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BABRI MASJID DEMOLITION AND LIBERHAN COMMISSION REPORT

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Justice Liberhan submitted its report to the Government of India. The Commission was set up 10 days after the demolition of Babri Masjid and it took 17 long years and 48 extensions before it submitted the report on June 30th of this year (2009). However, the report has still not been tabled in the Parliament and is expected to be tabled during this winter session. But parts of the Report have been published in *Indian Express*

Babri Masjid–Ramjanambhoomi controversy dominated Indian politics for about a decade and became the main issue and it was so controversial and rooted in communal politics that it polarized Indian people along religious lines for the first time in post-independence India and since it was raised for riding to political power and BJP did rise to political power towards the end of nineties of the last century.

It was not so secret that the leaders of the Sangh Parivar were responsible for demolition of Babri Masjid and the chief architect of this movement was Shri L.K.Advani who took out *Rath Yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya to win mass support of Hindus and the *Rath Yatra* turned into '*blood yatra*' as nearly 3000 small and not so small riots took place during its course. *Times of India* editorially described it as '*blood yatra'*.

Babri Masjid demolition also resulted in bloody riots in several major cities of the country and Mumbai and Surat riots in December and January 1992-93 surpassed all limits in brutality, killing and raping. By any accounts of Babri Masjid's demolition and subsequent riots remain the shame of modern secular India and this happened to fulfill the lust of a political party for power.

According to the extracts published in *Indian Express* the Liberhan Commission has indicted the top leadership of BJP and surprisingly Shri Vajpayee too. So far Vajpayee had been spared of any charge but only a report published in the *Outlook* magazine long ago Vajpayee was mentioned as one of those who was aware of the conspiracy to demolish Babri Masjid.

It is somewhat surprising that Justice Liberhan has directly blamed Shri Vajpayee and L.K.Advani for conspiring to demolish Babri Masjid because it was reported in the media that there was controversy between Mr. Gupta, the advocate for the Commission and Justice Liberhan on culpability of Shri Advani and Gupta alleged that Justice Liberhan wants to go soft on Mr. Advani and hence he resigned.

Of course in the media interview Justice Liberhan had maintained that his integrity is beyond questioning and he has indicted people strictly on the basis of evidence before him and that he has not spared anyone. This was after he submitted his report. What he had told media has now been borne out? He has indicted not only Advani but also A.B.Vajpayee.

On the basis of evidence that includes witness statements and official records, one of the key conclusions of the Commission's is said to be that the entire build up to the demolition was meticulously planned. And there was nothing to show that these leaders were unaware of what was going on or innocent of any wrongdoing. Mr. Advani had claimed that demolition was a 'spontaneous' event and that he was very sorry for that. He claimed he even wept for what happened.

However, the Commission has rejected this claim and holds him responsible for what happened. The Commission probed the sequence of events leading, and all facts and circumstances relating, to the occurrence at Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid complex on December 6, 1992 – the day Babri Masjid was brought down by *karsevaks.*

The Commission, according to the *Express* report, is learnt to have said that despite claims to the contrary, the Ayodhya campaign did not enjoy the willing and voluntary support of the common masses, particularly Hindus. In fact, Liberhan is learnt to have said that demand for a temple never became a mass movement. The campaign only ended up silencing the voices of sanity and shaming them into joining the movement.

What Justice Liberhan says is true. It was never a spontaneous demand from Hindu masses to construct Ramjanambhoomi temple, much less after demolishing Babri Masjid. In fact in the speeches delivered by Shri Advani and other Sangh leaders it was hidden from Hindu masses that the Sangh Parivar proposes to demolish Babri Masjid. This, in all probability, would not have been acceptable to Hindus.

It is also true that the Ramjanambhoomi campaign assumed such proportions and it aroused such frenzy among members and supporters of the Sangh Parivar that it became difficult for voice of sanity to be raised by Hindus. They were almost intimidated into submission. This is what happens when fascist movement becomes strong and no space is left for dissent or protest.

Liberhan Commission is also learnt to have said, as per *Indian Express* report, that despite claims by Advani and Vajpayee that they had no role in the demolition, the two leaders cannot be absolved of the responsibility for the same. Advani, when he appeared before the Commission, he had claimed that he was pained by the events at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

What is interesting is that Liberhan says that none of them had the capacity to defy the orders of the RSS without damaging their political future. By implication Justice Liberhan has suggested that to demolish Babri Masjid was a decision arrived at by the RSS and it was executed by the BJP leaders and hordes of VHP and Bajrang Dal. The Liberahan Commission goes much further in indicting the Sangh Parivar for its complicity in the event.

The Liberhan Commission is reported to have said that these leaders can't be given the benefit of doubt or absolved of culpability and names Vajpayee, Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi. It is very strong indictment indeed. The Commission is also said to have concluded that the diversion of funds to Faizabad and Ayodhya just before the *karseva*, mobilization of *karsevaks* as well as arrangements made at the site with military-like precision, clearly proves that the plan was just not limited to symbolic *karseva,* as stated by Sangh and BJP leaders.

Shri Vajpayee himself had committed in the session of national Integration council that the *karseva* would be symbolic and yet he did nothing to fulfill his commitment to the nation and hence what Justice Liberhan says is quite correct. Under the cover of symbolic *seva* it was planned to bring down Babri Masjid and all arrangements were made with 'military-like precision'. The Hindi media consistently described this demolition of *vivadit dhancha* (controversial structure) as if it was not a legally constructed mosque.

Liberhan further says that the small number of *karsevaks* who actually carried out the demolition, the hidden faces of such *karsevaks,* the removal of idols and cash boxes from under the domes and the eventual installation in the makeshift temple clearly show that the demolition was carried out with painstaking preparation and planning. In fact nothing was left to chance.

Commission also feels that the elite leaders of these Muslim organizations constituted a class of their own and were neither responsible to nor were they caring for the welfare of those they claimed to represent. These leaders, according to the Commission, failed the community by failing to put forth a logical, cohesive and consistent point of view on the dispute, both inside and outside the courts.

There were sane voices among Muslim community also but the way a section of Muslim leadership aroused emotions in the community, it became difficult to listen to these sane voices. For Muslims too it became an emotional issue and logical thinking and action became very difficult, if not impossible. Thus it should be clear to all of us that raising a historical controversy to high emotional pitch does nothing but harm to any community and only unscrupulous elements gain from it.

It may, however, be difficult to agree with Liberhan Commission when he observes that Central government cannot be blamed as according to the Constitution, no action could be taken without governor of the state submitting report requiring action by the Centre. To dismiss Kalyan Singh Government was perhaps not possible but Narsimha Rao Government could have saved Babri Masjid, if it had ordered the Rapid Action Force positioned just 11 kms from Ayodhya to move in and save the Masjid. DIG, RPF, himself told me later in a seminar that we could have saved the Masjid, if only orders had been received in time to act. We only wondered why no orders came from the authorities. Muslims also alleged that Narsimha Rao was not interested in saving the mosque.

Now it is to be seen what action the Central Government takes on the Liberhan Commission Report before it submits it to the Parliament. It is a matter of time. Also, one has to see how the leaders of the Sangh Parivar react to this report. We are certainly in for a political controversy. The BJP is already in the doledrum and it will certainly be another blow to its waning fortune.

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