies like "Baghat Singh" or "Mother India", my eyes fill with tears of pride. I don't follow Pakistan cricket team fanatically; I am well past my youth days of 1992 world cup victory. I still remember how the Pakistanis, all over the world, spontaneously came out on the streets singing dancing, waving their flags, congratulating and hugging strangers. It was similar story this time as well and all major motorways in and out of Bradford were blocked, there were long queues in front of sweet shops and police had to restrain some hot-headed youth who insist on sitting on the roofs of their cars while waving the flags, girls with Pakistanis T-shirts with loud anthems on their car stereos. These scenes were repeated across Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester and London. Obviously the rightwing mullah brigade (made in Saudi Arabian clone factory) does not like Pakistanis singing and dancing on the street in sinful jubilation. In itself winning a minor or major sports tournament cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be termed a national achievement. Do we really go over the top in our celebrations? probably yes, but the Pakistanis from the Jackson Heights in New York city to the Afro-Baluch slums of Lyari in Karachi and from Chinese border in the north to the deserts of Punjab and Sindh felt a real sense of excitement after continuous bad news of terrorist attacks, lack of electricity, breakdown of governance and the economic and social crises in Pakistan. Foreign governments and research analysts continuously rank Pakistan in the category of at risk of becoming a failed state. These analyses are probably too far fetched if not completely inaccurate. Pakistan is facing a Population explosion of

180 million people, but Pakistan is also bursting with energy and talent. Pakistani scientists, doctors and professors are among the best in the world. It would probably be irresponsible to rank Pakistan with countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Sudan or Zimbabwe. Pakistan is fighting a war for its survival against the Islamic terrorists. Pakistan was envisaged as a country for Muslims by liberal Muslim elite of India, not an Islamic theocracy. Pakistan, at its birth, had the vitality and diversity of a multiethnic multilingual and multi cultural country. Unfortunately rightwing pan-Islamic ideologues like Maududi, To-fail Mohammed and their protégé Islamist dictator Zia conspired to sell the soul of Pakistan to the devilish terrorist from Middle East. Despite its religious and cultural pluralism, Pakistan suffers an identity crisis. The founder of Pakistan Mr. Jinnah articulated his vision for the constitutional rights of all citizens irrespective of their religion, race or background, in a speech to legislative assembly on the eve of independence. But the Islamists want to turn Pakistan into a colonial outpost of puritanical Saudi Arabia. Even Baluch separatists are more democratic and secular than the so called champions of "two nation Hindu-Muslim ideology" of Pakistan. Recently Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan has tried to link the Pakistani identity to Indus Valley Civilisation, which prospered the areas of current Pakistan 5000 years ago. But can a vision from past heal the fault lines in the current Pakistani identity, possible but highly unlikely. Pakistan is a reality which the sceptics of partition of India cannot simply wish away. Pakistani identity is a fluid and dynamic paradigm and religion alone cannot provide the basis of a modern nation state. The Islamist tried to wipe out the colourful mosaic of songs and culture through imposition of their mono-chrome Islamic culture on TV, newspapers, magazines, painters and performing arts. World famous Pakistani historian and anthropologist late Ahmed H. Dani described, Pakistan's landscape and culture as many countries rolled into one; Northern Areas are Central Asian Switzerland, Frontier is Afghani, Punjab and upper Sindh are North Indian and Baluchistan and lower Sindh are Middle Eastern. Up until 2004, Pakistan used to have half a million European and American tourists every year. The Himalayan valleys in Northern Areas, The Kite Runner festival of "Basant" in the ancient and walled inner city of Lahore(capital of North Indian culture), cultural and religious tourism for Sikh and Hindu pilgrims are still as good as any in the world. Pakistan has to showcase the Indus Valley and Ghandhara Buddhist civilizations, Basant festival, performing arts festival, truck art, chicken-Tikka Masaala Mughal cuisine, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh pilgrimage places to new markets. Festivals at Shiv Mandir in Katas Raj and Kali Mandir in Hinglaj Balouchistan can bring Non-resident Indians(sikhs especially) NRIs from Europe and America. Its high time Indians are allowed free access to Pakistani destinations. In today's Pakistan, despite the terrorism the media is free but there are certain "red lines", which no one dares to cross. Pakistan national broadcasters TV and radio try to revive the art and culture through works of great writers and thinkers like Faiz, Faraz, Parveen shaker, S H Manto, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Ibn Insha and painters like Guljee, Sadqeen and A R Chughtai. Recently International bestsellers of Pakistani writers have made waves in media. Arguably, the art and the literature are limited to the elite. Unfortunately, the local languages and culture is in decline due to global satellite TV entertainment. Sufi Islam (with its colourful religious ceremonies) has inspired singers like Nusrat Fateh Ali, Junoon and Shafqat Amanat Ali to project a soft image of Pakistan to world wide audiences. Sufi saints' folklore and romantic folktales of Heer-Ranja(Punjab), Sassi-Pannu (Baluch), Saiful -Maluk(Kashmir/Hazara) and Umer-Marvi (Sindh) inspire and bond Pakistani masses together. English socialite, Jewish Heiress Jemima Khan, recalled listening to the Sufi Rahat Nusrat Fateh singing classic poet Ghalib at heritage Haveli (mansion) of the grandson of poet philosopher Dr. Iqbal, a stone-throw away from "Royal street" (the infamous dancing girls' street) and "Food street" Lahore, in the company of thespian legends, among them Indian Muslim Naseer-uddin shah(who co-incidentally played the role of Ghalib in biographical movie). The write-up captures the contradictions and beauty of Pakistani identity. Pakistan's biggest export to its eastern neighbour, India is culture in form of Poetry, Pop music, Sufi Qawali and its TV dramas. Indians consider Pakistanis as a custodian of Mughal Muslim tradition of undivided India, Urdu Bhasha is the lingua franca of Bollywood movies. Cricket is the passion, entertainment and pastime of the working, lower middle class Pakistanis. For the masses the pride and joy of winning a world championship was immeasurable. The cricketers become overnight heroes of the Pakistani nation. Pakistani cricketers (as a team), barring the two "Jehovah's Muslims" Yousaf(a Christian apostate) and Inzimum(ex-clubbing fanatic turned Islamist), are the new poster boys for modernity, liberal lifestyle and international success, the fast bowler "Rawalpindi express" Shoaib Akhter is more (in)famous for his night-clubbing and binge drinking than for his cricketing talents. Even the neighbouring Afghanistan has caught the cricket fever, despite the game being banned by the puritanical Taliban in mid 90s. We should not let chauvinistic nationalism blind us from the shame of military blunders and human rights violations but Pakistani society still has the vitality to rise again from ashes after every major crisis and disaster. In Struggle for democracy in 1980s, floods of 1992, earthquake in 2005, judicial movement in 2007 and refugee crisis in Swat valley and fight against Islamic terrorism, Pakistanis unite and open their arms for their less fortunate brothers and sisters. 99% of the Pakistanis are not the isolationist fanatics, that world media and the Islamists portray them to be. Pakistanis have a new found confidence that they can compete with the best in the world despite all difficulties. Three of the current cricketing heroes namely Yunus Khan, Shahid Afridi and Umer Gul are ethnic Pushtun and come from North West Frontier, an area battling the Islamist terrorist. Cricketing success has shown the youth of Pakistan a new way. Back on the streets of Bradistan even the English, Indian Gujarati and Bosnian Muslims joined in the chants of "Boom Boom Afridi", and I said the future is bright the future is green. ...and I am Sid Harth

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Posted by bademiyansubhanallah - 2009/09/08 17:57

http://twocircles.net/2009aug14/nehru_jinah_and_partition.html Nehru, Jinnah and partition Submitted by admin4 on 14 August 2009 - 5:00pm. ArticlesIndian MuslimMuslim World News By Asghar Ali Engineer, Mr. Jaswant Singh, a senior BJP leader from Rajasthan has written a book on Jinnah which is expected to be published shortly. He has, according to a news item on NDTV, called Jinnah a secular person and thrown responsibility for partition on Nehru. Earlier Mr. L. K. Advani had also described Jinnah as secular while visiting Jinnah's mausoleum in Karachi and paid heavy price for it as RSS asked him to resign as president of BJP. And now Jaswant Singh, a fairly independent minded leader has called Jinnah a secular person. No doubt Jinnah is a highly controversial figure. He is greatly admired and is father of the nation in Pakistan. He is often referred to as Baba-e-Qaum by Pakistanis. But he is hated by many in India and is considered mainly responsible for creation of Pakistan and hence a villain of the peace. Such extremes can never adequately define a person, let alone being understood adequately. The motives for describing Jinnah as secular by two top BJP leaders may be different but there is an element of truth in what they say. Shri Advani was speaking as a politician during his visit and may be he tried to please his hosts in Pakistan. Mr. Jaswant Singh is under no such obligation and is speaking as a scholar as he is known to be of fairly independent mind and may not be much concerned about what RSS and BJP leaders might think. It is not only in India that Jinnah is subject to different interpretations, some hating him as breaker of India and some absolving him of total responsibility for partition. Jinnah is subject to different interpretation in Pakistan itself some moderate and liberal Muslims describing him as secular and often quoting his speech in the Constituent Assembly as a proof of his secularism. The conservatives and orthodox Muslims, on the other hand, projecting him as believer in two nation theory and true Muslim who created Pakistan for Islam and Muslims. We have the same problem with Mahatma Gandhi in our own country. Some Dalit and RSS leaders hate him again for different reasons. Dalits hate him as an upper caste Hindu leader who upheld the concept of caste, if not of untouchability. And RSS leaders hate him, though publicly they may not take such position for obvious reasons. They hate him as they consider Gandhi as betrayer of Hindu cause and supporter of Muslims. They even indulge in propaganda that Gandhiji is responsible for partition of the country. Many people hold Nehru as responsible for partition and among those who hold Nehru as responsible there are all types of people – secular as well as communal. The question arises who is really responsible? We Indians and Pakistanis while holding our own leaders as responsible we have completely exonerated the British rulers of their responsibility for partition. Though secular elements at times do refer to the role of the British, communal forces in both the countries have completely absolved British. In RSS propaganda main culprits are Muslims led by Jinnah whereas in Pakistani propaganda it is Hindus led by Gandhi who are mainly responsible for partition. If one studies the complex developments carefully in mid-fifties it is difficult to fix total responsibility on any one person or one party. Different actors played different role adding up to partition of the country. First let us see the role of Jinnah since he is at the centre-stage of partition. Before this we also have to look at him whether he was secular or communal. It must be noted that we cannot go by western definition of secular and communal. We have accepted these terms in our own sense and in our own context. Gandhiji was secular despite being highly religious in his attitude. Nehru, of course, was secular more in western than in Indian sense. Similarly Jinnah was also secular more in western sense. Both Nehru and Jinnah never were religious as Gandhi and Maulana Azad were. Nehru was closer to Jinnah than to Gandhiji and Maulana Azad was closer to Gandhiji than to Jinnah. Maulana Azad also was deeply a religious person like Gandhiji though he was more liberal in religious matters than Gandhiji. Jinnah was thoroughly westernized person right from his younger days. He never had any religious training. He did not observe any Islamic taboos like liquor and pork. He never observed religious rituals. He even disagreed with Gandhiji about involving Ulama in politics and he opposed Gandhiji taking up Khilafat question. He believed in separation of politics from religion. He was described as Muslim Gokhale by friends. Gokhale was liberal and so was Jinnah. Jinnah was certainly secular in this sense. He until 1935 described himself as Indian first and then Muslim. And, until 1937 he had never thought of partition even in his dreams. He even entered into an informal understanding with the congress in 1937 elections in U.P. His differences with Indian National Congress had begun from 1928 onwards when his demands were rejected by the Nehru committee set up by the Congress to solve communal problem. He had even ridiculed the concept of Pakistan initially propounded by Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge University student. The two nation theory was deeply flawed and Jinnah had formulated it as a sort of political revenge on the Congress leaders like Nehru who refused to take two Muslim League nominees in the U.P. cabinet after Muslim league lost 1937 elections and Nehru was responsible for this. Maulana Azad tried to persuade Nehru to take the two nominees but unfortunately Nehru did not budge. Some scholars suggest that Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, an influential Congress leader from U.P. prompted Nehru. Whatever the reason political it was unwise not to take two Muslim league nominees. Maulana Azad has pointed this out and has criticized Nehru on this count in his political biography India Wins Freedom. For Jinnah it was outright betrayal and he decisively turned against Congress and gradually it led Jinnah to propounding two nation theory. Thus two nation theory was a politically contingent proposition rather than any religiously grounded proposition. Had Nehru shown little political sagacity this theory would not have come into existence at all. And in no sense of the word Jinnah ever wanted to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan. Jinnah would not have even approved of Pakistan having Islam as an official religion. That was not his bent of mind. If one goes by Jinnah's speech in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly it is doubtful if he wanted even a Muslim state, let alone an Islamic state. He was all for a secular state in Pakistan. Then if we call Jinnah communal in what sense can he be described as one? Or can he be? In those days when we were fighting for freedom of our country communalism was not opposite of secularism, but of nationalism. Anyone who was anti-national was described as communal. Thus if at all Jinnah could be described communal it is in this sense. And as pointed out above, Jinnah opted for partition not as a part of his conviction but as a result of political contingency. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible in a way as he was not very happy with the Cabinet Mission Plan as it would have resulted in weak centre as except defence, foreign

policy and communication all residuary powers would have rested with the federating states. Both Nehru and Sardar Patel were not happy with this scheme. And as Azad has pointed out in his book Nehru, on being elected as president of the congress in 1946, gave a statement that Cabinet Mission Plan could be, if necessary, changed. This infuriated Jinnah as Muslim League had also accepted the Plan and a composite Government was formed after 1946 fall elections. This finally drove Jinnah to accept nothing less than partition. The greatest culprit was British rulers as they also wanted India divided so that they could easily establish intelligence and military base in Pakistan to stem the tide of revolution which by then had become a certainty in China. Nehru Government would have never allowed such bases in United India. Lord Mount Batten got Nehru, through his wife Advina to endorse the partition plan. Thus it would be seen that apart from Jinnah the British and Nehru were also responsible for partition of the country. In my opinion the greatest responsibility of partition lay on the British shoulder. They cleverly maneuvered the complex situation in a way to make partition a reality. Partition, as Maulana Azad also pointed out, was neither in the interest of India nor in the interest of Muslims themselves. The ultimate result of partition is that Muslims of Indian sub-continent stand divided into three units and Kashmir problem is also result of this tragedy. And both the countries are spending billions of rupees on their armies and now such powerful interests have developed in keeping conflict between the two countries alive that all efforts for talks fail. Now the only solution is in confederation of nations of South Asia, with no visa and common currency. If European countries could form a viable union despite the fact that they were at each others throats until late forties why can't we in South Asia? ...and I am Sid Harth

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http://www.twocircles.net/2009aug12/call_second_freedom_struggle.html A call for second freedom struggle Submitted by admin4 on 12 August 2009 - 7:09pm. ArticlesIndian Muslim By Kashif-ul-Huda, TwoCircles.net 15th August is the celebration of an independent India. Schools, colleges, and government offices mark the day by parades, speeches, and unfurling of the Tricolours. For children it is a holiday and a day when they get lots of candies. It has been 62 years since we gained independence from the British and this month we should contemplate what we have achieved and where we as a nation want to go. India is proud of its democracy and collectively Indian voters have always made the right choice. Recent Lok Sabha elections yet again proves that Indian public is very mature when it comes to exercising its democratic rights. India has also made lot of progress in the economic front. This prosperity is visible in the way we dress, eat, and live. Modern gadgets have changed our lives and we do not lag behind the world leaders in adopting latest technological advancements. We should be proud of our journey as a nation since 1947, though there have been many shameful incidents along the way. As we start playing a bigger role on the world stage we have to look inwards and see how strong we as a nation are. Problems that we inherited middle of the last century still persist with us today. We still have problems of illiteracy, poverty, corruption, bureaucratic redtapism, law & order breakdown, etc. We have also failed in improving our society as various social evils like casteism, communalism, dowry deaths, child marriages still exist, laws notwithstanding. What we need as a nation is a road map developed with consensus. A road map to where we want to be as a nation. A collective goal for all of us, a future that everyone has a stake in, a target that everyone aspires towards. We all have to buy this idea of India which will be beneficial to all Indians regardless of religion, caste, language, or region. India that provides free & quality education to all its children in a language of their choice, provides jobs to those who are willing to work, improves law & order machinery so that the weakest amongst us can seek justice without fear, improves administration so that it breaks from its colonial mind-sets and understand that it is here to serve people and not the political party in power. A system that is transparent and with built-in accountability is the only way to ensure that it will be responsive to the needs of a big and diverse country like India. How can this ambitious goal be achieved? For this we have to go back to about a hundred years ago and take lessons from India's freedom movement. We need visionary leaders of this century. Leaders like Ali Brothers, Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, BR Ambedkar, Jawahar Lal Nehru. Movement is led by big leaders but it also need grass root level leaders who can go door to door and explain the importance of the movement. Importance of Urdu journalism in stroking the fires of freedom movement can not be underestimated. Media in India now is more widespread and reaches a large proportion of population, they need to join in this second freedom struggle to educate and motivate Indians. This movement should work with the government but should be independent of it, so that it can monitor the administration and make it responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. We as individuals have to understand the duties and responsibilities of being a citizen. It is correct to petition and protest when government fails in its duties but it is also important that we hold on to our end of this arrangement by fulfilling the duties expected of us as a citizen of a country. We have to follow the law all times, we have to take care of fellow human beings, we have to see how our actions are affecting others and correct our behaviour if it is harmful to the community and the country.

.call for second freedom struggle Submitted by gopi thomas (not verified) on 12 August 2009 - 8:23pm. While the society has progressed, and abject poverty has been eliminated, we still have many more miles to go. This is a journey; no destination is final; aspirations change as a country and people progress. However, by naming it a second freedom struggle, we are putting the blame on others; or even worse, indicating that we have to be free from our own leaders or our democracy. This is dangerous. What we need is a movement; a grass roots movement, focused on development, focused on our people, eliminating bureaucracy, enforcing transparency, ensuring equal opportunity

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<http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2009/08/for-us-body-india-is-same-a...> August 15, 2009 For US body, India is same as Somalia and Afghanistan <http://www.rediff.com/news/2009/aug/13us-body-places-india-on-watch-l...> Obviously incensed after being denied visas to visit India, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom

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<http://deshgujarat.com/2009/08/15/muslims-attack-janmashtami-processi...> Muslims attack Janmashtami procession in Ahmedabad Muslims attack Janmashtami procession in Ahmedabad By our correspondent Ahmedabad, DeshGujarat, 15 August, 2009 Police lobbed five tear gas shells to disperse the Muslim mobs who were pelting stones over minority Hindu population in Ahmedabad's Muslim dominated Shahpur area on Saturday evening. The trouble started when Muslims attacked a Janmashtami procession that was passing near a Muslim place of worship and then started pelting stones over Hindus who are in minority in this area. After Hindus reacted to this, Muslim mobs started pelting stones from all the directions in Nagorivad area. Around three to four persons received minor injuries during the clashes. The situation was brought under control and heavy police deployment has been arranged. It should be mentioned here that Shahpur area was originally a Hindu dominated locality of Ahmedabad. But thanks to Muslim mafias, and property riots sponsored by them, Hindus had to sell their properties and ultimately the whole area started becoming Muslim dominated. Last year, Muslims had burnt a Hindu temple in Shahpur area. Feedbacks Received to "Muslims attack Janmashtami procession in Ahmedabad" sunny(london)

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http://www.khabrein.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25... BJP is incomplete without Muslims: Shivraj Singh Chauhan By Khabrein.Info Correspondent, Bhopal, Aug 16, 2009: Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan said in a program that the BJP is incomplete without Muslims. He said that the party does not differentiate between Hindus and Muslims on religious ground. Sushma Swaraj, a senior BJP leader while speaking on the occasion said that Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is not anti-Muslim party but this party is against those who spread hatred and divide society. The Minority Morcha of the party is the ambassador of Sadbhavna Mission among Muslims. She was speaking at the concluding session of the seminar of working committee of Minority Morcha. She said that the Muslims should be nationalist and should be proud of being Indian Muslims. Urdu is the language of this country and you should speak this language without any hesitation. She said the party workers should go among Muslims. Go there even if they don't welcome you, Shushma said. The worker should say the Muslims that the party is not against the Muslims; the party is against those thinking who refuses Vande Mataram. Giving the example of six year tenure of Shivraj Singh Chauhan in Madhya Pradesh Shushma said that there was no any discrimination against Muslims. If the Muslims have any problem with the BJP Government they should said, it will be solved as soon as possible. Sivraj Singh Chauhan, chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh said that the BJP is incomplete without Muslims. The party like Congress has never differentiated between Hindu and Muslims on the basis of religion. He assured that the safety of every citizen will be ensured in the BJP Government. There will be no any difference between poor and rich. He appealed the party workers to go among Muslims, solve their confusion and win their hearts. ...and I am Sid Harth

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http://www.ptinews.com/news/232678_Separatists-slam-PM-for-his-remarks Separatists slam PM for his remarks STAFF WRITER 21:10 HRS IST Srinagar, Aug 16 (PTI) Separatists today described Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's remarks that the recent elections in Jammu and Kashmir had showed that the separatist ideology had no place in the state as unrealistic and ridiculous. Singh's remarks were in line with the traditional rigid Indian policy towards the Kashmir problem, said a spokesman of the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference, headed by detained Syed Ali

Shah Geelani, here. The remarks are ridiculous and unrealistic, he said slamming the Prime Minister. Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the Independence Day yesterday, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said people of the state had participated vigorously in both the elections (assembly and parliamentary). This is a proof that there is no place for separatist thought in Jammu and Kashmir, he had said. ...and I am Sid Harth

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<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Debate/Do-something-substantial-f...> Do something substantial for minorities 10 Jul 2009, 0233 hrs IST, In the budget, Pranab Mukerjee made provisions for minority welfare and for opening two campuses of Aligarh Muslim University in Malappuram and Asghar Ali Engineer, Centre for Study of Society & Secularism Murshidabad. Well, it is a welcome move, given that something is better than nothing. However, the amount provided for matric and post-matric scholarships is a mere trickle, given the Muslim population in India — about 150 million. For the past sixty years hardly anything was done for Muslims who are equal to Dalits in backwardness, and now according to the Sachar Committee data, are trailing behind them. Earlier Congress governments hardly did anything to pull Muslims out of their backwardness though they kept on voting for the Congress. What is more regrettable is that Lalu Yadav and Mulayam Singh who also depended on Muslim votes, were equally guilty. The real measure of democracy is what it does for the most marginalised sections. Mahatma Gandhi also said the real test of development would be the benefit that accrues to the last man in society. Seen in that perspective, all central as well as state governments have failed to do anything worthwhile for minorities. Indira Gandhi had appointed the Gopal Singh High Committee in the early eighties which preceded the Sachar Committee. However that committee's report was not even tabled in Parliament. And shockingly enough V P Singh who became PM during the end of the eighties had not even heard of it! The irony is that even for such symbolic acts, the BJP immediately screams 'appeasement of Muslims'! And most of the middle classes swallow this 'appeasement' theory. This is also one of the factors in discouraging the Congress government from going beyond symbolism in doing something substantial for the minorities, especially Muslims. However, this election has shown that Congress must emerge from the fear of BJP propaganda and its anti-minorityism as masses of Indian people have clearly rejected communalism, at least of the extremist variety. The Centre should boldly come out with a substantial programme for uplift of the Muslim masses. That is the government's democratic duty. ...and I am Sid Harth

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<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Opinion/lts-not-just-tokenism-but...> It's not just tokenism, but a sham 10 Jul 2009, 0231 hrs IST, Welfare of minorities (a euphemism mostly used to describe Muslims in the country) is not just tokenism, but a sham. Parties that have shown great GVL Narasimha Rao, Political Analyst & Member, BJP alacrity in galvanising minorities into vote banks have done little to promote their welfare. No wonder, a sizeable section of minorities continue to remain poor both in terms of income poverty and capability poverty. Shockingly, the Sachar Committee report which studied backwardness among Muslims had found that the employment opportunities for Muslims were the least in West Bengal, a state ruled for the past three decades by the champions of ultra secularism — the Marxists. Minorities are a key and integral part of our society and they live in perfect harmony with other communities all over the country. They ought to be treated as equals and treating them as a separate bloc may serve the parochial interests of political parties but has the potential to cause grievous harm to the society by creating a chasm between communities. One great quality of the people of this country is that they do not discriminate people on the basis of their religion. Stalwarts like Abdul Kalam are respected by people all over the country; sports stars like Sania Mirza, Irfan Pathan, Zaheer Khan and film stars like Shahrukh Khan and Aamir Khan have achieved stardom and are adored by the whole nation and not just by Muslims. Why, we even have a prime minister in Dr Manmohan Singh hailing from the minority Sikh community who has just been re-elected with a bigger mandate. What more do you need to show that Indian people are truly secular? India being a secular nation and Indians being truly secular, religion should not be the basis for peddling any state sponsored welfare. There are many poor and deprived sections among the minority as well as majority communities. They all deserve support and encouragement from the governments for their uplift. The very idea of the UPA government forming a separate ministry for minority (read Muslims) affairs is an act of tokenism and the ministry deserves to be scrapped. ...and I am Sid Harth

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