

Hearings on Religious Freedom in India and Pakistan: Panel 1 Subpanel A Question and Answer

September 18, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

Panel I: Situation Analysis for India, Subpanel A (left to right): Mr. John Dayal, Dr. Mumtaz Ali Khan, Prof. Ainlee Embree, Prof. Arvind Sharma

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Thank you all very much for your presentations which allow us now some time for questions from members of the panel. And I'd like to begin, if I could, by asking--and perhaps I'll start with Professor Embree. Why now the increasing difficulty, the growth in Hindu nationalism? Mr. Dayal noted that the actual percentage of the population that is Christian is actually decreasing, not growing. To what do you attribute the growth of Hindu nationalism in the last few years?

PROFESSOR EMBREE: There is no one easy answer, Mr. Abrams. One answer quite clearly is rooted in the nature of India itself. From the very beginning of India in 1947, the aim has been to create a united Hindu--a united Indian nation. And this has been the aim of every politician in India, and understandably so.

And the group that I've called the Hindu nationalists have seized upon the Muslims and Christians as groups working against the unity. Now, the interesting thing to me and which I asked a great many people in India in the last three weeks when I was there is why this venom against Christians? Why not the Muslims, who have constituted an enormous population?

One answer that I was given was--by both Hindus, I may say, and Muslims--is that the Christians are a peculiarly vulnerable sector of the population. These people that Mr. Dayal was speaking of, these are poor, backward, and it's easy to attack them physically. They are also, in a sense, visibly foreign.

Now, I just want to again emphasize Christians are not new in India. Indian Christians claim that it was the apostle Thomas who was the first convert and began the conversion of India. Certainly, they're ancient.

One of the things that's often repeated continually in India is that the conversion of Indians took place during the British rule. This happens to be untrue. The British rulers were very much opposed to missionary enterprise, because they were afraid it would stir up the people. And the numbers of people who became Christian in the British period were really quite small. It had taken place in much earlier centuries.

But it's--I think the opposition is very much in terms of these religions as foreign entities in a body that should be Hindu. But it also--you have to relate it to the general situation in India, Kashmir and other things. But I would simply, I think, sum it up by saying the attack on Christians and on Muslims is an attempt to solidify a united nation to get rid of--not to get rid of but to weaken these groups. I can't be more specific than that, sir.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Did you want to comment on that?

MR. DAYAL: I don't know; I think one of the reasons possibly would like on the issue of the Dalits, as I explained in my opening remarks. Dalits are a very large community, together with the tribals. Both are being sought to be absorbed into the Hindu fold. Most of them challenge this. India's indigenous people, the tribals, challenge that they were ever Hindus. The Dalits argue that if, in a certain situation, you're supposed to be outcast, out of the pale, how can you ever be in it? How can you then be punished for going away?

But there are other reasons. I think we are very vulnerable. Beating us up, terrorizing us, will not invite any comment but will still help consolidate the constituency of the Sangh Parivar, the organizations, the fascist groups that we together call the Sangh Parivar. So you have this double advantage of being able to consolidate, continue the formation of this large, consolidated, one nation, one people, one culture constituency without exciting too much comment, too much retaliation. That is one.

The other, of course, is that we are rocking the boat. There is no doubt about it. We are rocking the boat by our efforts over the past centuries in education and in health. The nuns

got raped because they were there in a military--in a medical camp where Government doctors refused to go, and in Gujarat, the churches have brought about a situation of education where tribals, indigenous people, now know their rights, and they refuse to work for free. They refuse to send their women over to the manor. That is changing the hierarchy in India. That is not liked by those who are at the top of the hierarchy. So you have these twin factors, the push and the pull.

DR. KHAN: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Yes?

DR. KHAN: May I add something to what Professor Embree has said as far as the Hindu nationalism, the question that was put? Mohammed Ali Jinnah [ph], the founder of Pakistan, expounded the two nation theory. Muslims constitute one nation, with a history, religion, and everything; Hindus constitute another nation. Therefore, the concept of the two nation theory was propagated.

And the result is one nation has already gone to Pakistan. It means Muslims are not wanted in India; they have gone to Pakistan. The remaining people are Hindus. So taking the same theory about two nations, one nation is gone; the Hindus are left behind, and this is their nation. This is the starting point of Hindu nationalism.

DR. AL-MARAYATI: Excuse me; I'm losing my voice. But I had a question for you, Dr. Ali Khan, about what's been mentioned that there are fewer--lesser attacks in recent years on the Muslim population because there is more interest in actually pursuing them as a voting bloc, considering their large numbers, and so that there may be acts of conciliation or less aggressiveness for political reasons. Is that your assessment of the situation as well?

DR. KHAN: I'm not in a position to understand your question clearly.

DR. AL-MARAYATI: What I'm saying is that there are fewer attacks or discrimination against Muslims because government, whether it's local or state government, so forth, is interested in pursuing Muslim votes to become elected, so that they have

a more positive attitude towards the Muslim population in their area, and that's one explanation as to why violent acts are decreasing against Muslims, and I would like to know your opinion about that and the others on the panel.

DR. KHAN: Well, that's a very important question. Muslims constitute more than 12 percent of the population. They form a very sizeable, significant voting bloc. If you do not promise certain guarantees to Muslims, you are not sure of their votes. Therefore, even now, the new president of the BJP, Bangal Rashman [ph] has started wooing the Muslim population now. He wants Muslim support, because he has made the point very clear that without the support of Muslims, BJP cannot form the government. He has made that statement.

And this means that even BJP has realized the significant role that Muslims can play; you should not practice discrimination. If you do not allow Muslims in India religious freedom, you are not sure of their support. But I go on to further say Muslims do not take his words for granted. They say if we are to believe you, first of all, you declare that the contentious issues like Article 370, common civil code and concession on [in foreign language] will be given up once and for all.

Don't try to have a hidden agenda and an open agenda. You say once and for all no to such contentious issues: then, we will start to ally with you. If you continue the discriminatory treatment given the Muslims; it is also recognized very well by political parties, and without Muslim support, no party can really win. It's proved. Muslims voted against Congress because Congress was equally responsible for demolishing the Babri Mosque when Prime Minister Nashimbal [ph] was the Prime Minister.

So the Janata Dal people tried to play on the emotions of Muslims and got their support. Muslims realized that they are being fooled by raising this issue. This time, they solidly voted along with the Christians for the first time in the Indian political situation, Muslims and Christians solidly voted for Congress. They were not divided. The Congress Party came back with a thumping majority.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Yes, Mr. Dayal?

MR. DAYAL: I'd like to respond, too. First of all, it is not as if there is zero violence against Muslims. In states where it really matters, there is a simultaneity of violence.

In the State of Gujarat, Muslims continue to be killed, maimed, arrested, even as Christians continue to be assaulted, attacked, identified. In Uttar Pradesh, too, the State Government imposes--seeks to impose laws against Muslims even as it orders its secret police to go and harass nuns in schools.

So it is not true as if there has been a total cessation of violence against Muslims; and also, it is not true as if suddenly the whole Hindutva Parivar has said I will go out and love the Muslims. Within it, there is a major schism. As soon as Bangar Ralachman [ph] made his famous statement saying he has a nice heart for the Muslims, the rest of the Hindutvu Parivar came up with even more vigorous statements cautioning him not to do so, and the major headlined the VHP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, warns BJP against plans to appease Muslims.

I think it should be noted that an effort is a public relations exercise, but the people who govern the party which governs India are not convinced. They still think of Asian religions as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, versus Western religions: Islam and Buddhism [sic], and there's a major effort to do it physically. By the way, this effort has been challenged by the Buddhists as well as the Sikhs. The Sikhs have written a letter to the commission which is investigating the constitution, saying please ensure that we are identified as a religion and a people.

DR. KHAN: One important point that is missing is the growth of militancy in India, the growth of militancy. The growth of militancy has no place in society. There should be no room for militancy at any cost. But the hard social reality is that the growth of militancy in India is the direct outcome of the attacks on the Muslims in particular and minorities in general.

They are not supporting that militancy, but we have to consider the fact that it is a direct outcome of the constant suppression, oppression, of the minorities in India.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Thank you; I just want to welcome Commissioners Nina Shea and David Saperstein. We now have the full Commission here--I'm sorry; that's right; Dean Young will be--we are missing Dean Young, who will be joining us a bit later.

John Bolton had a question.

MR. BOLTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank all the members of the panel for their contribution, which has been quite helpful, and I hope we can call on you in the future.

I had a question for Professor Sharma, although I would certainly welcome comments by other members of the panel. I found your analysis quite interesting. I was struck that you rested it on Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and where you say that the concepts embodied in Article 18 are associated with Western religion and culture.

Without taking issue with that, in fact, putting Article 18 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights entirely aside for these purposes, I wonder if you could explain why your analysis is not inconsistent with Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which refers to the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. It seems to me that the conclusion that you draw in your testimony also leads you to quarrel with that provision of the Constitution. I'd like you to explain whether that's right or not or if you disagree, why I'm wrong.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: I'm glad that you have asked this question, because it goes to the core of some of the issues. I think what in talking about India one has to realize that Hinduism's self-perception as a non-proselytizing religion has a key role to play in this situation. I agree with Professor Embree that this may not be a fact, but I'm emphasizing that this is the dominant self-perception of the modern Hindu community; that it is a non-proselytizing religion.

Now, what happens when a non-proselytizing religion comes face-to-face with proselytizing religions? This is the key issue as I see it. Whether it is the Indian Constitution, Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, or whether it is Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration, if it is a non-proselytizing religion dealing with a non-proselytizing religion; for instance, Hinduism with Zoroastrianism, it does not cause any problems. If it is a proselytizing religion dealing with a proselytizing religion, again, like Islam with Christianity, it does not create problems, because the understanding of religious freedom of both the parties is the same.

Now, when we come to a non-proselytizing religion dealing with a proselytizing religion, the proselytizing religion--I beg your pardon--the non-proselytizing religion feels itself at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the proselytizing religion. Now, I admit, sir, that this is a very difficult and delicate point to make and convey, that the sense of vulnerability that is felt by a religion which does not perceive itself as proselytizing facing a proselytizing religion.

Now, of course, the obvious response is but why can't the Hindus just say no, right? If somebody comes and asks him to say, well, why don't you become a Muslim or a Christian, why doesn't he just say no? The problem is that he does not have the etiquette; his own etiquette and ethics and culture is very different. It is tolerant, first of all. So if somebody says and tells him that Jesus will save you, he says sure. You know, he will also save me like other gods can save me.

The moment the exclusiveness part of it comes in, he does not know how to handle it, because if he himself begins to adopt the same attitude, he ceases to be a Hindu. The only way the Hindu can deal with a non-proselytizing religion, then, is by ceasing to be a Hindu in his or her own perception.

Now, what does he do then? Either he says, well, there is no option; we have to meet the challenge on its own terms. So he begins to proselytize. Now, sir, visualize the following situation in India. At the moment, 2.4 percent of the population is trying to proselytize 82.3. What will happen if 82.3 percent of the population sets out to proselytize 2.4? Then, there will be a cry for minority rights by the 2.4. Then, people will forget that they are only trying to proselytize just as the Christians are trying to proselytize.

Now, if this does not happen, what happens? The Hindu turns to other recourses. The first response, anger, and we have evidence of that presented by the parties here. But this cannot be a long-run response, you know. You cannot function out of just outrage. So then, you turn to law. That is why there is a private bill pending for banning conversion.

When you turn to law, the other problem is the Constitution of India, which is based on a Western notion of religion. But let me point out that there has already been a judgment of the Supreme Court which states that propagation does not include proselytization. This was quite some time ago.

So you can see how what I call the Hindu view of religion, pressing for recognition in a Western legal and constitutional framework; the second sign of that is more recent. In another judgment of the Supreme Court, Hinduism has been called not a religion but a way of life. Hence, the centrality I accord to the two concepts of religion involved and how they shape our concept of religion.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Yes?

MR. DAYAL: I'd like to respond to the question as well as to the points arising out of the first response.

You are right, sir. The RSS does not believe that this is an evolved constitution or if it is, in fact a constitution that they are willing to accept. The head of RSS, Mr. K.S. Sudershin [ph] on the 10th of this month said the present constitution does not reflect the basic ethos, and it is not an evolved one. He said the country was secular, because the Hindus were in the majority, and the RSS did not accept the concept of minority. They don't accept most of the articles of the constitution as referred to.

Referring to the Supreme Court judgment that it is not a fundamental right to convert; it is not the fundamental right of a priest to sprinkle Jordan water or Loods [ph] water or a candle on people, but it is, and the same court upholds that, and I quote no less than Mr. Falinariman [ph], arguably India's greatest jurist, currently a member of our upper house, the Indian senate, you would say, who repeatedly points out, referring to and analyzing the Supreme Court judgment in a seminar where he and I were present last week, he says it is not necessary that the right to convert be declared fundamental, simply because the right to be converted--and these are his emphasis--simply because the right to be converted to a different religious persuasion, a matter of free volition and choice--is basic to one's spiritual existence. No one can deny it. It is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims, et cetera, et cetera, which you are right, including the freedom to change one's religion.

The Supreme Court judgment has often been used as a hammer to be in the minorities' way, but the rest of the Supreme Court judgment is not heard, and that is the point we have repeatedly made when challenging the laws of Aronachal [ph], Utter Pradesh and Orusa [ph], which ban conversion: what are you banning? The right of a frocked priest to sprinkle holy water? Or my right to accept that Jesus saved me, which I still proclaim that he did? That, the court has held as it cannot but.

MR. BOLTON: I just have one followup question for Professor Sharma and again for the others if they want to comment on it.

I understand both your prepared statement and your answer to my first question, then, to be essentially an argument that religion as you understand it is a collective right and not an individual right. Do I have that--do I understand that correctly?

PROFESSOR SHARMA: I understand it both ways. What I would like to say by way of clarification is that if I were to take the Hindu position, then, yes, I would say all conversion should be banned. But that is not the position I wish to take, because it is not just Hindus who live in India. So we have to arrive--first of all, we have to recognize the problem. I don't think the problem has been recognized as such: that we have a problem of two concepts of religious freedom.

Now, once that is recognized, they can be reconciled, in the sense that there can be a code of conduct to be agreed upon by all parties who are going to proselytize. Now, there have been cases, and these are press reports, so I cannot vouch for their accuracy, but there have been cases reported in which evangelists have gone into a temple while the people were actually praying and started denouncing their gods.

Now, if I were to enter a church in the U.S. under my claim that I am exercising my freedom of religion and were to denounce the practice of eucharist as cannibalism and exhort all Christians to become civilized, how would I expect to be treated?

MR. BOLTON: Could I just ask if you could address this question whether in your concept, this--the right of religious freedom inheres in individuals or inheres in collectivities? Because I think that goes centrally to the issue of what the Indian Constitution says.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: No; I think individuals have the right to choose their religion.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Commissioner Shea?

MS. SHEA: Well, I also want to thank you all for preparing testimony and appearing here today. It's so important that we have a deeper understanding of the world's largest democracy. There has been broad press coverage of the problems of religious freedom or lack of it in India, and it's so important that we understand what's at work.

I'd like to direct my question to Mr. Dayal, and I was fascinated by your analysis of the hate campaign that is causing violence against the Christian community and Muslim community as well, and I'd like to know what, in your opinion, the Government of India should be doing and what the United States should be doing in its relations with the Government of India to help the situation briefly.

MR. DAYAL: Yes; hate campaigns are essentially built on lies. Demolish the lie, and you help demolish the hate campaign. A persistent hate campaign against Christians is that they forcibly convert. They are not going into nuances of whether you are concurrently a Hindu and a Muslim and a Sikh at the same time or no. You're going into absolute situations: that Christians forcibly convert; that they use force; they use guile; they use inducement, and they use money.

But this is a malicious lie. I've been on three committees of inquiry of the National Commission on Minorities. We have gone to state upon state, and the response has been there has so far not been a single case of forcible conversion, as is proper: 2.3 percent in a billion people. Who can? Even this evangelist that was quoted just now, how dare he enter a temple with 1,000 people? He must be nuts. This government is in a position to announce that there is no forcible conversion in India, as much as the government is in a position to announce that Christians are not the only ones receiving money from abroad. The Government itself receives money; Hindu organizations; Muslim organizations.

The Buddhists, women, children, you name it; people who love trees get the money from Europe in India. We have asked the Government again and again under your laws, sir, you know who is getting what money. Why don't you publish the entire list so we know? And then, nobody can continue with the lie.

I showed you this Bible. It was burnt because they said that

children were being asked to certify that they have accepted Christ, and teachers were demanding the certificate when they were giving this Bible. At the end of any Gideon's Bible is a normal blah blah. It is bonded to the plastic. How can you remove it as a certificate and give it back?

And yet, the lie was perpetrated; 400 were burnt, and an environment of hate was created in Gujarat, which led to 36 churches being destroyed. Hate--and if truth went out, the Government could help by letting truth out. The Government, as I said also, must assert its political will and announce that it will not tolerate this crap; that it will bring the full might of the law, the full wrath of the law on this.

MS. SHEA: And what should the United States be doing in its foreign policy towards India in its view?

MR. DAYAL: Pray for us, ma'am. I do not know, because this is a very sensitive issue, possibly even more sensitive than the issue of conversions; the issue of nationalism and jurisdiction. I'm not here, as I have repeatedly said, to seek sanctions. They will hurt our people. But yet, the world is a global family. Have we not in India cried when people of Indian origin were persecuted in Fiji, and the ambassador and the president of Indian origin was sacked? Was he not given a great hullabaloo in India? Do we not cry when our brother Christians are persecuted in Pakistan or anywhere else?

The world is a global village, and I think universally, we must strengthen the United Nations Article 18 to ensure that people like us can exist as us.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Commissioner Saperstein?

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Professor Sharma, I want to also follow up on John Bolton's questions to you, and I want to express my appreciation to everyone. My apologies for being late; I was coming from out of town, and this was the earliest connection that I could make.

But I read your testimony with great interest. I speak as both a rabbi who is clergy within a non-proselytizing tradition and also a law professor who teaches church-state law. I want to just briefly ask about both sides of that. In the United

States, the way we deal with the conflict of religious freedom of different individuals that come together, to take your example of somebody interrupting a church service, is to say that the state can get involved when it has a compelling interest in doing so.

Protecting the right of the people who are being disturbed is a compelling interest, but it must then do it in the most limited manner possible, so it can't ban the person from carrying that message at all; just not in a way that interrupts the worship service that's involved here. We always have to balance things out.

It is good for you to call for negotiating sensible, civil ways of resolving competing rights. I understand that. However, that doesn't abrogate the notion, the fundamental notion of universal human rights, which either we agree to, or we don't here, which is that first, it is not subject to majoritarian rule. Even if every Hindu in India were troubled by this, the right of an individual, as you asserted in your very last comment, to accept what faith they wish to accept would need to be protected, and the number of people who are troubled by that doesn't change the right. It may change how we reach that civil accord, but it doesn't change the underlying nature of the right.

Secondly, in your concluding paragraph, you say that you'd like to see Article 18 with equal emphasis protect both sides of this. But in point of fact, I would suggest to you that it does exactly that. There is no time in Article 18 where the word to adopt is not preceded by the word to have. People are free of coercion that would impair their freedom to have a religion or to adopt a religion. They are guaranteed the freedom to have a religion or adopt a religion.

It would seem to me that it does do that exactly. And finally, now, on the rabbinic side here, it would seem to me that there are times that certain religions have contradictory beliefs. If the proposition is that everyone should be allowed--it should be protected from the argument that there are contradictory beliefs, that seems to me a major infringement on religious freedom and also a violation of common sense here.

Those religions that, at their center, believe that idolatry, the worship of idols, is fundamentally wrong are irreconcilable with religions that believe that it is right. Those who would believe in human sacrifice are inexorably opposed to those religions that are against human sacrifice. And even if one of those two religions thought well, we can encompass both, it doesn't limit the freedom of the other side to suggest

that that is not so here or, for that matter, over the question of belief in Jesus, in my religion, a religion that says God does not take human form, and salvation cannot be found through any entity that has taken human form, is irreconcilable with a religion that has that at the center of their faith.

So it seems to me there are times that differences--and it is a major limitation of freedom to say no, you have to let everyone do everything.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: Could I request that the Article 18 be read out to the Commission? Could I request that Article 18 of the Universal Declaration be read out?

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Be read out?

PROFESSOR SHARMA: Yes, sir.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: I mean, I think I read the lines that dealt with this: Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, freedom either individually or in community with others, public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

And the second provision that speaks to this is: No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: Right, sir; my position is that have is not strong enough to give me the clout to say that if you come to me and say it is my right to proselytize and ask you to change my religion, I can send of the same provision in Article 18: I have the right to retain my religion, and back off.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Now, what about the contradictory beliefs? I mean, where religions believe there are contradictory beliefs? Do they have the right to say that to others?

PROFESSOR SHARMA: Oh, certainly, yes.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Well, that seems to me to be the right to proselytize, isn't it?

PROFESSOR SHARMA: The right--I am not opposed to the right to proselytize. It is the conditions under which it is being carried out. I mean, I gave a provocative example.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: But the right to say that if you accept the beliefs of my religion, you cannot maintain logically--you have the freedom to do it, but you also have the right to be wrong.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: Yes.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: But on a religious ground, you cannot accept the tenets, the fundamental beliefs of your religion if you accept the beliefs of my religion. Certainly, people would have the right to do that, and that would not be inappropriate, would it?

PROFESSOR SHARMA: No, no; I believe that everybody should have the right to change their religion; to retain their religion. People should have the right to ask others to change their religion. They should have an equally clear-cut, firm right in their own perception to refuse it. What I am saying is that this is not the perception we have--

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Okay.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: --at least in India of either Article 18 or Article 25.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Okay; then, bottom line is to the extent

that people have that impression that word to have did except that, then, the issue for you is less of the fundamental laws that are involved but rather the wisdom of finding ways to go about this work that respects the cultural differences.

PROFESSOR SHARMA: That is correct, sir.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Okay.

DR. KHAN: Let me interrupt here. Freedom of religion should not necessarily mean that I should have the freedom to profess my religion, but at the same time, I should basically believe in what is called tolerance for other religions. Unless my mind is in toleration, this freedom of religion will be conflicting. I should follow my religion and respect the other religions as well.

Apart from this, Mr. Chairman, if you'll permit me, one important point that has not been articulated so far is there is an attempt in India to divide Muslims and Christians, saying Muslims are blasting the churches. This has happened in some states, including my own state of Kenaltica [ph].

Now, here I want to make the point very clear. There is an organization called [in foreign language] Association, and the handiwork of this organization, they have blasted some churches, and the Muslim name was dragged in. But immediately, all the Christian organizations in all states have said that this is not the handiwork of Muslims. Muslim leaders also said, religious leaders, no, we are not responsible.

The basic truth is that this is not led by Muslims, because Islam does not permit to recognize some other person as a prophet or something like that. So as a Hindu religious leader, and therefore, basically, if their religion does permit that, they are not Muslims. So how this is happening is this fear that the Sangh Parivar, the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad are having some sort of collusion or understanding with Vindar Anjaman [ph] to blast the churches and bring conflict between the Muslims and Christians.

MR. DAYAL: I wanted to bring to the Commission's notice a small fact. We've forgotten a community called Dalits. Over the last 3,000 years, the violence against Dalits adds up

to a million times more than the violence against Muslims or Christians. And I was wondering why, because they never proselytized. Who would want to bring somebody up into a state where he becomes an untouchable?

I also want to point out in the question of conversions and reconversions a great shame. Ashankasharia [ph] of the Papsi [ph] of Pulli [ph] in converting tribal Christians to Hinduism through some ceremonies; he said now, you are Hindus, but you cannot worship in a temple. You cannot marry our daughters. We will build small temples for you; you go and worship there.

A friend of mine wrote an article. He headed it low-cost temples for low-cost people. I was wondering how things reconcile to this continuing violence against the Dalits? Somewhere there is the answer to the question of tolerance and intolerance. I think history defines the truth.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: I wanted to ask you a question, Mr. Dayal, about violence. As you look at acts of violence around the country, do you see a particular pattern or set of patterns, that is, for why an incident occurs, when it occurred, or why in one particular town or province and not another?

MR. DAYAL: There is definitely a pattern, and we had been repeatedly asking Archbishop Andajalastik [ph], who was my chairman when I was convening the National Human Rights Forum; he asked the Prime Minister, please have the pattern looked into, because the pattern is bizarre. Crimes take place in Uttar Pradesh against Christians, and in Uttar Pradesh, Christians are not even 2.3 percent. They are so few, you have to travel 20 kilometers to find the next Christian family.

But yet, in an area where the Lord Krishna is said to have been born or was born, in the state--the town of Mattura [ph], a nuns' convent was attacked; a priest was bashed close to death. He survived because he was strong. Under the priest, a brother who had not been ordained was bashed to death.

The eyewitness of the brother's murder is Cook [ph], a tribal Christian called Vijay Acca [ph] was taken by the police and killed in police custody by the police. Two policemen, officers, are facing trial on that. I don't know if they'll be punished. But here is a situation where there is no proselytization. There are not even Christians enough to make a good congregation on Holy Saturday. Why is it happening there?

In Gujarat, the tribal situation, the forests have been taken away from the tribals. But everywhere we go, we see that before the violence takes place, a month before, two months before, the camps there of the Hindutva Parivar; of the VHP, of the RSS; hate literature and inflammatory speeches are made. After that, some lunatic or possibly somebody gets killed. And then, the Government comes and says that these are criminal gangs which are killing. And then, we ask the Government how is it that thieves and robbers have turned anti-Christian?

There are, of course, no answers to that.

CHAIRMAN ABRAMS: Because we need to go to the panel on Kashmir, I'm going to have to draw this discussion to a close. I would also announce that as we have taken as much time as we have with this panel, the break which we had initially scheduled will be eliminated, and we will add that time and perhaps a little more to the subpanel on Kashmir.

I know Professor Embree has agreed to stay on for this second panel. So let me, on behalf of the Commission, thank Mr. Sharma, Mumtaz Ali Khan, Mr. Dayal for being with us today; for your oral testimony; for your written testimony and for the answers you've given to our questions. Thank you very much.