

Similarly, there is a loose assertion, or rather a quote from an article in *India Today* by Prabhu Chawla that, “the army signaled its unwillingness to step in and take drastic action” against Hindu gangs determined to harm the (Babri) mosque. Now all this is unprofessional. Mr. Khalidi should have known that army can act in aid of Civil Power only when asked by the civil power, which in this case was the UP government under Kalyan Singh. Law and order is a state subject, so how can Khalidi get away with another dubious quote from someone to the effect that the then Army Chief Gen. Roderigues “refused government pleas to take over security arrangements at the Babri Mosque.” The central government couldn’t in seriousness have asked him. If the central government meant business it could have first dismissed the state government and then asked the army aid the civil administration. Much of Khalidi’s argument loses its authority and gravitas with such amateurish statements. Don’t lay the blame for Ayodhya on the door of the Army or the Para-Military. Point your finger at a fanatically obsessed UP government and the ever-dithering Centre.

Similarly, he states that “Sikh grievances inside and outside the Army led to the Punjab imbroglio in the 1980s.” Really? Grievances inside the army? Could we know what they were? And he calls Shaubeg Singh “a retired Lt General” when he was a cashiered Major General. The book needed more painstaking research. The trouble with the author is that he sometimes trivializes the very important central argument of the book by making assertions that cannot stand scrutiny. Only two Muslims have risen to the rank of Lt General, he tells us. Only six Muslims ever became Major Generals. That is sad. Pursue this argument by all means through a thorough study, records, *inter se* seniorities, the works. Don’t bring in the Sikh analogy and say that a great injustice has been done to them because “no Sikh ever rose to the position of the Chief of Army Staff.” And then he brings, in support of his contention, the case of Vishnu Bhagwat and his “half Muslim wife.” Anyone who knows anything about that case knows it had nothing to do with Mr Bhagwat’s attorney wife (I thought she was Parsi). Khalidi, however, does make the point that because of Akali Dal backing no action was taken against the Sikh officer, Vice Admiral Harinder Singh who made that contemptible statement. Though in all fairness it must be said that Sikh politicians are known to lobby hard for their favourites in ministries and even in the agencies.

One can agree with the author’s conclusion that the army should be representative of the ‘national demography.’¹ But one could argue with him when