

DISCUSSION SERIES-I

Many Faces of Communalism

**KHUSHWANT SINGH
BIPAN CHANDRA**

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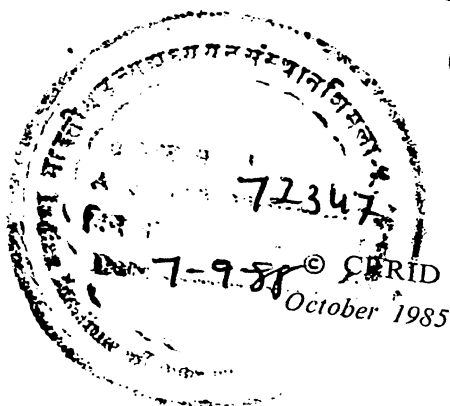
MANY FACES OF COMMUNALISM

KHUSHWANT SINGH
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P.N. Haksar

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CATALOGUED

FOREWORD

The Publication of our *Discussion Series* might not be too inappropriate an occasion to say something about the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, as I see it. We have a fairly large number of institutes dispersed all over the country which concern themselves with research in areas of social sciences-economics, politics, their inter-connections, etc. All of them are supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and by the government of the state in which they are located.

The Centre which was founded towards the end of 1978 by a group of independent thinkers drawn from public and academic life, civil services and industries, made a very small beginning in 1979 with the publication of the quarterly journal, *Man & Development*, which has entered seventh year of its existence. In the following year the Centre worked towards its objective to provide an environment suitable for study and promote academic research in humanities and social sciences, Indian culture, comparative religion, natural science, industry and other fields such as advancement of education and integrated rural development.

When we thought of this Centre, we decided to make a slight departure from the usual organisational pattern of social science research. The usual pattern has been that the funds came and in-house facilities were developed. With professors, assistant professors, associate professors, senior research fellows and others, was built up a hierarchy among academics. Some were scientists, some were physicists, some were sociologists, and so on. We did not want to create an institute with a hierarchy of academics, but to draw upon the existing resources of universities in and around Punjab and Chandigarh and to have a small staff here which would think of problems which needed investigation. We have proceeded in this fashion. And it was in 1981 that the Centre

was able to identify a team of young researchers from different disciplines to initiate the process of interdisciplinary research on problems of fundamental importance and of contemporary relevance.

The people associated with us are spread out in Delhi in the Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University, in Aligarh and all over India. One of the consequences is the active involvement of a large number of scholars and academics in a search for understanding rather complex and difficult problems which our country faces, and is bound to face with the passage of time. We are thus experimenting with a new type of structure.

Having spent a good bit of my life in being part of a bureaucracy, I found my friends in the bureaucracy expressing grave doubts about the success of such a structure. They wondered how we could have a research institute without the requisite number of professors, assistant professors, lecturers and so on. We have ultimately succeeded in convincing them that this experiment is what is called a cost efficient or low cost experiment. We look for bright young people with a good academic background, and we look out for problems.

One of the problems which has been engaging our attention long before it burst into the terrible things which have happened in our country, especially in Punjab and elsewhere, is the problem of communalism. We have made a deep study, and we are enlarging the study, and extending it to U.P., Gujarat, Maharashtra and other parts of the country.

In our search for understanding complex and difficult problems, particularly in the area of national integration, we have got together academics, intellectuals and others in efforts towards a mutual comprehension of such problems. In the midst of the tragic developments in Assam we held a seminar in Chandigarh on the problems of the northeastern region. The object was to establish some sort of communication between minds which had barricaded themselves behind a wall of fear and suspicion. We

published the proceedings of the seminar, which gave expression to a variety of perceptions of the problems of Assam and northeast India. Sanguinary events overtook us. The problems remain even today. One hopes, however, that our modest effort will contribute to some extent in bringing about reconciliation on the basis of reason, justice and law.

Similarly, the Centre has conducted a study on the Punjab crisis. The band of young researchers attempted to probe deep into the problem to expose clashes of economic and political interests that have developed and their relations to manifest cultural and religious factors and have examined the implications of convenient political alliances in the past. It is a comprehensive treatment in which socio-economic and political dimensions have been interwoven to understand the all pervasive impact of communal ideology. This publication too has attracted attention.

The Centre, while concerned with the problems of India, realises that many of our problems are related to developments in our neighbourhood and even beyond. This is what led to the seminar on South Asia. It was really an attempt to understand our problems in a wider context. The group of scholars and diplomats who participated in the seminar tried to come out with policy perceptions, which took into account the realities of today, while not compromising the future. The seminar did provide valuable inputs into the perception of India's relations with its neighbours in the context of the existing correlation of international forces. This should be evident from the published proceedings of the seminar.

The organisation of series of lectures on the occasion of the inauguration of our new complex is a continuation of this process. The idea was to have an interaction between citizens who think and those who specialise in particular areas. As with similar other efforts on our part, we are publishing some of these lectures in a series of handy volumes of related themes. We have called these *Discussion Series*, because apart from the lectures there were

discussions, without which interaction would have had no meaning. Among the subjects covered in this series are communalism, planned development and the nuclear age.

As one of our regular activities in keeping with the basic objective of understanding our country's problems, in our quarterly journal, *Man and Development*, we try to reflect in it, with the help of a wide variety of well studied articles and papers by distinguished authors as well as scholars and field workers, the basic philosophy of our Centre.

This institution passionately believes that our ancient country, which has tried out various methods of salvation, needs to try out, in at least what remains of this century - fifteen years more - not the path of *dharma*, not the path of *bhakti*, but the path of acquiring knowledge or *gyana marga*. We have tried to pick out and identify all varieties of *dharma*, according to various conceptions of *dharma*, or *mazhab* if you like to call it. This country has not really tried out yet the path of knowledge, and especially *ascertainable* and *ascertained* knowledge, which is the whole area which science has opened up for us.

True, it does not answer all questions. At least it answers how to build a bridge; how to build a house; how to do well in economic management so that you do not have losses and make profits; how to structure various social systems, political system, economic system and so on, so that they produce, contentment among the people and less dissonance and more consonance.

This series of lectures is part of that design - a search on the part of our Centre to persuade our fellow compatriots to try out this path of knowledge also. The fundamental point is to question everything - not to accept anything on the basis of anybody's authority, because we know that authoritarianism, even in matters of conscience and religion, has led to dangerous developments and situations in the past.

May be, this is a blasphemous type of introduction to the first few volumes of the *Discussion Series*, based on the lectures

on the occasion of the inauguration of our Centre's new complex. We might seek some comfort in the thought that Jawaharlal Nehru left us with the reflection, that our salvation lies in the application of science and technology to the problems of this ancient society which has seen three thousand years of civilisation and has been thrown in the middle of a multidimensional transformation since 1947.

One of the attempts of this Centre is to create multi-dimensional human beings, who are not narrow scientists who see science not merely as an activity, but as an activity inevitably inter-connected with society, changing it, deforming it, distorting it, doing one thing or another with it. Although a poor country, we have made large investments in science, and rightly so. The time has come to understand this multi-dimensional aspect of science and how to use this knowledge not just to create statistics but to give back to man the heritage he has created through centuries of progress in science and technology. It is to the achievement of this goal through the path of acquisition of knowledge and understanding and its dissemination that the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development is dedicated.

18 July, 1985

P.N. Haksar

New Delhi.

SEPARATIST TENDENCIES IN SIKH HISTORY

Khushwant Singh

I am going to begin with what is known as a Sardarji joke which has some bearing on the subject. In fact I will begin with two, both true and pertinent to the subject I am going to discuss.

The first is about a well known historian and linguist, Dr. Lorrimer. I do not know how many of you have heard his name. He had been travelling-this is before independence-through many parts of north-western India and Central Asia and came back to London to deliver a series of lectures on his travels. In these lectures he mentioned Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. It was a very erudite oration. At the end of the lecture one of the audience got up and said, "Dr. Lorrimer, I would like to ask you about the Sikhs. We have heard about Hindus and Massalmans. But tell us who are these Sikhs you have been talking about?" Dr. Lorrimer scratched his head and said, "You know it is very difficult to tell you who a Sikh is. I would say he is a kind of vicious Hindu." I happened to be among the audience.

The other incident really happened to me. I was in Israel some years ago staying in a hotel in Tel Aviv. Obviously not many Israelis had seen anything as odd looking as I. I came to the dining room. An American Jewish couple sitting alongside me could not keep their eyes off me. They kept looking at me and whispering to each other asking where on earth this character had come from. They talked and talked and could not contain their curiosity any more. Then the man turned to me and asked, "Excuse me, do you speak any English?" I replied I did. "My wife, Majorie, and I have been arguing all the time and wondering where you are from." I replied, "You try and guess

where I am from." They scratched their heads and could not make anything of me. They tried many countries. They realised that I couldn't be an Arab because Israel was always having trouble with the Arabs. Ultimately I told them that I am from India. They were relieved, I then asked them "Can you tell me what race or religion I belong to?" An argument started between the husband and wife. She said, "You couldn't be Jewish, could you?" Many Jews have beards. "No, I am not Jewish." I replied. The husband remarked "Of course not; How can he be Jewish. Don't be silly asking him questions like that." The wife tried again and said, "Could you be a Buddhist?" I realised that she was asking me whether I was a Buddhist. I said, "No, I am not even a Buddhist." The husband kept looking at me trying to make sure whether he could get it right. The wife then turned to me, "Could you then be a Musclem?" I said, "No, I am not a Musclem either." She got exasperated said, "Who the hell are you?" I replied, "I am a Sikh." The husband, with great triumph, roared, "I know, you are from Sikkim."

I mention these anecdotes to illustrate that whatever self-esteem the Sikhs may have, they are too few in the world to be known and most regard them as no more than a sect of bearded Hindus. It is a real problem and in some ways it does sum up the Sikh dilemma from the very beginning.

Separate identity is not a problem that is unique to the Sikhs. Any new religious community which breaks away from its parent body, has to establish a separateness from the parent body. There are two major divisions of religions in the world. There is the Judaic family of religions which includes Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Then there is what you might describe as the Hindu body of religions, that is those that have broken away from Hinduism. The major of these breakaway groups are Jainism, Buddhism and, the most recent, Sikhism.

The problem of identity was present to both these systems of religion and the others that broke off from them. In the Judaic

form the separate identity was very clearly established, because they are prophet-based and scripture-based with definite codes of conduct. So you have Judaism with its own prophets, Abraham or Moses; you have their Talmud and the Tora; you have their rites, circumcision, days of fasting and distinct rituals.

The first to break away was Christianity based on another prophet Jesus Christ; paying nominal deference to the prophets of the Jews but really recognising their own founder as the only Saviour. They have their own scripture, the Bible, the Old Testament and later the New Testament. They deny some Jewish customs: they do not circumcise their children, they have one day of fast, on Friday. Ultimately, Christians maintained their identity by hostility towards Judaism. Jew became a dirty word.

Then came Islam, again a prophet-based religion with a scripture of its own, the Qoran, distinct from the Bible or the scriptures of the Jews; Muslims took some customs from the Jews, others they rejected. They practise circumcision; they eat only *halaal* (Kosher) meat like the Jews do not eat *Jhatka* meat we eat. The Jews turn to Jerusalem for prayer, Muslims turn to Mecca for *namaz*. The names of different *namazes* of the Muslims are almost the same as those of the Jews; their greetings *Sehalm Elech* is the same as the Muslim *Salam Valaikum*. Despite these common practices, Muslims were able to build a separate identity and ultimately descended to direct conflict and hostility against the parent body.

With us it was different. Hinduism is not a prophet-based religion. Hinduism has no clear code of conduct of do's and don'ts. Hinduism has no set scripture. There is no such a thing as the Hindu Torah, Bible or Koran. There are the Vedas and the puranas, but they are not scriptures as they are understood in the West. Bhagvat Geeta came up much later and was picked up by the foreigners and given to the Hindus as their Bible.

The first to breakaway, from Hinduism was Jainism. It did have its Tirthankara including Mahavir who may be regarded as

its founder-prophet. Mahavir did not produce a new scripture but only a new theology based on *ahimsa*, a variation of the teachings of Hinduism. Likewise emerged Buddhism. Like Jainism, somewhat prophet-based on Gautam the Buddha. It also evolved a new theology out of Hindu theology but its Hindu roots were clearly discernible.

Then we have Sikhism. It is prophet-based on Guru Nanak and the nine succeeding gurus. Sikhism did not evolve a distinct theology of its own like Jainism or Buddhism. It accepted a form of Vaishnavite Hinduism, giving it a new emphasis. Basically the Gurus teachings were vedantic. Therefore there was not the same kind of breach from Hinduism, as in the cases of Jainism or Buddhism. Sikhism accepted the Hindu code of conduct, its theory of the origin of the world, the purpose of life, the purpose of religion, *samsara* the theory of birth, death and rebirth were taken in entirety from Hinduism. Consequently, the problem of separate identity for the Sikhs was more complicated than with the other two break-away groups.

The revolt of Sikhism was not against Hinduism but against its Brahmanical form. It was based on two things : the concept of God as unity, a God who was *nirankar*, (formless). Therefore, Sikhism rejected the worship of idols. It also rejected the caste system. It was, as the cliché goes, an acceptance of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

There are other forms of Hinduism which are likewise monotheistic and casteless. Hinduism has this enormous capacity of taking everything in its embrace : you can be an idol worshipper, you can be an idol breaker; you can believe in one God, you can believe in a thousand gods; you can have a caste system, you can deny the caste system; you can be an agnostic, aethist or whatever else you like and remain a Hindu. What can you do about it ? It is this power of absorption of Hinduism that it is even willing to *recognise Prophet Mohammad* as an Avtar of Vishnu, that poses the real challenge to other religions.

I will now try to explain Sikh separate identity which we are

trying to, and perhaps will go on trying to maintain. We should turn back the pages of our history books to understand the problems.

I have divided Sikh history into five periods. First, the formation of Sikhism under the ten Gurus; a period of 200 years, from 1500 when Guru Nanak proclaimed his faith, ending with 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh propounded the khalsa panth. The second period is the struggle for power, beginning with Banda, continuing with the (mis)ls as they fought foreign invaders like Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali. Then we have the third period, the consolidation of Sikh power under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This lasted less than fifty years. The fourth period is Sikhism under British rule. And finally we have the period after independence which is the most crucial and controversial.

I start with Guru Nanak. He did start a new religion. He said so clearly in the year 1500 or thereabouts, when he had his mystical experience. He went to bathe in a stream and was missing three days. His first statement as he came out was : *na koi Hindu, na koi Mussalman*. You can interpret that statement in many ways. But you cannot deny that what he intended to imply was that he was introducing a new system of ethics and metaphysics. He may have taken something from Hinduism and something from Islamic 'Sufism'. You can see this clearly in his own writings.

By the time he died he had compiled his own liturgy of hymns which form a part of the Adi Granth. They mark a clear departure from orthodox Hinduism. He also set up the first Sikh temples, gurdwaras, which earlier on were known as dharmshalas. His disciples, *sishyas*, from which the word Sikh is derived, became a distinct community apart from Hindus and Muslims. There was no clear cut division, but his Sikhs were no longer reading Sanskrit religious texts, which they did not understand but hymns Guru Nanak had composed because they could understand them. They were probably at the same time also reading Kabir, Mirabai, and other bhakti saints' writings. Never the less, a separate reli-

gious community came into existence in the life time of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak's successor, the second Guru, Angad evolved a new script, Gurmukhi. Thereafter, you have the beginnings of a new body of religious literature building up.

We come to the third Guru, Amar Das. With him Sikh missions began to spread to various parts of Punjab, he introduced new rituals, new ceremonies to be performed at births, marriage and deaths. These are confined to the *sishyas*, the followers of Guru Nanak.

With the fourth and fifth Gurus, the gulf between Hindus and Sikhs widened. Guru Arjun gave Sikhs a scripture of their own, the Adi Granth; a Mecca-Kashi of their own, Amritsar and a martyr of their own himself. Guru Hargobind introduced martial traditions. He was *meeree peeree da Malik*. He built the Akal Takht which is the seat of both spiritual and temporal power for the Sikhs. With the last of the Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh, in the year 1699, began the Khalsa Panth with its distinct external forms, the Khalsa Sikhs.

Are these changes not important enough to show that a new community had been born? However, what is worthwhile to bear in mind is that, despite these innovations, this new community, the Khalsa Panth remained an integral part of the Hindu social and religious system. It is significant that when Guru Teg Bahadur was summoned to Delhi, he went as a representative of the Hindus. He was executed in the year 1675. His son who succeeded him as Guru later described his father's martyrdom as in the cause of the Hindu faith, "to preserve their caste marks and their sacred thread did he perform the supreme sacrifice". The Guru himself looked upon his community as an integral part of the Hindu social system.

To complicate matters further, although we had the Khalsa form we also had alongside the Sahajdhari Sikh, who did not

grow his hair and beard but called himself a Sikh. It is a euphemism to say that in due course he would start growing his hair and beard and be baptised. To complicate matters still further, we had a large community of Hindus growing up in Western Punjab and in Sindh who remained Hindus, who continued to have Hindu names but who did not go to Hindu temples, but to Sikh gurdwaras. In their homes they had the Granth Sahib and all the prayers they performed was from the Sikh Scripture. Where then do you draw the line of distinction? How do you say, this man is a Hindu, this man is a Sikh? In Western Punjab it becomes almost impossible to tell one from the other. All you can say is that this man grows his hair and beard long and this man does not. The Sahajdhari, as often happens, is more particular about the performance of rituals and his prayers than the Kesadhari.

This is the situation which emerged at the end of the Guru period of Sikh history. Then began the struggle for power under Banda Bairagi. A Hindu, Lachman Das, later on became Banda Bairagi, Sikh historians, being Sikh historians, converted his name into the Banda Singh Bahadur. It does not go nicely to have somebody called Lachman Das in a book on Sikh history.

Banda's military success was in areas which were predominantly Hindu Jat areas, round about Delhi. These people were Hindus, they were not Sikhs, they did not all find it necessary to convert to Khalsa panth. It was a peasants' revolt. Banda was able to rouse the peasantry under the banner of the Khalsa Panth and gain its first military victories.

There was no distinction at that time between Hindu and Sikh. It was the same when Banda was captured and executed in Delhi. The torch was taken up by Sikh bands, later on dividing into many misls of which we recognise the larger twelve. They were led by people who adopted the khalsa form, but Hindus were in the same crusade with them. They fought invaders. First Nadir Shah. He looted Delhi. As he was going back his caravan was looted all along the route through Haryana

and Punjab right up to the Indus. Then came Abdali. He invaded Punjab and went through Punjab to loot Delhi, Agra and every town in the periphery. As he was going back, Sikh bands closed in on him and deprived him of his loot and the Hindus he had enslaved. You see, how external pressures made it impossible to distinguish between Hindu and Sikh.

The Sikhs triumphed and we had Ranjit Singh. You may feel that here at long last we had a Sikh monarch, and the Khalsa would come into their own. Nothing of the sort happened. Ranjit Singh turned out to be more secular than almost any other monarch in our history. Not only was he secular, he was also superstitious. Instead of taking Sikhism in its pristine form, he accepted Hinduism in its brahminical form. He paid homage to Brahmins. He made cow - killing a capital offence.

Apart from being orthodox in respect of external symbols and having the Granth Sahib read to him every day, he worshipped as much in Hindu temples as he did in gurdwaras. When he was sick and was about to die, he gave away cows for charity. What did he do with the diamond kohinoor? He did not want to give it to the Darbar Sahab at Amritsar which he built in marble and gold but to Jagannath Puri as his farewell gift. When he had the Afghans at his mercy and wrested Kashmir from them, he wanted the gates of the temples of Somnath back from them. Why should he be making all these Hindu demands? Whatever the break-away that had been achieved from Hinduism, this greatest of all our monarchs bridged in 40 years. When he died, seven women committed *sati*, a practice forbidden by the Sikh faith. If it was not a relapse into Hinduism how else can you describe it?

The first real break with Hinduism began with the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The British came in on the scene, saw this community. its pugnacious Khalsa army which put up the stoutest resistance they had faced in India. I do not know whether there was mischief in their minds, but they came to the conclusion that the valour of the Sikh troops was closely connected with the Khalsa tradition, and that the only proper Sikh was one who had his hair and beard, intact.

The Governor General of that time also records, "I can see with my own eyes this small community, which has dominated the whole of Northern India, will within a few years disappear because the base of relapsing back into Hinduism has such alarming proportions that it may not be a surprise if this community which almost assumed the aspect of nation-hood will within a few years totally disappear." The British passed an order that the Sikhs would be recruited in the defence services provided they had been baptised and observed the traditions of the Khalsa. So the first statutory guarantee of the continuation of the Khalsa came from a foreign power. To start with Hindus did not find this much of a problem. The Hindu who wanted to join the army simply stopped shaving and cutting his hair. Many Hindu Jats had the same Surname, Singh. Even those who did not, were not averse to adopting it. Nihal Chand became Nihal Singh and went into the British Army as a Sikh soldier. The numbers of Khalsas started increasing. By World War I, a third of the British Indian Army were bearded Khalsas. Besides the army, Khalsas were also given preference in the police and the civil services. Separate electorates were introduced. Minorities including Sikhs, had more seats in legislatures than their numbers warranted.

So you had this kind of hot-house protection given to the keshadhari Sikh by the British. Those of you who were in the services before independence may recall one could not get a job reserved for a Sikh unless you were a kesadhari. If you cut your hair, you could be fired. If not fired you lost chances of promotion, particularly if you had a Sikh Minister like Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia. Sikhs who trimmed their beards got a tongue-lashing that persuaded them to break their scissors. I overlooked mentioning another important factor which emphasised differences between Sikhs and Hindus in the British period. This was the attempt by renaissance Hinduism to claim Sikhism back into the family fold in the 1870s by the Arya Samaj.

Christian missionaries had tried earlier to win Sikhs over to Christianity and had a certain amount of success in converting Sikhs around Ludhiana. These were mainly Sikhs of lower

castes. But sometimes they succeeded among the princely order as well. We had the celebrated case of Sadhu Sunder Singh of Patiala and the family of Raja Harnam Singh of Kapurthala. The Arya Samaj was more successful than Christian missions, because what the Arya Samaj taught had much in common with Sikhism. They were monotheist, against the worship of idols and the caste system. For them a community which was half Hindu and half Sikh was fertile ground for conversion.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati came to the Punjab at the invitation of Sikh leaders and started preaching. He talked about the vedas which no Punjabi Hindu understood. Nevertheless he made an enormous impact, and large numbers of Sikhs went back into the Hindu fold through the Arya Samaj. Fortunately for the Sikhs, Dayanand Saraswati was also very offensive in the language he used. He did not realise that he was treading on soft ground when he described Guru Nanak as a *dambi*, an imposter. He described Nanak as illiterate because the language he used did not conform to the language of the vedas, Sanskrit.

Needless to say it was the worst way of trying to win over the Sikhs. The Sikhs rejected Dayanand, and the Samaj and set up Singh Sabhas and the chief Khalsa Diwan to counteract Dayanand's movement. Kahan Singh of Nabha published a book entitled 'Hum Hindu Nahin hai'. It was categorical statement of rejection of Hinduism. The Arya Samaj can take the credit for driving Sikhs away from Hinduism.

Nevertheless, right up to the end of British rule, although differences had begun between Sikhs and Hindus, some nurtured by the British, others nurtured by the animosity that the Arya Samaj had created among the Sikhs, the two communities remained close to each other, largely because of the pressure of Muslim nationalism and Muslim communal demands for Pakistan. The riots that started breaking out in Punjab, particularly as it came closer to partition and the demand for Pakistan gathered momentum, Hindus and Sikhs came together to fight this danger. So it happened that in all the riots that took place in 1946 and 1947

the Muslims were on one side, the Hindus and Sikhs jointly on the other side. When the line of partition was drawn, to a man Hindus and Sikhs trekked out of Pakistan to come and make their home in India.

Now comes the more crucial period, 1947 and onwards. The worst sufferers of the 1947 partition were the Sikhs. They suffered much more than the Punjabi Hindu. I will explain why.

At the time of partition Sikhs accounted for about thirteen per cent of the population of united Punjab. They paid over forty per cent of the land revenue and water rates because they were the most prosperous agricultural community in the state. In the canal colonies, like Sargodha, Lyallpur, Gujranwala and Montgomery, the biggest landowners were Sikhs. Hindus were largely an urban people, in business or in trades in towns and cities. When the partition came both Sikhs and Hindus lost their homes. Hindus lost their businesses but they were able to rehabilitate themselves by setting up new business, with the cash they had been able to retrieve and the compensation they got.

In the case of the Sikh, he not only lost his home but also his means of livelihood because his means of livelihood were land and cattle, he was a farmer. He changed places with the Muslim of East Punjab who was largely a landless tenant, a kammi. So, Sikhs owning 200 to 400 squares of land, got less than a tenth of what they had owned. Then a thirty acres ceiling was imposed. Opulent landlords were reduced to small time farmers. It is to their credit that they responded to adversity with courage and were able to rehabilitate themselves and within a few years make Punjab the most prosperous state in India. Nevertheless, Sikhs never forgot that they were the worst hit by the partition. It was not difficult to work on their feelings which could be summed up in a few words. "Independence gave Hindus Hindustan, it gave Muslims Pakistan, what the hell did we Sikhs get out of it? Nothing. We got poverty".

In addition to being reduced from affluence to comparative poverty, Sikhs lost their minority privileges because there were

going to be no minority privileges in a secular state. On principle nobody could object to their abolition. But when it came to its impact on a minority, which had for years enjoyed these privileges, it gave form to grievances. Their numbers in the army started to dwindle; their numbers in the Civilian services also began to come down. Since democratic institutions were introduced, Sikhs discovered to their dismay that they were less than two out of a hundred Indians and they did not count for very much. To add to all these the older generation had to contend with the younger who did not understand why they must grow their hair and beards, when they get no economic benefits for doing so. They had not been brought up on the traditions of the Khalsa and were not proud of those traditions. When a Sikh father is asked, "What do I get out of it?," he can no longer say, "I can get you a job in the army if you have your hair and beard."

Young men started getting away from the Khalsa tradition. External props to the Khalsa separatism started crumbling. Leaders of the community felt that their flock was facing extinction and they must preserve it by whatever means they can. The only answer Akali leaders could think of-they are not used to thinking very deeply-was to have political power in their homeland. They reasoned: 'If we are in power in Punjab we will see that traditions of the Khalsa panth continue among our own people, we will persuade them, if necessary coerce them without spelling it out clearly. They came to the conclusion that Sikhs could not exist as a separate people unless they had political power in the area in which they were living.

The opportunity they waited for came in the form of the proposal to demarcate boundaries of states on a linguistic basis. What it meant in the case of Punjab was the possibility of creating a state with a Sikh majority. This dawned on Pandit Nehru's mind long after he had conceded the linguistic principle. Instead of admitting his error and saying, 'I accepted this in principle, it has been applied in all other states of India - Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat - but Punjab is another matter because almost

half its population do not want it. It was evident that as the principle had been conceded and applied elsewhere, Sikhs were right in demanding that it must be applied to Punjab as well and Punjabi Hindus were wrong in opposing it. The gulf between the two communities began to widen. Punjabi Hindus were persuaded to declare their language to be Hindi, which it is not, and not Punjabi which it is. They fell to this stupid temptation in the full knowledge that it was going to spell their own ruin in the years to come. They were made to tell lies by their leaders and played into the hands of Sikh communalist : "How can you trust this community" ? They are even willing to deny their mother tongue," they said.

However, Sikhs did not come clean on the subject and admitted that in demanding a Punjabi speaking state, they were in fact demanding a Sikh majority state. They were giving a linguistic sugar coating to a basically communal demand. Various devices were worked out to contain these conflicting points of view. Pepsu was merged in Punjab, and a regional formula, was evolved and ultimately, after prolonged agitation and war with Pakistan, the Punjabi subha was formed with the Sikhs forming sixty per cent of the population of the State.

This should have satisfied Sikh aspirations: at long last they had a state which they could call their own. But the party which speaks for the Sikhs, the Akalis who had waged ceaseless battle for a Sikh majority state, found to their chagrin that sixty per cent is not good enough. In a system of a joint electorates the Akalis discovered they did not have a chance of being in power unless they made coalitions with the Congress or with one of the opposition parties; or agitated for a state where the proportion of Sikhs increased from sixty to something like eighty per cent. After toying with the first alternative, (making alliances with other political parties and sharing power). Akalis opted for the second, viz; increase the proportion of Sikhs and decrease that of the Hindus in Punjab. This could be done by constitutional means; so they decided to take the path of agitation: one morcha after the other - *Nahar roko, rail roko, rasta roko* - all in the name of a

dharam yuddha, which had nothing to do with *dharam*, only to do with the *Kursee*. Some of their demands make little sense, because when they were in power, they had done nothing about them. When some were conceded, they added more to them. They passed an Anandpur resolution 1973, and forgot about it when they had their one government. When they were out of power, the resolution was presented to the Sikhs as a kind of *Magna Carta* to which they attached a list of forty - five demands.

Do Sikhs really have any legitimate grievances? Let Sikhs seach their own hearts. We form under two percent of the population of the country; we are the richest farming community in India; we form nearly ten per cent in the defence services of the country today; there is not a service - administrative, provincial, police, Navy or any others and-in which we are not over-represented. And yet the Akalis insist that Sikhs are discriminated against. If there is any discrimination it is in favour of Sikhs, not against them. Till the Akalis launched these thoughtless agitations Sikhs were more than first class citizens of this country. It is the Akali leadership which has reduced us to the status of third class citizens whose loyalties to their country are suspect.

Examine the Akalis demands : they want Chandigarh to go exclusively to Punjab. 'What is wrong, in that? Why not hand over Chandigarh? You may ask, I have also said in Parliament that Chandigarh belongs to Punjab. But only to facilitate a settlement. What exactly will Punjab get out of its exclusive ownership?

At the moment, all the Haryanvics are living here renting office space, houses and spending their money in your shops; throw them out and lose all that? You know it is going to be with you. Do you want a label put on underneath Chandigarh, 'Punjab'? As I said, I have supported the Akali demand because they made such a song and dance about it. It is only when they get it will Punjabis realise that instead of giving more prosperity, they have lost on the city. You have a referendum in your city and you will find out what the citizens would like. They would like neither Haryana nor Punjab.

They talk about declaring Amritsar a holy city. What happened to the holy city during Ranjit Singh's time? Even today it is a simple matter for the municipality to pass laws that no licences to sell cigarettes, pan, beedi or liquor will be issued to any one in the walled city. We also know that local Hindus, as soon as they came within sight of the Golden Temple, put out their cigarettes themselves out of respect for Sikh sentiments. When Akalis were in power there were more liquor shops within the walled city than cigarette stalls. They did nothing about them. Out of power they make this municipal matter into a community issue.

Then they want Article 25 to be amended because it lumps Sikhs with the Hindus. I was in the Central Hall of Parliament with some Akali leaders when this article 25 issue came up. Bibi Rajinder Kaur was getting very worked up and said, "What right have they to say that the word Hindu shall include Buddhist, Jain, Sikh?" I said, "Bibiji, is this all you object to? Would you be happy if they said the word Sikh will include Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs?" She replied, "Oh no, that won't do." I asked her what kind of logic was this? Why not pick up grievances that have some substance? The only one I could suggest is the unfair allocation of river waters. It is an issue which affects the peasantry both Sikh and Hindu.

It is for all Punjabis to affirm that till our fields are properly irrigated we will not let any one else take water which passes through our territories. Also we must have prior claim to hydro-electric energy produced in our state. Our poor farmers have to get up at unearthly hours after midnight to operate their tubewells while Delhi has power at all hours and squander it away in lavish celebrations as during Republic Day week. We produce excess of wheat, we produce excess of rice, we produce excess of sugarcane; and we do not have enough of flour mills sugar mills, nor agro-based industries. The Central Government does not give us any heavy industries under the guise that this is a border state. We must press such demands.

I was talking to your Governor this morning. I told him that unless you persuade the Central Government to put up more

industries in the state and absorb young people coming out of schools and universities, you will have terrorism on your hands for years to come. He agreed with my observation.

I come to the last part of my theme, which is also the trickiest: The emergence of extremism and Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala. I do not think it is necessary to go back and examine whose creation he was, who built him up, who allowed him inside the temple or who suffered him to remain there to the end. But one conclusion we cannot escape, that is he did serve the purpose of the Akalis. They suffered his presence in the temple, they did not condemn him for what he said nor what his gunmen did. As a matter of fact, once, when I told Sant Longowal, "*Eh shobha nihin dinda; eh jo naphrath di gallen karda hai gurdwarey vich baith kay.*" I know Longowal, did not approve of him (Bhindranwala.) He kept quiet for a while before he replied, "*Eh to sada danda hai, our lathi.*" This kind of passive attitude amounted to connivance with the man. He served the purpose of the Akalis in a more sinister way.

The reason why I was so angry with the Government over the storming of the Golden Temple, despite all the promises given in Parliament that they would result in horrendous blood bath which would, for all times, divide the Punjabi Hindu from the Punjabi Sikh and alienate the Sikh from the rest of India. I gave this warning over and over again at every session of Parliament. My warning was ignored. Have I been proved wrong? People describe me as a Sikh communalist because I returned my Padma Bhushan. I did not do it as a Sikh communalist, I did it as an Indian, because this one sinister act has struck a heavy blow to the unity of this country. It has alienated a population of fourteen million people from the Indian mainstream.

You can take it from me that apart from a handful of Sarkari Sikhs, the rest of the community is unified in condemning "Operation Blue Star" as an act of unpardonable sacrilege. In this matter there are no differences of opinion between Jat and Non-Jat, Khatri, Arora or Mazhabi. Every single Sikh shares the agony

of what happened at Amritsar and other parts of Punjab in the first week of June 1984. How are you going to reparaire the enor-mouse damage that has been done ?

I have only one solution to offer, which I put for the first time in public meeting. In the next few days, weeks or months, the Akali leaders should be released. It is likely that the elections will be called as soon as law and orders are assured. Should Akalis and Hindu communal elements be allowed to re-emerge in the shape and form they were ? If they do, then we will have to start from scratch again. It is for the Sikhs to reject Akali leadership which has brought them on the brink of ruin. It is for the Punjabi Hindu to reject Hindu communal parties-even the Cong-ress Party because it has played a most sinister role in the developments in Punjab.

Our only hope is Punjabi regional nationalism. I have drawn up a charter for the future of the Punjab. I have even suggested to younger people who have energy and the vitality, that this is the time to launch new party. I put it to Amrinder Singh of Patiala and I said, "For God's sake, do not talk any longer as a Sikh but as a Punjabi. Pick up people of your generation of Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs who have had enough of this hatred and are dying to live together in peace as they did in the past." I even suggested to him the name of a party, *Desh Punjab* with a leadership equally Hindu and Sikh. When you make demands on behalf of the Sikhs make them jointly. If it is the all-India Gur-dwaras Act, let the Punjabi Hindu say, yes we want it, or we do not want it. Let us speak with one voice.

If we do not do that and we start again with the Akalis trying to grab power in a manner that they have done in the past, then, I warn you, you better prepare yourselves for another division of of your country. Their plot is as simple as it is sinister. These killings of innocent Hindus are a deliberate part of a plan to invite the Hindu backlash in Haryana and Delhi, to bring insecurity and force populations to leave this part of the country and force people like us to get out from where we are. Most of us who lost our

homes and properties in Pakistan, have to face the same fate again ?

Kya is liye taqdeer nay chunvaye the tinke
ke jab ban jaye nasheman
to koi aag laga de ?

In response to questions, Mr. Kushwant Singh said: A party which will be equally Hindu and Sikh and will have nothing to do with religion of either party. I do not see why we should use places of religious worship for political purposes. You form this kind of party in a hall like this, not in a gurdwara or a mandir.

If words please you, let me say I did not mean separatism, let me call it evolutionary separatism. I am trying to establish that a group of people known as Sikhs started a separate way of living of their own. By the time of Guru Arjan they were no longer going to Hardwar to bathe in the Ganga, they were going to Darbar Sahab to bathe in the Sarover, they were not going on pilgrimage to Banaras, they were going to Amritsar; they were not reading the Vedas or the Geeta, they were reading the Granth Sahab which Guru Arjan had compiled. If you do not like the word separatism you may call it evolutionary. I prefer to call it separatism.

I would have been very happy to present the charter I have prepared. It has been published in some papers. I am sorry I have not got a copy with me. What I have said is basically this, that this Desh Punjab party should have equal numbers of Hindus and Sikhs and every demand should be made jointly by the two communities.

Sikh communalism differs from other communalism, whether it is Hindu or Muslim, I think, in this sense that here we have a unique phenomenon of a community breaking away from the parent body in a very unpleasant form and in very short period. After all, there was enough basis for Jinnah for formulating his two-nation theory. The Muslims are in fact in many ways differ-

ent from us, in dress, in clothing, in religion in everything. But where it took Jinnah ten or fifteen years to ram the two nation theory home, it took our stupid leaders only three to make the Sikh and the Hindu into two different nations. That tragedy itself makes this communalism distinct. We worship in the same places, we are the same ethnic stock, we are the same race, we speak the same language, we give our daughters and sons in marriage to each other. And yet our leaders have succeeded in dividing us into two. Credit for this achievement must go to the Akalis as well as the central leadership.

When I recommend Punjabi regional patriotism there is nothing anti-national about it. It does not militate against us being Indian. Our present problem is the hatred that has developed between the Punjabis and I believe that this is the one antidote I can offer.

There is nothing against being hopeful and an idealist. I concede that the odds are heavily loaded against anything which may have a moral basis. But you do not give up because of that. My dialogue yesterday with two Akali leaders, Sardar Balwant Singh and Dhindsa and earlier with Amrendra Singh of Patiala, was not very fruitful. They said you cannot talk in these terms to the Sikh peasant, he is very inflamed. If you tell him to join hands with the Hindu, he will not agree. I am told that nor will the Hindu because he is also very angry. I insist this is the time to talk to them. I am convinced that both the communities have had enough of hate and violence. Do not bother how much of money is on the other side, if you come out with a new message of hope and if you want Punjab to survive, and to prosper, for God's sake get together otherwise you will be cutting your own feet with your own hands.

I do not give a very prominent role to religion as a panacea for communal hatred because the hatred is based on a misunderstanding of religion. Therefore it is futile to keep on saying that all religions preach love, all religions preach friendship to each

other and all religions teach the same thing—we have been hearing all this from the time we invented God. In actual practice, wars have been fought in the name of religion. I think that if we divorced religion from politics or made religion a purely private affair then we would come to social problems and we could deal with them in the same way as we do with the political and economic. I have said that there is little hope of Punjab returning to normal unless it resumes its pace of agricultural and industrial progress. The basic economic problems must be solved. You give the people employment, you give them work, you give them leisure, you give them pleasure, and I think they will stop thinking along narrow communal lines.

When you talk of a value system, I would answer that Sikhism has by and large accepted Hindu vedantic philosophy. You find many hymns of the gurus which read like translations of passages from the upanishads in simple language. The main contribution of Sikhism to Vaishnavite Hinduism is the introduction of the work ethic—*Kirat Karo, nam japo, wand chako*—the enormous emphasis on work, striving and achievement. It springs from the teachings of the Gurus. You must not beg, you must not stretch your hand, you must endeavour, you must do better than the other person. All the spirit of the Sava Lakh and one man being an arm is a continuation of the ethic propounded by Guru Nanak right in the beginning.

One thing you have to bear in mind is the future of the Punjab. If you have any illusions that Bhindranwala is dead put that out of your mind. He is physically dead but his ghost is going to haunt this land for a long, long time to come. He is going to disturb the sleep of the Hindu and he is going to disturb the conscience of the Sikh. How do you combat this is up to you. None of these frightens me because I feel as strongly as a Sikh as an Indian. I do not care what your reactions to Bhindranwala are. If any one person has brought the community to wreck and ruin today it is this one man. You call him a Sant, I do not. I did not in the past. I deny him that title today. But you have to

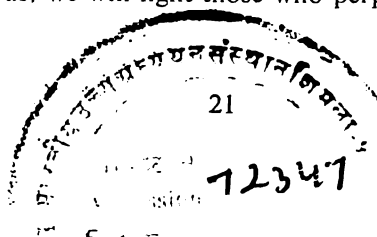
pay the price of your support to him; not I as I do not live in the Punjab. Unless you get together as one people, all of you will lose your sleep and your conscience will be disturbed for ever. That is why I have put this proposition of a regional party as an alternative. I may be wrong. This is my answer to what can happen. Build on something which we share in common, do not build on something on which we are divided in our opinions.

I have made a point that the one thing that gives the Sikh community a sense of insecurity is about its own future. My generation at least strongly feels that we have a separate religious identity. Nevertheless we are faced with this fear of ceasing to be. There are two ways you can get over it. A distinct identity can be maintained from within based on traditions and the teachings and the faith, or by emphasising differences with other communities. You pick up quarrels with your neighbours, remain unfriendly with them and you retain your separate identity. One method has been tried, i.e., of deliberately creating tensions with others, of saying that we have nothing to do with them. What has not been given a fair trial, is the sustenance that Sikhism has within itself and its traditions.

I want to make my position clear. After all what happened in Amritsar gave me a strong sense of identity with my own community. I felt that the Government had committed a sin, it had made horrendous error. I took a stand both as an Indian and as a Sikh. I am not a very religious man. But I do know something about my religion and the history of my people.

There is talk about repression of the Sikhs in the Punjab. I agree today there is repression. But who is fighting it ? Are you ? I certainly am doing my bit. I have set up committees to defend the Sikh soldiers who had deserted and the boys who have been imprisoned. Take my word, if there is any injustice I will fight it. I am not a lawyer but I appeared in the Supreme Court when the World Sikh Meet was banned, as well as on behalf of Sikh soldiers. But, when I feel somebody has done wrong, I have every right to say he has done disservice to his community. If there is any injustice done to us, we will fight those who perpetrate it.

28 September, 1984.



DANGERS OF COMMUNALISM IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Khushwant Singh

I have not been to Chandigarh for many years. Quite honestly, I do not look forward to coming to this city and usually bypass it on my way from Delhi to Kasauli. People who live here tell me that it is a very dull city where nothing happens. I am also told that the incidence of death by boredom is very high. The usual adage I keep hearing about the people of this city is that it is of grey beards and green hedges. What I have seen of Chandigarh, convinces me that as far as cities go it is probably the healthiest of any city in India. If I was a doctor this would be one city that I would avoid practising in. The only thing that appals me is the excessive number of lawyers here. I am sure that indicates a kind of sickness; it is only where people quarrel a great deal you need to have so many lawyers.

Having made that apology let me get down to my subject.

I am going to deviate slightly from the title "Dangers of communalism in India" because it is pretty clear to every one what these dangers are. If communal hatred continues to spread the way it is spreading, it will spell disaster for our country. I do not think there can be any two opinions on the subject. What I plan to do is to deal with the topic under four separate headings. First, how the communal stereotype comes about: how for instance we get notions of how Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs come to have set images in the minds of common people. Second, the new dimensions that communalism has acquired since we became independent in 1947. Third, an analysis of the communal virus. And finally, I offer suggestions of what we can do to prevent that virus from spreading further.

First, the stereotype. How is a communal stereotype built ?

I will base my observations entirely on personal experience of how my notions of other communities were built because, I think, for most of us of my generation, who come from Western Punjab, the communal problem has meant only one thing, the problem of the Muslims. I make it personal because I think most of us have shared similar experiences.

I was born in a very small village in Shahpur district called Hadali. It had three or four hundred families of which a bare 30 or 40 were Hindu or Sikh. Muslims were either landowners or retired army personnel. They were enormous-sized people, physically virile and powerful. We were frightened of them. They looked down upon us, Hindus and Sikhs, with contempt. We were 'Kirars'. A *Kirar* would normally means a trader, but there was an element of contempt added to the word. There were no tensions between us for the simple reason that we dared not create any tensions with them. They were on the average a foot taller than people like me. Many were in the Viceroy's Bodyguard and crack regiments. We rarely went into their homes. Although we addressed each other as we do our relatives, maasi, chaacha, etc., the dividing line was very clear. They were the top people, we were the underdogs. The experience of these years in this tiny village created the impression that the Muslims were something to be feared and dreaded.

After the first few years in Hadali I migrated to Delhi. Here again I was exposed to incidents of a communal nature which left a permanent impact on my mind. I was a boy of seven or eight when Swami Shraddanand was murdered. I did not know who Swami Shraddanand was except that he was a very well-known Hindu leader. I watched his funeral procession pass through the streets of Delhi with hundreds of policemen and soldiers lining the roads. It was about the biggest and the longest procession I had ever seen, it lasted for a couple of hours.

A couple of years later, the man who had murdered Swami Shraddanand was hanged in Delhi jail. All the elaborate *bandobust* by the army and British soldiers and armoured cars, was unable

to prevent Muslim mobs from snatching the body of this man, taking it to Jumma Masjid, for the namaaz-i-janaza before allowing it to be buried.

This incident confirmed in my mind that Muslims were fanatics. We Hindus and Sikhs were not so involved with our religions as the Muslims.

This impression was further confirmed by the kind of textbooks that we read at schools. After five or six years in an advanced, enlightened institution, like the Modern School of Delhi, we had chosen our heroes from history. Four men we learnt to worship: Prithviraj Chauhan who fought the Ghoris, Maharana Partap, Guru Gobind Singh and Chattrapati Shivaji, who fought the Mughals. It is notable that all our heroes were non-Muslims those who fought the Muslims. Not one Muslim name appeared in our list.

Then we had the famous encounter between Shivaji and Afzal Khan. Did Shivaji murder Afzal Khan in cold blood or did he forestall Afzal Khan's attempt to strangle him by digging his *baagnaak* into the Pathans belly and tearing out his entrails? We had no doubts in our mind that Shivaji acted in self-defence because Muslims were treacherous and should never be trusted. We hugged that illusion to our *bosom* despite doubts that actual historical facts might indicate that it might have been the other way round.

We were also exposed to physical evidence of what the Muslim conquerors had done. If you lived in Delhi, as I did, you could not escape them. We were taken to the Qutab Minar to see the ruins of 27 Hindu and Jain temples with all their hundreds of figurines mutilated. We concluded that Muslims were a destructive people and a race of vandals.

After schooling and college in England I came to settle at Lahore. Here again the situation was much the same. A Muslim *Mohalla* was different from Hindu and Sikh *Mohallas*. There was hardly any mixing between the two communities except at a super-

ficial level. Even among the elite there was a kind of keeping up of a facade of liberality, but there were few instances of genuine friendship. I was a practising lawyer at that time. The Lahore High Court Bar Association had a large hall. Muslims sat at one end, Hindus and Sikhs at the other. There were very few people who went between the two groups. Here were a people who were otherwise extremely civilised, spoke in friendly terms and occasionally went to each other's weddings and funerals. But when it came to feeling comfortable and relaxing, the Muslims sat in one corner with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the other with Hindus and Sikhs.

In that kind of situation it should not surprise any one that a man like Mr. Jinnah was able to ram home the two-nation theory. Muslims did not belong to the Hindu mainstream. All other religious groups in India, particularly the Sikhs, were an integral part of Hindu society. Muslims not only had a totally different religion, they could be identified by their names as a distinct people. You could not tell the Hindu from the Sikh because Rajputs, Jats, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Banias and others shared common names. Muslims could also be identified by their dress, their caps, their diet was different, the way they lived, their habitat were all different from those of other residents.

Consequently when communal tension built up and Hindu-Muslim riots broke out there was no question about which side you belonged to, where right or wrong was, the choice was forced on you. Muslims were on one side, Hindus and Sikhs on the other. There was no question about Sikh alignment with Hindus, a Sikh stood out like a sore thumb and was in any confrontation the first victim that a Muslim could lay his hands on.

Then came the 1946-47 riots. I was there till the partition of the country. Nothing worse has been witnessed in the history of India. The riots were followed by exchange of populations during which nearly half a million people including women and children were butchered. The only redeeming feature of this terrible carnage in 1946 and 1947 was that it drained the venom

of communal hatreded out of our systems. It should be borne in mind that after 1946-47 communal riots the people, to whom we ascribed Hindu-Muslim tensions, the British left. We had been brought upto believe to that it was the British who divided us to rule over us and as soon as they were gone there would be no communal tensions, particularly since a large number of Muslims themselves had chosen a state of their own and the more aggressive of them had gone to Pakistan.

More important than purging communal venom out of our system and the foreign ruler who fostered it having gone was the impact of Gandhi. I do not know how many of you experienced the presence of Gandhi. I was amongst the fortunate few who was in Delhi after partition. We Hindu and Sikh refugees were full of anger. Thirsting for revenge. It was at the height of the wave of anti-Muslim feeling, when Gandhi announced his fast unto death. He said that unless the riots stopped he was going to die.

It was an incredible scene, I happened to be living just across the road from Birla House. The first day large mobs of Sikhs Hindus, all Punjabis were shouting *murdabad* to Gandhi. The police and the army were guarding Birla House to prevent these people from entering. This went on for two days. The third day news came that the old man was sinking. The mobs began to thin and became less vociferous. On the fourth or fifth day, when the news came that he was likely to die, the scene changed in a spectacular manner. The very people who thirsted for Gandhi's blood three or four days earlier, came out in their thousands, sat in silence, split their own veins, to sign with their own blood, petitions asking him to give up the fast. This was the biggest miracle that I have ever seen in my life. Riots stopped. What the army and the police could not do, this one man was able to do by the force of his personality.

To sum up, three things—the experience of 1947, the British leaving India, the majority of Muslim population of northern India migrating to Pakistan and the experience of Gandhi—created

an illusion that the hatred between Hindus and Muslims was over, that we could now look forward to an independent India where there would be no communal tensions of any kind.

Unfortunately, this proved to be a mirage. It did not take very long after independence to see the same virus of communal hate that had sickened relations between Hindus and Muslims re-erupt in different parts of India. Even more disconcerting was that the communal tensions took new and unexpected dimensions. Hindu and Muslim tension we had got used to. But somehow we had only seen them in northern India. Now it spread from Bengal where they were taking place in 1946 and 1947, across the Gangetic plains down to Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, all the way down to Tamil Nadu. Instead of riots getting less we found them extending to all parts of the country.

A new phenomenon that we saw after independence was inter-caste riots. They might have taken place earlier but we did not hear very much of pogroms carried out against Harijans. Perhaps the reason is that with independence the untouchables were given new hopes and aspirations and started clamouring for their rights which were resisted by caste Hindus and riots broke out; such riots were one-sided; the poor untouchable was beaten up and was rarely able to resist. We also had other Hindu factions fighting each other, names of many we in northern India had not even heard of. In Karnataka it was Lingayats versus Vokkaligas. In south India there were inter-Brahmin rivalries, Iyers versus Iyengars.

At times tension took bizarre forms. One of the points of dispute between Iyers and Iyengars was the way they wore their caste marks. One wears it perpendicular, the other horizontal. That is not all. One puts a little dot between the eyebrows the other does not. You would hardly think that this dot could be a subject of acrimony. It was when it came to decorating a kuple elephant. The Iyers and the Iyengars fought it up to the Privy Council. We Punjabis cannot afford to laugh. Recall the tension between Hindus and Sikhs in Karnal only a few years ago. It was over the heights of a Gurdwara and adjoining temple. They went

on adding storeys one on top of the other. Since Hindus had more money they were able to raise their temple a little higher. Not to be outdone, Sikhs put up their nishan sahib even higher. They started fighting each other. The Minorities Commission went to Karnal to make a report. This is the asinine level to which hatred can reduce people.

We hear of many other inter-Hindu disputes. In Gujarat recently there were riots between Pattidars and Durbars. When I went to collect material on the dacoit lady, Phoolan Devi, I discovered that it was not a simple case of dacoity and robbery. At the bottom of the massacre at Behmai perpetrated by her was inter-caste rivalry. She was a Mallah who ply boats across the Yamuna; the men she slew were Yadvas.

I come to my final example of what communal tension can lead to in India; the massacre at Nelli, in Assam. Nelli was an unknown little village till over three thousand people were slain in one orgy of killing. It was Bangladeshi refugees killing Bengalis and Assamese; Assamese and Bengalis killing each other; tribals killing non-tribals; Muslims killing Hindus and Christians; Christians killing Hindus. In short it was just everyone killing everyone else.

This is the grim picture of our country today. What kind of analysis do we make of confused strands of hatred ? Unless we separate them, what solutions can we offer ?

History casts a very long and baneful shadow over our country. It is a history basically of confrontation between local Hindus and Muslim invaders from foreign lands. It is also of ethnic confrontations like the Aryans expansion at the expense of the aboriginal. I do not know what we can do about this baneful shadow that history casts upon us, except either to forget our history or rewrite it, if necessary falsify it to suit our purpose.

The more basic reason of tension is our habitat; growing congestion in the cities. You people living in these wide open spaces of Chandigarh would find it hard to visualise what it means

to live in *jhopad-pattis* with upwards of 50 people in a room, Go to Bombay, Delhi or perhaps even Amritsar, to see the terrible conditions in which people exist. Tensions build up at the slightest provocation, tempers are roused and explode into violence. Instead of going for the person next to you, it is easier to gang up with him to go for somebody who belongs to another community.

Added to these are economic motives which are now assuming sinister proportions. You may remember the example of Moradabad, where Hindu-Muslim riots took place a few years ago. Initially, they were isolated cases of fights between individuals without much damage inflicted on property. Then Punjab refugees who had settled in Moradabad started taking on brass-ware business which had been traditionally a Muslim monopoly. Hindus found it profitable to hire goondas to molest Muslim craftsmen so that the brass industry was taken out of Muslim hands to come into theirs. The same thing happened in Maharashtra, in Jalgaon and Bhivandi. Weavers were largely Muslims. The outsiders, Sindhi and Punjabi Hindus, who were trying to set up business of their own, they found it profitable to organise riots against the Muslims, destroy their looms and their homes.

We have seen the same thing happening recently in Punjab and Haryana. The Hindu backlash in Haryana, in Panipat, Karnal, Yamunanagar, in response to Sikh terrorism was largely diverted against Sikh shopkeepers so that Hindu shopkeepers were rid of their business rivals. We know perfectly well that once a shopkeeper has his store or shop looted or burnt he is not likely to set up business there again. He is likely to migrate. Sikh shopkeeper of Haryana will shift to some towns in Punjab where he feels safer and in his town manoeuvre to get Hindu shopkeepers to leave.

Recently I was in Hyderabad where Hindu Muslim riots flared up again for the umpteenth time. This time they were triggered off by politicians, and for the first few days the loss of life and property entirely Muslim. What surprised me was that among the properties destroyed was the Khadi Bhandar. I could

not understand where the Khadi Bhandar came in, in these Hindu-Muslim conflicts, till I discovered that the building belonged to a Muslim. Hindu goondas decided that Khadi or no Khadi, the building had to go because the owner was a Muslim.

Another factor which must be taken into account, particularly in Punjab, is educated unemployment. It is pretty clear to all of us that the unprecedented prosperity that came to Punjab with the green revolution has reached a plateau stage. Your land is not likely to produce than it is doing today. On the other hand your farmer is continuing to produce more and more children and with every succeeding generation land holdings are becoming smaller and smaller.

Without enough industries, either agro-based or any other, in Punjab you have a floating population of educated unemployed youth which is going to become the most serious challenge to law and order in your state. It can be established that the All India Sikh Students Federation which, till two or three years ago, was no more than a paper organisation has suddenly become a focal point of Sikh terrorism. Those unemployed youngmen could have been claimed by the Marxists, as some indeed were, or they could have been reversed by Sikh terrorist organisations. Unless the State can provide more jobs for its unemployed young you will face serious trouble from the younger generation.

Finally we have to work out plans to meet the immediate situation. How are we to combat communalism as it exists today ?

First, we have to learn to live with it. It is not going to disappear in the near future. We had that illusion in 1947. We know better today. The experience of the last thirtyseven years makes it clear that we cannot wish communal tensions away. The best we can do is to contain them. We have tried many methods of defusing them. There is the traditional approach derisively described as the *Ram-Rahim* or the *Allah Ishwar tere nam*, of preaching that all religions emphasise, love between humans.

This approach worked with people like Mahatma Gandhi because he symbolised in his own person, the spirit of *Ishwar Allah*

tere nam, and could convey the message through his own life-style. With people like Mahatma Gandhi gone and little likelihood of our throwing up anyone like him in the near future, we can pretty well forget getting to the people by appealing to religious sentiment. C. Rajagopalachari once said that God was the best policeman and felt that faith in God makes people tread the straight and narrow path of rectitude better than anything else. There may be an element of truth in it. A genuinely religious man has no hatred in him. But such men are rare while men who display their religiosity are many and emphasise religious differences rather than their commonness.

It is important that politicians and those who wish to become leaders must learn not to display the religiosity. Punjab is an example of what exaggerated display of religiosity can do. My friend Giani Zail Singh was an example of what not to do. I have said it to his face in Parliament, "You are the founding father of Sikh fundamentalism." I said, "Your motives may have been noble because you wanted to deprive the Akalis of the stranglehold on the gurdwaras and you felt that the only way to do it was to prove that you were a better Sikh than they. As Chief Minister you set in motion a religio-political movement.

Just every state function started with some kind of Sikh ritual. You may recall the massive *kirtan darbars* which were organised. Every foundation stone laying ceremony started with an *ardas*. You named a whole road running from Anandpur to Patiala as Guru Gobind Singh Marg. You even discovered horses said to be descendents of the stallion on which Guru Gobind Singh rode. You marched them down this Guru Gobind Singh Marg and poor illiterate villagers went about picking their droppings as something sacred. This may have yielded dividends at that time.

"Did you bother to think what would be the feelings of people who were not Sikhs? After all the state is nearly half Hindu. Would they have shared this enthusiasm for converting every state function into a religious occasion? What if it was a Hindu Chief Minister and he did something quite reverse and

every time he did something there was a *havan* or chanting of Sanskrit shlokas ? What would have been the reactions of the Sikhs ?”

Why did it never occur to the Sikh leadership then that this method of taking power out of hands of the Akalis, was not right ? I quoted an Urdu couplet : *Mazi Ke dosh pe gaye the voh chadne, mazine unko patka sau sau bar.*”

We have to do something about our history textbooks. Various departments of the Ministry of Education are trying to put history in what they think is the proper perspective. It would be dangerous to falsify history. If there are unpleasant truths let the present generation face those unpleasant truths rather than have them whitewashed. What the state could do immediately is to reconsider its attitude towards propagation of religion. There is far too much emphasis on religious teaching. I am of the opinion that no state run school has any business to teach religion of any kind. You must not brainwash children in their most receptive years and make them incapable of thinking for themselves. I would therefore first strongly recommend a total ban on teaching of any religion in any school.

I would also ban broadcasts by All India Radio and Doordarshan of religious themes. If you calculated the amount of time- and I deliberately use the word-time wasted on kirtans, shabads, recitation from the Gita or Ramayan, Mahabharat and the Qoran, in a country which is planning to go forward, a country whose constitution states explicitly its aim to cultivate a scientific spirit, and has no time to lose, it is tragic that so much time and energy should be squandered away in this fruitless pursuit.

I come to my last point. When we are face to face with communal passions what are the preventive and punitive methods we should adopt ? The most important preventive method is to strengthen our intelligence. This has become a cliché but it is very important. Our intelligence has been so poor that we hardly even get a warning ahead of time that communal passions are building up and the steps should be taken to defuse them. It is

only after somebody has been stabbed or some houses have been burnt down that the police, as the newspaper cliches go, swing into action.

We must also restructure our police force. We should adopt the simple principle that the minority communities should be over-represented. If it is a Muslim area the police should be largely Hindu. If it is a Hindu area the police should be largely Muslim. This is necessary because it restores confidence in the minorities as it is the fear of the minority that you have to try to assuage. Care should be taken to see that sub-inspectors certainly belong to minority communities because they are the most important police officers who deal with the actual situation in any particular area.

When a riot really breaks out what should we do ? I have the following suggestions to make:

First, wherever a riot breaks out, the police officer-in-charge should automatically be suspended from duty, because the breakdown of the law enforcing machinery is clear evidence of dereliction of duty; it is the police officer's duty to know that tension was building up and he should have taken steps to defuse it. After a new police officer is put in charge, the entire administration of that particular locality should be placed in his hands. We must learn to trust the police much more than we do now. It is for them, along with the district magistrate or whoever it is, to impose curfew in the area and take whatever steps they want to contain violence.

We must also provide for summary trials of mischief makers. Perpetrators of communal riots are seldom taken to court. Rarely are communal killers punished, because nobody is willing to give evidence. Provisions should be made for summary trials on the spot, where the incidents have taken place and the magistrate should be empowered to impose collective fines on the area and to order public flogging of people who he feels were responsible.

Before I end, let me return to the evil effects of political interference. As I said, I have just come from Hyderabad, I also frequently go to Bombay. You have heard that in Maharashtra,

when the most savage riots broke out in Jalgoan and Bhiwandi, they arrested several people including smugglers like Haji Mastan and Yusuf Patel. Within a week, because of political interference, they were released. The same was done in the case of the Shiv Sena, which played a nefarious role. In Hyderabad, they arrested an MLA of the name of Salauddin Owaisi. He was at one time an active Razakar and is now a member of the Legislative Council. He was arrested when the riots broke out. Then he was released and made Speaker of the Assembly. When N.T. Rama Rao came back, Owaisi was sacked and is back in jail again. This kind of political skulduggery cannot help us in reviving communal amity.

I will end with a couplet which I picked up in Hyderabad. The message will go home to those who know Urdu. For those who do not I will translate the words. It goes like this :

Tu idhar udhar ki na baat kar
Yeh bata ke Qafilah kyon luta ?
Mujhe rehzanon se garaz nahin
Teri rehbari ka savaal hai.
Main bathaon Qafila kyon luta ?
Tera rehzanon se tha vasta
Mujhe rehzanon se gila nahin
Teri rehbari pe malaal hai.

In response to questions and comments Mr. Khushwant Singh said : I was actually planning to start my talk with a definition of communalism. I thought it would be far too academic because I think we all know exactly what the word means. The dictionary meaning is misleading. The dictionary gives communalism favourable meaning derived from the word community. In England the word communal means something that you share with each other. It does not have the same connotation that we have for it in this country. Where it is actually hatred for the other community rather than sharing something with your own. I would say that the feeling of belonging to a particular community, which has a sense of exclusion towards all others and an unfair preference for your own community. It is not very precise but is clear enough.

Sikh communalism vis-a-vis the Hindu, is a recent phenomenon. There are no analogies because we are seeing something new erupting.

But I think it is wrong to say that smaller the minority the stronger its communal instinct for survival. What about the Parsis ? They are the smallest community in the country. Have you ever heard of their making any demands as a minority community ? What about Jains ? They are fewer than we are. Is there any element of communalism in their demands ? What about the Christians ? They are more than the Sikhs but have you ever heard of the Indian Christian community ganging together and saying 'We are discriminated against, these are the rights that Christians must be given ?' There is something uniquely different about the upsurge of Sikh communalism which has no parallel with other communal upsurges.

Killing innocent people as in communal frenzy is the most heinous crime and the most deterrent punishment should be meted out to it. I am in favour of flogging. I am in favour of corporal punishment in schools. This is the one thing that will deter the errant people. Why I recommend public flogging is because I think a communal rioter must be publicly disgraced and exposed to public ridicule. That is why I have often suggested that a really good punishment would be the old traditional way to blacken their faces and make them ride on donkeys round the locality.

Then you mentioned about what seemed to you like Hindu functions being performed by the state. I am not quite sure if the breaking of a coconut is a particularly Hindu function. It is an Indian Custom. I have known in my own home coconuts being given a ceremonial occasion. After all, when it comes to Sikhs almost ninety percent of whatever we have in the way of customs are taken from the Hindus. You see coconuts presented to gurdwaras. But why make such a song and dance about them ? I agree that religious rituals should not take place in state functions. In any case no state functionary should be a participant to a religious function in public. His religion is his private affair. He can do what he likes in his home.

I would only give you a very human response to that kind of question why are people communal. I have one observation of what I saw Punjab before and after partition. I think that is valid and you check it with your own experience. Before partition, Hindus and Sikhs hated the Muslims, after partition the same Hindus and Sikhs are hating each other. Hindus and Sikhs who did not hate Muslims before partition, the same Hindus and Sikhs do not hate each other, even now. I think there is a quantum of venom in all of us. Some have it more, some less. I can speak for myself—and I was never a saint—I never hated a Muslim at any time of my life and I find it totally impossible, incomprehensible to hate a Hindu today.

I wish make a point—and I think this is the one principle we have to follow if you want to do anything. If you are in your own community, without a member of the other community present, then you let your tongue loose and say unpleasant things about the other. Sikhs will get together and refer to the Hindus then as *kirar*, *topianwale*, *banye*, *mahashe*. It is then your duty to say, shut up, do not use that kind of language, The same with the Hindus. When they know that there is no Sikh around then it is *sikhra*, *baran baj gaye*, *mat maree gayee*, etc, Then it is for the Hindu to say, look, I am not going to tolerate this kind of language. Unless you squash this expression of communal hatred amongst your own people you will never be able to squash it in the country.

The chairman,....., in his concluding remarks, said: While listening to Sardar Khushwant Singh, I was reminded of a verse from Ghalib. It goes like this :

Dekhna thakreer ka jadoo
 ke jo usne kaha,
 Balki dekhna thakreer ki lazzat
 ke jo usne kaha
 Maine ye jana ki goya
 eh bhi mere dil mein hai.

I would like to share with you a few thoughts that have occ-

ured to me. My observations are based on my own personal experience.

I have, like some people in this country, had the experience of living in medieval India until 1947 because I lived in a princely state in a very remote corner of Rajasthan, Mewar State. Udaipur was its capital. I remember that in 1947, I was 19 years of age; I was born there as a Muslim, was brought up there, and throughout my childhood, school days and college days I had been taught by everyone around me that Rana Partap was a great hero of Mewar and he was a hero for all of us, of the Hindus, of the Muslims, of the Rajputs and also of the non-Rajputs.

Every year on the occasion of Partap jayanti there were great celebrations, kavi sammelans, mushairas, plays, sports, in which people of all the communities participated with great enthusiasm and it never occurred to anyone with which one identifies. Therefore it is a very complex thing. One has to see it from all these angles because unless we do that we may create new illusions about it new misconceptions and new stereotypes about it.

The second observation that I wish to make is how dangerous this game of mixing religion and politics is. I recall the observation of Maulana Azad in 1947 after the announcement of the partition plan. I suppose it was on the 2nd of June that Jawaharlal Nehru, Jinnah and Mountbatten had addressed the whole country and they said that they had agreed to a partition plan. Soon after that a journalist approached Maulana Azad and asked him how it would affect the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. I think what the Maulana said in one sentence was almost prophetic. He said that it will hurt Islam in Pakistan and Muslims in India. This is exactly what has happened. Today, I think it is not possible for any decent person, let alone a decent Muslim, to live in Pakistan because they have prostituted religion to such an extent that they are using religion to do all kinds of nasty, obnoxious things to their citizens, and deny the very elementary rights of decent living to the people. People are served with lashes in public and the kind of barbarous scenes are repeated which, I

think, even in medieval times this country had not witnessed. They are going back to the age of barbarism.

The third point I wish to make is that Rana Partap was a Hindu hero who fought the Muslims. If you go to Haldighati where the great battle took place between Akbar's forces and Rana Partap's army—Akbar's army was led by, not a Muslim, but by Raja Mansingh who was the Commander of Akbar's forces, and the chief of artillery of Rana Partap was Hakim Sur Khan who was not a Rajput but a Pathan—and his grave is still there at Haldighati. In those days we used to go there and offer flowers. Side by side is the samadhi of Chetak, the famous horse of Rana Partap.

When Sardar Khushwant Singh referred to history I was reminded of my own personal experience that after all things were not as bad at least in that part and may be many parts of India as they were probably in some parts of Punjab. But after 1947 Rana Pratap all of a sudden became a Hindu hero even in Udaipur and has stayed as such ever since and all that enthusiasm of all the people for Rana Pratap, even his image has been tarnished.

This reminds me of what a very distinguished friend and colleague of mine in Jawaharlal Nehru University, a very eminent historian, Prof. Bipin Chandra has said. He said that communalism is not a dinosaur, it is not an ancient animal, it is a very modern animal. Another observation made by someone else is also very apt. He said that communalism in fact is a secular phenomenon in the sense that it is not concerned with religion at all, it is only concerned with temporal needs of the community. I agree with Sardar Khushwant Singh that there must be good intelligence, there must be a good police force, a mixed police force, all these are very necessary. But I think this is not a task which concerns the state or a political party or a government of the time alone. This is a task which concerns all of us, all the citizens of this country. Last year when the situation in Punjab was rather hot I and some of my colleagues in Jawaharlal Nehru University felt very unhappy about it. But then we decided that instead of feeling unhappy about it and

doing nothing about it let a team of JNU teachers go to Punjab and let us travel by road and visit places, address gatherings of students, teachers, lawyers, ordinary citizens, all kinds of people.

This is exactly what we did in July 1983. We started from Delhi, went to Patiala, Jalandhur and Amritsar. In the process we addressed several meetings, so that we could at least satisfy ourselves that we were not sitting idly by in Delhi and expressing our anger or sorrow or unhappiness about what was happening,

So I think that if the citizens of this country do not have this kind of involvement on a wide scale I do not think any amount of effort that a government might make will really be able to cope with it. Of course this is a problem which has to be attacked from various angles. It is not only from the angle of the involvement of the citizens but also from the educational angle, from the angle of having a fresh look at history. I remember, once, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was addressing the Asian History Congress in Delhi and he said that many people who visited Banaras saw only ugliness, dirt all around but there are others who see something else. History writing is also something like that.

History writing can deteriorate or degenerate into writing a report of a gutter inspector. So I think we have to have a fresh look at the writing of history also, because the writing of history in the last hundred years has done a lot of damage to the relationship between Hindus and Muslims.

27 September, 1984

COMMUNALISM—THE WAY OUT

Bipan Chandra

I am very thankful to the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts on the subject with you, especially because this is a subject which is not merely of academic interest or research for people like me and people of this country, it is a matter of life and death for our society. Therefore all of us are actively busy thinking about the problem, thinking about the solutions to the problems that communalism raises.

A number of important aspects which are inherent in the subject have been referred to. I am afraid I am going to let them remain inherent. Only, I am going to assume that what has been said is very true, I fully agree with everything that has been said. But I am afraid that I am not going to provide a history of the communal problem or its sociological or class analysis. I am going to do something very unhistorian like and that is to try to suggest what should be done. But then I believe that the ultimate goal of all social sciences is to contribute to the building of a better present and a happier future. So I do hope that some of the insights that I have acquired as a result of thirty years of teaching of history and researching in it would show up in what I am going to say; but they will not be there in their direct form.

I must warn you that I am going to be extremely frank. I am an extremely frank person or an argumentative person and I do not beat about the bush. I have spoken on the communal problem at Amritsar, Chandigarh, Patiala and also in Kurukshetra and Rohtak. I believe that if one has something sensible to say one should be able to give the same lecture to audiences of Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or a combination of all of them. So I am going to be extremely frank.

Secondly, I am not going to discuss the communal problem of just Punjab though naturally that is something which is currently occupying the minds of people, specially in this part of the world. In fact communalism is a problem not only for Punjab, it is a problem which is facing the entire country and the entire Indian society. It is a conjunctural aspect that sometimes it may break out here or there in a virulent form. But, in fact, communalism has been pervading, sometimes growing sometimes receding, but still pervading on a large scale in the entire Indian society. So it is not a problem that Punjabis alone are facing, it is a problem that people all over the country are facing.

Thirdly, one of the starting points of what I have to say about “communalism : the way out” is that it is going to be a very long haul-the way out. We are in a kind of dark tunnel and the way out is also going to be a very long one. Historical problems generated over generations do not get solved in a jiffy. There are no short-term or instant solutions to this problem, nor can short-term compromises solve the problem. So far as the way out is concerned, it is a problem of initiating and pushing forward the process of the long haul.

In this respect, I must point out that I am aware of this long haul character from personal experience. Educated in an Arya Samaj School, in a predominantly Hindu communal milieu, I know how long the struggle has to be to overcome the communal elements in one's thinking and one's personality. I have been teaching now for over thirtythree years. I know how difficult the task is. When students, who come under teachers' secular influence for three, four or five years, go back into society and are once again open to the other currents, how it breaks the heart of the teacher and how one realises then that it is going to be a very, very long haul. It is like the *banvas* of Ram, Sita and Lakshman, which was a fourteen year haul. Yet, in this long haul there are a large number of positive fronts so far as one's own life is concerned. Let me share one experience with you.

In the early fifties I had a student whose hair were all grey and who was so strongly secular and so strongly anti—communal

that he would pick a quarrel with anybody with RSS bias in the college. Once, when he sat down with me I asked him why he was so strongly secular, when he was a Punjabi. He said he was not a Punjabi but a refugee and so I said it was even more surprising. He said this was how his hair had turned grey. "It is like a story in the films. I am from Rawalpindi. My mother and father and five of my brothers and sisters were killed before my eyes. I was hiding behind a box and as I was then very small. Those who killed members of my family did not see me. I was too frightened to cry, seeing seven members of my family being wiped out. Only one of my brothers survived because he was not in town. That is when my hair turned grey." I said: "How come that you are so secular?" He said: "Sir, very early I realised that my parents had not been killed by Muslims, they had been killed by communalism." I got my very first lesson regarding what is communalism from this young boy when he said: "My parents have not been killed by Muslims, they had been killed by communalism." He said: "Whether it is the communalism of the Muslims or of the Hindus I am very strongly opposed to it. I react very strongly psychologically when I come across any communal minded person because I see the murderers of my family before my eyes." So in this long haul there is also hope.

One other point, though I am not going to deal with it at great length. It is of course a very basic point but there is not enough time to deal with it. So I will just state it. It is that communalism is the product of a particular situation of a particular society, economy and polity, which creates problems for its people, problems of which the people are not able to understand the cause. Communalism is often the effort of the people to come to grips with the situation of their personal and social crisis without correctly grasping what the social situation is. In other words, communalism is not a correct diagnosis of the social situation, nor is it the correct solution of the social situation. I shall come back to this point again—, but there is a social situation lying at its back, which is funnelling it, without which communalism could not have survived for long, and unless that particular social situat-

ion is righted or effort is made to right that situation, to solve that situation in the right way, ideologies like communalism, casteism and other similar ideologies of hate—false ideologies—will go on rising. Therefore, the way out of communalism in a permanent direction lies in righting the social situation.

As I said, I could have delivered two or three lectures on this subject, explaining how communalism before 1947 was a product of the colonial society and how communalism today is the product of capitalism which is not able to develop the society fast enough to meet the needs of that society. But having said that I would also like to make two other points.

One point is that one cannot rest with this social aspect because communalism is an enemy in itself and communalism comes in the way of the righting of the situation. Communalism is the product of a particular social situation but to right that situation communalism has to be opposed; otherwise one cannot right the situation.

Secondly, the social roots have to be discovered and a social analysis of communalism has to be evolved. Without that there can be no long term strategy of a permanent fight against communalism. But, as I said earlier, one has to combat communalism even in the existing situation, precisely in order to transform that situation. So, my second important point is that social analysis of communalism—which I am not going to make here—should not be used, as many people do, as an alibi for not fighting against communalism. In other words, as a Marxist, as I have been described, I do not believe that communalism will not end till socialism comes and therefore, believers in Socialism should not fight against communalism but should fight only for socialism.

This type of outlook can also become, in the name of social analysis, an alibi for not fighting against communalism, because, as we shall see, the type of political ideology communalism is, it is rather difficult to fight against it. When one fights against capitalism one fights against class enemies who are distant. When one fights against communalism one fights one's brothers, sisters and parents, one's brothers-in-law and other-in-laws, one's friends

and colleagues, and persons one comes across daily. It is a very difficult task. But the difficulty of the task should not mean that we should give it up in the name of fighting for the ultimate solution. In other words, fighting for the ultimate solution does not take away from the task of fighting against communalism.

First of all I would like to point out that in my analysis of the way-out in Punjab, the most important aspect or concept is the fact that communalism is basically and above all an ideology. Communalism is not in the main communal riots, it is not in the main communal violence or communal terrorism. Certainly, communal violence is linked to communal ideology. But basically communalism is an ideology of which these three others are conjunctural consequences. Communal ideology can prevail even without violence, but communal violence cannot exit without communal ideology. It is possible to have communal ideology for decades without communal violence taking place at all. Therefore, communalism is above all a communal ideology and it is at the level of struggle against that ideology that the way out has to be found. Any other way out will prove to be no way out at all. That will be like treating a cancer patient with aspirin because there exists a head ache or a stomach ache. A head ache can be caused by many diseases. The real problem is the disease, not the headache or some other ache.

What is communal ideology ? I hope you will forgive me for trying to explain such a simple notion. After all, who does not know what communalism or communal ideology is ? But having begged your forgiveness for imposing a very simple explanation on you or an explanation of a simple notion, let me still go ahead.

I believe that communal ideology consists of three elements, one succeeding the other. First of all, according to communal ideology people who follow the same religion have common secular interests, that is, people who follow the same religion have not only common religious beliefs or interests but they also have common political, economic, social and cultural interests. This is the first bedrock of communal ideology. From this arises the notion of religious community. In my view, a person who talks

about the Hindu community or the Sikh community or the interests of the Sikh Community or the Muslim community or Hindu community is already taking the first step towards communalism whether he knows it or not, however secular he might be feeling privately or genuinely at heart, unless the concept of community is used for religious purposes only.

The second step is taken when in a multi-religious society it is said that the secular interests, that is economic, social, political and cultural interests of the followers of one religion are different from the interests of the followers of another religion. One does not say that the Hindu religion is different from the Muslim religion; that is true by definition. But when one says that the interests of the Hindu community are different from the interests of the Muslim community or the Sikh community, then one has taken the second step towards communalism.

The third step is taken when it is said that not only are the interests of the followers of different 'communities' different but are hostile to each other. That is what is economically, politically, socially or culturally in the interests of Hindus is not so in the interests of Muslims or in the interests of Sikhs, that the two cannot have common economic, social, political interests, that their secular interests are bound to be opposed to each other. This last step brings communalism to the stage of what I would describe as extreme communalism or fascistic communalism.

The first stage, I would say, is the begining of communal ideology. The second is what I would describe as liberal communalism. or what some people describe as moderate communalism. The third is when the secular interests of the followers of one religion are counterposed to the secular interests of another in a hostile fashion, then we get the last stage of communal ideology. I believe that it is this communal ideology in all its stages which has to be opposed, and the way out from communalism means decommunalising ideologically the people of this country, of this state, of this area, of our different institutions and so on and so forth.

This is very important because if you equate communalism not with communal ideology but only with communal violence, then one will have to say that Punjab was a happy land where there was no communalism after 1947. Because, after the communal riots of 1947, and till 1982, there was no communal violence or communal rioting in Punjab. According to this theory communalism came in Punjab either only after 1982 when communal killings started by Bhindranwale's followers or in June 1984 when the Government of India's armies marched into the Golden Temple. But in actual fact communalism was growing stronger every day in Punjab since 1947. It was not only growing stronger under the surface after 1947, it became visibly stronger in the last six or seven years before anybody had heard of Bhindranwale. Some of us started warning of the dangers to Punjab of communalism in about 1974 when I spoke in the Punjabi University, Patiala. Others must have done so even earlier. I remember speaking in the Punjabi University in 1974 warning against the danger which Punjab was beginning and going to face with the brewing of communalism.

In other words what we find is the slow growth of communalism in Punjab over the years. How deep that communalism has penetrated this province—and in fact more or less the other parts of the country also—especially in the middle classes of the Punjab was revealed by the June events. Large sections of the Hindu middle classes thought that the entry into the Golden Temple was something to be celebrated, to be overjoyed about, something which was good. I can understand if the feeling was that through this action a major danger to Punjab, that is of communal killings, and to India, had ended. I can understand that. But only communal people or people pervaded with communalism could have celebrated this event. Similarly, the reaction of a large section of the middle class Sikhs and Sikh intelligentsia was also communal when they talked about the army's entry into the Golden Temple as a hurt to the Sikh community. Of course any Sikh or any Hindu in Punjab would be sad at the entry of the army into the Golden Temple. But I cannot understand this reaction

except as an aspect or consequence of the pervasive nature of communal ideology because the normal reaction of any person, Hindu or Sikh, would have been that this hurt was caused by Bhindranwale and his group. This is not Indira Gandhi's propaganda; this would be the normal secular reaction anywhere in the world. How is it that the intelligentsia of Punjab, both Hindu and Sikh, reacted in a different way? This can only be because there was the all-pervasive character of communalism growing since 1947 underneath and above the ground.

I remember one of my students who studied with me for five years, three years for B.A. and two years for M.A., a middle class Punjabi, a judge's son. He started discussing communal problems and I started pointing out to him day after day, at every discussion, how he was communal, how his assumptions were communal. After four years he came to me once and said; "Every time I meet you say I am communal; I go back and get rid of that particular assumption or concept and I come back and say I am secular; you again show to me that I am still communal; does it mean that when all my flesh disappears and only my bones remain, intellectually speaking, only then will my communalism go?" I said; "No, my boy, communalism has entered even the bones of the Punjabi middle classes. Perhaps what many of us can do is to minimise the damage. It may be difficult for your generation and mine to get rid of communalism fully. It is a very pervasive thing."

Similarly, if one was to go by the criterion of violence, one would say that Muslim communalism in India is very weak. After all, Muslims are the victims of communal rioting, they are not the instigators. May be, in one case out of a hundred they are the instigators. May be, they kill, but they kill only more or less when they are forced to defend themselves. Therefore, one would say that in areas like Moradabad, Aligarh, Meerut, Bhiwandi, Bombay, Jubbulpur, Indore or Bhopal there is no Muslim communalism or it is extremely weak because Muslim communalists are not creating violence; it is the other side which is creating violence. But the fact is that communal ideology is extremely strong among Muslims in India.

Similarly a large number of Hindus pride themselves over the fact that in their area there is no communal rioting and, therefore, they say they have no communalism. Particularly, South Indians used to tell us that you North Indians are communal but we are not. But now, increasingly, they too are discovering that they too had communal elements in their ideology and that is why communal forces are making a breakthrough in the South. In fact, communalism among Hindus has been equally strong whether there was violence or not.

Communalism seen as an ideology alone explains why anti-Hindu and anti-Sikh communalisms could grow in post 1947 Punjab. As I have defined communalism, communalism especially of the extreme variety, is based on the theory of mutual hatred and clash of mutual interests; and liberal communalism is based on the notion of secular interests of the followers of the two religions being different or separate. But once one sees communalism as looking upon the followers of one religion as constituting a community, as having separate secular interests, and as having opposed interests, then one can clearly see that simply because Punjab was partitioned, Muslims were driven out from Punjab jointly by Hindu and Sikh communalists, it did not mean that communalism came to an end.

In Punjab, Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs have what is called *roti beti ka rishta*. Not only do they eat together but they inter-marry. There would not be very many Hindu families in urban Punjab who would not have a Sikh in the family, one way or the other. Why should communalism have then developed among them, unless one sees that if there is a communal ideology which is turned against Muslims—the notion that Hindu interests are separate, Sikh interests are separate, and Muslim interests are separate—once this ideology is not overthrown and constitutional changes do not overthrow such ideologies—once no effort was made to overthrow this ideology and this ideology continued, then it was bound in time to turn Hindu and Sikh communalists against each other, once Muslim communalism disappeared from this scene. Hindu communalism

was bound to be anti-Sikh and Sikh communalism was bound to be anti-Hindu. Then the notion that Hindu and Sikh communalists had co-operated together in killing Muslims or in defending themselves against Muslim communalists in West Punjab, and, therefore, should not fight each other would not hold and communalism would develop, this time in its anti-Sikh and anti-Hindu form.

Here we may take note of a very interesting aspect. Sikh communalism, from the days of Bhai Veer Singh's novels, was based on the theory that Sikhs were the defenders of Hinduism. Read any novel of Bhai Veer Singh. It says that Sikhism developed in order to defend Hindus; Hindu communalists too accepted this theory that Sikhs were the sword arm of Hinduism. That is why the main communal body, the RSS, has three great heroes, Shivaji, Guru Gobind Singh and Rana Partap. In fact it is very interesting that throughout the fifties and sixties and even in the seventies, the two groups of communalists tried to avoid hatred against each other. The Akalis never preached hatred of the Hindus because it would go against the entire grain of the development of their communal ideology during the 20th century and against their particular mythology regarding the history and role of the Sikhs in the past.

Similarly, the RSS and the Jana Sangh found it in extremely difficult and unpleasant job to rouse hatred against Sikhs; their mythology was that Sikhs are part of Hindus and in fact they were the toughest the biggest, defenders of Hinduism against Muslim tyranny. And, therefore, they could not easily breed hatred towards Sikhs. Despite the two communalist groups therefore, making every effort not to spread hatred, hatred did come finally because communal ideology has its own inner logic. Once you propagate communal ideology then the consequences are not in your hands. Once you promote the notion of community and community separatedness and separate interests of communities then it was inevitable that one communalist group should deny the mother tongue and the other demand Punjabi suba in the name of Sikh majority. That was inevitable.

It is very interesting. No communal riots occurred in Punjab but at the same time communal killings did occur in Punjab over the last two years. Perhaps no Sikh was killed or communally murdered in Punjab, but a few were killed in the neighbouring state of Haryana. In other words, the two communalist groups could not prevent their own development into the third stage, that is the hatred stage.

If what I am saying so far is correct then it seems to me that the most important aspect of the way out is an ideological struggle against communalism, if communalism is primarily and basically an ideology, if it is not communal riots, if it is not communal violence, which are only conjunctural manifestations of this ideology. In Aligarh you may have riots for three years running and you may have no riots for the next ten, fifteen, twenty years, and yet communal ideology is pervasive, whether it takes the form of a riot or not. It is a conjunctural fact depending on many factors, including, sometimes, which Deputy Commissioner or Superintendent of Police is holding the position in Aligarh district or Aligarh town. If we accept that, then the way out of communalism lies above all in waging an ideological struggle against communalism.

If communalism is basically an ideology then it cannot be suppressed by force. No ideology can be suppressed by force. Ideology has to be fought at the level of ideas. This is what we learn from history.

Secondly, if communalism is basically an ideology and has to be opposed, then there can be no compromise with or concessions to communal ideology in any form. I stress this because we find all around—in the past in the pre- 1947 period and now in the last few months in Punjab—people are reeling under pressure and are beginning to make or advocate compromises with communal ideology in one form or another.

Thirdly, the ideological struggle has to be fought not only among the masses, not only among the communal persons, it has to be fought also among secular persons—I shall soon come to that—because what we witness in periods of crisis is that communalism burgeons forth, and it burgeons forth because secular people join

it in a burgeoning manner. This happens because there are communal elements also among the secular people which suddenly grow. Secondly, it is not true that intellectuals can necessarily handle communalism or communal ideology better than others. Intellectuals are as much victims of communal ideology, and they are the main purveyors of communal ideology. In fact it is the intellectuals who have revealed the biggest weakness regarding communalism in the twenties, thirties, and forties, and in the years after 1947, as well as in the events in Punjab for the last one year and especially after June 1984.

It is very interesting that when the franchise was extremely narrow and limited and confined mostly to middle classes, business people in the urban areas and landlords and rich peasants in the villages, we find that in 1926 the Swarajist Party got defeated in Bengal, in Punjab, in the Central Provinces and got extremely narrowed down in Madras, UP and Bihar precisely because the middle classes and intelligentsia gave way to communalism. Many of them accused Motilal Nehru of being a beef eater, an Islam lover and what not. Therefore, this struggle against communal ideology has to be waged not only with the help of intellectuals—of course with the help of intellectuals along with the masses—but it also has to be waged first of all among the intellectuals themselves.

I find in the last six months and very much so in the last two or three months, themes which were basic to the communal ideology—of Muslim and Hindu communalism especially since 1922 when Hindu and Muslim communalism started growing on a large scale—are being unconsciously picked up even by many secular persons. That is, themes, notions, ideas which were the very bedrock of communal ideology among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are today being expressed by extremely secular minded Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs. For example, in March there appeared a statement in the press and there was something similar again in August or September that one should respect the pride of Sikhs in their history, implying that Sikhs have a history of their own.

In fact, people like me, poor historians, for years we were fighting against this notion in the syllabi committees and among

our colleagues. We were saying, do not talk about anything called Sikh history, there is no such thing called Sikh history any more than there is anything called Hindu history or Muslim history. There is the history of Punjab. History is a common history of the people of a region or country. History is a history in which peasants participate, in which artisans participate, and so on. For example Banda Bahadur Singh's history is not the history of Sikhs. In my text book on Modern India, I have also written glorifying Banda Bahadur Singh's struggle, but I have not called it Sikh history. It was a struggle of the oppressed and downtrodden people of Punjab in the first two decades of the 18th century against particular types of oppression. The other day I read a statement referring to 'the pride of the Sikhs in their theology' or 'pride of the Sikhs in their language'. This notion that Punjabi is the language of Sikhs was the bedrock of Hindu communalism in Punjab in the 1950s. Now we find secular people talking about the pride of the Sikhs in their language. In other words, Punjabi in Gurmukhi script is seen as the language of the Sikhs, it is not the language of the Punjabis. There can be nothing more communal than this. In fact it is very interesting that all these themes were articulated by Hindu communalism much earlier.

When I was asked to sign the statement in March about the Sikhs' pride in their history, I said to the organisers; "I am not willing to sign any statement unless you are willing to sign the same statement with the word Sikhs replaced by the word Hindus." But what is this Hindu's pride in Hindu history? I have been for thirty years fighting against this notion of Hindu's pride in Hindu history. I have been fighting against the notion of Hindi being the language of the Hindus. And how can I talk about Sikhs' pride in their theology. Because, how would it be for this country if Hindus were also asked to have a pride in their theology. I hear the phrase, 'effort is being made to divide Sikhs, as if all Sikhs should be united irrespective of their politics. By the way, these statements are not being made by Sikhs only. They are being made by Sikh intellectuals, Hindu intellectuals. When Bhagat Singh came across this notion being propagated by Lajpat Rai that

Hindus must be united, that they must not be divided, he branded Lajpat Rai, his political guru, as a communalist for propagating this notion. This notion that the Hindus must not be divided, they must remain united and any one who tries to divide them is a dirty dog—if that is communalism, how is it not communalism to talk about Sikhs not being divided? Rather I wish Sikhs were divided, that is, communalists from the secularists; I wish they were divided between capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, and so on and so forth.

I read about 'Sikhs must have an identity'. What is this notion of Sikh identity? This is the very notion which created these two communal forces in the twenties. Hindu *sanghatan*, Muslim *tanzeem*. What was Hindu *sanghatan*? Hindu *sanghatan* was based on the notion that Hindus had no identity, they must acquire identity; *tanzeem* on the notion that Muslims had no identity, they must acquire an identity. And yet I find highly secular people now writing about Sikh identity.

All this shows how deep and penetrating is communal ideology in our minds. When we suddenly come out with concepts, symbols and ideas which we thought we had long buried; when they come up in our minds though we have been struggling in our minds against them for twenty, thirty years as secular persons; when we suddenly issue a statement under the stress of the situation we find these notions coming forth; this shows how important is the notion of ideological struggle, how important it is to go to the marrow, not only to the bone but the marrow, in order to fight communalism.

What does the struggle against communal ideology mean? It is well known. I will not explain. Communalism is anti-development; communalism is anti-national unity; communalism is anti-class struggle; communalism is anti-humanist; communalism is in fact anti-religion in so far as all religions are based on certain humanist values. But I think you hear a lot about all this. I think these facts should be brought home to the people, including religious people.

Secondly, secularism is not just an instrumental value. Secular-

ism is a value in itself because it is a humanist value. I particularly say this to my socialist friends. By socialists I mean those who believe in socialism and that includes communists also. Secularism is important not only because communalism stands in the way of the struggle for socialism. Why do we fight for socialism ? We fight for it because we cannot stand oppression of man by man; we cannot stand poverty in the midst of riches; we believe that a human being should not be exploited and should not be starved. The same value is involved also in secularism. That is, nobody should be hated because of his religion; nobody should be killed, nobody should be discriminated against.

The ideological struggle against communalism above all means bringing home to people, masses as well as the middle classes and intellectuals, the falsity of communal assumptions, of communal logic, of communal answers; of bringing home to people that what the communalists project as problems are not the real problems and what the communalists say is the answer is not the real answer; that the communalist not only gives the wrong answer, he also raises the wrong question. This is the long haul which we have got to undertake, of going to the people and explaining to them with the help of history, with the help of sociology, with the help of everyday life, with the help of our social struggles, class struggles and what not, through all channels to bring home to the people, that the problems that the Hindu and Sikh communalists have raised in Punjab are totally false; from the notion of religion in danger to the notion of identity in danger, to the notion that Sikhs are becoming too big and Hindus are going to be oppressed, to the notion that Hindus are going to oppress and eliminate the Sikhs that all this is wrong, these are not the real problems. The unemployed youth should know what their real problem is. Their problem is not Hindu oppression, their problem is unemployment. What are the causes of that unemployment ? The communal answer is wrong, It is not the Hindus and it is not the Sikhs who are responsible for it. The communal solution is also wrong. Neither the elimination of the Hindus nor the elimination of the Sikhs will solve the problems plaguing society. In

other words, the problem is posed wrongly and the answer is wrong. This looks very simple but in fact this is the basic task that has to be performed.

In this respect let me point to one other aspect. Some people, especially some liberal minded people, who have been brought up on common sense at their mother's knees, say how can an ideology or a movement spread if there is not some truth in the complaint; communalists must be pointing to some genuine complaint, some genuine cause, because otherwise how would millions of people believe it? The common sense part lies in the saying 'where there is smoke there is fire'. But the fact of the matter is that this is not true. It is a specific aspect of communal type of ideologies that they reflect a social situation of crisis but they do not reflect it—either the cause or the solution—correctly. In other words, the communal type of ideologies can have no basis in reality and yet they flourish.

This is the case not only in Punjab. This problem is raised sometimes in the case of Bhindranwale. There must be some reason why Bhindranwale was so popular. There must be some reason why all Hindus have become communal in Punjab. There must be some reason why all Sikhs have become communal in Punjab. If one is soft towards Hindu communalism then one says there is some reason and it lies with the Sikhs, If one is soft towards Sikh communalism then one says there must be some reason and it must be lying in what Hindus are doing. But the fact of the matter is that the 20th century is rich in ideologies both in our country and abroad which spread without having any genuine basis in reality. On a world scale, the ideology of fascism is a very good example. Were the Jews oppressing Germans, was there some truth in it? Was there some truth in Nazism because millions and millions of people loved Hitler and followed him to the grave? Twenty million Germans died, from children of eleven onwards in defending what Hitler stood for. Does it mean that there was some truth in Nazism, Hitler had something true in him? or that the Jews must have oppressed Christian Germans; their behaviour must have had something to do with rise of Nazism.

Similarly three hundred years racialism has been rampant in the western world; sometimes in a most vicious form till the fifties or sixties in the USA. Was there some truth in the notion that Blacks are inferior? In our own country, Hindus constituted over seventy per cent of the population before 1947 and constitute more than eighty per cent of the population today; and yet millions upon millions of Hindus under communal influence believe that they are in danger, their culture is in danger, their religion is in danger, their very existence is in danger, and not merely in Punjab or Kashmir, it is in danger all over India. Projections are made. In the year 2020 Muslims will be in a majority because they do not practise family planning. The Sikhs also might start not having family planning and in the year 2500 they will become a majority and Hindus will be extinct because they would have practised family planning like the Japanese or Russians or Americans. Yet, many more than those who follow Sikh communalism—millions upon millions—believe this that Hinduism is in danger, and they vote for communal parties.

It was on this type of falsehood that Jinnah built up a powerful movement for communalism and then for the partition of the country with the notion that no Muslim can survive in free India, that they will be wiped out—and then left nearly half the Muslims to survive in India at the mercy of people who, he, had claimed, would wipe them out. In fact, Muslims, with all their disabilities and with all the discriminatory conditions in this country are better off than they are in Bangladesh or Pakistan. Therefore, this notion I will not buy, and I think this is an aspect of the pervasiveness of communal ideology, this notion that there must be some truth in communal ideology. I came across this notion as a young man in Lahore during 1942-46, and I am shocked when I come across this type of notion today in Punjab and in the rest of India.

Here I would like to make one other point. If there is a real crisis where fire fighting is needed, when your house is on fire, you do not start buying the right type of fire extinguisher, you start extinguishing the fire. I can very well understand that in a moment

of real crisis of a communal riot in Moradabad or Aligarh, or in the type of situation which prevailed in Punjab and may prevail again, every effort is made to arrive at some compromise at the political level. I am not a political leader, I would not say what sort of compromise should be there on Chandigarh or water sharing or this or that. But one thing I can say, that there should be no compromise on the ideological plane. Compromise on some problems helps solve them. This is not the case with communalism; a compromise on the communal plane will only make the position worse. I must also say that if a compromise is found absolutely necessary it should be for gaining time. A compromise makes some sense only if you gain time in order to fight better against the communal ideology. In fact, compromises have been made several times in Punjab with Sikh communalism as well as Hindu communalism, sometimes by denying Punjabi suba and sometimes by giving it in a particular manner. At both times, after the compromise, it has been assumed that situation is now safe and we can go home and go to sleep. First, I am not in favour of compromise at all, but if compromise becomes necessary it makes sense only if you use it to launch a powerful ideological battle against communalism.

In this connection let me say another thing. Let us learn one lesson from pre-1947. Under no circumstance—this is what one means by struggle against communalist ideology—should one make communalism and the communalist respectable. One should never stop attacking communalism ideologically. One of the major errors which we committed and for which we paid the price of partition was that we waged no ideological and political struggle against communalism in the twenties and thirties and we made communalism respectable by negotiating with it and by treating it as a respectable force. We paid the price in 1946 and 1947.

Communalism is an ideology. There is no such thing as Sikh communalism which is different from Hindu communalism or Muslim communalism. Hindu communalism, Muslim communalism, Sikh communalism are communalism first. I would regard them as varieties of communalism. They are like a rose which is

of different colours but a rose is still a rose. The simile is perhaps not appropriate, it is a bit of an insult to a rose. But you can get my meaning. This is another important reason why one should look upon communalism as communal ideology. If you see it as communal ideology then you do not fight against Sikh communalism or Hindu communalism, you fight against communalism as a whole, you fight against its particular manifestation. This means that among Sikhs one fights against Sikh communalism, among Hindus one fights against Hindu communalism, and if one has both of these in an area then one fights against both; in other words, one wages simultaneous struggle against all forms of communalism.

Here the role of education and the press is crucial. Paradoxically, one of the greatest dangers our society is facing is the spread of literacy. In simple terms, literacy is supposed to be the panacea of all social ills; and spread of literacy is seen as the highest value. I too regard it as of the highest value, and I think literacy is one of the three or four basic developments which all societies must achieve. But I think in this development there also inheres a great danger. Long time back, one of my American professors warned me against complacency regarding literacy. He said: 'Bipan Chandra, when you go back to your country do not be a blind follower of literacy.' I asked him "Why". He said: 'Remember one thing; the illiterate Russians produced Lenin as their leader; the illiterate Indians have produced Gandhi as their leader; the illiterate Chinese have produced Mao Tse Tung as their leader; and the country with the highest literacy, with the largest number of Ph.Ds, has produced Hitler as their leader; therefore be warned.' Thus, literacy makes sense only if it is used to spread the right type of ideas, not if it is used to spread poisonous ideas; and it is this that has happened in our country. Even peasants who were guarded by illiteracy and by their centuries old culture—and I shall come later to the centuries old culture which has protected this state in the last one and a half years—are being affected. But this culture is being eroded as literacy spreads and what is spread among them is the most rotten form of education.

Along with literacy came the notion of a Sikh history and inherent in that also is the notion of a Hindu history and a Muslim history and so on. You all know what textbooks are like. What is taught in them ? I know when I was a school-boy, when I read the play of Hakikat Rai, taught to me in my *dharm siksha* class as a true story, what a powerful impact it had on me. I felt that every Muslim should be eliminated—people who can put an eleven year old boy in chains and bury him between two walls. Therefore, there is a special duty on educationists and intellectuals to see that in the name of value-free education the wrong type of education does not spread.

The same is the case with the press. The press has played a very important role in sustaining and spreading communalism. It has been done not only by the communal press, it has also been done by the secular press in the name of freedom of information. It has indulged in sensational reporting and accepted communal leaders at their face value by designating them as Hindu leaders, Muslim leaders or Sikh leaders. I agree with the concept of freedom of information, with the theory that reporting must be fearless and objective. But I ask our press people only one question. When freedom of the press is attacked, do they report the event in a 'fair' and 'objective' manner, in a value-free manner ? The government imposed censorship on the press during the Emergency. Is this to be reported as an interesting piece of information only. Or, do you also condemn it in a manner in which the reader will know that something rotten is happening ? What about crimes against women, rapes and so on ? Can you report them objectively ? Then why is communalism also not seen as as much poisonous, and, in a society like ours, much more so ? Then how can one report the communal aspect as one is reporting a cricket match ?

This is what was happening in Punjab by the way for several years, that the entire reporting of the communal press was no different from the reporting of a cricket match between the West Indies and Indian teams, or something like that. At the same time, we should perhaps still be thankful that our press and our media are not yet as bad as they are in countries which are domin-

ated by the state and ruling groups which are fully communal. How would it be if in the name of information photographs of people, who have been brought down from a bus and shot down, were put on the front half page in the Tribune, or if the TV was to show them in the evening with all their wounds and with their mothers and daughters and sisters crying over the death of their loved ones ? Bad enough that you have to report that six people have been killed. But how do you report it ? As I said we are lucky that we have not had this type of 'fair' reporting as yet. When we reach that stage, the communal problem would perhaps be really beyond our control.

A part of the ideological struggle lies in distinguishing between communalism, semi-communalism and communal elements. This is very important. Let me take up communal elements.

If communalism is an ideology then it is constituted of several elements. The three basic elements I have already described. It is possible for people to be secular and yet have some communal elements. There is a great danger that if these elements are not opposed, they will grow and develop in a crisis situation and lead to the burgeoning forth of communalism. But there is also the danger that if you start branding those who have some communal elements as communal then you will be throwing a large number of secular persons into the ranks of communalists. Once you see communalism as an ideology, then you have to handle the entire problem in an extremely complex manner. You have to deal harshly with those who are communal ideologues. Those who are intellectuals but are giving way to communalism should also be dealt with firmly. They have no business to do so. But those who are victims, of communal ideology, even if they are communal, have to be handled as sick people, not as vicious people not as enemies.

My favourite simile is that you do not kill somebody who is suffering from tuberculosis, you treat him. The vast mass of people believe in communal ideology without knowing the full implications. Among them, deep educative work has to be carried

out. That is what I mean by ideological struggle. Those who have communal elements have to be told that they are secular people; that their secular feelings and commitment are a very healthy thing; but that these communal elements do not go with their secular personality and ideology. Therefore they must get rid of these elements. In this context a deep analysis has to be made of what is communalism and what are communal elements.

Similarly, we should distinguish between liberal communalism (Muslim League before 1937, All-India Muslim League after 1947, Akali Dal, B.J.P.) and extreme or fascist communalism (Muslim League after 1937, Jamaat-i-Islami after 1947, Extremist Akalis including followers of Bhindranwale, RSS). But this distinction is to be made because the two have to be opposed in different ways. The distinction is not to be made in order to take a softer attitude towards liberal communalism. If the latter is not opposed successfully, it tends to grow into extreme or fascist communalism.

In this respect I must say that not all use of religious language and symbols in politics is communalism, though in my mind it is not a correct thing. Still it is not communalism, N.T. Rama Rao goes round Andhra in saffron coloured clothes in a chaitanya ratham, and surrounded by all sorts of religious symbols. I would criticise him very sharply and I would point out how bringing in of religious signs and symbols even at the symbolic level softens up the personality for the intrusion of communalism. But I would not describe it as communalism. By describing it as communalism one would be throwing N.T. Rama Rao and others into the wrong camp.

Similarly, Reagan is today raising the question of religion and politics. Religion he says, cannot be divorced from politics. This is an extremely reactionary step which can have dire consequences. But one will not say it is communalism. Similarly, the people of this country have the right to, and should, sharply criticise it when the President or the Prime Minister visits holy places and the news is flashed on radio or television. Of course, it is their personal business to visit as many holy places as they may want to.

But the reporting of such visits is to be criticised. But it is still not communalism. My point is that on the one hand one should make this type of distinction, though after making the distinction one should be able to make a critique.

Similarly, one should differentiate between religion and religiosity. I do not want to speak on this point at length. I do not believe that the ideological struggle against communalism means a struggle against religion. I believe that religion is a personal affair. Religion has something which sustains people spiritually and in case of some people the older they become the more they want some sort of religious sustenance. It is an individual's personal business. I do not believe that the ideological struggle against communalism means struggle against religion, but I do believe that religiosity, that is religion encompassing large areas of life, is extremely conducive to the intrusion of communal ideology, though religiosity is not yet communalism. Communal ideology finds a fertile ground if a person is all the time surrounded by religious symbols and by religion. Religiosity is where religion is not something from which you derive morality or spiritual sustenance or faith in the next world or faith in salvation or how to get rid of the effects of your 'sins', but where one uses it to engulf different areas of one's life.

In fact we find that communalists in India have been consciously trying to encourage religiosity, whether you take activities of the Muslim communalists or you take the *yagna* organised by the Hindu communalist elements who have been trying to encourage religiosity, or you take the Sikh communal notions that the Sikhs are different because for them the *Khalsa* is above all and everything or the religion cannot be divorced from politics because this is the inner nature of Sikhism. But I believe that all this type of religiosity is still not communalism. A person deeply imbued with religiosity may still be secular. But I believe that religiosity tends to soften up people and make them open to communal ideology, and it has, therefore, to be avoided and opposed.

The struggle against communal ideology has to be a mass

level struggle. One of the weaknesses of Indian society which should be overcome if we want to find a way out is that there has been no mass ideological or political campaign against communalism in India since 1947. At least I do not remember any. There may have been meetings here and there and statements, but there has been no massive, all-India campaign against communalism. People like me have been criticising the national movement especially on the question of secularism and communalism. It is not my subject just now. I have been a sharp critic of the fact that our national movement failed to struggle against communalism ideologically; and this was one of the biggest weakness of the national movement. But I must say that even the type of mass struggle that Gandhi carried out for Hindu-Muslim unity, though it was totally inadequate, has not been carried out by us.

I think one of the basic features of any way out has to be—whether it is done by political parties or intellectuals coming together or non political groups coming together or by a federation of societies like the one here—the carrying out of a mass level campaign against communalism. For years some of us have been asking why we cannot follow our national movement and at least have what used to be called in those days ‘a week of struggle against communalism’. Why cannot people all over India set apart one week in which they will fight against communalism, they will speak against communalism, they will analyse communalism, all over the country simultaneously ? This is particularly important because if you do not carry on a mass campaign simultaneously all over the country there is a danger that the struggle against communalism in one place will strengthen communalism in another manner. If you carry on a struggle against Hindu communalism, then Hindu communalists can ask why should only we be struggled against; if you carry out a struggle only against Sikh communalism then Sikh communalists will raise slogans that Sikhs are being discriminated against, why only their communalism should be called bad and not the communalism of others ? The same slogan can be raised by RSS, why are Hindus being treated in this discriminatory manner ? I will have something more to say on this in a few minutes.

Secondly, I believe, as I have said earlier, that intellectuals have a special role in this field. First of all, by not giving way to communalism, by analysing their own thinking very minutely, by analysing every word that they write and every word they think and by seeing whether it has any communal intrusion; and then, having done that, by acting as teachers of the people. I am not one of those who downgrade intellectuals. Intellectuals have the habit of downgrading themselves and their functions; 'Oh, what are intellectuals? In the United States businessmen call them egg heads and dismiss them with a flourish of hand. I believe that intellectuals, particularly in societies like ours, have a very important role to play and they must not hesitate to play this role. Here one last warning, they must not give way to communalism or show ideological cowardice when pressure from communal surrounding mounts. To be genuinely secular one should be secular when one is under popular pressure. My respect particularly for Gandhiji has gone up ever since I studied in some depth what he did in 1946 and 1947 in Noakhali, Bihar and Calcutta and other places. Here was a man who, at moment of crisis, was able to stand up. I think this is what distinguishes a Jawaharlal Nehru from a Sardar Patel, that at a crucial moment Nehru was able to stand firm even though all round him there were pressures to which other secular people were partially giving way. I think it is very necessary for intellectuals in India today, when there are riots and communal violence all over the country in one form or another, to show this firmness in commitment to secularism.

My last point in this respect before I come very briefly to the second theme of what is not the way out, is: what about communal violence? I have no problem in saying that when one is faced with communal violence, a communal riot, a knifing in the dark or communal terrorism where people are killed because they are riding in a bus or they are killed, as in Karnal, when they are boarding a train, or whatever, whether one person is killed or one hundred are killed, it is communal violence. I have no hesitation in saying that when faced with communal violence, immediate and effective counter violence of the state is needed. This must also be clearly stated because communal ideology has to be fought ideologically

but when communal ideology manifests itself conjuncturally in violent situations—and violent situations feed communal ideology, make it grow in geometrical proportions—when society is wrecked with violence, then the state alone is capable of saving the situation. No other counter-violence is available. When there is a communal riot taking place, say in Bhiwandi, the criticism against the state should not be why it sent its police or army, the criticism should be why it did not take preventive action one day earlier, and when communal riots broke out why did it not use the maximum of state force to crush communal violence in a manner that it would not have lasted one hour or one day instead of lasting six, seven or ten days. Therefore, I believe that in the type of situation that Punjab is faced with in the last one and a half years, the criticism should not be why the state took recourse to violence in the end but what was it doing for so long. I think this is a very important point.

As a person who is very frank and very honest in this respect, I must share some historical experiences with you. We have the example of fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany and Austria, where once fascism took recourse to violence it was impossible to meet it. This violence was sought to be checked by the organised defence of the working class of Italy, Germany and Austria. That counter violence by the organised working class movement was not sufficient. Because the state gave way, therefore, fascism won. Communalism is as I see today in its extreme form a form of fascism, and once communalism takes to violence, of which the most common form in India is the communal riot, then I believe that it is absolutely necessary that the state must act with complete integrity and with a total use of violence. Otherwise there is no point in having a state.

The second point I would like to make is that if it is true, as to European and Japanese experience indicates, that fascism grows with the help of the state, then under no circumstances should the state be permitted to be in any way contaminated by or participated in by communal elements. This is very important. Therefore,

I do not agree that the solution to the problem of Punjab or the problems of India, of Bombay, of Moradabad, lies in sharing state power with the communalists. I believe that it will be a sad day when that happens, it will only mean weakening the struggle of the state against communal violence in one way or another. In fact, in the last two years, communalism has increasingly penetrated the state apparatuses and we find that this is one of the major reasons why communal violence is breaking out in different part of the country.

What is not the way out of communalism ? I believe that giving concessions to communalists is not the way out. Concessions do not lead to the recession of communalism, they lead to its aggravation and escalation; they lead to the popularisation and spread of communal ideology; they make communalism more respectable. We again have a history of this. In 1916 the Congress League Pact was signed on separate electorates and it was declared by no less great men than Tilak and Jinnah, who were the architects of this plan, that the communal problem was solved forever. In fact, it was the beginning of the communal problem in a serious form. Communal negotiations took place in the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties and by 1935 almost every single concession that the Muslim communalists wanted had been given; every single concession. There was virtually not a single major demand raised by Muslim communalists which was not accepted in 1935.

Did this put an end to communalism ? It did the opposite. The Muslim League found that it had no demands left. Jinnah was asked by the Congress leadership, Nehru and Subhas Bose, in 1937 and 1938, "What are your demands now, tell us." He said, : "I will not tell you what my demands are; first you accept that you are a Hindu body, that I represent the Muslims and you represent the Hindus". In other words, he asked the Congress to commit harakiri, political suicide as a secular body. Thank god, the Congress did not do it. If it had accepted this demand in 1937, that it was a Hindu body, we would have been by now under, Hindu fascist rule. Whatever the negative features of its rule might be now, it is not Hindu fascist rule. When pressures for mak-

ing public the Muslim League demands got built up too much and the League could not go on with vague communal politics for more than two or three years, then the last demand that Jinnah could make was 'I want the partition of the country, I want Pakistan.'

In fact I cannot believe that one can assume that a time will come when a communal politician will say that all his demands are satisfied and he dissolves himself here and now,—no more Bhartiya Janata Party, no more Akali Dal, no more Muslim League, all my demands are accepted, therefore no more demands—I do not think communalists will commit suicide in this fashion. Then the logic of communalism leads towards separatism. Precisely at the stage when the communalist has no more demands left and it appears that all the demands of communalism have been accepted, the communalist is pushed towards the most irrational demands, because that is the logic of communalism.

In my view, something similar has happened in Punjab also; that it was the simultaneous appeasement of Hindu and Sikh communalism by the Punjab Congress since 1947 which has gradually pushed Punjab towards the brink, towards the Anandpur Resolution and the slogan of Khalistan. In fact the history of Punjab is a very good example of the proposition that the policy of conciliation towards communalism does not pay. What has been the policy of the Congress in Punjab since 1948 ? It has been a policy of conciliating, coopting, and incorporating communal forces into the Congress itself. The Akali Assembly party was twice dissolved in 1948 and in 1957. Simultaneously Congress got rid of the threat of Jana Sangh by appeasing Hindu communalism and by incorporating and permitting people like Lala Jagat Narain—I am sorry to speak ill of the dead, but I think that in the case of a political leader one can speak ill of the dead also—to enter or stay in the Congress. Thus communal persons were permitted to be brought in from outside into the Congress or they were permitted to develop from within the Congress in the name of conciliating communalism, coopting and incorporating communalism.

What were the consequences ? Communalism did not weaken

in Punjab. It grew. One group of communal leaders would get incorporated and a new group would emerge to take its place—as in a relay race where the baton is passed on by one runner to another. So after one group of communal leaders joined the Congress and another group of communal leaders would emerge, both among Hindus and Sikhs. In fact, one of the best ways of getting ministerial positions was to become a communal group and then ask the Congress to conciliate it ! What was the result ? Communalism was not weakened but the Congress Party which was quite a secular party in 1947 increasingly became weak and its integrity as a secular party was increasingly weakened. In fact the Congress increasingly became three parties in one; consisting of Sikh communalists, Hindu communalists and a handful of people like Darbara Singh, that is sturdy secularists. But the third category was getting smaller and smaller over time, and, above all because of this communal intrusion, the Congress became incapable of opposing communalism.

Similarly, I would say that the way out does not lie in fatalism or panic either. One should not give up the ghost and say—as I am now hearing many people say in Delhi and Chandigarh—that every thing is lost, that the divide between Hindus and Sikhs is too great to be bridged. I said earlier that it is going to be a long haul. The two communalist groups have got very strong and they will have to be weakened inch by inch. It might take a decade; it might take more than that. But the hope lies in the fact that there are the traditions of our nationalist movement. There are extremely healthy secular forces in India as well as in Punjab, who have reacted in a very secular fashion to the present situation. Therefore, it is not as if one should give way.

A few words about the question of the healing touch. I would like very briefly to speak about that. What does the healing touch mean ? If the healing touch means gradually, over a long period of time, to show to the mass of Sikhs and Hindus of Punjab that, no hurt was meant to Sikh religion, that the events of June should not be interpreted in a communal

way, or as a threat of extinction to the Sikhs, or as a symbol of the fact that the Hindu communalists have come out on top, then the healing touch is of course very necessary. But if the healing touch means to accept the communal charge that there was something communal about what happened in June, that is the army's entry into the Golden Temple represented some form of anti-Sikh action, then I am afraid I would not like to call that a healing touch. I would rather call it a big concession to communalism. By giving concessions one cannot have the healing touch because if we provide this type of healing touch to Sikh communalism today, we will have to do so for Hindu communalism tomorrow.

The real danger of fascist rule in this country is not from Sikh communalism but Hindu communalism. Tomorrow the Hindu communalists will demand the healing touch for themselves and the matter would be over for our country. Healing touch should not, in other words, mean a policy of appeasement of communalism in any shape or form. Communalism has to be fought, however tough the fight might be, or however prolonged. The healing touch has to be there but it has to be in the context of struggle against communalism, and not in the context of appeasement of communalism. Otherwise the healing touch will itself become a way of strengthening communalism in Punjab, of strengthening both Hindu and Sikh communalism. I would say that the best healing touch that is to be given not only in Punjab, but also in Moradabad, Meerut, Bhiwandi, Jamshedpur, Bombay, Aligarh, Bangalore and the fishing villages of Kerala, which are also being rocked by communalism today, is to convince the people by one's words and deeds and by struggling for policies which will convince the people that no follower of any religion is in danger, that if there is any danger to the religion of any people then the defence of that religion is not the responsibility of the followers of that religion but it is the responsibility of the followers of all religions. I shall come to this point once again.

Lastly, therefore, I would like once again to point to another harsh truth, that all communalism has to be fought simultaneously. This has another corollary. That is, that the theory that the Cong-

ress Party since Nehru's days and the left wing in India have been following i.e., that minority communalism is somehow ideologically superior to communalism or that it is not as bad, not as rotten, not as dangerous, not as anti-humanitarian as the majority communalism. I will repeat one thing, that, in my view, in this country the main danger of fascism comes from Hindu communalism. It is not possible for Muslims to impose fascism in this country; is not possible for Christians to do so. If Sikh communalism becomes extremely virulent and encompasses the Sikhs over a long period of time, then the worst that can happen is the harm to the people of Punjab. Sikh communalism cannot endanger the people of this country. It is Hindu communalism which may become fascist and which can threaten the entire country and the entire people. Therefore, I do believe that the main struggle in the country as a whole has to be against Hindu communalism. But this, in my view, does not mean that a minority communalism is not equally dangerous or equally antihumanitarian and is not to be opposed as strongly. This is so for the following reasons.

First, minority communalism is extremely dangerous because it increasingly hands over a religious minority into the hands of communal leaders. After all, communalism is the enemy not only of the nation, etc., it is above all the enemy of those sections of the people who believe in it. Who paid the price for Nazism? Not only the Jews; even more so the Germans. If we oppose Hindu communalism it is not only because it is a threat to Sikhs or Muslims, but, above all, because it is a threat to Hindus. Sikh communalism should be opposed by Sikhs not because it is anti-national or anti-Hindu but above all because Sikh communalism will mean Sikh fascism so far as Sikhs are concerned. In other words, communalism is above all the enemy of those who believe in it and whom it professes to represent.

Secondly, minority communalism, unless you struggle against it, makes the struggle against the majority communalism very difficult. As I said, our major struggle is against majority communalism. But it is impossible to fight successfully against it if one is soft towards Muslim communalism. In fact, the real danger

of the Bhindranwale phenomenon was and even today the real danger of communalism in Punjab is not Khalistan. I have no fear of Khalistan coming into being—in fact I believe in the theory that if people of an area do not want to stay in the country and they express this wish with near unanimity and over a certain length of time, they should have the autonomy to quit—but the fact is that in this country nobody is going to accept a second partition. This is an objective fact.

So, if there is communalism in Punjab, if Bhindranwale had grown stronger, the real danger would not have been that Bhindranwale would have been successful in creating Khalistan—that would not to be permitted by the rest of the country—the real danger would have been of a Hindu fascist regime which would appeal to the strong sentiment of the Indian people for national unity and integrity and declare that only Hindu fascism could keep this country united and strong. I do not want to name him, but a distinguished editor of a distinguished daily, has been saying and writing that India is after all a Hindu country and if it becomes a fully Hindu country then that would be an effective way of establishing the unity of the country. So, Hindu fascism can then claim that it is the final guardian of national unity. This is the real danger of any communalism or any communal ideology. Therefore, I feel that to avoid Hindu facism it is very necessary to oppose minority communalism.

Lastly, this is the experience of Punjab that we have, that if we are soft towards minority communalism, we become passive in the fight against communalism as a whole. What has been happening in Punjab, in fact all over India in the last many years, is that parties issue statements against communalism, intellectuals once in a while in seminars speak a few words against communalism, but no urgency is seen in fighting against communalism on a large scale. This is true not only *vis a vis* minority communalism, I do not see any struggle going on against Hindu communalism either in the country. I believe that this passivity against Hindu communalism is the inevitable result of the fact that one has this belief

that minority communalism is not so dangerous. Therefore, I would say that this also is not the way out.

The way out lies in understanding communal ideology, in waging a prolonged struggle against it, and in waging an ideological struggle against all types of communalism, because all types of communalism are branches of the same ideology, that is the communal ideology.

29 September, 1984.

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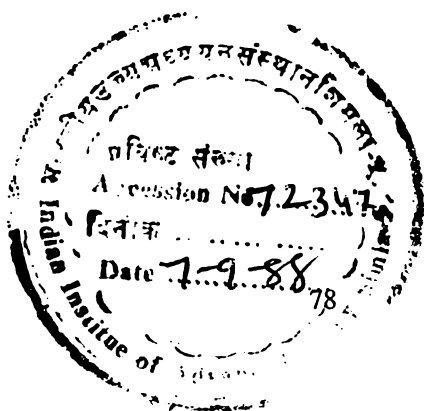
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Communalism has been with us for many decades now. In recent years it has acquired new features and frightening dimensions. This issue has been for some time part of the inter-disciplinary study conducted at the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development on majority-minority relations and their impact on the development process and national integration. It is, therefore, fitting that communalism should be one of the subjects of the series of lectures organised by the Centre on the occasion of the inauguration of its new complex at Chandigarh.

It is natural that Punjab should be the focus of attention. In his two lectures Khushwant Singh presents Sikh "separatism" in its historical perspective and identifies the various factors contributing to the spread and intensity of communalism today. He attempts a justification of the concept of Sikh identity within a secular framework, in his lecture on *Separatist Tendencies in Sikh History*. In his second lecture on *Dangers of Communalism in Contemporary India*, he offers some practical measures to contain communalism to avoid the disaster that the country would otherwise have to face.

Like Khushwant Singh, Bipan Chandra too believes that we have to live with communalism for quite some time as there is no short-term solution. He is not, however, prepared to wait for achieving socialism to rid India of this problem. He is not sure that it would happen automatically even then. This is because, while recognising social, economic and political causes behind contemporary communalism, he lays the greatest emphasis on the ideological aspect. Opposing sharply the concept of identity based on religion he calls for "waging a prolonged struggle against" communalism of all types, giving it the shape of a mass movement. This is his solution to the problem.

These two presentations on an issue of vital interest from two sharply different points of view provide not merely food for thought but even guidelines for action.

About the Authors

KHUSHWANT SINGH is a historian, novelist, journalist and a member of the Rajya Sabha. He has also been a diplomat. His two-volume *History of Sikhs* is considered an important historical contribution. His literary publications include a novel, *Train to Pakistan* and collections of essays and short stories.

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