

Battle For The Soul Of Modern India: The Bharaiya Janata Party--Harbinger Of Indian Fascism

By Lewis Fickett Jr.

What does the future of Indian politics hold? Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, Consulting Editor of India's *Economic Times*, stated in 2003 that:

The coming year will witness a war between Hindu nationalists and secular modernists for the soul of India. It is a battle that should command the world's attention. On the one hand are hundreds of millions of Indians who thrill to an extremist version of Hindu nationalism: nothing so pleases as the burning of a few Muslims, the prospect of war with Pakistan and revenge for the Muslim invasion of India many centuries ago. On the other, Indian secular modernists, also numbered in hundreds of millions, are rapidly making themselves one of the most international and successful communities of the emerging world. Struggle is certain; a clear-cut victory for either side, highly improbable. . . .

It was once said that India could be the back office to America's front office. Teleworking revenues are expected to rise seventy percent in 2003, and could create one million new jobs by 2008. Software creates jobs for a small elite, but teleworking can provide jobs for millions of ordinary graduates. These millions can flourish by providing many of the services of international capitalism (better indeed than the Chinese can). That is a Hindu nationalism of which India could be truly proud.¹

Khushwant Singh, one of India's most distinguished journalists who has published more than one hundred books, has recently written a powerful and provocative work entitled *The End of India*. Singh argues that the rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism in India as manifested in discrimination and often violence against the country's large Muslim minority poses a grave and perhaps irreversible threat to India's future as a secular pluralistic democracy. "It will not be Pakistan or any other foreign power which will destroy us. We will Indra-rise."² The villain of

¹ Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, "India's Fundamentalists Are Inching Toward Their Most Cherished Goal," *The Economist* (March 2003), 96.

² John Lancaster, "Literary Giant Stirs Up A Hornet's Nest in India: Khushwant Singh Says Hindu Nationalism Poses Grave Threat" (*Washington Post*, April 17, 2003), A19.

Singh's narrative is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (or RSS). This organization drew partial inspiration from the Fascist movements of Europe between the World Wars—and release of many offshoots including India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

Why should there be such surprise at Khushwant Singh's provocative comments? He replies: "The BJP could be dismissed as a lunatic group as long as it remained on the fringe of mainstream politics—not anymore!"³ Singh compares the situation existing in India today with that of post World War I Germany at the time of the Weimar Republic: "when Hindu Nationalists (such as the BJP) speak of restoring the country's lost honor, the *targets are really the Muslims*. They're *the Jews, what the Jews were to the Nazis* (italics mine)."⁴

Approximately 82.4 percent of Indians are considered to be Hindu, twelve percent Muslims, two percent Sikh, and two percent Christian. Looking back, the Gandhi-Nehru period may well have been no more than a gigantic "blip" in the long sweep of Indian history. What that means is that the great secular democratic tradition of the beloved Mahatma Gandhi and his loyal lieutenant, Jawaharlal Nehru are now passé in India. These observations explain the dramatic rise and recent success of the now majority Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It is difficult for a western liberal steeped in Anglo-American political culture to accept the fact that the BJP may now constitute the wave of the future in Indian politics.

As Professor Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., and Stanley A. Kochanck have pointed out in the Preface to their text on Indian politics: "The euphoria that greeted the end of British colonial rule, the triumph of the Indian National Congress, and the national consensus based on democracy, secularism, socialism, and non-alignment have all faded."⁵

The most depressing aspect of this great political sea change in India from the Congress Party to the Bharatiya Janata Party has been that it has been accompanied by a rising tide of physical violence. While some violence has always played a role in Indian politics, that role has now been greatly intensified, primarily by the recent more vigorous participation of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Indian electoral process.

³ Lancaster, A19.

⁴ Lancaster, A19.

⁵ Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., and Stanley A. Kochanck, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, 6th ed. (Ft. Worth, Texas: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000), iii.

The intensified role of violence has been primarily promoted by the activities of certain organs of the BJP. Such violent political activity has been thoroughly and carefully documented and analyzed by Professor Paul R. Brass of the University of Washington. Brass posits that there is a fundamental difference between organizers who want events of collective violence to be labeled as "riots" and those who want them described as "pogroms." He asserts that the recent communal violence has been carried out with a ferocity reminiscent of the Partition violence of 1947, and that it has taken place with the apparent involvement of ministers in the government of BJP Chief Minister Narendra Modi of Gujarat. Brass observes that common elements in these communal events include the systematic targeting of the intended victims—*always Muslims* (italics mine) by means of voters' lists and other documents identifying the intended victims. Many prominent BJP and VHP leaders "moved along with the mobs of Hindu rioters playing the role of 'conversion specialists;' then discreetly left, after which the mobs carried out their murderous attacks."⁶

Most significant was the failure of the BJP government, at both the national and state levels, to try to intervene and to stop the violence. Why, for example, did not the national BJP government of Prime Minister Vajpayee proclaim President's Rule under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution and then proceed to restore order. Likewise, nothing was done at the state level to rein in Mr. Modi. Not until May 2003 did the BJP Home Minister, L. K. Advani summon the reliable police.⁷

Introduction to the Bharatiya Janata Party

When India achieved independence from British colonial rule on August 15, 1947, it was recognized as a democratic, secular state. With the passing of the great independence leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas K. Gandhi from the scene and the evolution of time, the India Congress Party, the great Indian independence party, has been declining and it is now being strongly and successfully challenged from the Hindu Right.

⁶Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle and London: U. Washington Press, 2003), 386-92.

⁷Brass, 386-92.

Secularism in India has come to mean resistance to the long standing and an increasingly violent campaign to force the republican state to acknowledge the primacy of the Hindu majority as manifest in the BJP.

Historical Background

The BJP had its early origins in attempts at ethno-religious mobilization by the Hindu Mahasabha in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In these early days, the strength of this group had always been checkmated by Nehru's strong secularism and the then dominance of Indian ruling Congress Party. In contrast with Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS always gave priority to the development of a solid network of activists. From 1951 onward, its first Right-Wing Indian political front, the Jana Sangh Party, implemented a strategy of party building which similarly depended on the formation of such a network rather than on "the use of notables and powerful local politicians."⁸ "Our analysis reveals that the main division within the Jana Sangh Party and the party which succeeded it, the Bharatiya Janata Party, was not one of opposing factions competing for power but of local cadres which were prompt to mobilize against the national leadership. The party building pattern based on Rastriya Swayansevak Sangh (RSS) trained activists served as a constraint on the all India leaders who were criticized by the grassroots when they attempted to moderate their policies in order to win political allies."⁹

The present day BJP had its origins in the forces of Hindu Nationalism. A small minority Rightist party when it was originally founded as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh during the 1980s, it grew dramatically during the 1980s as the once dominant Congress Party began to decline. As the Indian political system began to fragment, the BJP came to power on March 28, 1998, leading a broad and loose coalition of thirteen other political parties. Initially, the BJP seemed to moderate its three founding political principles. First, it made no mention of its early commitment to repeal Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which gives a special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Second was its promise to construct a Ram Temple at Ayodhya. Third, the party pledged to enact a Uniform Civil Code which would be applicable to all religious groups (in effect, to reverse the *Shah Bano* decision which gives Muslims a separate status).

⁸ Christopher Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia UP, 1966), 7.

⁹ Jaffrelot, 8.

The Twin Crises of Modern Indian Politics – Ayodhya and Gujarat

Two major political events highlighted the BJP recent surge toward great political power in India. First came the successful campaign to destroy the Ayodhya Temple in Uttar Pradesh on December 1991 led by the BJP leader L. Krishna Advani himself. The BJP anti-Ayodhya outmaneuvered the plodding Congress Government of P. V. Narashima Rao who had been chosen as a compromise prime minister after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The other frightening but seminal event which again enhanced BJP power was the Gujarat election crisis of 2003 and its unusually bloody consequences.

Many devout Hindus believe that the Ayodhya Temple in Uttar Pradesh was the birth place of Lord Ram, the incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu (and the sacred icon of the BJP Nationalist Movement). The followers of the Ayodhya Temple Movement, and many other Hindus, believe that the Muslim conqueror Babar, the first of the Mogul Emperors, destroyed the original temple at Ayodhya when he camped nearby it in the sixteenth century and then proceeded to build a mosque on top of the temple ruins. Some ardent Hindu Nationalists believe that this process was repeated at dozens of other sites all over India. As a result, the Ayodhya Temple is considered to be one of the most sacred and vivid symbols of the wounds inflicted by successive invaders (such as the Muslims) upon Hindu pride.

The successful pre-planned BJP destruction of the Babri Masjid by BJP adherents in 1991 under the leadership of one of the BJP's most militant national leaders, H. K. Advani, was in several respects a chilling success. Not only was the old mosque itself physically destroyed, but more than two thousand Indian Muslims (and their families) were murdered, and India's Muslims correctly interpreted the event as a threat clearly against them.

The rising spectra of a society in which the police would no longer protect the lives of a significant religious minority (approximately twelve percent of Indian society) was chilling. It was as if the lights of a decent civilized polity were gradually going out. Finally, the minority Muslims themselves were being daily subjected to ostensible discrimination. As a result of what had happened at Ayodhya, Indian Muslims have become second-class citizens in their own country.

Some observers wonder whether any amount of historical evidence can resolve a controversy so ancient in origin and so "freighted" by ancient mythology and religious fervor.

The Ayodhya case has been in India's judicial system for more than a half-century, cutting as it does to the very quick of the Hindu Muslim coexistence in South Asia. Recently, India's lawmakers came up with a very unique and creative technique to attempt to resolve the Ayodhya problem. Taking the name of an American public works program now proceeding at great cost in Boston, Massachusetts, now called the "Big Dig" (USA style), the Indian Government has now undertaken a genuine "dig" to determine by a radar probe whether or not identified anomalies might prove to be a temple pillar beneath the Ayodhya site. What if no new evidence of a temple is found? "So what?," replied Madan Mohan Pandey, a lawyer for one of the Hindu litigants in this case. "Even if there is no proof, it will hardly affect the case," he said.¹⁰

This case has been in the high court in the state of Uttar Pradesh for more than 14 years over who should have title to the land. It has in fact outlasted the mosque whose fate it was meant to decide.

The Gujarat Election of December 3, 2002

Following the Ayodhya Temple Pogrom of December 11, 1984, came the Gujarat pre-Election pogrom of December 3, 2002. Following weeks of communal violence in Gujarat in the early Spring of 2002 hundreds of Muslims were killed, driven from their homes and placed in mortal fear of ever returning to their houses and jobs.

Unsurprisingly, the BJP won the Gujarat Assembly Election after this process. Specifically, the BJP won 126 seats in the 182 member State Assembly. Congress, the moderate old independence party, won only 51 seats. The election statistics taken by themselves do not reveal the real tragedy. Prior to and in preparation for this election, a frenzied wave of communal violence occurred. More than two thousand Muslims were killed by Hindu mobs in various parts of the state. To this day (May 27, 2003) many Muslims still do not dare either to return to their homes or in some areas even to emerge from their homes. It is also significant to note that the recent anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat was not casual and sporadic, as sometimes has happened in the past, but very well organized. Computer printouts had been prepared by BJP political workers, listing Muslim home occupants by name and address in those particular areas

¹⁰ Amy Waldman, "India's Big Dig: Will It Settle or Inflammate a Controversy?" (*The New York Times*, April 3, 2003), A9.

where the pogroms were to be conducted. In many cases, local Hindu police led the way into Muslim neighborhoods.

Troubling Political Incident in Gujarat

Until recently, Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat, seemed to be on a “proverbial roll.” His campaign of organizing pogroms in Gujarat had been very helpful to the BJP in winning the recent state assembly election of December 1992. Subsequently, Modi was dispatched by the BJP party leadership to campaign in the next statewide election which was scheduled to be held in Himachal Pradesh on February 11. Although BJP Chief Minister Modi campaigned in Himachal Pradesh, he was not as successful in that state as he had been in Gujarat, and the Congress Party triumphed overall in the election.

Not long afterward, it was discovered that there had developed an ugly incident during the Himachal Pradesh election process. According to a long and comprehensive report in *The Statesman* it was subsequently discovered that there had been additional problems during the Himachal Pradesh Election. It was discovered that Mr. Modi, in organizing the BJP campaign in Himachal, had apparently forced one of his own (BJP) Party members to resign from what appeared to have been a “safe seat” in the Gujarat Assembly so that Mr. Modi himself could occupy the seat. The assembly member forced to step aside—a Mr. Pandey—then refused to do so. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Pandey was murdered.¹¹

H. K. Advani, president of the BJP, then rushed to Gujarat to try to cover up the ugly incident. Advani then offered Pandey’s wife the “BJP ticket” for her murdered husband’s seat, but, on principle, she courageously refused.

A real crisis is therefore brewing within the BJP because the party has heretofore prided itself with a “Mr. Clean” image. This event, combined with the horror of the recent Gujarat pogrom are beginning to reveal a sordid, if not frightening, image of the BJP.

The Statesman Weekly later reported another weak attempt at a BJP attempted cover up of this incident. This time, BJP-controlled police in Gujarat reported that “Pakistan agents” were reportedly involved in Pandey’s murder—an absurd story!

¹¹ *The Statesman Weekly (Calcutta)*, (April 19, 2003), 6.

This whole sordid incident is important only in so far as it reveals a rising BJP political leader (Mr. Modi), who had reached too far and also had thereby compromised his own image not only within his own political party but within the Indian polity. Hopefully, the “Hate Wave of Mr. Modi”¹² is at an end and that Mr. Modi’s policies of launching pogroms and spreading vicious hate may now be strongly repudiated by the BJP.

After Gujarat, Whither India?

The short-term political impact of the Gujarat Election was designed to utilize Mr. Modi's lessons of Gujarat to replicate its successes in future state (and perhaps national) elections. Accordingly, the BJP leader in Gujarat, Chief Minister Narendra Modi, was dispatched to the site of the next Indian state election in Himachal Pradesh with the hope of his being able to repeat his Gujarat triumph for the BJP in that state.

Interestingly and, perhaps very significantly for the future of the Indian political system, Mr. Modi failed to transfer his “political magic” to Himachal Pradesh. There the Congress Party triumphed. The still unanswered question is—were there new and special issues in the Himachal Pradesh election which proved to be Mr. Modi’s undoing? Did, for example, Mr. Modi’s reputation for creating a “Hate Wave” precede him?

So-called communalism in India used to be treated as a sad, but shameful, relic of Indian history. The pre-election day in Gujarat is now more deeply troubling because it has become so well-organized. Last year, the Gujarat pogrom was not a spontaneous phenomenon. As Professor Brass has indicated, pogroms are not spontaneous. The BJP instigators of the Gujarat pogrom were not casual Muslim-haters. On the contrary, they were well trained and well organized, supplied with computer lists of names and addresses of Muslim families who lived in the most highly persecuted districts. Indeed, some impartial observers concluded that the Gujarat pogrom was the worst which had taken place in India since the terrible days of Partition.

¹² "Hero of Hatred," *The Statesman Weekly (Calcutta)*, (April 19, 2003), 6.

The "Hijacking" of India's History by the BJP

Another unfortunate consequence of the present BJP government has been its continued efforts to try to rewrite—or as Kai Friese expresses it—to try to "hijack" Indian history.¹³ Just as the Nazis rewrote German public school textbooks in the 1930s, the BJP government has been rewriting ancient Indian history.

BJP adherents (Hindu nationalists) have long had a quarrel with legitimate Indian history. These people are unhappy with the notion that the most ancient texts of Hinduism are associated with the arrival of the Vedic Aryan people from the Northwest. BJP supporters do not like the dates of 1500 to 1000 B.C. associated by authoritative historians to the advent of the Vedic peoples, the forebears of Hinduism or that the Indus Valley civilization predates Vedic civilization. And they (the Hindu nationalists) certainly cannot stand the implication that Hinduism, like the older religious traditions of India, evolved through a mingling of cultures and peoples from different lands.

The nationalists have already made significant demands for the excision of many awkward facts. "What is remarkable is how they have added several new chapters to Indian history."¹⁴ Thus we have a new civilization—the Indus-Saraswati civilization—in place of the well-known and documented Indus Valley Civilization, which is generally agreed to have appeared around 4600 B.C. and to have lasted for about 2000 years. (The all-important addition of "Saraswati," an ancient river central to Hindu myth, is meant to show that the Indus Valley civilization was actually part of Vedic civilization—the earliest recognizable "Hindu culture" in India and generally acknowledged not to have appeared before about 1700 B.C.—that appears without a single date.)

Despite the fact that the BJP has now long since achieved political power and some respectability within the Indian polity, many of its leaders still preach errant political nonsense to the Indian people.

Along with its Hindu-supremacist cohorts, the RSS and the VHP, the BJP still refuses to accept historical fact and tries to exist in a historical "never-never-land" which serves to perpetuate its own myths about India.

¹³ Kai Friese, "Hijacking India's History" (*The New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2002), A17.

¹⁴ Friese, A17.

Most dangerous of all, militant BJP cadres and their colleagues try to pretend that "they" are the only "true" Indians—and that both Indian Muslims and Indian Christians are "foreigners," living only at sufferance in Indian society.

What is the logical outcome of the BJP attitude toward Muslims and Christians? If all Muslims and Christians living in India are nothing more than foreigners, what must happen to them? One alternative would obviously be forced conversion to Hinduism. Still another alternative to the extent feasible would be emigration to a more hospitable land. *In extremis*, there is logically only one other alternative for those designated as "foreigners," and that is death.¹⁵

In November 1991, Hindu nationalists led by H. K. Advani, General Secretary of the BJP, fueled by historical grievance and political motives, the encouragement of their political leaders tore down the Babri Mosque at the controversial site. More than two thousand Muslims lost their lives in the riots which ensued. This event, which took place in November 1991, constituted the real beginning of the new militant BJP.

The destruction of the Babri Mosque by the BJP has had an even more negative consequence to the BJP than that caused by the murder of thousands of Muslims—horrible though that was. The Ayodhya Temple incident seriously undermined the leadership potential and reputation enjoyed by BJP Home Minister, H. K. Advani, who actually led the event.

As a result of an internal party election, Mr. Advani has nevertheless been chosen by the BJP as its designated successor to Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee, when Vajpayee officially resigns as Prime Minister. Such a replacement might, if it came today, hurt the BJP badly—because Vajpayee is still perceived as a sound moderate, and within such a militant party, Advani is rightly not regarded as a moderate.

A BJP "Patriot" is Recently Honored by the Indian Parliament

In what has been described as one of the most shocking events in the recent history of the Indian Parliament, the BJP government on February 26, 2003, authorized the hanging of a portrait of Vinayak Savarak on the wall of the Indian Parliament Building in Delhi.

¹⁵ Friese, A17.

Who was Vinayak Savarak? Savarak was a member of a small coterie of Indians who hated Mahatma Gandhi as well as Muslims. Savarak himself had been significantly close to those who conspired to kill Gandhi; he personally was part of the original conspiracy, along with Nathuram Godse (who was ultimately convicted of the crime). When the BJP government of Atal Vajpayee installed Savarak's portrait on the wall in the Parliament building it was as if an American Congress had installed a portrait of John Wilkes Booth on the walls of the U.S. Congress at the request of one of the American political parties. Understandably, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, leader of the Indian National Congress Party, boycotted this event as did most members of her own Congress Party.

The Shiv Sena

One cannot adequately discuss the Right-Wing Hindu Nationalists forces active in India today without briefly mentioning the Shiv Sena. Concentrated primarily in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the Shiv Sena has been a significant political force in that area since the late 1950s. The Shiv Sena has combined with several other political parties in the Mumbai area (usually against the Congress Party) to advance mutual interests. For example, during the late 1980s the BJP worked closely and successfully with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. The BJP "attracted more upper caste, middle class Hindus while the latter had many OBCs among its cadres. In 1989, this alliance helped the BJP to win ten Lok Sabha seats with 23.72 percent of the valid votes." However, in 1990, Bal Thackeray launched an intemperate outburst against the Mandal report, despite the Party's new-found base among OBCs.

This anti-Mandal policy further alienated the organized farmer groups such as the Sketkari Sanghatana, which had already refused to endorse Hindu Nationalist candidates in 1989, much to the chagrin of the BJP and the Shiv Sena.¹⁶ Bal Thackeray, the *enfant terrible* of Maharashtrian politics and head of the Shiv Sena, has made his policy toward India's Muslim community very clear:

We have nothing against Muslims. Let them be here. But they are to accept the Constitution of this country, the flag, and the law of the land. I will not tolerate any Muslim having this type of attitude in my own country: mainly your heart there in Pakistan and you

¹⁶ Hardgrave and Kochanek, 205.

body here in Hindustan. No. Please take the body also. What [sic] poor heart will do there alone?

Decline of Congress Leadership Ability

Unhappily for it, India's leading opposition party, the Indian National Congress, suffers from a severe disability—lack of effective leadership. The reality is that Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, a nice lady, became a leader of the Congress primarily by default. Based on her distinguished husband's name and a sympathy vote arising from her husband's assassination. As Congress leader, she got off to a very "rocky" start, claiming that Congress had the votes to form a government in 1999 when, in fact, it didn't. She was then forced to recant publicly. In office over time, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi has grown in strength and political perception. When Mrs. Gandhi took over the leadership role in Congress, the Congress Party was the ruling party in only three states. Today (May 29, 2003), the Congress Party controls fourteen states. Now Mrs. Gandhi is the supreme leader of the Party and no one dares to contradict her. Prabhu Chawla comments on Sonia Gandhi's role *vis-à-vis* Congress: "She has yet to gain the confidence of the press. Still wary of the media, Sonia has, however, made her presence felt at the grassroots level of her party."¹⁷

Larissa MacFarquhar provides us a strong concluding analysis of the gradual collapse and *denouement* of the Indian Congress Party:

The election of the Congress Party has much to do with its *appalling corruption* (italics mine). In order to understand just what it means that Congress politicians are considered more corrupt than their fellows, it is helpful to know that according to some estimates one in five members of the Parliament and one in three members of state assemblies in India have criminal records. Still corruption is seldom a deciding electoral issue. Indians are too much used to it.¹⁸

Whither India Under BJP Leadership?

Assuming, *pro arguendo*, that the BJP will either continue or strengthen its political hold over India, what will, in all likelihood, be the political prospects for India? Prem Togadia, a

¹⁷ Prabhu Chawla, *India Today* (Dec. 2, 2002), 1. .

¹⁸ Larissa MacFarquhar, "Letter from India: The Strongman" (*The New Yorker*, May 26, 2003), 56.

prominent BJP leader surgeon and head of the World Hindu Council, and a "true believer" in the BJP cause, has taken an exuberant view of the BJP's future in India. He has predicted that in two years, India will become a BJP-dominant nation.

One prominent old-time Indian politician, a long-time leader of the old socialist parties, Jaipal Reddy and a present leader of the Congress Party taken a relatively optimistic view of the BJP and the threat of Indian fascism it poses. Reddy takes the view that what took place in Gujarat was an aberration that cannot be easily replicated elsewhere in such a huge and heterogenous society as India.

A far more pessimistic view of the threat posed by the BJP to bring about a fascist-type state in India is that expressed by former Indian Prime Minister and Congress Party leader, V. P. Singh. Singh is very pessimistic and worried about the threat posed by the BJP to Indian democracy. Singh has stated in this regard, "Ultimately what they (the Hindu Nationalists) are aiming at is authoritarian rule. Then not only will the minority be targeted but those who do not agree with them. This minority will be declared as anti-national and treated as such." Professor C. P. Brambi, a noted BJP scholar, also views recent political developments in India very pessimistically. Brambi sees recent developments in India as part of a political process whereby majoritarian rule is being de-institutionalized in India. He sees significant similarities between this process and the rise of Nazism in Weimar Germany just prior to the takeover by the Nazi state in 1933.

On balance regarding this very difficult question, I am inclined to concur with the pessimistic conclusion of former Prime Minister V. P. Singh and Professor C. P. Brambi. The entire historical "track record" of the BJP manifests strong authoritarian tendencies. Even worse, the BJP continues to maintain a course of violence against its political opponents and India's religious minorities.

On the other hand, the Congress Party clearly has continued to show a pattern of decline. No other political party appears capable at this time of mounting an effective challenge to the BJP. All of the regional parties are too weak to be effective. It would appear that the BJP will continue to dominate the Indian political system and impose its Hindu-dominant ideology over the entire nation of India.

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