

## **Building and Deepening Democracy in a Highly differentiated Society**

By Mridula Mukherjee  
Professor of Modern History  
Centre for Historical Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi

"The State of our conception must be a secular, democratic state."

Mahatma Gandhi, 31 August 1947

(sixteen days after India became independent)

The struggle for freedom and independence from colonialism, which began roughly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and came to a culmination in 1947, evolved an ideological discourse which provided the foundational ideas to the young nation after independence. These ideas were absorbed by the people in the form of values. Perhaps the most important elements of this discourse were anti-imperialist nationalism, sovereignty, self-reliance and independent economic development, democracy, secularism, and a pro-poor orientation or equity. During the long course of the struggle, these ideas permeated to and were absorbed by the Indian people, and in this process they became values that were cherished as ideals.

In this presentation, we focus on the ideas of democracy and secularism, and discuss how they became the foundational values and principles of the Indian people. How did democracy take and thrive in the habitat of 'Homo Heirarchicus'? What kind of audacity prompted an economically backward, largely illiterate, 'traditional' country, which had been just divided on the basis of religion, and had an average life-expectancy of around 30 years, to adopt a constitution which granted representative government based on elections, adult franchise, complete equality before the law to all citizens regardless of race, religion, caste or gender, rule of law, civil liberties, freedom of expression, rights to form trade unions, protection to minorities, and much else? The sheer survival of democracy (and secularism) in India for over six decades, whatever be the opinions about its substance, makes it imperative that we ask this question and try to provide some answers. As a historian, I thus go back to the period of the freedom struggle, 'the epic struggle', as it has been called because, like all great revolutions, it had a larger than life character. .

It was first and foremost the political practice of the movement that reached these ideas to the people in various ways, such as writings in the press, pamphlets, speeches, posters, songs, theatre, by the holding of elections in the Congress party, in peasant and trade unions, student unions and other professional associations, through deciding important national issues by open voting in Congress annual sessions, by tolerating and encouraging dissent, etc. The strategy of struggle. based on making imperative the active participation

of the mass of the people in non-violent 'satyagraha' or civil disobedience movements, perhaps was most instrumental in internalizing democracy among the people by involving them in protest demonstrations, strikes, hartals, sit-ins, hunger-strikes, courting arrest by breaking a law - the real processes of democracy being enacted in the streets of numerous towns and villages of India. The movement was also based on innovation, creativity, and autonomous activity at the local levels, and this too built the habit of democracy.

The leadership of the national movement also had a deep commitment to civil liberties, not only because they believed them to be necessary for a vibrant society but because they had constantly struggled and sacrificed to wrest civil liberties from the British colonial administration. Democracy was thus seen as an absolute value, on which there could be no compromise.

On secularism, I will give example from people representing different political strands within the national movement to show how the idea of secularism was articulated. The founding fathers of Indian nationalism who constructed the basic economic critique of colonialism on which Indian nationalism was based, were not only themselves completely secular, but by ensuring that the foundations of Indian nationalism were laid on the ground of political economy, saved it from the perils of being based on race, religion, colour, culture. Later trends, including the extremists, and even Vivekananda, an important Hindu religious reformer and ideologue, remained within secular framework.

It was these foundations which gave Jawaharlal Nehru the courage and the conviction as Prime Minister to lead the Indian people after independence on the arduous yet exciting path of building 'a secular, democratic state' of Gandhiji's conception.

I speak primarily as a historian but also as a citizen who is concerned about these matters. And I will try to bring to you initially, some of the wisdom of the freedom struggle because it was I think one of the most glorious periods in our history. It is close enough for us to still feel its warmth and learn lessons from the methods that were adopted by it. And I think especially in dark times; like the ones we have recently been through, it is necessary to recall the symbols of hope and glory, when ordinary people performed tasks which in normal times would be beyond them. That is one of the things that great movements do-they touch ordinary people in such a way that they become great. We need some of that inspiration. We also need a reminder that the times in which something as glorious as the freedom struggle flourished were darker than the ones that we have been through, with a foreign power that was actively promoting communalism. And yet, if in those dark times such glorious things could happen, ours is not such an impossible task

The freedom struggle imparted to the Indian people certain ideas, which took the form of values as they were internalized by the people. The most important among these were anti-imperialist nationalism, democracy, secularism and a pro-poor orientation. (The freedom struggle was a prolonged mass movement lasting well over 70 years, a movement which reached down into the depths of Indian society and reached, to use Gandhiji's phrase, the "dumb millions of our society". It is this prolonged mass movement

that helped ground these values deep into the minds of the Indian people. The movement could do it because it was one of the greatest mass movements of modern times, perhaps one of the greatest mass movements in world history. Hence, its reach was very extensive and deep. So we are not just talking about intellectual ideas that were thrown up in this period. We are talking about ideas that were internalised and became values in the minds of ordinary men and women).

The most important of these, which went hand in hand with anti-imperialism or nationalism, was the value of democracy and civil liberties. I will talk about nationalism later in a different context. But I want to emphasize that along with nationalism the value of democracy and civil liberties was a very critical one.

The idea of democracy spread through various mechanisms among the people. It was spread through the work of nationalist workers who went deep into remote villages and into the mohallas or localities and it spread through the written word. It spread through literature, it spread through pamphlets, through posters, through the press. It bears emphasis that the press then was privately owned. It was a nationalist press on its own. It was not a press owned by the Congress Party or by any other party but the press actually performed the role of an organ of the freedom struggle

But most of all these ideas reached the people through actual political practices. I will give you three different kinds of examples to demonstrate what I mean. The political practice of the ordinary nationalist activist, when he went to a village, mohalla or locality, slum, or to the street and talked about what the people had to do, when he tried to arouse nationalist consciousness, there were two basic things that he talked about. This is based on extensive evidence in files and oral evidence of people who participated in the freedom struggle. The first thing that he talked about was the drain of wealth and economic exploitation, that is, the cause of our struggle for freedom was the economic exploitation by Britain. India was the 'sone ke chidiya' or the golden bird, and then there was the drain of wealth, and India was impoverished, and that we need to get the British out because they were exploiting us. After creating a justification for nationalism, he went on to ask, what do we want in its place? Do we want to restore Rajas and Maharajas and be their praja or subjects? The notion of the citizen or the nagrik was then put in its place and it was said that we now want a government of the people. The concept of mazdoor kisan raj or workers' and peasants' rule was very much a part of the nationalist armory as well. It was not something that was confined to the Left. The concept of the people in the sense of aam admi or common man, kisan or peasant, and mazdoor or worker, was used when talking about who would lead, and who would be the rulers. It was said that we, the people, would be the rulers, and not any king. As Nehru put it very evocatively in his presidential address to the Indian national Congress in December 1929 at Lahore, "You know I am not a supporter of the kings of old or of new, neither the modern princes of industry nor the old monarchs. I am a republican and a socialist," In essence that is the kind of flavour which went to the people.

Second, the value of democracy was internalized through the practice of the Congress Party and other political organizations. The Congress functioned as a proto-parliament

and the name Congress was very consciously taken from the example of the US Congress. The idea was to suggest that we are not a party but a parliament, a place where people come together to discuss, and take decisions for the nation. Elections in the Congress, after Gandhiji brought in reforms in the Congress Constitution in 1920, were always from the bottom up. You began at the village, then at the taluk or tehsil level, then the district and provincial level, and then the national. The AICC, the All India Congress Committee, which then emerged out of this elaborate election process, which took place every year was like the Parliament, and the Working Committee was the cabinet. So at least from 1920, after the reforms had been put into place by Gandhiji, we can say that for almost 27 years the people actually saw democracy functioning. The Congress was like a shadow government. By this practice of democracy it showed the people what democracy was going to be, what that future would be which they were to work towards. That is how democracy was internalized.

It is also important to point out that important decisions were taken through voting at annual Congress sessions. Even in the case of critical decisions such as whether or not to launch a major mass struggle such as the Non-cooperation movement in 1920, there was open voting, a division almost down the middle, with was a difference of only two or three hundred people. In 1942 as well, at the time of the launching of the Quit India movement, there was a sharp division of opinion within the Congress. Similarly in his famous 'do or die' speech on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1942 which launched the Quit India Movement, in which around ten thousand people lost their lives, at the very beginning, he congratulated the communists who had pressed their amendments to a division and voted against the Quit India resolution (this meeting of the AICC was held in an open ground in the heart of Bombay at the height of WWII, when the British had armed them selves with powers akin to martial law). "In doing so" he said, "they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last twenty years we have tried to learn not to lose courage even when we are in a hopeless minority and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction for it ennobles man and raises his moral stature. I was therefore glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle that I had tried to follow in the last fifty years and more." CW Vol 76 P 384

There were numerous occasions on which there were sharp differences and divisions but they were all in the open. This was accepted as part of the democratic process. It is important to remember that the kisan sabhas, or peasant associations, trade unions and, students unions, all demonstrated the practice of democracy before the people by their actual functioning.

I think perhaps in some ways even more important are the strategy, political programmes and the methods of struggle that were adopted by the national movement, Gandhiji and the Congress which required mass participation for their success. Once non-violence is an essential characteristic of a movement, there is no room for individual heroism, guerilla struggle, or minority revolutions. Non-violence can only succeed if large masses, Gandhiji's 'dumb millions', actually participate in the movement, so this political practice

of making mass participation an imperative and not a choice, was critical to the internalization of democracy. There is nothing that internalizes democracy more than people coming out onto the streets and demonstrating and participating in the process of democracy. So it was not the British, but the Indian national movement that internalized democratic practices in India.

The basic strategy was to wage a long drawn out hegemonic struggle or in Gramscian terms, a war of position – a struggle for the minds and hearts of people. The entire effectiveness of such a strategy and the strength of the movement lay in the active participation of the masses. They had to be politicized, activated and brought into politics. The political passivity of the masses, especially in the villages, which had been consciously inculcated by the colonial authorities, who preached that politics was not a legitimate domain of the simpleminded child-people of India, that politics was being artificially injected by job hungry babus, alienated from their own people, to serve their own narrow interest; this passivity was a basic factor in the safety and stability of colonial rule. It had to be replaced by mass participation in politics. The strategy of satyagraha as a mass movement, therefore, depended for its success, on active participation of the mass of the people, (the cadres role being to arouse and organize the people) and an expression of sympathy from an aroused public opinion.

Another facet of the strategy and methods of struggle adopted by the Indian freedom struggle which contributed to the building up of a democratic mindset, or democratic habits was that at the ground level where alone, in any case, a mass movement is and can be waged, it was not only open to initiatives and innovation originating at that level, it was crucially dependant on them. While the higher level leadership prepared the most, politically and ideologically, and laid down only three conditions – the movement must start only when initiated by the leadership, it must stop when the leadership decided, and it must remain non-violent. The broad program was also often laid down, but the organizational preparation was completely in the hands of the local leadership and cadre. Also the leadership were usually arrested pretty early and then the local level leaders of the cadre full play. This ability to create, innovate and take initiative built democratic ‘habits’.

In 1942, in the Quit India Movement the last big battle in the war for freedom, the leadership officially sanctioned local and individual autonomy of the participants in the coming struggle. The AICC resolution of 8th August 1942 declared that if and when the Congress committees at all levels ceased to function, “every man and woman, who is participating in the movement, must function for herself or himself within the four corners of the general instructions issued (by Gandhi). And the ‘general instructions’ were “I gave you a mantra. Do or die.” Which people translated into a slogan we shall do (something) or die, ‘karenge ya marenge’. And the variety of responses was enormous – strikes by students and workers for months on end - illegal news sheets mostly handwritten distributed in thousands because the newspapers had stopped publication in protest, mass protests in front of police stations, railway stations, law courts, all symbols of colonial power, parallel governments in pockets, which ran for to years, complete takeover of certain districts for a fortnight or more – sabotage of communications.

The Indian leadership was always a decade or two ahead in terms of their constitutional thought and demands, compared to what the British were willing to offer. As early as 1895, Lokmanya Tilak came out with a Constitution of India Bill, which talked about universal adult franchise. We know that from 1919 onwards there were a series of constitutional reports that were issued. In 1928, the Motilal Nehru report talked about fundamental rights, and the Karachi Resolution adopted by the Congress in 1931 embodied those fundamental rights. From the mid-1930s, the demand was for a constituent assembly. By the time we actually wrote the Constitution, there wasn't much left to write, it had all been worked out before. Just as in the case of the First Five-year Plan which started in 1952, the preparation had begun when the National Planning Committee was set up by the Congress in 1937 and much of what was included in the plans had actually been worked out. What we saw around the time of independence was a distillation and crystallization of this process, rather than a nation beginning afresh. All these things had been thought and practiced for the last 60 to 70 years, which is why sometimes the transition looked so easy.

The leaders of the National Movement also had a very strong commitment to civil liberties. For example, Lokmanya Tilak, in the Kesari newspaper of 16 June 1908, said, "Liberty of the press and liberty of speech give birth to a nation and nourish it". Tilak was known as a champion freedom of the press for which he suffered enormously. His press and money were confiscated because of the kind of freedom of the press he asserted. Gandhiji, for example, said "Civil Liberty, consistent with the observance of non-violence, is the first step towards Swaraj, It is the breath of social and political life, it is the foundation of freedom. There is no room here for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted" (Harijan, 24 June 1939, in Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, hereafter Cw, Vol. 69, P. 356). We all know of Jawaharlal. Nehru's commitment. to civil liberties and I quote, "If civil liberties are suppressed a nation loses all vitality and becomes impotent for anything substantial" (Nehru, Selected Works, hereafter Sw, VoL..7, p. 414). Jawaharlal Nehru was the founder of the Civil Liberties Union in India and his commitment to civil liberties was total. The resolution on fundamental rights, passed by the Karachi Congress in 1931, guaranteed the rights of free expression of opinion through speech or the press and freedom of association.

I also want to emphasise that democracy was an absolute value not only for Gandhiji, but also for the socialist Nehru democracy became over time an absolute value. From the mid-1930s, Nehru increasingly talked about not sacrificing democracy at the altar of socialism and began to talk of the democratic path to socialism. In the post-independence days, in 1963 he said, "I would not give up the democratic system for anything" (R. K. Karanjia, 1963, The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru, p. 123). It was as absolute as that. Democracy for him was not a means to social, political or economic development. A distinction is sometimes made between formal and substantive democracy. I would like to say that when we say formal it almost begins to sound as if it is not substantive, that is, the substantive is outside the formal. What we call formal democracy is substantive in itself, it is an absolute value, it is a gain in itself. it creates other benefits, a whole system

that is something that Nehru was very conscious of from the mid-1930s. I believe that was his great contribution to and break with the Marxist Communist understanding of the 1930s, a contribution which is rarely recognized. He talked about democratic path to socialism before anybody else in the world. He also believed that democracy was necessary for national unity, that there was no way you could hold this country together if you did not have democracy. The diversity of the country required that there be democracy because only in a democracy could all the different urges, including the clashes, come to the surface and not be suppressed and then explode like they did, for example, in the Soviet Union. He said, "I have a revulsion against all that smacks of a dictatorship, regimentation and authoritarianism" (Bipan Chandra, 1994, *Ideology and Politics in Modern India*, p. 38). He believed in "socialism by democratic consent" (R.K. Karanjia, 1963, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 44).

I shall now move on to secularism, which was also a very important value imparted by the Indian national movement. The first generation of Indian nationalists, whom we often call Moderates \_\_Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale, Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjea, G.Subramania Iyer, etc. were completely secular and nobody has doubted their secularism. However, the Extremists, such as Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Sri Aurobindo, are in certain circles doubted as far as their secularism goes. I think this understanding of the Extremists is completely wrong. This is particularly important because the BJP is busy these days trying to claim the Extremists as their ancestors, as the fathers of cultural nationalism. This is in the history textbooks brought out by the NCERT during the tenure of the BJP-led NDA government. In these, the national movement begins in 1893, with the publication of Aurobindo's articles, as Aurobindo is supposed to be one of the ancestors who founded Hindu nationalism. In this context it will be useful to look at what Aurobindo himself said at the height 'of the Swadeshi movement, of which he was a major leader.

"Nationalism depends for its success on the awakening and organising of the whole strength of a nation, it is therefore vitally important for nationalism that the politically backward classes should be awakened and brought into the current of political life; the great mass of orthodox Hinduism which was hardly ever touched by the old Congress movement, the great slumbering mass of Islam which has remained politically inert throughout the last century, the shopkeepers, the artisan class, the immense body of illiterate and ignorant peasantry, the submerged classes, even the wild tribes and races still outside the pale of Hindu civilisation, nationalism can afford to neglect and omit none. It rejoices to see any sign of life where there was not life before, even if its first manifestations should seem to be ill-regulated or misguided. It is not afraid of Pan-Islamism or any signs of the growth of a separate Mohammedan self-consciousness but rather welcomes them" (Bande Mataram, 22 December 1907, article on "The Awakening of Gujarat").

Another major extremist leader, Bipin Chandra Pal said ""The Swaraj of ours is not merely the Hindu, not merely the Mohammedan, not merely the Christian Swaraj, but the Swaraj of every child of India, Hindu or Christian or Mohammedan. The Swaraj will be the Swaraj of the Indian people, not of any section of it" (Bipin Chandra Pal, *Swadeshi*

and Swaraj: The Rise of New Patriotism, Yugayatri Prakashak Limited, Calcutta, 1954, Introduction, p. iii)

Tilak is accused of making Shivaji into a hero by starting the Shivaji festival, and of promoting the Ganapati festival, thereby arousing Hindu religious consciousness. I would just like to read to you his own defense against the criticism of the Shivaji festival "the Shivaji festival is not celebrated to alienate or even to irritate the Mohammedans. Times have changed, and as observed above, the, Mohammedans and the Hindus stand in the same boat or on the same platform so far as the political condition for the people is concerned. Can we not both of derive some inspiration from the Life of Shivaji under these circumstances?

We are not against a festival being started in honour of Akbar or any other hero from old Indian history. ...What makes Shivaji a national hero for the present is the spirit which actuated him throughout and not his deeds as such. His life clearly shows that Indian races do not so soon lose the vitality which lives them able leaders at critical times. It is a sheer misrepresentation to say that the worship of Shivaji includes invocations to fight either with the Mohammedans or with the Government. It was only in conformity with the political circumstances of the country at the time that Shivaji was born in Maharashtra. But a future leader may be born any here in India and who knows, may even be a Mohammedan. That is the right view of the question, and we do not think that the Anglo- Indian writers can succeed in diverting our attention from it" (The Mahratta, 24 June 1906, in Bal Gangadhar Tilak, His Writings and Speeches, enlarged edition, Ganesh .and Co. Madras, 1919, pp. 49-51).

I could give many more examples, but let me just conclude this part with a quotation from Vivekananda because he is another figure sought to be appropriated by communal forces. Swami Vivekananda, writing on 10 June 1898 in a letter to Mohammed Sarfaraz Husain of Almora says,

"On the other hand, my experience is that if ever any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone. Therefore I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of The Religion, which is Oneness, so that each may choose that path that suits him best.

"For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam- Vedanta brain and Islam body- is the only hope.

"I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body" (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1989, Epistles, p. 415).



With this kind of perspective, it is hardly likely that he could become the apostle of a Hindu Rashtra.

As for Gandhiji, there is no doubt that he was secular, though attempts have been made to try and appropriate Gandhiji by saying that he was in favour of religion and politics being combined. This is a gross distortion of Gandhiji's views and a misinterpretation of his belief that politics must be based on morality, for which often the Sanskrit word dharma is used, which is also the word used for religion. Realising that his views were being misrepresented, Gandhiji clarified again and again that "Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics" (Harijan, 9 August 1942, in CW, Vol. 76, p. 402). He also made it clear that he was no votary of a Hindu Rashtra or nation. On 9 August 1942, he asserted, "Free India will be no Hindu Raj, it will be Indian Raj based not on the majority of any religious sect or community but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion" (Harijan, 9 August 1942, in CW, Vol. 76, p. 402). He said in 1947, "The state was bound to be wholly secular," and that, "the state of our conception must be a secular, democratic state" (Harijan, 31 August 1947, in CW, Vol. 89, p. 56 and M.K. Gandhi, *The Way to Communal Harmony*, edited by U.R. Rao, Ahmedabad, 1963, p. 396).

Gandhiji also opposed religious instruction as part of the school curriculum that was approved by the state. He told Zakir Husain in April 1947, "I do not agree that Government should provide religious education .... If you try to do so, the result can only be bad." (quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma –Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, New Delhi, 1969 reprint, Vol. 7, p. 383, note 11).

Gandhi ji also rejected religious scriptures and doctrine if they came into conflict with reason. To quote, "the devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures can not transcend reason and truth", and again, "I no more defend on the mere ground of authority a single text in the Hindu scripture that I can defend one from Koran. Everything has to submit to the test of reason" (Young India, 19 January 1921, In CW Vol.19 P.24, and Young India, 26 March 1925, in CW Vol. 26 p.415).

The one thing that I do wish to emphasize again is that the value of secularism was not imparted just through propaganda, just through ideas. Secularism was ingrained into the Indian people via the struggle against communalism. The failure to prevent Partition does not mean that there was lack of struggle or that there was an admission of defeat. The acceptance of Pakistan by the Congress did not mean the acceptance of the two-nation theory or of the demand for India to become a Hindu Raj. The acceptance of the two-nation theory would have meant if, at the time of Partition, when there was huge pressure from the Hindu communal forces to make India into a Hindu Rashtra, India had become a Hindu Rashtra. The two-nation theory was never accepted by the national movement and India did not become a Hindu Rashtra but evolved into a secular state after independence and partition. I have appended to this paper a speech given by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime Minister, soon after independence, to convey an idea of the firm stand taken by him. Gandhiji put his entire moral weight into the balance. In his evocative words, "Do not accept Pakistan in your hearts," even though it is a reality physically. I would

also like to recall Gandhiji's political practice\_\_in Noakhali, in Bengal, in Bihar, in Calcutta, in Delhi\_\_in the 18 months or so before his death. I think there are few moments in history more inspiring and humbling than those last months of Gandhiji's life. He went to Noakhali where Hindus were the victims of communal frenzy and, when people threw excreta in his path, he removed his sandals and walked barefoot. When they threw glass he did the same. He walked barefoot at the age of 78 through the village paths of Noakhali. He then went to Bihar where Muslims were the victims. People asked, "Why have you come, what can you do for us?" Gandhiji's reply was, "I have come like a family member. I have come to mourn. Can I not come and mourn with you even if I can't do anything else?" Through his practice he showed that there are many things that you can do even when you are in the depths of despair.

I found that very important when the recent state-sponsored violence against minorities in Gujarat threw many of us into the depths of despair. One did feel that at least one can mourn, that mourning itself is a political act, a statement of solidarity with victims. And what he could not do alive, Gandhiji did by his death. The assassination of 'the greatest living Hindu' (Nehru's words) by a member of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, the unearthing of the conspiracy, delegitimised communal forces for a long time to come. Savarkar was named as one of the accused. He had been the President of the Hindu Mahasabha for many years, and there was no doubt about his involvement in the conspiracy. In fact Sardar Patel, then Home Minister wrote to Nehru on 27 February 1948, "it was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha directly under Savarkar that (hatched) the conspiracy and saw it through". Even though the initial trial did not return a verdict of guilty on technical grounds of law, Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha were politically finished. The final blow was delivered in 1969 by the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conspiracy to Murder Mahatma Gandhi, which was headed by a judge of the Supreme Court of India, Justice Jivan Lal Kapur, which clearly pronounced him guilty. I am just quoting one sentence. "All these facts taken together were destructive of any theory other than the conspiracy to murder by Savarkar and his group" (Kapur Report, Part II, p. 303). and I think it is an index of the sad times that we live in that we have his portrait up in Parliament, right across from that of the Mahatma's. I think one index of the change will be when we no longer have to live with this reality. Yet partition also showed that secularism had not been as deeply ingrained as a value in the minds of the Indian people as democracy. But Hindu communal forces did fail to gain legitimacy because they were increasingly loyalist and not anti-imperialist. It is worth noting that the extreme fascist phase of communalism, both Muslim and Hindu, which marked the last decade of colonial rule, was characterized by extreme loyalism. Both the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha were more than happy to share power with the colonial rulers when the Congress was actually fighting them through the Quit India Movement and all its leaders and many workers were in jail. Offers of support and an actual sharing of power happily went on during this whole period. Because of the fact that Hindu communal forces and Muslim communal forces never participated in the struggle for freedom, there was a delegitimation. Gandhiji's death reinforced that. The Hindu Mahasabha was virtually dissolved, the Jan Sangh had to be started by the RSS in order to remove the taint of the association with the assassination, and for 40 years after

Gandhiji's assassination Savarkar was not resurrected, \_\_the RSS/BJP waited for public memory to wane.

## Appendix

Speech by Jawaharlal Nehru at Delhi 29 September 1947. (Reported in Hindustan Times and Times of India, 30 September 1947. )

I remind you that I am not speaking to you in my official capacity as Prime Minister of India. I am now speaking to you as Jawaharlal, who has worked and lived with you for many years.

It is imperative that disorders in India are stopped at once if our dreams of construction are not to end in smoke. When the floodgates of murder, loot and arson are opened, it becomes very difficult to close them again. People who have once tasted blood will not easily be put down. Reports from West Punjab show that Muslims have started looting Muslims, and, in East Punjab, non-Muslims have become a source of anxiety to non-Muslims.

There is in Delhi an old man who has been in every way the Father of the Nation. He has been our guide, philosopher and friend for many a year. On his direction and under his guidance the nation has marched on to freedom and independence.

What must he be thinking now? He must be saying that he had taught the country to fight the entire might of the British with the weapon of nonviolence. The struggle has ended and victory has been achieved, mainly through nonviolence. And now that he is at the tail end of his life, we have given him a present of bloodshed and destruction. This is how we have treated the architect of India's freedom!

Muslims played a noble part in India's fight for freedom. I have known and worked with Muslims like Dr. Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan, who did so much for India. During the past few years, however, the Muslim League has incessantly preached a gospel of hate.

The Congress has always refused to subscribe to the two-nation theory and has been supported by the people in this matter. But, today, the people of India are doing the very thing for which they blamed the League.

Do you wish to accept the evil ways of the Muslim League by following its example set by its members in West Punjab. The Muslim League had spread the poison, but that does not mean that India, too, should repeat the very things for which she dislikes the League. That would not be retaliation but it would be merely copying the ways of the Muslim League.

If non-Muslims followed the example of the League, they will be playing into the League's hands and giving it the satisfaction of having been victorious in the battle against virtue. That will not be India's victory but her defeat.

I would condemn those who advocate that all Muslims should be expelled from Delhi. The great beauty of our country is that we have such a variety of cultures and religions.

The demand for making India a Hindu state is a virtual victory for the Muslim League, a victory compared with which achievement of Pakistan is of very little significance. You should not accept and follow the same principles that you have vehemently opposed in the past.

Great countries have always kept their doors open to healthy cultural influences. India was once a great country but then she lost her greatness. Why did this happen? It happened because we closed our doors to the outside world and became narrow in our outlook.

It was Gandhiji who made Indians realise the folly of narrow-mindedness. All talk of Hindu raj is an aspect of this narrow-mindedness, Hinduism is strong enough to stand by itself without artificial ideological crutches.

Every citizen of India, whatever his religion, has the right to live in this country and call for protection from the State. The Muslims who really consider India as their own country and do not look to any outside agency for help are welcome to live in the country. The Government must and will give full protection to them.

I warn all those who do not intend to pledge their unquestionable loyalty to the Indian State that there is no room in India for them. They are advised to migrate wherever they like.

I had sometimes thought it would be a good thing to shift the capital. During the last few days Delhi has been like a city without any soul.

If Delhi loses its culture, which is its spirit, then it will cease to have any special claim to being retained as India's capital. The people of Delhi have some special responsibilities.

Historically, Delhi is the centre of many cultures and civilizations. Different streams of thought have flown into this city and given it an individuality of its own. Disorder in Delhi is of special consequence since the eyes of Asia and of the world are turned on it. The recent rioting has resulted a loss of lakhs of rupees to its people who have had to bear it. If compensation has to be paid to those who have suffered in the riots, that too must come from its citizens.

The government has tasks whose execution has been interrupted by the outbreak of violence in the country. India must ultimately be run on the system of social democracy.

The goal is to provide equal opportunities to all. But this ideal can materialise only if there is peace in the country.

The consequences of rioting are much more serious than people imagine. A large number of men, women and children have been killed but many more might die of disease and privation resulting from the disorders in the country.

It is not that houses have been burnt and people murdered which is so serious, although that is bad enough; what is much more serious is that the disturbances affect the whole future of India. The hard-won independence of the country is in danger of being lost through mad actions. We must, wash the stains of blood from our hands before taking up the task of reconstruction.