

Karnataka: Events of December 1992

A Report: Citizens for Democracy- Karnataka, People's Union for Civil Liberties- Karnataka, Karnataka Civil Liberties Committee and Karnataka Ekta

Karnataka has the dubious distinction of being ranked third in India and the first state in the South in the riots that broke out all over the country during October 1990 in the wake of the notorious Rath Yatra of Advani. These riots left 88 dead with hundreds maimed and properties worth Rs 4.37 Crore destroyed. Police opened fire in 4 cities and the total number felled by bullets was 10. Since then the communal situation in the state has been rather fragile.

With the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, Muslims in Karnataka reacted with great emotion as elsewhere in the country over this grave sacrilege. Even the Chief Minister of Karnataka told newsmen that the violence was sparked off by "the spontaneous fury of the people in the wake of the Ayodhya incidents" (Deccan Herald, dt 18/12/92). In 1990, cities like Kolar, Davanagere, Ramanagaram and Channapatna were most affected; these riots were more in the nature of communal disturbances. But the violence that broke out in December 1992 saw these cities unaffected and scenes of utmost violence were to be seen in Bangalore, Mysore, Gulbarga, Bidar and to some extent Hubli/Dharwad and South Kanara. Though the number of dead was less than in 1990, the violence was widespread like never before and the loss of property was greater. To categorise these as communal would be misnomer because of the 78 dead, 33 were shot dead by the police; on the other hand, in most cases it turned out to be a confrontation between the police and the protestors, very like the situation in 1984 when crowds clashed with the police over the death in custody of Munna, an under trial prisoner in the Shivaji Nagar Police station, Bangalore; and again in 1986/87, over the publication of a blasphemous story in the 'Deccan Herald' in Bangalore.

Bangalore: 7/12/92: After the demolition of the Babri Masjid, crowds of Muslims thronged the streets on December, and curfew was imposed on 3 of the 10 police station limits, but other areas got affected as the day progressed. The army staged a flag march in the minority populated areas like Shivaji Nagar and Commercial Street, the elite shopping centre. At the end of the day, seven had fallen victims to police bullets. The police had opened fire, killing 2 in the Russel Market area and 2 in Rahmatnagar in R.T. Nagar. Crowds looted shops and torched homes near Elgin Talkies, Shivajinagar; police opened fire killing 2. In Chamarajpet, 2 shops were torched. Police opened fire in Guttepalya near Siddapura police station, near Lal Bagh. One KSRP Jawan was stabbed in Chamarajpet and another injured in the face in Rahmatnagar. Tensions rose in the latter place when a youth was shot, but he survived. In these clashes, it was found 12 police men and 50 citizens were injured.

Flag marches were organized in Kalasipalyam, Shivajinagar. Tannery Road, City market: curfew was imposed on Shivaji Nagar, Comercail Street, Jagjivanramnagar, Byatarayanapura, Kalasipalyam, City Market, D.J.Halli, Chamrajpet and Kengeri Gate police station. Crowds were pelting stones in Kalasipalyam, Shivajinagar, City Market; 6 shops were set afire, 12 BTS buses, and 75 private vehicles were damaged. Houses, shops and vehicles

were torched on Shivaji Road, City Market, Thimmiah Road, Russel Market, Guttepalya and Yarabnagar. Police fired several rounds in Shivaji Road, Commercial Street, RT Nagar, Kalasiplayam, Fraser Town, ChamarajpetDJ-Halli, Tannery Road, Mysore Road (Deccan Herald dt 7/12/92). There was arson and looting by lumpen elements: 62 two-wheelers were gutted in Jewelers Street, 5 cars smashed and 750 people were detained.

Slums at Bhavaninagar were set afire at 11.30 a.m in Banashankari, Tannery Road and RT Nagar. A commercial building 'Sangam' in Chamarajpet was torched. In RT Nagar, 18 were injured; a police van and jeep were damaged and 40 shops were looted. On Shivaji Road, 2 telephone and electric poles were also torn down, while 2 shops and 2 adjacent homes were burnt down. In the meanwhile, the police showed up late. The Girls Hostel and the Arabic School in Kadarenahallo were attacked and attacks on the former were made repeatedly.

In Rahmatnagar, a 3000 strong crowd centered round a place of worship did not allow the police to remove the body of a youth killed around 3 pm in police firing. In Shivaji Road, an anguished victim whose home was set on fire complained that the police appeared on the scene 45 minutes after the event.

Prohibitory orders under section 144, Cr PC were promulgated throughout Bangalore Rural District for three days from 7th morning. Yet there were many youths who defied police batons and walked brazenly on the curfew-bound streets.

8/12/92: In Bangalore though the situation was relatively calm, the death toll rose from 7 yesterday to 13 (9 in police firing and 4 in stabbing). Stray incidents of arson and stone pelting continued. 2 died of stab injuries in the hospital, while one body was found done to death in Banashankari and 2 died due to the police firing of the previous night. Night curfew was continued in 10 areas of the city. Curfew was relaxed from 6 a.m. to 9a.m.

7 huts and a wood depot were set ablaze in Bhavaninaga slum.

9/12/92: With an undeclared curfew in almost all parts of the city, violence continued unabated with 5 dead, 4 in police firing and 1 stabbed, taking the city toll to 18. The army was called in to stage a flag march in Shivajinagar, Kadarenahalli, Kalasipalyam and Banashankari and the last was the worst affected.

4 persons were injured in firing and another in stabbing, 1 person was killed when police opened fire on a crowd trying to demolish a place of worship on Tannery Road at about 3.30 pm. Another person was killed and 3 others injured when police fired at a crowd looting shops and attacking the police on Modi Road in D.J Halli; 10 shops were looted.

In Madiwala, 1 person was killed for allegedly trying to snatch a gun from the sub-inspector who foiled the attempts of a crowd to burn a bus. Police fired on a crowd of 500 which tried to ransack a place of worship in KG Halli, seriously injuring 1 who was admitted to the T.B. Sanatorium. A line of shops was set on fire near Konankunte on Kanakpura Road. In Girinagar, 8 huts were gutted and 7 houses ransacked. At least 12 huts were set afire in

Kumaraswamy Layout. In Byatararayapura, a plastic factory was gutted around 10.20 a.m. The crowd set fire to at least 25 vehicles including 7 buses in the city.

There were group clashes in Padarayanapura where 2 were stabbed forcing the police to re-impose the curfew at 10.15 a.m. A house of worship was partially damaged at Ashwathramnagar near Hebbal and groups tried to attack houses of worship in Banashankari and Padarayanapura who were chased away by the police. A crowd of 1000 which gathered in Shivajinagar on rumours of dairy milk being poisoned was also chased away.

Gangs of people who were enforcing the BJP bandh on HAL Road, Hosur Road, West of Chord Road, Kanakpura and Bellary Roads and Kalasipalyam were chased away by the police; an attempt to go in a procession was also thwarted.

According to the Police Commissioner, 500 preventive arrests were made in the course of the day. Tear gas shells were lobbed in all directions to quell crowds that were intent on rioting. A shop was torched in Govindaranagar while a leather factory was stoned in Vijaynagar. A moped and 3 cycles were burnt on Magadi Road. A body found near Bowring Hospital was declared by the police as a victim of murder, not of rioting. The death toll touched 16 in the country.

10/12/92: In the morning, police fired on a crowd on Modi Road, Kaval Byrasandara, near DJ Halli leaving 1 dead and three injured. In Shivajinagar, police charged with batons, and curfew was imposed from 6 a.m. noon. There were sporadic incidents from 8 a.m.: a timber depot was burnt in Banashankari 2nd Stage; 26 houses were gutted in Uttaranahlli in 2 fires. In Kumaraswamy Layout, an auto was burnt, so also a house of worship on Kanakapura Road, a house in Govindaranagar, hut in Ilias nagar and another timber depot in Kanakapura Road. A mutton shop near the railway crossing and a house of worship in Mathikere and Pillanna Gardens respectively were gutted.

25 HMT buses were stoned and several burnt on HAL, Hosur West of Chord Roads; 40 BTS and KSRTC buses were damaged and 15 destroyed. The army staged a flag march through Shivajinagar, Tannery Road, JC Nagar, Banashankari, Kadarenahlli and Kanakapura Road. Curfew was imposed on 10 police station limits.

Police fired in KG Halli, Kaval Byrasandara,, Madiwala Check post, killing 2 and injuring 15; they also fired in the air at Tannery Road, Hosur Road, Guddahalli. Tear gas shells were fired and crowds chased away with baton charges in Chamarajpet.

11/12/92: The situation showed improvement since afternoon. Curfew was still imposed on 10 police station limits, strictly so in Jagjivanramnagar and Shivajinagar, where tension persisted. A person injured in the violence of 8/12/92 succumbed to his injuries at NIMHANS. Tension which could be sensed, dissipated after the Friday Namaz and around 4p.m an air of relaxation prevailed. In the afternoon, a bus had been burnt in Chamrajpet and a flag march was staged there.

12/12/92: A man who was injured in police firing on December 7, died in the M.S.Ramiah College Hospital in the afternoon. Complaints of police high handedness were made to all leaders who visited the affected parts of the city; the former had been accused of breaking down doors and beating up inmates. In Yarabnagar, in Banashankari, Ms. Margaret Alve, Central Minister listened to complaints of police being mute witnesses to violence there and also abetting in some instances. People complained that the police were passive spectators, letting miscreants setting homes afire, but roused only to beat up innocent, returning home from work. Similar complaints were heard from people living in Broadway Road, Baitul Mal, Sultan Gunta Road, Thimmiah Road in Shivajinagar and other areas.

The Sub- inspector of Banashankari police station denied these charges but conceded that policemen against whom there were complaints had been shifted out. Another charge was that the police refused to register complaints, specifically those that came from the poor like auto drivers, mechanics and petty businessmen; what was worse was that they were picking up innocents and filing cases against them, false cases under sections which were non-bailable.

A spokesperson at the relief centre opened in the Bowring Hospital charged that the police had picked up 12 year old children and detained them. Shri. A.K. Ananthakrishna, member of Legislature from Shivajinagar admitted that the police in their bid to contain violence 'exceeded their limits, going beserk'. He said that they "rushed into homes to flush out alleged miscreants and in the process indulged in atrocities like breaking doors, smashing household articles and threatening people". (The Times of India, dt. 12/12/92)

The Chief Minister, while visiting affected parts of the city saw the girls' hostel and the Arabic school in Kadarenahalli, burnt, charred remains of its matador van and auto. In Kumaraswamy layout, the slum-dwellers still complained of the police swooping down in the middle of the night and taking away their men folk.

The Home Commissioner in a statement said that Mysore, Bangalore (Urban), Hubli, South Kanara, Gulbarga and Bidar districts were most affected while Kodagu, North Kanara, Hassan, Chickmangalur, Shimoga, Kolar, Bellary, Bijapur and Bangalore (Rural) were not affected and public and private properties worth Rs. 5 Crores had been lost.

On 31/12/92, Shri A.K. Ananthakrishna, M.L.A. (Shivajinagar) said in the Legislative Assembly that there were no communal clashes in Shivajinagar, Bangalore, as stated by the Chief Minister in the House; he suggested that this reference to communal rights in Shivaji nagar be removed. He stated that both communities, major and minor had helped each other and there had not been a single clash involving people in his constituency. He maintained that atrocities were committed by anti social elements from outside and the police personnel who barged into houses in pursuit of troublemakers. He also said that the police had failed to round up the anti-social elements before the trouble started. (The Times of India, dt 31/12/92)

MYSORE: Mysore, which remained calm, turned violent on 8/12/92 when one person was stabbed and 7 were injured in group clashes. In Kyatamaranahalli, 3 were injured in stone throwing at 10 p.m. and the police had to fire in the air to disperse the crowd; 4 police station

areas were brought under curfew. According to the Indian Express of 10/12/92, incidents of stabbing touched 40 with 4 dead in Kyathamarahalli and Kesare; 500 people took shelter in a touring cinema hall and 100 were sheltered in a place of worship.

11/12/92: The total lack of co-ordination between the police and the civil authorities came to the fore in the last 4 days. The strife torn city with only N.R.Lashkar, Mandi Mohallas and Nazarbad under curfew had borne the brunt of the absence of policing in the rest of the city. In addition, the absence of the area key-map coupled with ineffective handling and reading of the situation by the police made it worse. The revenue minister visiting the city, admitted he had heard these complaints and also police raids on homes looking for weapons and assaults on women. Lack of professionalism on the part of the police was admitted by some police officials as well as criticized in the Peace Committee.

There were 28 incidents of stabbing on 11/12/92, supposed to be the outcome of killing a youth on 8/12/92. Pressmen noted in some areas that police remained mute spectators when miscreants with lethal weapons went on a rampage. Complaints of police not providing assistance to the injured were made to the Minister of Higher Education on 10/11/92. The injured brother of the deceased, Sridhar (killed on 8/12/92) was left unattended for 48 hours by the Civic authorities. The former Mayor, Shri. Vasu ascribed sporadic incidents to absence of proper planning and execution by the police. A petty shop in front of the office of the police Commissioner was torched in daylight and incidents of arson and stabbing continued. There were also complaints of the police harassing inmates of homes, beating them up and looting their belongings.

12/12/92: The situation in Mysore continued to be grim even after 5 days of mayhem. With the death of one injured person on the 11th night, the toll had risen to 6. Nearly 20 incidents of assault were reported. Mandi, N.R.Lashkar, K.R.Mohallas, Nazarbad, Lakshmiapuram, Vidyaranyaapuram and Devraj police station area wore a deserted look.

Hundreds of men and women staged a dharna in Kyathamarahalli protesting police harassment, (The Times of India: 12/12/92)

Curfew was extended to 8 police station areas. 20 small business establishments had been set ablaze. Torching of 20 huts in Kyathamarahalli was reported. Shops and small showrooms were targets of looters. As many as 17, either stabbed or assaulted, were admitted to the K.R. Hospital. A city contractor attacked with an axe and sickle in Rajendranagar succumbed to his injuries on the 11th night. An Assistant Sub-Inspector of police was hit by stones while dispersing a crowd in Udaygiri in the morning.

Police reported 12 shops and 2 houses set on fire; among them, 7 were from Jayalakshmiapuram and Vontikoppal areas. A police officer pointed out that the cases of arson were from North and East Mysore.

Inmates of a relief camp complained of inadequate facilities to the leader of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly, particularly by Muslim women of Mandi Mohalla who complained of indiscriminate beating of their men by the police; they also complained of lack of co-ordination between the police and Revenue Departments. A thousand women of Kyathamarahalli came out defying ban orders and sat in dharna in front of a police make-shift camp; they alleged that

the sub-inspector had entered their homes and beaten up men and children. (The Times of India: 12/12/92)

The curfew had affected the local newspapers; some of its employees complained of being caned on way to work. Protesting against police harassment, evening dailies did not appear on 12/12/92. Their editors lodged a protest with the city police commissioner against police atrocities on journalists. Even those with valid curfew passes had been beaten up.

The Hindu of 12/12/92 blamed the RSS and its sympathizers for the spate of stabbings in the city.

14/12/92: A man was stabbed to death in the Gandhinagar area and another succumbed to stab injuries on 13th night. 7 were injured when police opened fire in 2 places in Tilaknagar around 8 a.m. The office of a transport company close to the Regulated Market was torched and the home of a RPF constable ransacked by miscreants.

The city remained tense with yet another flag march by the army. Day and night curfew was extended to 16/12/92 in Mandi, NR, KR, Lashkar Mohallas, Nazarbad, Lakshmipuram and Vidyaranyaapuram.

The police handling of riots came under flak from all quarters. The officials agreed that absence of clear-cut directions from top hampered policing. A senior I.P.S. Officer said that police-personnel from sub-inspector and below had let down their superiors in a crisis. For ineffective handling of the situation, the negative attitude of the police who had been posted in the city for long periods of time, because of their political links, and lack of organized approach were to be blamed. Political interference was also held responsible.

BIDAR:

7/12/92: Unruly crowds began assembling early in the morning after a place of worship was desecrated in Basava Kalyan Taluk and they indulged in arson and looting that thick smoke billowed from the commercial areas of the town. In the firing that followed, 5 died and 3 of stabbing and were 35 were injured. Stabbing, looting and arson continued unabated. The I.A.F. did an aerial survey and a flag march. Offices of the Zilla Parishad and social welfare and Revenue Departments were partially gutted and more than 100 shops were burnt down.

8/12/92: The town was calm but tense; 2 succumbed to injuries sustained on 7/12/92. 3 died of police firing and 7 in clashes, total toll being 12 dead; 2 succumbed to injuries later. The Hindu of 9/12/92 reported that there was widespread arson and nothing left to burn. The Deccan Herald of 10/12/92 reported the total dead as 10. The Hindu on 12/12/92 reported that the RSS and its sympathizers went on a stabbing spree in the town.

GULBARGA:

Some temples were attacked and demolished on Sunday (6/12/92) night and police fired on the crowds. The following day, the situation was uncontrollable, hence a flag march was ordered.irate mobs threw stones on houses and shops. A crowd of 500 attacked the Roza police station and forcibly released a person unconnected with the riots and damaged furniture.

On 8/12/92, there were clashes followed by arson and looting; police opened fire and killed 8, and one got stabbed fatally. Homes were attacked in Raghavendra Colony and valuables looted. The Deccan Herald of 8/12/92 reported crowds stripping women, burning their clothes and one woman killed. Police fired in Lalgeri and Nehronagar. The army staged a flag march. On 11.12.92, 2 were stabbed to death and one suffered stab wounds. This was after 1 p.m. near a place of worship in N.V. Layout at fag end of curfew relaxation. The toll of total dead was 11. The Hindu of 12/12/92 reported a stabbing spree by the RSS and its sympathizers in the town.

Hubli/Dharwad:

8/12/92: Police opened fire in Kasbapet in old Hubli and 2 dies; one was stabbed fatally; on the 10th, the total dead was 6; stabbing was reported from Kamaripet (Hubli), Writers Galli (Dharwad) and Gavaligalli (Hubli). 5 were dead of stabbing. Earlier on 7/12/92, in Netkar Colony on the outskirts of Hubli, Muslims charged the police with breaking into homes and picking up the innocent for interrogation, while complaining to the Minister for Housing.

Rest of Karnataka:

8/12/92: In Kudachi in Belgaum district, 300 youths stoned a house of worship and damaged 8 shops. Police fired on them and killed one.

9/12/92: Police lathi charged in Muddebihal in Bijapur Dt. In Mandya Dt. 2 shops were set on fire.

In Raichur, there were some cases of rioting.

In Raidurg, Belgaum Dt, a stationery shop was set afire.

In Chitradurga, 1 died in police firing and 1 in police stabbing, and 30 were injured. Desecration of a mosque led to tension which led to a flag march. In Hidayatpura in the district, there was arson and looting of 25 houses.

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10/12/92: In Mangalore, a crowd of 100 chased 2 and one of them was a victim of a pistol shot. 2 were stabbed.

10/12/92: In Mangalore, one died in police firing.

In Sira (Tumkur Dt) one was stabbed and the total dead were 2.

In Sindhnoor (Raichur Dt), police opened fire.

In Belgaum, police opened fire and killed one.

Urwas in Ullal in Mangalore, 2 died of stabbing, in Jambugadde near Ullal, police opened fire.

11/12/92: IN Kunigal, 2 were stabbed to death.

12/12/92: In Kunigal, 1 was stabbed to death and another suffered stab injuries.

A riot victim body was found in Ullal near Mangalore, and 2 cases of stabbing in the latter town in Lady Hill locality; 50 were arrested and curfew was imposed from Kannur to Suratkal of South Kanara Dt.

Chitradurg: A man stabbed earlier, succumbed to his injuries.

Channapatna: The body of a riot victim was discovered.

Chitradurga: The total toll of the dead in the district, rose to 3 and 200 persons were arrested.

Sira: One man stabbed to death.

Bijapur: 125 people had been arrested so far and 54 cases registered.

13/12/92: Tumkur: 1 person was stabbed.

Gokak: (Belgaum Dt) A place of worship was damaged and curfew was imposed.

14/12/92: Chitradurga: Mobs burnt down a wood depot.

The Hindu dated 20/12/92 pointed out in a review of the events of December 1992 that the mob frenzy and mayhem lasted 10 days resulting in 88 dead. It felt that the communal virus had spread far and wide and taken deep roots. It found that disturbances by and large were confined to 6 out of 20 districts involving some district head-quarters and some urban pockets. It estimated that private properties lost amounted to Rs2 crores while public property amounted to Rs 50 lakhs; the total loss of properties could be put down to Rs. 7 crores.

Indian Express dated 22/12/92 cited four reasons for the disturbances during December 1992 in Karnataka: the first was the unmanageable growth of populations in the cities with migrants flowing in: in Bangalore and in other cities with migrants flowing in; the second was that Bangalore and the other cities had become a haven for smugglers and criminals. The third reason advanced was the growth of regionalism in the state and the final reason was that corruption was at its peak and all these contributed to the riots in the state.

Victims of communal violence in Bangalore, Mysore, Bidar, Gulabarga, Hubli and other places were asked to name the community, class or group who they felt had threatened them the most. Yet seldom would they name either the major or the minor community as the one they feared the most; on the other hand there was more or less unanimity that no community as a whole was responsible for all the violence undergone. Undoubtedly, the majority of lives and properties lost belonged to the Muslims. The complaint was generally of the laxity of the police in enforcing law and also excesses on its part. Even the relations of the victims of stabbing who had rushed the latter to police stations or hospitals were arrested and charged with 'rioting'. The majority of those arrested were undoubtedly innocent and false cases had been foisted on them. The police has been accused of partisanship on many counts; their indifference in the face of peaceful citizens undergoing assault, murder and arson, at times even abetting crimes and to add insult to injury coming down heavily on the victims themselves. Sadly enough, a good part of the machinery whether it was the bureaucracy or the forces of law and order had either acted in a partisan fashion or abdicated its duty of protecting the citizens from lawless elements.

Here are some concrete instances to bear out the truth in these charges against the police. The Mutavalli of Yarabnagar mosque in Banashankari, Bangalore described how he sheltered non-Muslim women and children, during the tension in December 1992, in the mosque when they felt insecure in their own homes and even cooked food in his house for them. But the police descended on this place, beat up the Mutavalli on charges of violating the curfew; he forbore from crying out for help since he knew the police needed a pretext to shoot down young men if they stirred out as it happened in other places. All the same, innocent youths were picked up and false cases were filed against them

The proprietors of an auto rickshaw workshop in Nala Road in Shivajinagar narrated how police raided homes in that area and took away young men on false charges. This has been the pattern of the functioning of the so-called law and order forces in the state of Karnataka.

In N.R. Mohalla in Mysore, a non-Muslim student of Engineering gave an eye-witness account of how in his locality inhabited by non-Muslims, the latter lynched Muslims, not even escaping

women and children who barely escaped with their lives. The police invariably reached the place when the worst was over. In another incident, a volunteer of a relief camp sheltering victims of riots was stopped peremptorily by a CRPF constable who flung the former's sunglasses on the ground, smashed his watch with the baton, and snatched the money, a few thousand rupees meant to buy provisions for the relief camp. The volunteer in question was a Muslim; the money has not been recovered and the constable was back on duty after an inquiry, looking nonchalant and brazen.

In Hubli, Office-bearers of a Muslim social and cultural organization furnished a list of all those arrested in the city during the riots and the overwhelming majority happened to be Muslims when the majority of those wounded and dead happened to be Muslims. Even responsible members of this organization engaged in relief work were roughed up.

The fact that out of the 78 dead, 33 were killed by police bullets bears ample testimony to the brutality of the latter. Social activists who visited and saw the dead and injured in the government hospitals found that almost all victims of bullet injuries had been shot in the chest or the head though the instruction in the police manual directs them to aim below the knee.

This incident will amply demonstrate the partisan nature of the police: On January 26, 1993, the BJP had threatened to hoist the national flag on the Idgah grounds vowing to violate the prohibitory orders in force. When the BJP mobs made a bid to violate these orders, the police used tear gas, batons to break them up and finally fired rubber bullets and successfully dispersed them without killing or injuring any.

During December 1992, the orders were to 'fire to kill' acclaimed by the D.G. of police and the Chief Minister. Boys as young as 12 to 14 who threw stones were shot and killed. This demonstrated the kid-glove treatment meted out to the BJP and the bullets rained on the Muslim crowds; it speaks of the rank discrimination indulged in by the state, as though the lives of the minorities were of no consequences.

It is necessary to study the contrast in events of October 1990 and December 1992. In 1990, tensions arose as they always did year after year with Ganesh festivities followed by the Prophet's birthday. Then came the shilanya programme that communalized city and village alike; the climax was touched with Rath yatra of Advani. Riots broke out in Ramanagaram, Kolar, Chanapatna, Devangere, Hubli and other places. Since these riots were communal by nature involving both communities, the police had to keep a semblance of being even-handed. Even then the sufferers were Muslims in terms of properties and lives. But with the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the crowds that came out were emotionally surcharged Muslims, an easy target to the police who fired with abandon, killing 33 out of the total dead. Elementary measures like warning the crowd over the public address system to be followed by firing tear gas shells and then charging with batons were all given the go-by; instead, the trigger-happy police blazed away with their guns fulfilling the orders of the police 'Fire to kill'. The people witnessed the macabre scene of the D.G. of police and the Chief Minister of the state congratulating each other on what they claimed to be a speedy end to the riots with the establishment of the peace of the grave.

The following suggestions are made for restoring, protecting and strengthening secular values.

The situation in India has been wholly communalized with the sole intent of riding to power on the crest of a fanatical religious wave. The original sinner in this respect has been the Congress (I) whose soft Hindutva was capitalized by the BJP: The opening of the lock of the Masjid that lodged the idols, facilitating the shilanya programme, the Shah Bano episode point to the vicious role of the ruling party. The party that brazenly chose the lotus symbol, had Ram inscribed in its manifesto and unabashedly declared that Ram would be used to garner the blood sodden votes. Almost all political parties, one time or another have used the communal card wittingly or unwittingly in the electoral game, but the worst sinner has been the Congress (I) with its unsecular 'Abhaya Hasta' symbol and the BJP. That a so-called political party which unashamedly used Ram to come to power in four states and to become the main opposition in the Parliament, increasing the membership in the Lok Sabha from a mere 2 to a phenomenal 119 speaks of the constitutional failure on all fronts. To sustain the spirit of the Constitution of India, political parties using religion (pseudo or otherwise) for political gains must be legally barred from functioning in electoral politics. The trick of permitting such parties to contest elections and then seek to dispute the result before the Election Commission or Court of law is to make a mockery of democracy.

These communal outfits must be barred at the very outset and on no account be allowed to register as political parties. This move should be taken on a priority basis.

The responsibility for keeping peace in sensitive areas must be borne by the police, the bureaucracy and the people's representatives, be they members of parliament, state legislature, Municipal and panchayat bodies. An amendment to the Constitution must enable the voters to recall their representative who has failed to live up to his or her responsibilities. Since all these, including bureaucrats, have accepted responsibility by swearing loyalty to the Constitution, they cannot absolve themselves of their duties by passing on the buck to others for their own failures.

Collective fines must be imposed in the people of the area where violence takes place whether this violence is imputed to elements within or without the community. The citizens have a responsibility to maintain peace and they are obliged to play the role of law abiding citizens.

The Constitution should be so amended as to provide for setting up People's tribunals consisting of retired judges of integrity which could act independently, conduct its own investigation, name the culprit, award punishment and compensate victims. Its term must be time bound and its report, a public document. Incidentally, this will free the overburdened Courts of this additional responsibility and the people's tribunal will enjoy as much credibility as the present courts of law.

There must be accountability for all actions of the security forces and laws must be suitably amended so that they are accountable for all their actions; any excesses on their part can be subject to penal action. The police which has become a state within a state needs to be cut to size, be held accountable to the police and an intensive programme be undertaken to reorient its outlook, so that it could learn to function as a servant of the people.

The people's tribunal must pay attention to the ongoing turbulence in the Punjab, Kashmir and Northeastern states. The Indian state with its bungling has communalized issues which bid for

some kind of autonomy in a truly federal set up. In stead these have served to fuel the communal temperature of the land. There is a national debate on the federal nature of the constitution and ways and means of implementing federalism in the functioning of the Indian state, the only means by which the country could be held together.

Its time that relations between India and Pakistan are divorced from relations between Hindus and Muslims in this country. A bid must be made for a people to people dialogue so that the power hungry chauvinist leadership of both countries will be marginalized and that in turn will usher an era of harmony among all communities.

Lastly, the SAARC must evolve an institution like the European Commission of Human Rights; this body could adjudicate on issues within a country or between member countries and deliver judgment impartially and objectively which should be of a mandatory nature. An institution of this kind could go a long way towards lessening tensions all round.