

Temple destruction in Kashmir :

BJP's claim vis-a-vis truth

In order to present that the demolition of the Babari Masjid was a justified action, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar have tried to place 'facts and logic'. The destruction of temples in Kashmir is cited by the BJP leaders while justifying the demolition of the Babari Masjid. The BJP has raised the question: those who are condemning the demolition of the Babari Masjid, are totally silent on the destruction of many Hindu temples in Kashmir; why are they so? This dual standard, according to the BJP, is due to 'pseudo-secularism' and naked appeasement of Muslim community.

By the argument the BJP wants to justify the demolition of the Babari Masjid and asserts that it has done no wrong as the temples in Kashmir have been 'destroyed'. It can never be the argument of a civilized man that if any temple is destroyed anywhere, the mosque is to be attacked in retaliation or the vice versa. One wrong cannot be remedied by another wrong. Moreover, the story of the destruction of the temples in Kashmir is a big lie which has recently been unfolded in three investigations carried out by Mr. B. G. Verghese, the noted journalist, and by two biweeklies, the *India Today* and the *Frontline*.

Three investigating teams visited Kashmir recently to conduct an on-the-spot investigation at the sites where temples were 'destroyed', according to the BJP. With the list of temples, circulated by the BJP, they visited the temples, interrogated the priests and local people and took photographs of those temples, and it has become clear to them that the BJP's propaganda is furthest from truth. Their reports including the photographs of the temples, totally intact, have already come out in different newspapers. The report of Mr. B. G. Verghese, the journalist, was published in the *Jansatta* on 7th February last. The *India Today* published the report of its investigation on its 28th February issue. The *Frontline* published the investigation report on its 12th March issue. All three reports stated categorically that the BJP's propaganda on the question of demolition of temples was furthest from the reality. It is commented in the *India Today*: "An *India Today* investigation - backed by photographic evidence - concluded last fortnight, reveals that the BJP and its leaders have either been misled on this issue or are deliberately using the tactic of the Big

Lie (if you report a gross untruth often enough, people begin to believe you) in order to score political points."

Some Revealing Facts :

Different BJP leaders expressed different figures at different times on the question of the destruction of temples. The *India Today* states: "While Sahni said 'hundreds have been destroyed', Advani has, over the past three years, said 53 at one point and 40 at another. While the BJP central office gave a list of 46 temples said to have been damaged in 1986, its Jammu office furnished a list of 82 temples. Two years ago, a senior RSS leader gave a list to journalist B. G. Verghese of 62 temples which were burnt and damaged in Kashmir by terrorists in 1990. Surprisingly, the 1986 list carried names of the same temples."



Dashnami Akhara : unaltered

Mr. B. G. Verghese has stated that he got two lists of the 'damaged' temples after much effort, one given by one top leader of the RSS containing the list of 62 temples and another given by the *Sanatan Dharam* containing the list of 6 temples. Mr. Chamanlal Gupta, the president of the Jammu Unit of the BJP, informed Mr. Verghese that more than 200 temples were destroyed in Kashmir; but Mr. Verghese could not get a list of those temples even after much persuasion.

It is stated in the *Frontline* that the BJP's claim in press conference varied from 200 to 1000 Hindu temples destroyed since 1990; but to save face the BJP has lowered down the number to 40 to 55 after the Ayodhya incident.

After on-the-spot inspections of 23 temples as per the list of 'destroyed' temples provided by the BJP the *India Today* reported: "The ground reality is that except for two temples - Shailaputri and Bhairav temples in Baramulla - the rest are all entirely safe. The more important ones, like the famous Khir Bhawani temple at Tula Mulla village in Ganderbal, 30 miles from Srinagar's Badshah Chowk from where the annual yatra to the Amarnath Cave starts, are also safe even

though the BJP would have you believe that they are 'completely burnt'.

Mr. Verghese stated that he visited many temples in Kashmir and talked with the priests and the devotees. But he heard no complaints from any one of them.

The *India Today* commented: "If temples were to be singled out they could easily have been attacked in village after village. smaller temples situated in villages which abound with militants were not harmed right through the 1989 to 1991 period when militancy was at its peak".

The *India Today* further commented: "When challenged with this evidence, the BJP ducks behind a question answered in Parliament by the then minister of state for Home, M. M. Jacob. On March 3, 1992 Mr. Jacob had stated that 38 'places of worship' had been damaged between 1989 and 1991. Inquiries into the details of the Unstarred Question once again revealed that the BJP was conveniently building a myth around this figure too".

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that what Mr. Jacob did not reveal and the BJP leaders too concealed was that, of the 38 'places of worship' mentioned by Mr. Jacob, 16 are mosques and mosque-related properties and the rest 22 were temples and dharamshalas. Had the temples been attacked by the Muslim fundamentalists as asserted by the BJP, there would not have been any damage to the mosques. But this did not happen since the damages were caused by crossfire and other militant-related activity and not because of any concerted attempt of attacks on temples.

After the on-the-spot investigations of the 23 temples, the list of which was supplied by



An Anantnag Temple : unimpaired



The famous Khir Bhawani Temple remains intact

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the BJP to the representative of the *India Today*, the big lie of the BJP was unfolded and it was concluded in the February 28 issue of the periodical thus : Visits to temple after temple proved that it was not the temples but the BJP's propaganda which needed to be demolished.

A glimpse into the real state of affairs of the 23 'destroyed' temples as revealed by the investigation of the *India Today*.

1. Dashnami Akhara Temple, Srinagar
BJP'S version : Completely burnt
India Today's report : Safe.
 2. Ganpatyar Temple, Srinagar
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Safe.
 3. Raghunath Mandir, Srinagar
BJP's version : Burnt
India Today's report : Caught fire when an adjacent school was set on fire.
 4. Shiv Temple, Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar
BJP's version : Damaged and desecrated
India Today's report : Safe.
 5. Hanuman Mandir, Srinagar
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Safe.
- 
- Shiv Temple in Srinagar :
no sign of desecration
6. Shiv Temple, Barbarshah, Srinagar
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Safe
 7. Jai Devi Temple, Bijbehara
BJP's version : Desecrated
India Today's report : Safe
 8. Vijeshar Temple, Bijbehara
BJP's version : Looted and damaged
India Today's report : Safe
 9. Shiv Temple, Bijbehara
BJP's version : Looted and damaged
India Today's report : Safe
 10. Raghunath Temple, Anantnag
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Safe
 11. Gautamnag Temple, Anantnag
BJP's version : Broken
India Today's report : Safe
12. Shailputri Temple, Baramulla
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Damaged in 1990
 13. Bhairon Nath Temple, Baramulla
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Damaged in 1990
 14. Bhairav Temple, Sopore
BJP's version : Damaged
India Today's report : Safe
 15. Rupa Bhawani Temple, Waskura, Ganderbal
BJP's version : Burnt
India Today's report : Safe
 16. Dayalgam Temple, Anantnag
BJP's version : Heavily damaged by stoning
India Today's report : Safe
- 17 to 19.
Three temples at Lukh Bhawan, Larkipora, Anantnag
BJP's version : Completely burnt
India Today's report : Damaged in '86, subsequently repaired.
20. Wanpoh Temple, Anantnag
BJP's version : Damaged in 1986
India Today's report : Subsequently repaired
 21. Khir Bhawani Temple, Ganderbal
BJP's version : Damaged by rockets
India Today's report : Safe
 22. Shiv Temple, Ganderbal
BJP's version : Burnt
India Today's report : Safe
 23. Mattan Temple, Anantnag
BJP's version : Looted and burnt
India Today's report : Safe

Instances of Communal Harmony :

The *India Today* also cited instances of communal harmony in Kashmir, when it stated : "Kashmir saw the first eruption of communal violence in 1986 . . . just as Muslim neighbours had given shelter to their Pandit friends during the riots, the two also joined hands in collectively rebuilding the shrines."

It is further reported about the Khir Bhawani temple which the BJP asserted as 'completely burnt': "Khir Bhawani for instance . . . continues even through troubled



The Ganpatyar Temple remains unscathed

times to host the Jeth Ashtami festival, where the Muslims mingle with the Hindus in offering prayers. Considered by Pandits to be one of their holiest shrines, the local Muslims of the area also strictly observe the custom of entering the temple only if they have not eaten meat."

A remarkable instance of communal harmony has been reported in the *Frontline*. In order to rouse communal passion two jawans of the Rajput Rifles attacked one famous mosque of Anantnag town on 28th January last. In protest, a strike was held and the people demanded unconditional apology from the Commandant of the regiment. He did not apologise ; but no untoward incident happened either. Rather, when the reporters went there they found a little temple quite intact inside that mosque. The Imam of the mosque said to a query that they wanted to incite communal passion by attacking the mosque but they failed to trap them.

Reaction to 6th December incident

Shri Madanlal Khurana, the BJP leader, stated in a Press Conference recently that 52 temples were destroyed in Kashmir. The *India Today* and Mr. Verghese showed that the truth which Mr. Khurana concealed was that these temples were damaged after the incident of 6th December. After the demolition of the Babari Masjid by the Hindutva vandals led by



Rupa Bhawani Temple in Ganderbal : never burnt

the BJP the communal divide and the communal holocaust exposed their ugly face throughout the country. As a reaction to the communal passion released after the 6th December incident, in which innumerable people became victims, incidents of attack and damage to temples or mosques did happen in some places and the attack on temples in Kashmir is due to this reaction. But the BJP is shamelessly projecting this incident of attack on temples in justification of its dastardly act on 6th December. This is Goebbel's tactics according to which truth is nothing but persistent propaganda.

After what has been revealed by the two prominent biweeklies and one noted journalist the BJP leaders should have apologised for misguiding the people through false propaganda if they were really honest and sincere. But they failed to do so. Even after this shamelessly mean demeanour can the BJP claim itself to be honest and outspoken ?

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