

FREE BALOCHISTAN

Baloch nationalists have declared their independent country, its currency and even passport. Its top singers are singing national anthem as the Baloch Liberation Army which has been fighting Pakistani forces and faced disappearances and killings, seem to have taken control of most of the territory. Creating yet another country in the south Asia with the UN's acceptance may not be that easy yet the optics show that all is not well in the territory's relation with Pakistan. Balochistan was never part of the pre-1947 India, through it eas culturally connected to it. Balochistan was an independent country ruled by the King of Kalat. The kingdom was usurped by the newly formed state of Pakistan under the pretext that its western flank must gain strategic depth.. Going by the history of Balochistan, it's clear that Baloch and Pakistanis are different people and societies. While most of the Pakistanis are islamic zealots and radicals, Baloch are more secular in their outlook and behaviour. For this reason, there are hardly any Baloch fighters in Al Qaeda, ISIS or the off shoots of these terrorist outfits. We have seen women like Mahrang Baloch lead the freedom fighters, something that is not possible in Pakistan. However, the major conflict between Baloch and Pakistan is two-fold. One if the cultural difference and the other is exploitation of Balochistan's resources be it the Gwadar Port, the mineral wealth or the Sui gas. Chinese have descended in large numbers in the territory for laying the CEPC to give their country access to the Gwadar port. They have created isolated zones in which the Baloch are kept at the bay. There is no employment for the locals in the Chinese projects and hence the Baloch are against both China and Pakistan. The irony is that while Sui gas, as the natural gas is called in Pakistan after the place where it comes from , is supplied to entire Punjab while the Baloch people live in poverty.

Ram temple: India's civilisational awakening

VK Bahuguna

Indian civilisation, particularly Hinduism — better known culturally as Sanatan Dharma — thrived for thousands of years under the rule of Muslim invaders and the British. In spite of subjugation and tyranny, Indians did not convert en masse as happened in other civilizations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Indian psyche was deeply hurt when Babur, in 1528, demolished the temple at the birthplace of Lord Ram in Ayodhya, but the seething anger lingered for centuries as devotees continued to offer prayers at a raised mud platform known as the 'Ram Chabutara' within the precinct. History

In November 1858, a group of 25 Nihang Sikhs, led by Baba Fakir Singh Khalsa, entered the complex and built a clay platform (Chabutara) inside the premises, placed a picture or symbol of Lord Ram and wrote “Ram Ram” in charcoal on the walls. They performed a Vedic havan and left. An FIR was later registered against them on November 30, 1858, by the mosque muezzin. This action by the Nihangs is a crucial document proving that Hindus had been worshipping here for a long time. Then again, in the night of December 22-23, 1949, a group led by Mahant Abhiram Das entered the locked Babri mosque and placed a nine-inch metal idol of Ram Lala beneath the central dome.

A large gathering of thousands thronged the site, and to prevent communal escalation, the administration locked the outer gates but allowed a Hindu priest inside to perform limited daily puja and bhaj offerings to the idol. The then Prime Minister Nehru directed that the idol be removed, but the District Magistrate KK Nayar took a pragmatic decision to avoid communal tension by sealing the main building and allowing a lone priest to perform basic puja only; this continued until February 1986, when the locks were opened under a court order officially granting Hindus access to the inner section for worship. The rest is history until January 22, 2024, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the majestic temple constructed after the No-



vember 9, 2019, Supreme Court verdict.

Why write this article now, when the Ram Temple is in the news for the wrong reasons? The immediate cause is the public uproar regarding theft of donations and an alleged financial scam in which staff responsible for its safekeeping were siphoning off crores. Some quick action has been taken and things are on the right path, but baying for the blood of the people at the helm who trusted these thieves — due to lack of administrative acumen — and smearing the entire temple management is undesirable and suggests ulterior motives. Such things can happen in any religious institution.

For example, a massive Vatican financial scandal involving Cardinal Becciu began in 2019; he was stripped of his rights as a cardinal and, after trial, was convicted in December 2020. Similarly, the Caritas Luxembourg 61.2 million bank and donation fraud case began in 2014 and continued until 2026. In October 2024, former congregants filed a major financial fraud lawsuit against Gateway Church of Texas. These accusations were often directed at top management, whereas the Ram temple case appears to involve petty thieves and not the trustees. It is therefore highly undesirable to accuse senior management without evidence. Hinduism

Likewise, in Islam, the misuse and diver-

sion of zakat — which is analogous to donations - has been a persistent issue. Investigations into the Bashir regime in Sudan revealed that funds intended for the poor were routinely diverted to entities linked to the regime. Similar inquiries have been reported against various charities in the Middle East. These incidents, including Ayodhya, underscore the global challenge of maintaining transparency and the need for continuous oversight over massive flows of donations and gifts, and they call for strict internal audit and modern accounting and management procedures.

It seems many people want to take advantage of this event politically, particularly those who opposed the Ram temple's construction and who pander to vote-bank appeasement politics. In reality, portraying the issue as an attack on the Hindu religion — ostensibly at the behest of “woke” Western elites with double standards — misreads the situation. The global progressive movement vocally supports land-back movements, the return of sacred sites to Native Americans, and the decolonisation of African and Australian spaces. Yet when the same logic of decolonisation and the restoration of sacred indigenous geography was applied to Ayodhya — backed by an exhaustive, multi-decade legal process and conclusive archaeological evidence from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) - it was branded re-

gressive by some of their Indian cohorts.

Thus, in global media, academic circles and certain domestic intellectual hubs, the event leading to the Ram temple's construction was frequently framed not as a moment of cultural healing but through the modern lens of hyper-nationalism and as an instance of majoritarianism. This globalised “woke” framework inherently struggles to accommodate non-Western civilisational icons. The Anglo-American woke club views the world from an exclusive Western template. Christianity and whiteness are historically associated with institutional power and colonial expansion. But when it comes to India, any attempt to promote cultural renaissance is instantly mapped to Western imperialism, dismissively ignoring Hinduism's history as a victim of brutal, multi-century colonial and imperial onslaughts, and viewing the assertiveness of Hinduism with suspicion.

Therefore, when Hindus pointed to archaeological and historical evidence of a temple being demolished to build a mosque, the narrative was systematically suppressed or downplayed by Marxist and progressive historians for decades. Lord Ram is not only a deity but an icon of righteousness and the soul of the foundations of Indian civilisation's core elements of governance. Unlike many ancient pagan or indigenous civilisations that were entirely erased by global colonial movements, India's indigenous civilisation survived. The reclamation of Ayodhya is a manifestation of that survival. Hinduism

For global critical theorists, an indigenous majority asserting its historic rights and building a monument to its survival disrupts the standard post-colonial narrative, which often prefers indigenous cultures to remain permanently oppressed. Thus, the controversy surrounding the Ram Mandir is a clash between a globalised intellectual elite and an assertive India. The “woke” view sees the Ram Mandir as a fracture in secularism, whereas the vast majority of India views it as the healing of a historical wound. India is asserting its right to define its own modernity, its own secularism, and its own path towards justice.

LET US TAKE SHELTER OF GOD, NOT OF HUMAN BEINGS

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

Lord Krishna has very emphatically instructed us to treat all souls equally. Aren't we all part of God? (The Bhagavad Gita 15.7) Let us see what these instructions are. In the verse #5.7, Lord Krishna states, “A karma Yogi considers souls of other persons similar to his. “Wise persons have equal vision in those who are blessed with knowledge and humility, in a Brahmin and even in an outcast.” (5.18) “One who is equally disposed towards all beings attains the supreme devotion towards Me.” (18.54) The Lord teaches us that external differences like status, etc., are just temporary garments. True wisdom lies in seeing the divine equality — the same eternal essence within everyone, with no exceptions. Hinduism

Why then we don't have equal vision towards all souls? Why do we raise some of them to a higher level than us to the point of taking their shelter, which position is strictly reserved for God? Lord Krishna is very emphatic about taking His shelter, not of anyone else. (18.66) Yes, we can take guidance from a learned person (4.34), help from a highly placed person, etc., but to take shelter of another person is not at all wise.



Let us see what do we lose by taking shelter of anyone other than God. “Worshippers of gods go up to gods, that is they can obtain what gods can give. Worshippers of God go up to Him, that is they can get God's mercy.” (9.25) In another verse,

Lord Krishna states, “Those People, bereft of knowledge, caused by passionate desires, take shelter of other gods.” (7.20) Just imagine taking shelter of human beings, who are placed lower than gods. This cannot be classed anything like intelli-

gence.

Before I take up benefits of remaining in shelter of God, we must understand more as to why God is so strict about us not taking shelter of another human being. Such a relationship is extremely limited; It can be temporary only. Another is helplessness of all souls without any exceptions, all being small, intrinsically. All depend on God for whatever they need.

Now I come to some benefits of staying in shelter of God. The first one has to be guidance, because direction is all-important, and God is Omniscient. He knows exactly what will suit an individual. And God is there to help where we fall short, which is often, due to us being small, helpless and ignorant too. God does not stop there, if we remain in His shelter, He provides what we need and protects what we have. (9.22) We all have many desires; God fulfils them, the ones according to dharma (highest principles). Once God is in the loop, success is assured in whatever we take up. Forget fears, depression, etc; peace will be ours.

In order to gain all these benefits, we must stop looking for shelter where it is not, neither in human beings nor in material objects like wealth, fame, etc. Just remain in shelter of God now and forever.

Uttar Pradesh: Can the BJP hold its bastion?

Kalyani Shankar

With the UP elections drawing closer, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is rolling out a comprehensive, strategic plan aimed not only at retaining power in the state but also at solidifying its influence across India.

The strategy emphasises uniting the NDA and addressing local issues that resonate with voters. Still, it would benefit from detailing how the BJP plans to tailor its messages to specific caste and regional concerns to demonstrate a nuanced understanding of voter diversity.

The BJP has identified 100 constituencies as particularly important for electoral success, but including the criteria or process used to select them would clarify how these priorities were determined and their significance.

The party plans to appoint local organisers known as booth palaks, who will energise grassroots engagement, making voters feel that their concerns are valued and understood, and

booth pravasis, who will facilitate outreach and mobilisation efforts.

These local representatives will play a crucial role in liaising with residents, understanding their concerns, and ensuring that the party's messages resonate effectively within their communities.

The party plans to launch extensive social media campaigns and targeted advertisements to reach diverse demographics, with tailored digital strategies designed to inspire confidence in the campaign's effectiveness across regions and age groups.

The BJP is promoting a message of inclusive development. The party is committed to supporting various demographic groups, particularly farmers and women. The schemes launched would benefit farmers and women's self-help groups, uplifting these communities.

Nationalism remains a cornerstone of the BJP's identity and messaging.

The party seeks to project itself as a guardian of national interests, particularly regarding national security. By emphasising robust defence policies and a strong stance on terrorism

and internal security, the BJP aims to resonate with voters who favour a strong, secure government. This approach seeks to galvanise support by appealing to citizens' desire for protective leadership that adequately addresses threats. Politics

The economy will also be a focal point of the BJP's campaign. The party intends to showcase its efforts to revive the economy, with particular emphasis on job creation initiatives. Programmes such as the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which aims to incentivise domestic manufacturing and attract investment, will be highlighted.

The messaging will aim to reassure voters, especially young people, that the BJP can stimulate economic growth and create employment opportunities.

In addition, the BJP is preparing to robustly counter any opposition criticism of its governance. The strategy includes demonstrating that the Opposition is fragmented and lacks a coherent governance plan. By drawing sharp contrasts between its own successes and the failures of opposing

parties, the BJP seeks to bolster its image as an effective and reliable party.

While the BJP stands as a formidable national presence, it also recognises the importance of building local alliances.

The party is likely to seek partnerships with regional and smaller political parties to enhance its electoral prospects, fostering hope that such cooperation will strengthen governance and community representation.

The BJP's strategy for the upcoming elections emphasises clear communication, community engagement, national security and economic recovery.

The party aims to address voters' concerns and has developed an “election-ready” framework that strengthens grassroots outreach and booth-level committees while incorporating more young people and women into its leadership.

Poll-bound states, including Uttar Pradesh, have been instructed to prepare for potential early elections.

The Opposition in Uttar Pradesh is

gearing up for the upcoming elections with a concerted effort. Around 23 parties have united under the INDIA coalition, aiming to present a formidable challenge to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Opposition is preparing for the polls with a clear five-point strategy. This strategy focuses on important issues that matter to voters, such as unemployment, economic inequality and social justice. By emphasising these topics, the Opposition hopes to show that it cares about the needs of ordinary citizens and to set itself apart from the ruling party. Strategic Planning

The Opposition emphasises grassroots engagement and is maximising its efforts. Local leaders and representatives from various parties are mobilising to connect with voters directly, understand their concerns, and present a united front against the BJP.

This engagement strategy includes town hall meetings, rallies and community events to reinforce the coalition's message and build trust among constituents.

The coalition is working to counter the BJP's narratives on governance and development by presenting a clear plan that highlights the ruling party's shortcomings and persuades voters that it provides a viable alternative.

The coalition is focused on making Ayodhya central to its Assembly election campaign, seeking to use alleged donation irregularities to challenge the BJP's claim of being the sole defender of Hindu interests.

Social media and digital platforms are also integral to the Opposition's campaign efforts.

Overall, the Opposition's preparations indicate a focused attempt to consolidate its efforts, enhance community engagement, and present clear alternatives to the BJP's policies.

The Opposition has a well-defined strategy and collaboration among various political entities. The INDIA coalition hopes to repeat its 2024 success, but it has cracks.

Since Uttar Pradesh is politically important, it remains to be seen how both sides perform.