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MY TURN

## Whither Nepal?

The conversion onslaught threatens Hindus

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In the wake of the visit of Indian saint Mukunda Sharan to Jawalakhel, Lalitpur, some time ago, Hindu devotees pasted wall-posters in various parts of Kathmandu Valley inviting people to hear his spiritual discourse. Most of these posters were removed or defaced by people who follow alien religions. No culprit has ever been punished. Disrespect against the Hindu saint was expressed in the broad daylight. Can anybody dare to do so against any Muslim saint in an Islamic country? Is it possible to insult the Pope in the countries dominated by Catholics without repercussions? What one cannot do in the Islamic or Christian-dominated countries, one can do in my Hindu Kingdom. It compels me to ask, "Is Nepal at all a Hindu state?"

Following the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal in 1990, billions of US dollars have been pumped into Nepal for conversion. Though against the law, the conversion effort is augmented by US government funds. The Christian population, which was almost nil until 1960, has now increased to

hundreds of thousands. Every year, hundreds of churches are being built in various parts of the country with the support of international organizations. And this goes on while the number of adherents to Christianity plummets daily in the West!

Apart from the Christian population, the Muslim population has also increased beyond any proportion. The Muslim population accounted for merely 2.5 percent of the total until 1981. It shot up to 3.5 per cent in 1991. The number of mosques has increased not only in Kathmandu Valley but also in remote parts of the Kingdom. For even a small population of the Muslims in several villages, big mosques were built. Though the country has been facing acute recession, there is no dearth of money for making mosques or churches. In the beginning of December, 1998, Muslims audaciously held rallies at Sita's birthplace--Janakpur, one of the great holy towns of Hinduism--calling for the conversion of Nepal into an Islamic state!

The Christian missions backed by Western affluence and Islamic organizations with petro-dollars pose a major threat to the Hindus in their own land. Poor, illiterate and helpless, Nepalese are lured into these alien religions. It is against the spirit of our constitution. To prevent the destruction of our ancient culture, conversion is illegal in Nepal. Both the converters and the converts are subject to strong punishment. However, the law enforcement machinery is so weak that no person has been imprisoned, despite the fact that conversion has become a common phenomenon in recent years.

It is a pity that foreign missionaries have been taking undue

benefit from the overtolerance of the Hindu State. If His Majesty's Government is not strict in enforcing the country's law, the situation will become serious in the not-too-distant future. Hindus will turn into a minority in their own land. At the moment, many Hindus and Buddhists have already started facing difficulty in getting employment in foreign agencies dominated by the Christians and the Muslims. These agencies have recently started instigating the Nepalese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to oppose the government because a provision has been made for the NGOs to seek the government's permission prior to receiving external funds. Over the years, the lack of such a provision has enabled many of the foreign agencies to direct their funds for conversion. Such a provision might check the monopoly of certain international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies who work as a virtual parallel government and support the conversion activities in Nepal. If the activities of the foreign missionaries are not controlled effectively, Nepal may not remain a Hindu state for long.

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