

[Western Media Unfair to Hindus](#)

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Hinduism Today Survey Confirms Anti-Hindu Bias And Lack of Background

The western media reported extensively on the December demolition of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and the subsequent riots, and many Hindus say the tragic events were compounded by inaccurate and biased reporting. HINDUISM TODAY received dozens of such complaints about the newspapers, wire services and television broadcasts. The complaints fall into six general categories:

1) Inaccuracies about the immediate situation and inadequate background on the history of the disputed Babri Masjid, especially in creating the erroneous impression it was a functioning mosque at the time of destruction.

2) An anti-Hindu bias in the reporting with the apparent attempt to put India and Hinduism in the worst possible light.

3) Use of the term "secular" to describe the decidedly nonsecular treatment of Hinduism under Indian law, and use of the term "fundamentalist" to categorize the Hindu activists, who are actually "nationalists."

4) Failure to seek out and report moderate Hindu opinion on the events, while reporting both moderate and extremist Muslim opinion.

5) Failure to report earlier, vastly more destructive and deadly Muslim attacks upon Hindus and Hindu temples in Kashmir, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and

even the USA and Canada.

6) Inaccurate and insensitive remarks about Hindu deities, beliefs and practices, especially with regard to Lord Rama.

The overall result, said our readers, was to make Hindus look bad and to exacerbate Hindu/Muslim relations worldwide. HINDUISM TODAY acquired and analyzed dozens of these reports from The New York Time's, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, the Associated Press, United Press International, CNN and the BBC, whose combined readers and viewers number over one billion.

The readers' complaints, we found, were valid. Of the eight news services, The Washington Post did the best job. The others, even though they have full-time correspondents living in India and the Ayodhya crisis has been years in the making, failed to grasp - or to convey - the complexities of India's religious and political scene, and often betrayed a pro-Muslim, anti-Hindu bias. Below we give examples of errors in the six above-mentioned categories. The errors of fact, slant and bias of the entire collection of stories are far too numerous to explain here.

The misreporting started right off on day one, December 7th, with the first CNN report which stated, "Muslims refused to give up control of the building fearing that could lead to dispossession of other Muslim shrines in India. India's Supreme Court was on the Muslims' side." The error is that the Supreme Court did not side with the Muslims (or the Hindus). In fact, the issue had been in the courts for 50 years without a decision, a substantial contributing factor to the dispute's final degeneration into anarchy. Secondly, no explanation is given as to why there was fear of dispossession of other Muslim shrines - that those shrines had been built during the Muslim conquest of India upon Hindu holy sites where temples had stood. By one count, there are 3,000 such mosques. Finally, the actual Hindu demand was to dismantle and relocate, not to seize or demolish, the Babri Masjid. Similar reports in other media made it appear that Hindus had attacked a functioning, undisputed Muslim mosque as a prelude to usurping other legitimately built and owned mosques in India.

Over and over each reporter incorrectly stated there was no "firm evidence" that

the Babri Masjid was built after Muslim conquerors demolished a temple marking the birthplace of Lord Rama. Western readers and viewers were never told that thousands of other mosques in India were built after demolishing Hindu temples. In such a context, proving that Babri Masjid, which happens to be sitting on one of the most revered Hindu holy places in India, was built after destroying a temple is to simply state the "self-evident," said reader Anil Patel of Chicago.

A clear example of anti-Hindu/pro-Muslim bias comes in this Associated Press report on December 9th on Hindu/Muslim relations in India: "Bharat Prabhudas Amin doesn't like Muslims because they won't sing 'Worship the Motherland,' an anthem that millions of devout Hindu sing every morning." The song in question is India's national anthem *Rashtra Geet*, literally and correctly translated as "National Song." Patriotism - the real issue - is cleverly concealed by the report's implication that Muslims are being asked to sing a Hindu religious song.

Particularly misleading are the continuous references to "secularism" such as this from *The New York Times*: "dislodge India from its secular foundation." Read by a western person, secular means "separation of church and state." But this is not what happens in India. Consider just this partial list of facts mentioned by our readers: 1) nearly all Hindu temples - tens of thousands - are owned and run by the government, often by a non-religious official. Hindu temples not already owned by the government can be taken over. Muslim and Christian places of worship are not owned or run by the government, nor can they be taken over. 2) Hindu schools which receive government funds cannot teach Hinduism, whereas non-Hindu schools which receive government funds can. Hindu schools can and are often taken over by the government. 3) Income of Hindu temples is taxed. Temple endowments are often usurped.

Then there is the term fundamentalist which, according to Webster means "religious beliefs based on a literal interpretation of everything in the Bible and regarded as fundamental to Christian faith and morals," and extended to other religions to categorize those sects that adhere to a strict interpretation of the original scriptures. But the term is a misnomer for the Hindu organizations involved in the Ayodhya conflict. Philosophically they are quite liberal, and hardly fundamentalist in the sense meant by "Christian fundamentalist" or "Islamic fundamentalist." Rather they advocate a Hindu state for India and, according to Prof. Arvind Sharma of Canada, "Hindu nationalism would be a far better term." By calling the Hindus fundamentalists, the spectre of religious intolerance is raised, and the well-known historical tolerance of Hinduism towards other faiths is ignored.

Muslim leaders as radical as the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of Iran were quoted calling for virtual jihad [holy war] over the destruction. Mr. Subramaniam, president of the Malaysia Hindu Sangam, complained. "The views of the Hindu parties to the conflict were not mentioned, but the [ruling party] leaders were mentioned several times." No moderate Hindu religious leaders were quoted by any of the news media, though such people are readily available in New Delhi.

Typical of the statements which fail to mention Muslim attacks against Hindus in India is this from Tin' Los Angeles Times: "...long-running military offensives against militant separatists in Punjab and the disputed state of Kashmir." No mention is made that the separatists in Kashmir are Muslims, or that they and the Sikh separatists in Punjab have received massive military training and assistance from Pakistan. This is common knowledge in India and a major source of Hindu/Muslim tensions. Dr. Bangalore Sureshwara of Chicago, Illinois, complained about "the virtual withholding of information from the public relating to the destruction and damage of Hindu temples in Kashmir that occurred in the eighties." Nor did the western media mention the 200,000 Hindus forced out of Kashmir by the Muslim separatists, even though tens of thousands of these refugees languish in squalid camps just outside of New Delhi itself.

"Hindus often had a feeling of insult that the story of Lord Rama wasn't taken seriously in the press. It seemed a denial of His existence, a painful experience," stated Nandoe Tewari of Foundation Ganesha in Holland. Consider these excerpts from The Los Angeles Times: "Fabled Hindu warrior-king and demigod Lord Rama...There is no proof Rama was born here, or even that he existed. But fanatics don't look for evidence." Demigod means "a lesser god; minor deity." Speaking of Lord Rama in this fashion and doubting His birth is a tremendous insult to the hundreds of millions who revere Him as God's incarnation on Earth with exactly the same reverence accorded Jesus by the Christians. Can one imagine a newspaper report stating, "There was no proof that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, or even that he existed?"

Why does this all happen? In speaking with the various newspapers and wire services, we learned that the US offices depend entirely upon the expertise of their foreign correspondents in India. There is no editor in the home office familiar enough with India or Hinduism to judge the accuracy, impartiality or completeness of a report. In the case of Ayodhya and the subsequent riots, it was as if they had reported on the 1992 Los Angeles riots and never mentioned the injustices of the Rodney King case which caused them. That's bad journalism.

Sitting at these same media's sports desks are reporters and editors who can explain in extensive clinical detail the present and past medical condition of Joe Montana's throwing arm - the top pro football quarterback of the San Francisco 49'ers. Perhaps the same interest and effort could be applied to understand Hinduism - the world's oldest religion - and Hindus - 1/6th of the human race.

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