

COMMENT

## Targeting Uttar Pradesh?

ASHOK SINGHAL, INTERNATIONAL President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Major General Bharat Keshar Singh, President of Vishwa Hindu Mahasangh, the Shankaracharya of Puri Nischalananda, Jagadguru Madhwacharya Shri Vishesh Teerth (Udupi), Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Vasudeva-charya and Subramaniam Swamy during the last week of December were all part of a three-day Virat Hindu Mahasammelan (22-24th Dec, 2006) held at Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh(UP) which was formally organised to deliberate on the 'Challenges Before Hinduism'.

Of course the way the deliberations unfolded it was clear to even a lay person that it had nothing to do with challenges before Hinduism—neither of the spiritual or the temporal kind—rather it was a gathering to chalk out a political programme couched in religious parlance to further the agenda of the saffronites.

An important feature of this Mahasammelan was that it was organised parallel to the National Executive Meeting of the BJP at Lucknow. Interestingly while the media was more focused on the deliberations of the National Executive meeting or was busy reporting about intraparty squabbles, not many people even deemed it necessary to report or comment on this massive gathering of people in the heart of Eastern UP.

The Mahasammelan or congregation not only called for declaration of Nepal as 'Hindu State and restoration of monarchy' there but also resolved for the construction of a grand temple at Ayodhya, and 'liberation' of the Kashi and Mathura shrines, ban on cow slaughter. It also criticised the Indian Government stand on Nepal and said no political party was taking Maoists' activities seriously. It also deliberated on the 'pathetic' condition of the Hindus in Nepal and the alleged activities of ISI of Pakistan there which was supposedly spreading its network to create disturbance in India.

And while the BJP seemed to waver initially on the agenda of construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya, in its executive meeting, the Mahasammelan which was in a sense a show of defiance by its own party MP from Gorakhpur seemed to focus itself on these very agendas over which the BJP seemed to be going soft because of political exigencies. It is a different matter that at the end of its meeting the Party itself discovered the 'merits' in raising this issue and go the whole hog riding on a rabid Hindutva agenda.

Question naturally arises whether the 'party with a difference' which wears discipline on its sleeves has decided to tail its own 'defiant' MP or it is part of a wider gameplan of the Hindutva brigade which has seen for itself the 'success' of this model in this part of UP—a model which has the potential of making it another Gujarat. At the time of writing Gorakhpur was under curfew following communal tensions and violence, thanks to Hindu Mahasammelan.✍

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