



Your article “The Angst of a Failed Jinnah” in issue No. 151 was quite interesting. Another similarity between Advani and Jinnah is that both travelled the fundamentalist road to seek political power, even though both had begun as moderates. I completely agree with you that the use of violence unites the fascist, communists and religious fundamentalists, irrespective of their ideological garbs.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Aparna Krishnan, who wrote that interesting article, “A Cure Worse than the Disease,” on rural education.

**Barun Mitra, New Delhi**

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**Labour of Love**

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I am proud of the work Manushi has done with the rickshaw pullers in Delhi. In our world of globalisation and “progress”, the rights of the unorganised sector and the poor and weak seem to be of no consequence. I am glad that there are other people who have committed themselves to see that the interests of the weak and poor are protected.

I have completed nearly 21 years in Rampuram village, and the work I have done here has made some difference both for the rural women I work with, and also among the general community who realises that being self-reliant is more valuable than accepting sops and handouts. Our Government does not want poor people to become powerful in their own right, because then accountability will be the order of the day. So, I do what is possible in this direction, which of course does not make me very popular with the local leaders, contractors and sarpanches. Earlier there were many attempts to scare me off, including a brush with Naxalites, but my

## Responses to MANUSHI

stubborn refusal to get cowed down or dissuaded has made them more or less give up on me.

My organisation focuses on empowerment through enhancing knowledge and skills for economic development in non-traditional areas.

**Chandra J Kanjilal, Andhra Pradesh**

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**Women’s Reservation Bill**

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The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government has recently decided to introduce a new version to the Bill to reserve 33 per cent of seats for women in both Lok Sabha and State legislatures. The proposed bill both aims to increase the number of seats and provide 33 percent reservation for women candidates. In this context, if the government increases the seats, the total strength in Lok Sabha will increase from 542 to 723 (excluding two Anglo Indian members) of which 179 will be reserved for women candidates.

The 91<sup>st</sup> amendment of the constitution (2000) extended the freeze on the expansion of seats to the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha till 2026.

Now, if the UPA government wants to increase the number of seats, first they have to amend the Constitution. This would be against the spirit of the 91<sup>st</sup> amendment of the Constitution. It would also go against the objectives of the National Population Policy (NPP) of 2000 statement that urged by the

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (Government of India 2000:11) of freezing the expansion of seats till 2026. The NPP recommended the freeze as a motivational measure, in order to enable state governments to fearlessly and effectively pursue the agenda of population stabilisation.

The aim of these amendments were mainly in response to fears expressed by southern states, which felt that as a result of enhancing the number of seats in parliament they might lose some of their representation in Lok Sabha since they were the leading states in the Union that were containing population growth through strong family limitation. If the proposed number of seats is to be based on the size of the population, the states which are successful in controlling their rate of population growth will be punished by losing some proportion of seats. Moreover, a delimitation commission is currently working on making population size equal as far as possible in constituencies within each state, based on 2001 census population figures. Even within the states, those districts that register the lowest fertility rate and reduced population growth the most will lose a substantial number of seats on account of delimitation activities to other districts which did not do as well.

The main obstacle in front of UPA government will be to find a

suitable formula to distribute the enhanced seats. So far, no consensus has been reached. BJP made its stand very clear. It would not support any move for a quota system. If the government goes by a proper delimitation process, it would not be possible to complete the process before the next general elections. The time and money spent in the ongoing delimitation activities will be wasted.

Another concern is how the south Indian states are going to react to this move. The 91<sup>st</sup> amendment of the constitution was introduced in the parliament partially because of the pressure from southern MP's to avoid a possible north-south divide and also to maintain the federal balance.

**J. Retnakumar, Mumbai**

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### No Easy Answers

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Aparna Krishnan's report in issue No. 151 on rural schools in India is brilliant. This ethnographic report provides a detailed description of the educational set up in rural parts of India as it exists today. Most issues discussed don't have easy answers, but one wonders why we are allowing international organizations like the World Bank to determine our agenda and approach. Is this not crippling us further? What compels us to accept their terms? This report should definitely be taken to policy makers.

**Dipti Kulkarni, New Delhi** ☐

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