

## Beyond Real Estate

by Javed Akhtar



The bone of contention is not Ayodhya, but a particular plot. While no one is sure of the exact millennium of Ram's birth, the Sangh parivar is absolutely certain about the precise spot of his birth. Yet, leave alone 30 feet, they will not agree to move three inches to solve the problem .

On the other hand, the 'once a mosque, always a mosque' claim of maulvis and mullahs is nothing but a lie. They cannot deny that in many Muslim countries, mosques have often been shifted even to broaden highways.

That a solution is the last thing on the minds of the contestants on either side is obvious.

Nothing in the world is done on such a scale and with such consistency without a grand plan; the question that arises is: **why are the fundamentalists from both sides doing this?**

Behind all the impassioned sloganeering and pretensions of defending culture, religion and nation, the real agenda is to legitimise an unjust and an exploitative system. To deny civil liberties, you need an undemocratic system. And to justify and legitimise an undemocratic system, you need religious fundamentalism and majoritarianism pretending to be nationalism.

The fact is that Jinnah was a cold-blooded, manipulative, power-hungry politician who hardly had any religious beliefs.

The same can be said of Advani.

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[http://www.hindustantimes.com/2003/Jul/15/181\\_308179,00120001.htm](http://www.hindustantimes.com/2003/Jul/15/181_308179,00120001.htm)  
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Fascism and fundamentalism (theocracy) have one thing in common: both believe in the total usurpation of the basic rights and civil liberties of citizens. Given half a chance, like the Taliban, the Sangh parivar will start putting women in their place.

*Gujarat is called a laboratory of Hindutva, but in my view its biggest laboratory is Pakistan, which was founded on those very principles on which the Sangh parivar wants to rebuild this country.*

In post-Partition India, the Muslim fundamentalist can no longer aspire to gain control of the State. But his political ambitions intact, he does seek to be a State within a State. He is interested in democracy and secularism only to the extent that in the name of these principles his fundamentalism is tolerated.

So, the choice is not between fundamentalists of two communities, for they are the mirror-images of each other.

**The choice is not even between a temple and a mosque. The choice is between democracy and a totalitarian regime.**

Let us make all fundamentalist organisations irrelevant by telling them in no uncertain terms that it is not Ayodhya – they are the problem. ►

