

# Transfer Acharya case to another State: BJP

Religious  
812 MD-  
Do not politicise issue: Minister

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 2.** Amid continuous heckling from across the political spectrum, the arrest of the Kanchi Sankaracharya was raised in both Houses of Parliament today by the Bharatiya Janata Party. The party called for transfer of the case to another State and Central intervention to ensure proper treatment to the Acharya.

With the BJP alleging that the Congress-led Governments at the Centre and in Andhra Pradesh were involved in the arrest of the Acharya, Sri Jayendra Saraswathi, the Government asserted that neither had anything to do with the police action in Tamil Nadu.

In the Lok Sabha, the issue was raised by the Deputy Leader of the BJP in the House, V.K. Malhotra, as zero hour began. Allowing him to raise the matter that "pertains to a State" in view of the sentiments attached to the issue, the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, reprimanded members time and again for frequent interruptions.

## 'Use Article 256'

Mr. Malhotra said the Centre should use Article 256 of the Constitution to issue directives to the State to ensure proper treatment to the Acharya. Further, he said, the case should be transferred out of Tamil Nadu, even as Mohammad Salim of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said the arrest must not be politicised. Though only a couple of members spoke, the issue held up the proceedings for half-an-hour and much of what transpired was struck off the records.

The Leader of the House and Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said: "Neither the Centre

nor the Andhra Pradesh Government had anything to do with the arrest; this is a matter exclusively within the purview of the Tamil Nadu Government."

Referring to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's letter to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalithaa — which was cited by Mr. Malhotra as the reason for raising the issue on the premise that it had ceased to be a State issue after the Prime Minister's intervention — he pointed out that Dr. Singh had underlined the need for the law to take its course.

The Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Personnel, Suresh Pachouri, appealed to the Rajya Sabha members to refrain from politicising the arrest. Responding to an hour-long discussion during zero hour, Mr. Pachouri said that Dr. Singh in his letter to Ms. Jayalithaa had observed that it was an "extremely important" case and emphasised that law must take its course. Ms. Jayalithaa in her reply had assured him that proper care was being taken while handling the case.

The Minister denied that the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, had consulted either the Prime Minister or the Union Home Minister before the arrest in Mahbubnagar on November 11.

## Assault on religious institution, says Sushma

Raising the issue, the senior BJP leader, Sushma Swaraj, said the Acharya had been ill-treated in custody and no arrangement had been made for him to offer his daily prayers or to give him proper food. She expressed anguish over the "assault" on the 2,500-year-old religious institution by the Tamil Nadu Govern-

ment and demanded that the Centre issue directions under Article 256 and 257 of the Constitution.

Ms. Swaraj, who had visited the Acharya in the Vellore Central Jail, said that it was regrettable that he was arrested on the eve of Diwali, the most important festival for Hindus. Even political leaders, eminent journalists and reputed businessmen were usually lodged in guesthouses.

## AIADMK's stand

Refuting the BJP's charges, the AIADMK leader, P.G. Narayanan, said the State Government had the highest regard for the Kanchi Mutt and accused Ms. Swaraj of "misleading" the House. "The arrest of the Sankaracharya was a painful action undertaken by the State Government to uphold the rule of law. Is it the case of the BJP, which is the only party spearheading the protest, that no case should be pursued against the Shankaracharya? No political party can say that the accused in a murder case be let off just because he is holding a high religious position," he said.

Mr. Narayanan said that if the State Government had not taken the decision, it would have been charged with wilting under pressure from powerful people.

Mr. Narayanan also questioned the BJP president, L.K. Advani's demand for shifting the case outside Tamil Nadu, saying that law and order was a State subject and the Centre was more or less satisfied with the State Government's action.

Nilotpal Basu of the CPI(M) said the case was under judicial scrutiny and the right forum for such a discussion was the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

## জয়েন্ড্র ফের জেল হাজতে, সুর পাল্টে বিজেপির পাশে ডিএমকে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২২  
নভেম্বর: তামিলনাড়ু সরকারের  
আবেদন আদালত খারিজ করে  
দেওয়ায় তিন দিনের পুলিশ  
হেফাজতের পর আবার জেল হাজতে  
ফিরলেন কাঞ্চীর শঙ্করাচার্য জয়েন্ড্র  
সরস্বতী। আর আজই তাঁর প্রতি  
রাজনৈতিক সমর্থনের পরিধিও বাড়ল।  
এবং একেবারে অপ্রত্যাশিত জায়গা  
থেকেও তিনি সমর্থন পেয়ে গেলেন।  
আগের মত থেকে পুরোপুরি সরে এসে  
ডি এম কে প্রধান করুণানিধি প্রায়  
বিজেপি-র সুরেই বলেছেন,  
শঙ্করাচার্যের সঙ্গে যে ব্যবহার করা  
হচ্ছে তা অত্যন্ত বাড়াবাড়ি। জয়ললিতা  
প্রতিহিংসার বশে এই সব করছেন।

অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশের প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী  
চন্দ্রবাবু নায়ডুও বলেছেন, শঙ্করাচার্যের  
গ্রেফতারের ব্যাপারে অকারণ  
'তাড়াছড়ো' করেছে জয়ললিতা  
সরকার। তাঁর মতে, শঙ্করাচার্যের সঙ্গে  
এ দেশের অসংখ্য মানুষের আবেগ  
জড়িত। তাই এ ব্যাপারে সাবধানী  
পদক্ষেপই অভিপ্রেত।

পাশাপাশি দিল্লিতে শঙ্করাচার্যের  
সমর্থনে ধর্না ও উপবাসে নামা  
বিজেপি-র মঞ্চ যোগ দিয়েছেন  
প্রাক্তন রাষ্ট্রপতি আর বেক্টরামন,  
প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী চন্দ্রশেখর এবং  
সংযুক্ত জনতা দল নেতা জর্জ

ফার্নান্ডেজ। সেখানে অটলবিহারী  
বাজপেয়ী খোলাখুলি জানিয়ে  
দিয়েছেন, "ধর্মগুরুর অপমান দেখে  
বুঝতে পারছি দেশ রাজনৈতিক  
পরিবর্তনের জন্য তৈরি হয়ে গিয়েছে।  
ভারত অধর্মকে বরদাস্ত করে না। এমন  
দলকে প্রয়োজন যারা সব ধর্মগুরুকে  
সমান মর্যাদা দেবে।" বিজেপি  
সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী আজ  
ভেলোর জেলে গিয়ে শঙ্করাচার্যের  
সঙ্গে দেখা করেছেন। তার আগে  
কাঞ্চীতে গিয়ে জয়েন্ড্রর ঘোষিত  
উত্তরাধিকারী বিজয়েন্ড্র সরস্বতীর সঙ্গে  
দেখা করেন তিনি। আর শঙ্করাচার্যকে  
নিয়ে বিজেপি নেতাদের এই ব্যস্ততার  
জন্যই সংসদের অধিবেশনের আগে  
আজ ভোজসভা বাতিল করে দিতে হয়  
স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়কে।

শঙ্করাচার্য-কাণ্ডে আজ সবথেকে  
বড় চমক নিঃসন্দেহে করুণানিধির মত  
পরিবর্তন। পুলিশ জয়েন্ড্র সরস্বতীকে  
গ্রেফতার করার পরেই করুণানিধি এটা  
পুলিশের 'সং কাজ' বলে অভিহিত  
করেছিলেন। আজ তিনিই বলেছেন,  
"শঙ্করাচার্যের গ্রেফতার বেশ কিছু  
সন্দেহের জন্ম দিয়েছে। জয়ললিতার  
প্রতিহিংসাও এর কারণ হতে পারে।  
বীরাঙ্গনের হত্যার মতোই এই গ্রেফতার  
নিয়েও বেশ কিছু সন্দেহের জবাব  
মিলছে না।" তা হলে কিছু দিন আগে

তিনি কী করে জয়ললিতার পাশে এসে  
দাঁড়ালেন? তাঁর জবাব, "গ্রেফতারের  
পরই আমার মত জানিয়েছিলাম। তার  
পর যা হয়েছে, তা থেকেই সন্দেহ ও  
প্রশ্ন দেখা দিয়েছে।" তবে রাজধানীর  
বিজেপি ও কংগ্রেস নেতাদের মতে,  
মমতা যেমন কখনওই বুদ্ধবাবুর পাশে  
থাকতে পারেন না, তেমনিই ডি এম কে  
পুরোপুরি এ আই এ ডি এম কে-র  
পাশে থাকতে পারে না। সে জন্যই  
কৌশলে সরে এসেছেন করুণানিধি।

দিল্লিতে বিজেপি-র ধর্না মঞ্চ নাম  
সঙ্কীর্ণনে সামিল শ'আষ্টিক ভক্ত তালি  
দিতে দিতে গলা মেলাচ্ছেন, এমন  
অবস্থায় বেক্টরামন, চন্দ্রশেখর,  
ফার্নান্ডেজ এবং আসারাম বাপুকে নিয়ে  
প্রবেশ বাজপেয়ীর। সম্ভবত এই প্রথম  
বিজেপি-র অনুষ্ঠানে বাজপেয়ীর  
থেকেও অনেক বেশি করতালি পড়ল  
আস্থা টেলিভিশন খ্যাত আসারাম  
বাপুর নামে। এবং অবস্থা এমনই হল  
যে, বাজপেয়ীকে আগে বলে নিতে  
হল। তার পর বললেন সুধাংশু মহারাজ  
এবং সবশেষে আসারাম বাপু। এটাও  
সম্ভবত বিজেপি-র ইতিহাসে রেকর্ড  
হয়েই রইল। বাজপেয়ী ঘোষণা করে  
দিলেন, শঙ্করাচার্য জেল হাজতে ফিরে  
যাওয়ায় ধর্না শেষ। তবে তাঁর দাবি,  
সংঘর্ষ শেষ হয়নি। শঙ্করাচার্য মুক্তি না-  
পাওয়া পর্যন্ত আন্দোলন চলবে।

23 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

# জয়েন্ড হাজতেই, আডবাবীদের ধর্নায় ভিড় নেই

চেমাই, ২০ নভেম্বর: কাঞ্চীর শঙ্করাচার্য জয়েন্ড সরস্বতীর জামিনের আবেদন খারিজ করে দিয়েছে মাদ্রাজ হাইকোর্ট। রায় চ্যালেঞ্জ করে কাল সূত্রিম কোর্টে আবেদন করতে পারেন জয়েন্ডর আইনজীবীরা।

শঙ্করাচার্যকে আরও জোরার জন্য গত কাল তিন দিনের জন্য পুলিশ হেফাজতে পাঠানো হয়েছিল। নিয় আদালতের সেই রায় চ্যালেঞ্জ করে জয়েন্ডর পক্ষ থেকে হাইকোর্টে আবেদন করা হয়েছিল। দু'পক্ষের বক্তব্য শুনে সোমবার ফের সুনামির দিন ধার্য করেছেন বিচারপতি এ কে রাজন। এ খবর সংবাদসংস্থা পিটিআইয়ের।

দিল্লি থেকে স্টাফ রিপোর্টার জানাচ্ছেন, শঙ্করাচার্যের মুক্তির দাবিতে অনেক ঢাকতাল পিটিয়ে আশোলন শুরু করে বি জে পি সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবীর মতো নেতা জীবনে প্রথম উপবাস-সহ ধর্নায় বসলেও আজ মাত্র দুশো সমর্থক তাঁর পাশে ছিল। এই অবস্থায় সূর অনেকটা চড়িয়ে দেওয়া ছাড়া গতাত্তর থাকে না। আডবাবীও সেটা জানেন এবং সে জন্যই শেষ

যদি আমরা চুপ করে থাকি তাহলে বিজেপি কেন রাজনীতিতে এসেছে?"

আগের বক্তা সুযমা স্বরাজকে উদ্ধৃত করে তিনি বলেন, "সুযমা ঠিকই বলেছেন। আমরা কেবল ক্ষমতার জন্য বা সংসদ হওয়ার জন্য রাজনীতি করি না। আজ চুপ থাকলে, রাজনীতিতে আসার কারণকেই ত্যাগ করতে হয়।" তিনি অবশ্য বিজেপির রাজনীতির কারণ যে হিন্দুত্ব, সেই কথাটা এক বারও উচ্চারণ করেননি।

তবে তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ সহযোগী অরুণ জেটলি জানিয়েছেন, সোমবার চেমাইতে বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ তথা আর এস এস এসের আয়োজনে যে ধর্না হবে, সেখানে যোগ দেবেন আডবাবী। দিল্লিতে সংসদ মার্গে উপবাস-ধর্নায় কাল থাকবেন মুরকী মলোহর জোশী এবং পরশু প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। আর এস এস এস স্বয়ং সেরকদের নির্দেশ দিয়েছে, সবাই যেন ধর্নায় যোগ দেন। জয়েন্ড গ্রেফতারের প্রতিবাদে ২২ নভেম্বর ভারত বন্ধ ডেকেছে বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ। মামলাটি

সংসদ ভবনের অদূরে সকাল থেকে উপবাসে বসেন বিজেপি নেতারা। আডবাবী ছাড়াও সেখানে ছিলেন অরুণ জেটলি, মুখতার আকবাস নকাভি, নজমা হেপতুল্লা, বরুণ গাধী। যোগ দেন আসারাম বাপু, রামবিনাস বেদান্তির মতো সম্মানসীরাও।

ভজন, স্তোত্রপাঠ, ধর্নায় জয়ধ্বনিতে ভরে ছিল জয়গাটি। বিকেলে খবর আসে, সরকারপক্ষ শঙ্করাচার্যকে পুলিশি হেফাজতে আরও বেশি দিন রাখার চেষ্টা করবে। আডবাবীর তাৎক্ষণিক ঘোষণা, "যত দিন উনি পুলিশি হেফাজতে থাকবেন, তত দিন উনি পুলিশি হেফাজতে আজকের ধর্নায় কম লোক হওয়ার বিষয়টি চিন্তিতে প্রচার করলে বিজেপির কর্মীরা সাংবাদিকদের ধাক্কাধাক্কি শুরু করে দেন। উত্তেজিত মিডিয়া অনুষ্ঠান বয়কটের হুমকি দিলে অরুণ জেটলি, সুরিন্দর সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া দলের লোকেরদের ক্ষমা চাইতে বলে পরিস্থিতি ঠাণ্ডা করেন। পরে আডবাবী বিড়ম্বনা ঢাকতে

বলেন, "জরুরি অবস্থার প্রতিবাদে রাষ্ট্রপতি ভবনের সামনে ধর্নায় চারজন ছিলাম। আজ তো তার থেকে অনেক বেশি।"

বামপন্থীদের বিক্রপ করে আডবাবীর বক্তব্য, যখনই কমিউনিস্টেরা কংগ্রেসকে সমর্থন করে, তখনই এমন ঘটে। ১৯৭৫-এ তদনীন্তন কংগ্রেস সরকারের সমর্থক ছিল বামেরা, তখন জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করা হয়েছিল। "মোরারজি, বাজপেয়ী, জয়প্রকাশ নারায়ণকে বিপজ্জনক বলা হয়েছিল। শঙ্করাচার্যের বিরুদ্ধেও একই কথা বলে হচ্ছে।" মহাত্মা গান্ধীকে উদ্ধৃত করে আডবাবীর বক্তব্য, দেশে ধর্নশক্তি এবং রাজশক্তির মধ্যে বিভেদরেখা নেই। অথচ ধর্ননিরপেক্ষতার নামে এখন অনেক কিছু হয়ে চলেছে।

আডবাবীর বক্তব্যের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে আজ কংগ্রেসের তরফ থেকে কোনও মন্তব্য করা হয়নি। কিন্তু সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরো এক বিবৃতিতে বলেছে, বিজেপি রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যে ধর্নীয় ভাবাবেগে উস্কে দিতে চাইছে। বাবারি মসজিদ নিয়েও ঠিক এমনই আচরণ দেখা গিয়েছিল।

# HC throws out seer's bail plea

Angry BJP Snaps Ties With AIA

Nationwide Stir

Chennai: The Madras high court on Saturday dismissed the bail application of Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswathi who was taken into custody on November 11 in connection with the murder of a temple official on September 3.

Giving his order on the bail plea, Justice R Balasubramanian said, "I am dismissing the bail application at this stage."

The seer is likely to move the supreme court on Sunday challenging the rejection of his bail petition. Sources said the seer's counsel would file a special leave petition and make a "mention" of it in the SC on Monday.

Angered by the seer's police demand, the BJP on Saturday announced that it was severing its ties with the AIADMK. Criticising the J Jayalithaa government for its handling of the case, BJP general secretary Rajnath Singh told mediapersons in Ranchi that it was unbefitting of a state government. "We will not have any relationship with the AIADMK from now," he said. Demanding the immediate intervention of the Centre, he said,

day nationwide stir on Saturday to protest the seer's remand with party chief L K Advani observing a day-long fast in New Delhi. He was accompanied by senior leaders Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley and Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi among others. Advani will also lead a dharna in Chennai on November 22. While former Union minister M M Joshi will observe a day-long fast on Sunday, another ex-minister Jaswant Singh will take over on Monday. NDA chairman and former PM A B Vajpayee will participate in a demonstration on Monday.

Meanwhile, the Madras HC will pronounce on Monday its verdict on a plea challenging the order of the Kancheepuram judicial magistrate remanding the seer to three days' police custody. Justice A K Rajan reserved his orders on the plea filed by the seer after hearing the arguments of the pontiff's counsel I Subramaniam and senior advocate K T S Tulsani on behalf of the Tamil Nadu police. The police is planning to seek the seer's custody for one more day.

## 'Christian' Sonia behind arrest: VHP

Chandigarh: The VHP on Saturday accused Congress president Sonia Gandhi of having a hand in the "conspiracy" that led to the arrest of Kanchi shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati.

"Sonia is involved in this," VHP working president Ashok Singhal said, adding that the seer's arrest could not have been possible without a "large-scale conspiracy". The VHP has called for a Bharat bandh on November 22 and we will give an appropriate response if the Shankaracharya is not released from jail immediately," he said.

Congress' intentions in the episode as it is the party which had amended the constitution overruling the supreme court judgment in the Shah Bano case. The BJP also launched a three-



BJP chief L K Advani seeks the blessings of religious leader Asaram Bapu during a dharna in New Delhi on Saturday

"As nothing is mentioned in the constitution about taking permission from an appropriate authority before arresting any religious leader, such a process should be handled with care. I doubt the

The sankaracharya's arrest has become inevitably politicized

Religion  
Penitence  
1-18

# Trials of a pioneer

19/11

SWAPAN DASGUPTA

**M**onastic intrigues have been a source of macabre fascination for the laity. From Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* to Dan Brown's best-selling *Da Vinci Code*, tales of machinations of monks, cardinals and godmen have enthralled both believers and sceptics, not least because they have also provided valuable insights into a mysterious and cloistered world where theology, ambition and greed produce a volatile cocktail.

Over the past week, there has been considerable popular interest in the dramatic arrest of the *sankaracharya* of Kanchi on a charge of murder. Even as crime reporters and unnamed police sources have had a field day presenting some extremely fanciful theories to a hungry media, the case has become inevitably politicized. Passions have been further aroused by the public prosecutor's description of Sri Jayendra Saraswati as a "criminal" who deserved no exceptional treatment. It has been suggested that the *sankaracharya*'s arrest is a calculated assault on Hindu institutions and the Hindu religion. Conversely, in atheistic circles linked to the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu, there have been celebrations over the humiliation of a Brahminical bastion. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam chief, M. Karunanidhi, has even gone to the extent of demanding a government takeover of the Kanchi *math* whose assets have been estimated by the media to be worth some Rs 10,000 crore.

The arrest of the Kanchi *sankaracharya* is no ordinary event. While it has become woefully common for sundry *sadhus*, *maulvis* and *padres* to be charged with serious criminal offences, this is the first time in living memory that a person of such elevated standing has become embroiled in a murder case. The 69th *sankaracharya* of Kanchi is the living embodiment of a monastic order that was begun by Shankara at his final resting place in the 9th century. Along with the *peeths* in Sringeri, Dwarka, Puri and Badrinath, all established by Shankara in the course of his journey to revitalize the *sanatan dharma*, the Kanchi *math* constitutes one of the five pillars on which traditional Hinduism rests.

However, the importance of the Kanchi *sankaracharya* extends beyond the range of the institution at Kancheepuram. While orthodoxy attaches greater importance to the other four *maths*, it is Jayendra Saraswati who has in many ways emerged as the public face of Hindu *dharma*. Since he took over from the revered Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswati in 1994, the Kanchi seer has consciously broken from the tenets of the

*dasanamisanyasi* order that has defined the conduct of the Shankara orders. He has extended the activities of the *math* beyond meditation and spiritual quest to social activism. From campaigning against religious conversions and championing the unrestricted temple-entry of Dalits, he has involved the Kanchi *math* in grand projects centred on education and healthcare. Indeed, he has been a pioneer in steering an orthodox Hindu order to the type of activism that was the hallmark of Swami Vivekananda. He has even plunged headlong into the treacherous world of politics as evi-

fallen out with the present dispensation, is still fiercely contested, there seems to be a grudging acknowledgment that a section of the *math* establishment did take the law into its own hands. Adding to the murkiness are whispers of an underlying power struggle involving the *sankaracharya* and his heir-apparent, Sri Vijayendra Saraswati. The observation of the Art of Living proponent, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, that "saints should keep a watch on people around them" has struck a chord.

Regardless of how the legal battle proceeds, the entire incident has

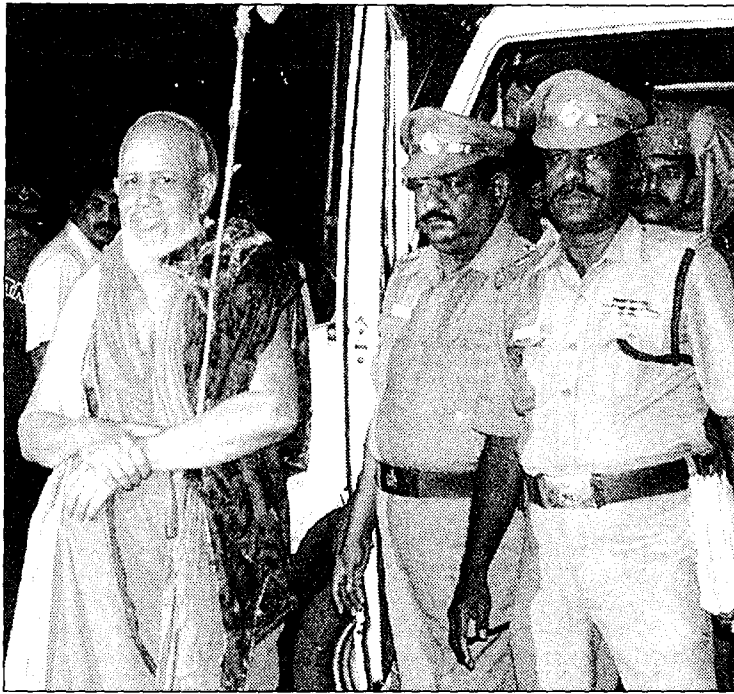
out of proportion to his social limitations in south India. No wonder the visible protests were organized by groups like the Rashtriya Swamasevak Sangh, VHP and Hindu Munani, which have no stakes in electoral politics and, consequently, were not deterred by the awesome power of anti-Brahminism.

Interestingly, this is not the first time that the arrest of a *sankaracharya* has failed to generate a mass reaction. In 1990, the then Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, arrested the Dwarka *sankaracharya*, Swaroopanand Saraswati, for leading a march to Ayodhya. The Dwarka seer, who is favourably disposed to the Congress, was attempting to undercut the BJP and VHP on the temple issue.

The reluctance of Hindus to be spontaneously moved by those representing the traditional institutions of *sanatan dharma* has certain profound implications for the future of political Hinduism. It is more than likely that legal difficulties of the Kanchi *sankaracharya* will prompt a reordering of priorities in the *math*. Already criticized for adopting a public profile and confronted with the threat of a government take-over, it is entirely possible that Jayendra Saraswati and his successor will eschew activism for passive philanthropy and prayer.

If this retreat materializes, it is entirely possible that the advocacy and promotion of Hindu causes will pass almost exclusively to political and religious leaders who are less inhibited by tradition and more confident of their social clout. As things stand, the recent expansion of the Hindu social sector has not been heralded by the centres of orthodox religion or established players like the Ramakrishna Mission who have shed Hinduness for universalism. The initiatives have been taken by religious figures such as Sathya Sai Baba, Mata Amritanandamayi, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the Swaminarayan sect, individuals from the Aurobindo Ashram and lesser known figures like Swami Asheemananda in Gujarat. It is they who are giving the Hindu faith a new energy and new dynamism which is likely to overshadow the Brahminism of the traditional orders.

The likely eclipse, in unfortunate circumstances, of Jayendra Saraswati's overhaul of orthodoxy may pave the way for a more socially-committed, politically inclusive, creative and modern Hinduism. The hierarchy of the Kumbh Mela may yield way to the ratings on the Aastha channel and God TV. The change, in many ways, could resemble the transformation of the Christian faith in the United States of America. The consequences, too, may not be dissimilar.



Overhaul of orthodoxy

dent from his deep involvement in attempts to find a negotiated settlement to the Ayodhya dispute.

The arrest of such a man, in circumstances that reek of government insensitivity, should, ideally, have triggered a monumental Hindu explosion. Yet, apart from an outpouring of Brahmin anger in Tamil Nadu, a *bandh* in Kerala, some camera-friendly demonstrations by Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders and some strong words from the Swami Dayananda Saraswati-led Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, the reaction has been strangely muted. Despite Atal Bihari Vajpayee's expression of concern and Murl Manohar Joshi's show of solidarity, even the Bharatiya Janata Party has trod a cautious path.

It is conceivable that the nature of the charge against Jayendra Saraswati has prompted more concern than anger. Although the personal involvement of the *sankaracharya* in the murder of Sankara Raman, a former *math* functionary who had

been a colossal setback to Hindu activism in India. The absence of a backlash from those who revere the institution of the *sankaracharya* has underlined the serious limitations of a Hindu-right-or-wrong approach. The principle of equality before law, an important tenet in the process of secularization, has, it would seem, prevailed. Of course, if the *sankaracharya* is honourably acquitted, there may be an explosion of anger. However, its manifestation is likely to be electoral, and against the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam chief, J. Jayalalithaa, rather than sectarian. The faultlines are unlikely to be *dharma versus adharma*.

The relatively passive reaction of Hindus to the *sankaracharya*'s arrest can also be explained by caste. Despite attempts to reach out, the Kanchi seer's appeal remains confined to Tamil Nadu's beleaguered Brahmin minority. His pan-Indian importance, as a spokesman of religious Hindu interests, was

19 NOV 2004

# Jaya claims 'shocking' evidence against seer

## But report to Centre silent on details

HT Correspondents  
Chennai/ New Delhi,  
November 17

CHIEF MINISTER J. Jayalithaa today told the state Assembly that the police had "shocking, but solid" evidence against Kanchi Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati's "direct involvement" in the murder of temple manager Sankararaman. She, however, did not reveal the evidence.

Central officials say the report Delhi has received from the Tamil Nadu government on the arrest, too, is abysmally short on details relating to evidence against the seer and the "circumstances" of the police action.

They said the Jayalithaa regime had merely sent a chronology of its actions, including Jayendra Saraswati's detention in Mehboobnagar and his transportation to Chennai and then to Vellore. The state government is silent even on the procedure the police followed while carrying out the arrest in a state (Andhra Pradesh) where it



J. Jayalithaa

has no jurisdiction.

An official said the Centre won't seek further clarifications from Tamil Nadu; it would, instead, rely on its own intelligence channels to get the information it needs. Other than that, it will wait for the chargesheet to be filed in the court.

Jayalithaa, however, told the Assembly. "The interrogation of two key accused — Kadhiraavan and Rajni — has revealed that the seer was involved in the murder. A huge amount as fee for the murder

was paid from the mutt's bank account, five people were made to surrender to mislead the investigations and Saraswati stayed in touch with the murderers."

She said the Sankaracharya was behind a similar attack on a mutt devotee, Radhakrishnan, in Chennai on September 20, 2002, as he suspected the latter to be behind some anonymous letters directed against him.

"Investigations have revealed that Jayendra Saraswati conspired and plotted with his henchmen to eliminate Radhakrishnan, though he was only injured. Since this case is similar to Sankararaman's murder, the same police team will investigate it," she said.

Jayalithaa said the police were on the look out for two more accused — Ravi Subramaniam and Appu — who along with Jayendra and Kadhiraavan had planned the murder. She dismissed suggestions that the police had violated any norms while arresting the seer.



# Kanchi focus shifts to seer junior

## 'Tearful' acharya mum on arrest

M.R. VENKATESH

Kancheepuram, Nov. 16: Political leaders from Delhi trooped to Vellore to meet acharya Jayendra Saraswati in jail today, but a subtle power shift was underway at the *ashram* in Kancheepuram.

The junior acharya, Vijayendra Saraswati, returned to the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt this morning to be welcomed by devotees with cries of "Periyaval, Periyaval". Periyaval is an affectionate term so far reserved for Jayendra Saraswati.

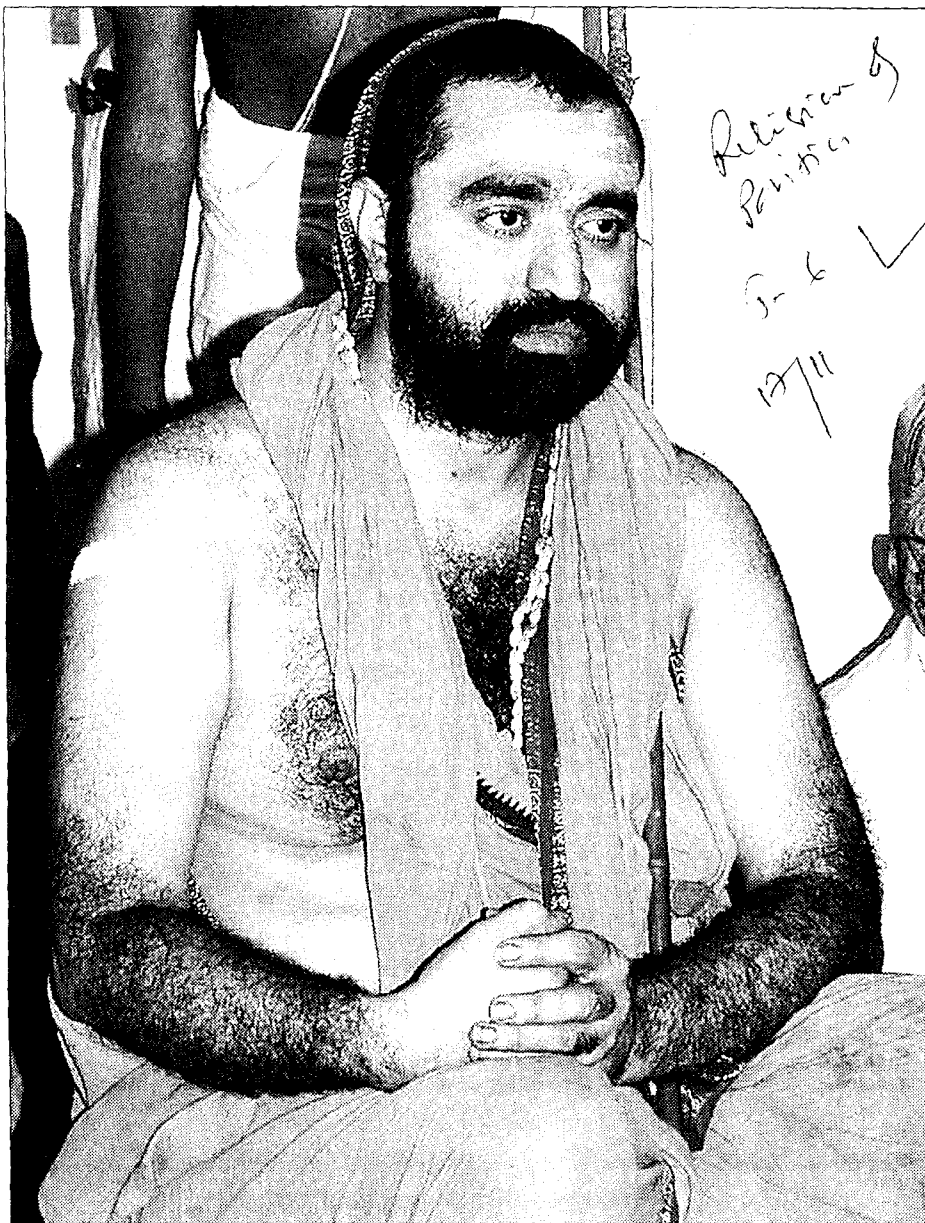
Vijayendra Saraswati, who was on a tour with the Kanchi seer when he was arrested on Thursday night by Tamil Nadu police at Mehboobnagar near Hyderabad, drove back in a white Cielo that was followed by three *mutt* vans.

Devotees swarmed around the car as it reached the western entry point to the temple town. A brief reception to the chanting of Vedic *shlokas* and Poornakumbha followed.

For the junior acharya, the scene at Sarvatheertham — the large temple tank that is a border landmark here — when he was offered prasadam from the Kamakshi Amman Temple would have been a throwback to 17 years ago. In 1987, Vijayendra Saraswati had received the Kanchi seer at the same spot when he returned after suddenly leaving the *mutt*. Jayendra Saraswati had been traced to Talai Cauvery in Karnataka and persuaded to come back.

Vijayendra Saraswati seemed to be groping for a response to the grief among followers and devotees over the arrest of the seer on a murder charge.

For a while, it seemed he might not speak at all to the waiting media contingent as *mutt* manager Sundaresa Iyer cut the gates and said there was nothing the junior acharya had to say. But sensing that silence could be interpreted adversely, the managers quickly arranged a brief media in-



Vijayendra Saraswati at the news conference in Kanchi on Tuesday. (PTI)

teraction with Vijayendra Saraswati before he resumed his usual puja at the *mutt*.

Without mentioning the arrest, the junior acharya said: "I am in deep sorrow now. We should all join in an earnest prayer to the Lord." This was preceded and followed by Vijayendra Saraswati taking a deep breath and observing a minute's silence. He sat on a wooden stool during the meet.

Wiping a tear from his eye, Vijayendra got up and left after former chief election commissioner T.N. Seshan prodded him to wind up the interaction lest the media ask uncomfortable questions.

As questions were raised about why he did not condemn the arrest, a *mutt* devotee re-

torted: "Why should Sri Vijayendra condemn? It is for the acharya's followers to do it and the whole country is disturbed though there have hardly been any serious protests in Tamil Nadu so far..."

Only the Sangh parivar and leaders of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance have come out in protest against the arrest. BJP leader Murlidhar Joshi and NDA convener George Fernandes separately called on Jayendra Saraswati in prison. Later, Joshi decried the acharya being treated like a "common criminal".

The former human resource development minister also called on Vijayendra Saraswati here in the afternoon. Lat-

er, Joshi said the seer had urged that wisdom and good sense should prevail and people should remain calm. Seeking police custody for the acharya was "preposterous", he said, alleging that police were trying to "concoct evidence".

But a kilometre from the *mutt* the Kancheepuram District People's Forum staged a demonstration against Jayendra Saraswati, demanding that the police should not grant bail to a "murderer".

High drama prevailed at the judicial magistrate's court here as the police were directed to produce Jayendra Saraswati on Thursday to hear his views on the prosecution's petition seeking police custody of the seer.

## Sangh, BJP see poll hope

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Nov. 16: Have the Sangh parivar and the BJP found a new mascot in Jayendra Saraswati? Murlidhar Joshi, K.N. Govindacharya, George Fernandes and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad — often sparring allies — have closed ranks to denounce the Kanchi acharya's arrest.

The Sangh scored a minor victory when it got Janata Dal (United) leader Fernandes to persuade the NDA to toe its line on the arrest.

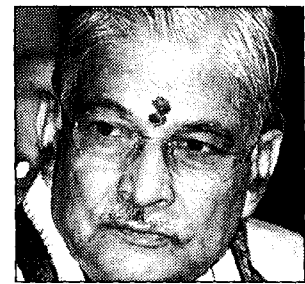
Far from a conflagration, Jayendra Saraswati's arrest did not even cause a minor fire in Tamil Nadu, the seat of the Kanchi *mutt*. Why then are the Sangh parivar and Fernandes bristling in anger?

Observers believe that with the "Ayodhya card" subject to the law of diminishing returns and other Hindutva issues — a common civil code, conversions, illegal immigration from Bangladesh — not taking off, the arrest is a convenient plank to whip up the bogey of "Hinduism being under threat".

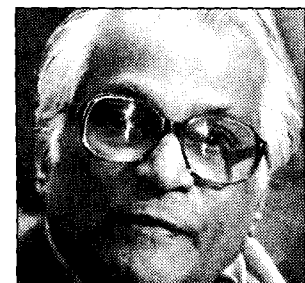
The VHP linked the arrest to Tamil Nadu police to Sonia Gandhi's rise in politics and suggested that nothing better could be expected of a "foreign" ruler.

But the Sangh parivar chose not to attack Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa. Sources explained that she had been a "useful" ally of Hindutva, bucking the trend to support Narendra Modi, and could come handy in the future. "Moreover, if we start branding her as anti-Hindu, it won't cut ice because she dared to bring a law against religious conversions," said a BJP source.

BJP sources said while their protests against the arrest may not bear fruit in Tamil Nadu — where the acharya is worshipped by a tiny fraction of the minuscule Iyer community — the idea is to revive a pro-Hindu ambience in the heartland. "The seer has followers in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh among Shaivites. We have be-



Joshi (top), Fernandes: On a hunt



en losing upper caste votes to the Congress. We have to check the defection," said a source. Brahmins like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Joshi taking up cudgels for the seer, sources said, would go down well with the upper castes.

The only problem is that unlike Ram, a pan-Hindu figure, the Kanchi seer's "appeal" is limited to a sect. The best the BJP can hope to achieve is to remind people of the "role" he played in the Ayodhya "movement".

The Congress, always in a quandary on religious matters, was over-cautious. Sonia, asked to comment, said the matter was *sub judice* and she would not speak on it.

### South support

Several south Indian organisations today protested in Delhi against the arrest of the acharya and demanded his immediate release.

They took out a march — shouting slogans against Jayalalithaa and her government — to Jantar Mantar and held a day's token hunger strike. The protest was led by the Bharatiya Cultural Society, Dakshina Bharata Samaj and the Delhi Tamil Conference.

# Hindutva issue: NDA meet today

*Rehman & Perin*

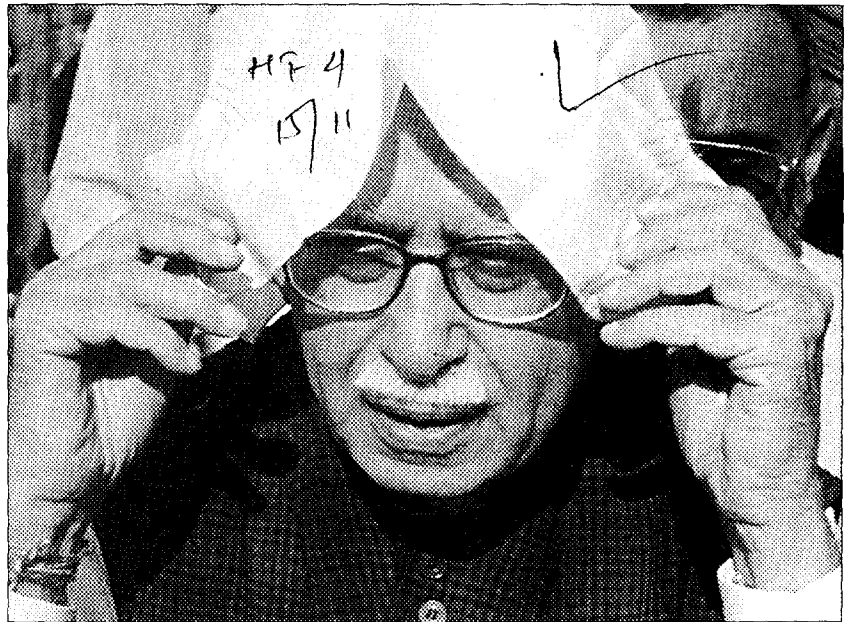
**HT Correspondent**  
New Delhi, November 14

FOUR DAYS after the maverick BJP leader Uma Bharati challenged the BJP leadership in full glare of cameras, the NDA is meeting here on Monday in the backdrop of the controversy generated over BJP's attempts to revive the Hindutva issue.

BJP president L.K Advani, however, on Sunday said he didn't see any problem from the allies on his stand on Hindutva in the meeting on Monday. Ahead of the NDA meet to discuss the BJP's latest stand on Hindutva, Advani said whatever he had stated on the issue at the BJP national council on October 27 was in consonance with the NDA manifesto. "We are meeting on Monday to clear the confusion, if any," he said at Amritsar.

Advani said he had spoken to NDA convener George Fernandes after some misgivings over his speech at the BJP conclave. "In fact, I had suggested that the NDA hold a meeting on Monday so that there is no misunderstanding." This is the first meeting of the NDA after Advani took over as the BJP president from Venkaiah Naidu last month.

In his bid to win back the BJP's core constituency, Advani had told the BJP conclave that construction of the Ram temple was inevitable and the Vajpayee government had been on the verge of finding a solution to the issue before the Lok Sabha polls. His statement, however, caused suspicion among the allies because of his association with the issue. The BJP, which is dependent on its NDA



BJP president L.K. Advani pays obeisance at the Golden Temple in Amritsar on Sunday. AP

allies for the Assembly elections in Bihar and Jharkhand, is keen to downplay the issue. The alliance's priority has to be kept in mind to avoid a split in the NDA vote in the coming polls.

Nevertheless, the allies are expected to use the occasion to ask the BJP to make its stand clear on Hindutva and contentious issues like Ayodhya, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code. The JD(U) at its national executive meet had adopted a resolution saying it had joined the NDA

only after three controversial issues had been removed from the alliance's agenda. "If any effort is made to revive them, we shall have to take another road. We shall never compromise with religious bigotry," a leader said.

The NDA meeting is also likely to deliberate on the recent arrest of Kanchi Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati. The BJP has already expressed shock over the pontiff's arrest seeking his "security and safety."



# PM denies role of Centre in Kanchi seer's arrest

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 14 NOVEMBER

WITH the Kanchi Shankaracharya's arrest on the charges of murder threatening to snowball into a major political controversy, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday was constrained to step in by making it clear that the Centre had no role in the affair.

On a day when the RSS and its affiliates such as the VHP, Bajrang Dal and even the BJP stepped up their protests against the decision to lodge the Shankaracharya in judicial custody, the Prime Minister tried to steer clear of the controversy by asserting that the Centre had no role in the arrest, and dismissed the charge that the action against the seer was taken at the instance of the UPA government. "The Centre has no role in the arrest. It is not correct to say we had a role. To say the least, it is not our concern," Dr Singh said in Hyderabad on Sunday afternoon.

The Kanchi Shankaracharya was arrested on November 11 from Mehboobnagar in Andhra Pradesh in connection with the murder of a former employee of the Kanchi Mutt. The Prime Minister's statement only reflected the government's, and the Congress party's, concern over an adverse fallout of the Shankaracharya's arrest. While the Congress has limited itself to stating that it was wrong to have arrested him on the day Diwali was being celebrated, there is an apprehension in the party that the entire episode, if not handled properly and delicately, has the potential of dragging the party into it.

The principal Opposition party, the BJP, on the other hand, deplored the arrest, observing that the Tamil Nadu government,

while ordering the seer's arrest, appeared to have acted "in haste" or "under pressure". "The Supreme Court has set certain guidelines on whom to arrest or whom not to arrest for what offence. It seems the decisions (in Shankaracharya's case) taken are either hasty or taken under pressure," BJP president L.K. Advani told reporters in Amritsar. "He (the Shankaracharya) is not the kind of person who will go underground or vanish. As far as the facts are concerned, the case is in court and it is the court that has to decide," he said.

While the BJP has not taken a formal decision to join in the protests being organised by the Sangh parivar, it has, it appears, made it clear that its workers were free to participate in the ongoing agitation. This was evident from reports of BJP workers taking part in the protests across the country. The Jayalalitha government's decision to put the Shankaracharya behind bars, however, came in for some left-handed compliment from the Left parties. While charging the VHP and other forces with trying to give the issue a political colour, the CPM politburo issued a statement asking the Tamil Nadu government not to give in to any pressure as the Shankaracharya was not above the law.

"While the case should be pursued with sensitivity keeping in mind the religious status of the individual concerned, it must be emphasised that this is not a religious matter," the statement said. Pointing out that the prosecution had stated that sufficient evidence existed in the case to proceed against him, the CPM said the judicial process should proceed unhindered. CPI national secretary D. Raja also wanted the law to take its own course.



JAYENDRA SARASWATI

## Junior seer may take over Kanchi Mutt

Hyderabad  
14 NOVEMBER

THE junior Shankaracharya of Kanchi Mutt, Vijayendra Saraswati, would take over the reins of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham if necessary, Swamy Swaroopanand Saraswati of Sharada Peetham at Visakhapatnam said on Sunday.

Vijayendra Saraswati's ascendancy to the pulpit of the Mutt is a foregone conclusion in view of Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati's arrest and remand in a murder case, Swaroopanand told a local TV channel in an interview.

Swamy Swaroopananda said Vijayendra Saraswati was sworn in as the legal heir of Jayendra Saraswati some time back and "hence there will be no confusion in the change of guard in the Kanchi Mutt."

Vijayendra Saraswati is now in Mahaboobnagar. — PTI

# JD-U wants BJP to clear Temple air

SNS & PTI

RANCHI, Oct. 31. — The Janata Dal (United) has sought a clarification from the BJP on the recent statements made by its leadership on the Ayodhya issue and has asked for a meeting of the National Democratic Alliance for a discussion.

In its political resolution passed at the three-day National Executive which concluded here today, the JD-U members felt that the recent statements have created a feeling in the minds of the people and in the minds of political activists that the BJP is charting its own course with *Hindutva* as its direction. The resolution also said that while each party in the NDA has the right to pursue its policies, anything that impinges on the NDA agenda raises too many questions.

"We joined the NDA only after the three controversial issues — Article 370, Uniform Civil Code and Ayodhya — had been removed from the agenda. If any effort is now made to revive them, we shall have to take another road. We shall never compromise with religious bigotry," the resolution said.

The resolution seeking clarification contradicts a statement made by JD-U President Mr George

## Nitish for Kurmis

RANCHI, Oct. 31. — In a bid to attract the Kurmi population ahead of the Jharkhand Assembly elections, Mr Nitish Kumar today suggested to the party's state unit to include in their poll manifesto the demand for inclusion of Kurmis in the ST list. — PTI

Fernandes on Saturday that the BJP has not deviated from its stand on *Hindutva*.

According to the NDA agenda on the Ayodhya issue, it was decided that both parties would find a solution and if that was not found the court's verdict would be abided by.

The UPA government was criticised for dismissing the Phukan Commission set up to inquire into the Tehelka issue.

## Jaitley for talks

The confusion among the NDA partners over Mr Advani's concept of *Hindutva* and his views over the Ayodhya issue would be sorted out through dialogue, party general secretary Mr Arun Jaitley said. "The BJP has its own ideology. Advani-*jee* has clarified that *Hindutva*, Indianness and nationalism have the same meaning and has nothing to do with religion. NDA partners should not have any objection to this."

## VHP threat to snap ties

VADTAL (Gujarat), Oct. 31. — The VHP today warned the BJP that they would snap ties with the latter if the Ram Janmabhoomi issue was diluted.

Displeased with the manner in which the BJP has been persuing the issue, VHP working president Mr Ashok Singhal warned the BJP to deal with it more seriously. "The Ram Janmabhoomi is more dearer to us than the BJP. If the VHP has to forego either, we would prefer to dump the BJP," Mr Singhal told a convention of VHP workers here. He added that the Temple issue was "non-negotiable" and that the matter "cannot be solved by the courts".

## 'Dharmayudh'

Asking Hindus to prepare for a *Dharmayudh*, VHP general secretary Mr Pravin Togadia today told party workers to become more aggressive to protect *Hindutva* and Hindu temples at any cost. He also cautioned that the day is not far when the minority population will outnumber Hindus. To check the minority population, a law is needed that forbids the minorities from having more than one wife and producing more than two children, he said.

01 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

# ধর্মীয় সংরক্ষণ ঠেকাতে নির্বাচন কমিশনে বিজেপি, অখুশি বামেরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩০  
সেপ্টেম্বর: কেন্দ্র ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে  
সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখতে  
কমিশন গড়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার পরেই  
তা খামাতে নির্বাচন কমিশনের দ্বারস্থ  
হল বি জে পি। তাদের বক্তব্য, নির্বাচনী  
আচরণবিধি অনুসারে মহারাষ্ট্র ভোটের  
আগে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার এই ধরনের  
সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে পারে না। সংখ্যালঘু  
ভোট পেতে ভেবেচিঙেই কেন্দ্র এই  
সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। অবিলম্বে এই উদ্যোগ  
বন্ধ করা দরকার বলে কমিশনকে  
অনুরোধ করেছে বি জে পি। এই  
কমিশনের ব্যাপারে ক্যাবিনেট সচিবের  
কাছ থেকে ৪ অক্টোবরের মধ্যে  
রিপোর্ট চেয়েছে নির্বাচন কমিশন।  
সরকারের উদ্যোগে বামেরাও খুশি  
নয়। তারা প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে বার্তা  
পাঠিয়ে বলেছে, উদ্দেশ্য মহৎ হলেও  
সংরক্ষণের পদ্ধতি বৈজ্ঞানিক ও স্বচ্ছ  
হওয়া দরকার। সংরক্ষণকে হাতিয়ার  
করে বি জে পি রাজনৈতিক ফয়দা  
লুঠতে পারে এমনটাই আশঙ্কা করছেন

বাম নেতারা। যোজনা কমিশনের  
ডেপুটি চেয়ারপার্সন মস্টেক সিংহ  
অহলুওয়ালিয়াও আজ মনমোহনের  
কাছে গিয়ে জানিয়ে এসেছেন যে,  
সংরক্ষণের ব্যাপারে কমিশনের তরফে  
তার কিছু আপত্তি আছে। কাল  
মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে কমিশন গড়ার  
সিদ্ধান্ত অনুমোদনের পরে আজ  
বিষয়টি নিয়ে পর্যালোচনায় উদ্যোগী  
হচ্ছে সরকার। কাল চার বাম দলের  
নেতাদের প্রাতরাশে ডেকেছেন  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী। সেখানেই বিষয়টি নিয়ে  
কথা বলবেন তিনি।  
প্রকাশ্যে অবশ্য কংগ্রেস যুক্তি  
দেখাচ্ছে যে, এটা আদৌ ধর্মের  
ভিত্তিতে সংরক্ষণ নয়। বরং পিছিয়ে  
থাকা সংখ্যালঘুদের এগিয়ে আনার  
চেষ্টা। জোটের কর্মসূচি অনুসারেই  
কমিশন গঠনের সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে। এর  
পিছনে জোটের রাজনীতি নেই। এবং  
বিষয়টি নিয়ে সংসদেও বিস্তারিত  
আলোচনা হবে।  
প্রস্তাবিত কমিশন ধর্মীয় ও

ভাষাগত সংখ্যালঘুদের মধ্যে কারা  
সরকারি চাকরি ও শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে  
সংরক্ষণের সুবিধা পাবে তা চিহ্নিত  
করবে। ৩১ মার্চের মধ্যে সরকারকে  
রিপোর্ট দাখিল করবে তারা।  
বি জে পি'র মুখপাত্র মুখতার  
আব্বাস নাকভির বলেছেন, সামাজিক  
ও আর্থিক দিক থেকে পিছিয়ে পড়া  
সংরক্ষণের জন্য বাজপেয়ী সরকার  
কমিশন গঠন করেছিল। কিন্তু মনমোহন  
সরকার সেই কমিশন ভেঙে দিয়ে  
ধর্মীয় ভিত্তিতে কমিশন গঠন করেছে।  
এটা সংবিধানবিরোধী।  
সংবিধানসংক্রান্ত পরামর্শদাতা  
কমিটিতে নেহরু বলেছিলেন, ধর্মের  
নামে সংরক্ষণ শুধু মূর্খতার কাজই নয়,  
বিনাশকারীও। বি জে পি জানিয়েছে,  
ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে সংরক্ষণ হলে হিন্দুদের  
মধ্যে বিরূপ প্রতিক্রিয়া হবে। হিন্দুদের  
মধ্যেও তো আর্থিক দিক থেকে পিছিয়ে  
পড়া মানুষ আছেন। তারা কেন  
সংরক্ষণের সুবিধা পাবেন না, এই প্রশ্ন  
তুলেছে বি জে পি।

ANINDIA 1 OCT 2002

# EC whip on religion in polls

HTC and Agencies  
New Delhi, September 10

THE ELECTION Commission today warned political parties against fanning religious passions in the run-up to the Maharashtra Assembly polls. Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy said "adequate action" would be taken "if the need arose" during Uma Bharti's "Tiranga Yatra" that enters Maharashtra at the weekend.

Does he fear that Uma Bharti's yatra will vitiate the atmosphere? Krishnamurthy said: "The state has enough powers. We do not proceed on assumptions. When the problem comes, adequate action will be taken either by the state government or by the EC if there is need."

11/9  
"Religious sentiments should not be used for political purposes. This applies to all political parties. There are enough provisions in the IPC to proceed against (violators) if religious celebrations are patently politicised," Krishnamurthy said.

The poll panel asked all parties to follow the model code of conduct during their campaigns and to desist from misusing religious sentiments for political purposes during Ganesh Chaturthi.

Stray complaints against the behaviour of some poll observers have been worrying Krishnamurthy. His advice to such officials was: "Be neutral and unbiased", and don't become a burden on the district authorities demean themselves and the system by seeking lavish hospitality.



## Battle for Maharashtra

The EC warned parties of action if religious sentiments were used for political gains. It may also take "adequate action" against Uma Bharti's 'Tiranga Yatra', if needed

The BJP says 'Veer Savarkar' and 'Tiranga Yatra' of former MP CM Uma Bharti would not be major issues in Maharashtra polls.

# Temple back in BJP vision

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, March 5

KEEN TO enlist Sangh Parivar cadres for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has agreed to include the RSS' pet issues in its 'Vision Document'.

Issues such as the Ram temple, uniform civil code, abrogation of Article 370 and banning cow slaughter, will be grafted on to the document being drafted by Law Minister Arun Jaitley.

Jaitley will hold discussions with leaders of various Sangh-affiliated organisations like the VHP, Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS).

The decision was taken at a 90-minute meeting between the top lead-

ership of the BJP and RSS at Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's residence on Friday. Others present at the meeting included Deputy PM L.K. Advani, BJP chief M. Venkatesh Naidu and party general secretary (organisational activities) Sanjay Joshi.

The RSS team included its general secretary Mohan Bhagwat and senior leaders Madan Das Devi and H.V. Shadri. They are believed to have told the BJP leaders that if they wanted the support of the Sangh cadres, the party must reaffirm its commitment to the Hindu cause by including its chief issues in the document.

According to sources, though the BJP leaders agreed to include these issues, the party will not deviate from its stated line on the contro-



File picture of an RSS camp.

versial matters. So while it will say a Ram temple should be built in Ayodhya, it would also make clear its

preference for a negotiated settlement on the issue.

The meeting took place shortly before the annual all-India general council meeting of the RSS which is scheduled to be held in Jaipur from March 12 to 14. The conclave will deliberate on the political situation in the country on the eve of the polls and the strategy for effective coordination between the Sangh bodies and the BJP.

Emerging from the meeting, Devi said, "Our cadres will campaign for the party in their individual capacity and mobilise support for the BJP while working in close coordination with the party."

Related reports on Pages 4 & 5

# Ayodhya and cow in NDA manifesto

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 8. — Despite its earlier reservations over Hindutva issues, the National Democratic Alliance today included Ayodhya and the ban on cow slaughter in its election manifesto, which said the NDA favoured an early and amicable solution to the Ayodhya dispute.

Releasing the manifesto, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said the issue cannot be "ignored", reflecting the complete dominance of the BJP over other allies in the ruling coalition.

"The Ram Temple issue is one of national concern, and one cannot go ahead by ignoring it. But we have also suggested how it should be resolved... either through dialogue or a court verdict which will be acceptable to all concerned," said Mr Vajpayee, addressing a press conference after releasing the 36-page NDA agenda for the Lok Sabha polls.

He said Ayodhya has

## Mind the mines

KOLKATA, April 8. — Miss Mamata Banerjee, coal minister, today ruled out privatisation of mines although the NDA manifesto has the measure on its agenda. On her return from Delhi this evening, she said that she had signed the manifesto only after receiving an assurance from the NDA allies that coal mines would not be privatised if the coalition came to power. — SNS

been included in the agenda as "we do not want it to be prolonged and become an issue in the elections"

In the 1998 and 1999 polls, NDA had put Ayodhya, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code on the back burner. The agenda released today expressed hope that an early and amicable solution to Ayodhya will strengthen national integration. "We continue to hold that the judiciary's verdict in this matter should be accepted by all," it said.

THE STATESMAN

9 APR 2004



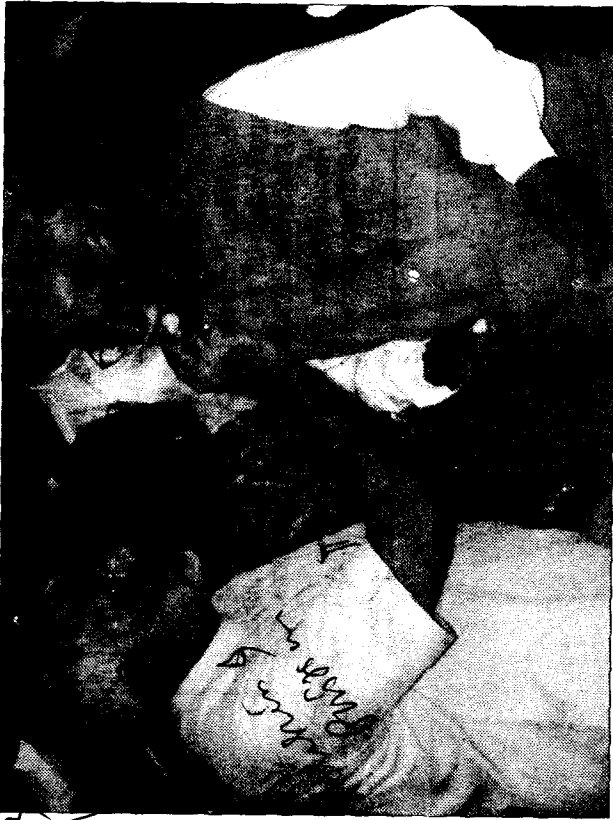
# Advani roots for Hindu-Muslim amity

Press Trust of India

GANDHINAGAR, March 29. — Admitting that relations between Hindus and Muslims in India have been "tense" for a long time now, Mr LK Advani today said "it's time for reconciliation between the two communities", but made it clear that it wouldn't be achieved at the cost of any section of society.

Without naming the Congress, the Deputy Prime Minister said the minorities had now realised how some "anti-BJP" elements had created a "false image" of the party and that they had been used merely as vote-bank.

To a question, the Deputy Prime Minister said his Bharat Uday Yatra had received overwhelming response from Muslims, especially when it passed through Hubli, Karnataka. "I was surprised to see large gathering of Muslims just when the yatra entered Hubli, where the relations between two communities have been strained for a long time now... Around 150 Muslims there wanted to join the BJP everyday." But will there be a repeat of Hubli in Gujarat? "It would. I'm not sure whether it's happening or not, but across the nation there's a feeling among minorities that they've been used as vote bank and the image created about the BJP in their minds was not correct."



Mr Narendra Modi and Mr LK Advani after the latter filed nomination papers for the Gandhinagar seat on Monday. — PTI

Coming out in strong defence of the Narendra Modi government, which drew flak for the post-Godhra communal violence, Mr Advani said: "I believe Akshardham incident was more gruesome than the Godhra carnage. But had the Gujarat government not been alert and taken timely steps, the reaction attack could have been worse."

Rubbishing as "blatantly false" the allegations that the state government was responsible for the af-

termath of the Godhra incident, he said: "It had successfully curbed the possible reaction to the Akshardham incident." No government in the last 55 years, Mr Advani certified, had been as prompt and active as the Modi government in bringing a communally volatile situation under control. Proof: "As many as 200 rioters were killed by Mr Modi's policemen."

What's Ram Rajya? "Ram Rajya means good governance. Mahatma

## Ram develops cold feet?

NEW DELHI, March 29. — Mr Ram Jethmalani is now having second thoughts about taking on Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee in Lucknow as a Congress supported independent.

Mr Jethmalani is out of town, but sources close to him said the former minister had expected other secular parties like the Left, SP and BSP to back his candidature as the common nominee of all parties against the Prime Minister in Lucknow. This did not happen after the SP and the BSP made it clear that they would not pull out their nominees. — SNS

Gandhi used to say 'Swarajya' should be adopted by all governments. I would say Ram Rajya means "ideal governance," said Mr LK Advani, who yesterday assured BJP workers on both Ram Temple and Ram Rajya.

## A surprise

The Deputy Prime Minister had a surprise waiting for him at a BJP workers' meeting here today: he was welcomed by Mrs Jagruti Pandya, widow of slain party leader Haren Pandya.

Only a few days ago, Pandya's father, Mr Vithalbhai Pandya, had declared that he would contest against Mr LK Advani in Gandhinagar to get justice for his son's death.

# Islamic clerics welcome RSS-Jamiat talks

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 16 JANUARY

EFFORTS to spread the feel good factor on the Ayodhya front appear to be yielding some results at last, with a host of Islamic clerics welcoming the talks between RSS and Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Hind.

Appreciating the dialogue process, All India Muslim Personal Law Board member Maulana Mohd Yaqub Bulandshahri said the talks between RSS and Jamiat would create goodwill between the two communities and help find a solution to the vexed mandir-masjid controversy. Maulana Bulandshahri is also chief of Saharanpur-based Mahaze Uluum madrassa, the second largest madrassa in the country.

"The suspicions of the people of the two religions can be removed only through talks," he

said.

Maintaining that the court would facilitate a solution to the controversy, he observed that the goodwill created through the talks would help all sides concerned to accept the verdict without heartburn.

Meanwhile, RSS said it hoped the dispute would be resolved in coming months, through negotiations. "Things appear to be moving in the right direction after the Dalai Lama's appeal. There is lot of progress on the issue. We hope to find a solution to the controversy in the next few months," RSS spokesman Ram Madhav said.

Stating that RSS was keen to see a negotiated settlement on the Ayodhya issue, the RSS leader said the Lama's initiative should be supported by both sides.

Hoping that Jamiat would take the right decision on resolving the Ayodhya issue, Qari

Mohammad Mustafa of Jama Seja Aam Dadri said something beneficial would emerge from the ongoing talks.

Mufti Azam of Saharanpur and Qazi Shakeel Ahmed said all religions were like parts of the same body and the separation of any of these would cause pain.

"The differences between Hindus and Muslims have been created because of politics and these can be eliminated through talks," said Maulana Mohd Hamid of Ghaziabad.

Universal Association for Spiritual Awareness founder-president N.K. Sharma, who was instrumental in bringing about the RSS-Jamiat talks, said the path was full of challenges and any attempt to politicise the issue would harm the process. "We are taking the media into confidence on the developments so that there is no impression of barter," he said.