

# Socio-demographic Profile of Pakistani Hindu Migrants in India

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**KEYWORDS:** Migration. Narratives. Sindh

**ABSTRACT:** The present study focuses attention on the socio-demographic features of the Pakistani Hindu families from the Sri Ram Sena Hindu camp in New Delhi. These families had been migrating to India from Sindh, Pakistan since 2011. Such an understanding of this recent group of migrants is crucial to further understand their life-worlds as they lead their lives in a period of waiting. This article also includes narratives from the families which shall help in furthering an understanding of this community.

## INTRODUCTION

Often to understand the life-world of a migrant community, one has to first understand the socio-demographic characteristics of the community. This study thus, aims to understand the socio-demographic characteristics of the Pakistani Hindu community who have migrated to the city of New Delhi in India from their native place in Sindh and currently inhabit the Sri Ram Sena Hindu migrant camp located in the Aruna Nagar II neighborhood of the Civil Lines area within the city of Delhi. The families from this community had been migrating to this camp since the year 2011 and the migration was still occurring in the year 2020. Migration has taken place through either the border in Jodhpur region of Rajasthan or, the Wagah border of Punjab. The main reasons for the migration that came up in multiple narratives were related lack of safety of adolescent daughters, lack of school education in line with the Hindu culture and practice of un-touchability apart from lack of freedom to practice their own socio-religious practices (such as burials). However, this article aims to give a socio-demographical understanding of the family's specific to a particular camp of the Pakistani Hindus and is not generalisable for the other camps of families from

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the same community within the National Capital Region such as those in Adarsh Nagar or Faridabad.

However, before we go further a brief mention of the history of the native society of the families has to be mentioned. Sindh has historically (especially in the pre-British times) been a land of syncretism. Kothari (2004) had pointed out that historically identities were so often blurred and so porous that religion was not even a marker of identity. According to (2012) inter-community relations had nothing to do with religion. However, such syncretism was present not only in the pre-British times but even under, the British till the early 1920's. Therefore, the province of Sindh can be said to have witnessed the longest period of proximity between the Hindus and the Muslims whose relationship although unequal (in terms of the former community being the minority) was the most intimate one in the sub-continent (Kothari, 2009).

However, fissures in the inter-communal relationships appeared in the late 1920's and again in the late 1940's. The beginning of the fissures had their beginnings in annexation of Sindh to Bombay Presidency under the British rule. It was due to this annexation that the Sindh province started seeing large-scale migration of Gujarati traders, Marathi and Parsi administrators (Malkani, '84) and even of Jews, New Series ©SERIALS

Christians and minority sects of Islam like Ismailis and Bhoras (Lari, '94). Due to this annexation, Sindh saw large-scale influx of Hindus from Rajasthan, Kutch and Gujarat areas that did lead to some insecurity that Sindh would gradually become a Hindu majority province among the Muslim elites (Lari, '94). This insecurity was all the more fostered due to the fact that the Hindus who prior to the British invasion hardly owned land ended up within a century of British rule with 40% of the land and another 20% (of the lands of the non-Hindu community) that were mortgaged to them (Malkani, '84). However, later the fissures would widen in the later 1930's due to a series of riots and massacres, suddhi movements (Kothari, 2006) and later nearing independence due to large influx of Muhajirs who had migrated to Sindh and undertook looting of the properties of the minorities in Sindh so as to force them to leave Sindh for India. These fissures fuelled out-migration of minority Hindus from Sindh who fled due to fear of persecution especially in the period immediately following Partition.

For those who remained in Sindh or, those who managed to return post-Partition, the condition of the minorities gradually deteriorated in Pakistan. After, independence, even though Pakistan was envisaged as a nation where people would work together in spirit as citizens of a State with equal rights, social justice, equality, brother-hood of man, tolerance, equity, justice and fair play with no privileges and obligation on the basis of community, religion, colour, caste, creed (Korejo, 2002) the conditions for the minorities rapidly deteriorated. This was because, this vision of pluralism and secularism in an ethnically diverse country was not followed by the successors of Muhammad Ali Jinnah who, either openly disfavoured such ethos or were bogged down by the demands of the extremist forces. The first death knell to secularism occurred under the Liaqat Ali Khan regime when he moved the Objective Resolutions in 1950 and following it, the twenty-two point plan whereby, it was realised that the non-Muslims in the Islamic state were to be treated as dhimmis (or the payer of the jizya tax) who even though were to be given full protection and religious freedom could not be equal citizens when compared to the Muslims. Thus, the religious minorities gradually lost their voice in the

making of laws and were not eligible for any high office or executive authority and all of this put an end to Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision for equality for all (Korejo, 2002).

In recent time's minorities such as Shias, Christians and Hindus to a lesser extent are targeted by extremist organizations such as splinter groups of Taliban, ISIS and also Deobandi militant groups (Syed, 2016). The treatment of Hindu minorities in Pakistan has varied with Pakistan's relationship with India. This was seen in the period following the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war when many Sindhi Hindus were uprooted from their villages in Tharparkar desert and had crossed over to Rajasthan. Also, in the 1990's, following the Babri Masjid issue in India, the out-migration of Hindus from Sindh had also occurred due to instances of persecution. However, the recent instance of out-migration from Sindh to India is related to the promise of citizenship under Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 and currently (in the year 2020 due to) the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019. The passage of this Act allowed for the families from the Pakistani Hindu community to transit from refugees to illegal migrants to legal migrants and finally to future citizens of the Indian state once the process of granting citizenship starts for the community.

Minorities are being targeted in Pakistan in the form of forced conversion of young women and abduction that has been on the rise in areas and districts of Sindh such as Tharpakar, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Umerkot, Jacobabad, Kashpore, Kandhkot, Ghotki, Larkana and Sukkur where Hindus are to be found in large numbers. One of the causes of the rising extremism is due to the rise of Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith/Salafi madrassas (Syed, 2016) along with, the rise of its sub-groups such as Tablighi Jamaat al Huda groups. Mehmood and Hassan (2015) had pointed out that it is also due to the increase in the presence of seminaries.

However, some legal bills seeking to protect the minorities in Sindh have been introduced from time to time. Some such bills that are proposed are National Council of Minority Rights of 2014 which would monitor whether minorities have rights and formulate policy recommendation for achieving such ends (Mehmood and Hassan, 2015). However, certain proposals such as the National Action Plan of 2016

which had brought out twenty points to fight extremism while, the Hindu Marriage Bill, 2016 passed by Sindh Assembly that sought to reduce the instances of discrimination of minorities were also passed. Also the judiciary in the form of apex courts has called for the constitution of three task forces to formulate strategies for religious tolerance in Pakistan, curriculum reform and guard the places of worship (Mehmood and Hassan, 2015). Other such measures for protection of minorities in Sindh have been the formulation of a private bill under rule 94(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, which allowed formulation of the Sindh and Minorities Rights Commission Bill, 2015. These bills thus, seek to address the grievance of the minorities apart from creation of avenues for their socio-economic development and protect the identities of the minorities through guaranteeing their rights. It also aims at non-discrimination; equality, promotion of education of minorities, promotion of their participation in all aspects of public life, inclusion of their concern in development and poverty reduction processes apart from reducing the disparities in the social indicators such as employment, health, status of women and housing for the minorities. The aims of such policies have also been to re-instate values of religious harmony, tolerance, respect and peace that were inherent in the initial phase of creation of Pakistan. Other bills like the Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Bill, 2015 also sought to penalize forced conversion with five to three years of jail term.

#### METHODOLOGY

The field-work on which this study has been based was started by the researcher from the month of August, 2016 and had stretched up to May, 2017. The field-work was divided into three phases. The first phase saw the researcher familiarizing herself with the settlement from the months of August, 2016 to November, 2016 with the help of the non-governmental organization that worked in the camp. The researcher would visit the camp and join the interns of the non-governmental organization. The second phase of the research work stretched from December, 2016 to January, 2017 in which the researcher aided by the informants (from within the

settlement and population under study) performed a survey of the whole settlement's hundred and ten households. The study was initiated with a pilot study of the 110 families living in the Sri Ram Sena Hindu camp. It is largely from this pilot survey that the data for this article has been taken up from.

At the third phase that started from February, 2017 to May, 2017 an in-depth understanding of the life-world was undertaken that also captured the narratives of the people. Snowball sampling has been a helpful tool in this study as the respondents were either referred by the individuals working with the non-governmental organizations or the respondents themselves. The information of the socio-demographical feature of the population has been coupled with narratives to give a brief insight of the life-world of the families from the community.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio-demographic profile will throw light on the areas of Sindh from which the migrants have originated followed by educational profile of the families. Next we shall come to the nature of work undertaken by the families back in their native society and also, in the city of New Delhi. This will be followed by a brief understanding of the socio-religious custom of the families from the community.

##### *District-wise origin of the migrants*

Since the year 2011, a number of families from the Hindu community of Sindh in Pakistan had been migrating to New Delhi in India. The migration continues even in the year 2020. The families are from villages located in the districts of Tando Alahyar, Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Karachi and Matiari district as had been represented in Table 1.1. However, some of the families were from cities such as Hala and Saeedabad of Matiari district and Tando Jam in Hyderabad district. As evident in Table 1, approximately, 35.64% of the families originated from Hyderabad district while another, 22.77% had their origins in Tando Alahyar district. About 21.78% and 18.81% of the families originated from Matiari and Tando Muhammad Khan districts respectively. Only 0.99% had their origins in the Karachi district of Sindh.

*Table 1. District-wise distribution of the migrants.*

Places in Sindh	Number of Households (in percentage)
Tando Alahyar	22.77
Hyderabad	35.64
Tando Muhammad Khan	18.81
Matiari	21.78
Karachi	0.99

All the families had been living in the villages or in the cities in the districts mentioned in Table 1. undertook agrarian work as their main source of livelihood. Out of the hundred and ten families, except for seven all were agrarian farm laborers. The seven families were land-lords back in Sindh. Be it in history or, in recent times much of rural Sindh still runs on a feudal economy which is marked by un-free or, bonded labor who are often tied to the land through obligation to its owners either in terms of fusion of economic and political power or, the existence of a subsistence economy at the village level or, from a simple process of reproduction where the surplus is generally consumed by the landowner class.

The agrarian base of the families was reflected in the narrative of Manav Das who hailed from a village in the Hyderabad district when he said, “we had our own house but, did not own our any agricultural land. So, we used to take land on lease for agricultural purpose and did agricultural work. Half of the produce from the land had to be given to the land-lord”. Another respondent, Mita Devi from a village from Hyderabad had reflected, “even though we had our own seven roomed house it was shared among my large conjugal joint family. We never owned land for farming of wheat and cotton but only leased it from the land-lord in lieu of turning in half the produce to the latter.” Another respondent like Geeta Devi from a village of Hyderabad had reflected, “we used to stay in the houses provided by the land-lord himself. Mother and father would often go for work in the fields for once a month. The money would be earned once a year or once every two years from the fields of tomato or some fruits like melon or banana that we would take on lease and cultivate.”

Others like Pooran from Latifabad in Hyderabad, Sindh had pointed out, “we would lease fields of mango or banana. If out of the 10,000 kilo of lease we were able to retain 20 to 30 percent. We could earn a profit of Rs.8000 or above on each lease of banana

that we were able take to the local market. The plantation work is bit different. We would invest on the plantation by taking it on lease for Rs 2 lakhs to Rs.3 lakhs. We would incur mostly profit but in the past few years before coming to India we were incurring losses. Based on the money available with us we would also use it to lease land for three to four months to take up the business of banana and papaya”. For other respondents especially those who were land-lords like Lal, agrarian work was undertaken in the form of managing plantation in the village, packaging the produce and exporting them to the markets. This was evident when Lal from Hyderabad had said, “we had our own plantation of banana that we would put in packages and send in truck-loads to nearby market from where they would be exported to India and elsewhere. We worked with the Muslims who were partners in the business. Everything be it the plantations, packaging, the trucks going to the market and then to the border to export the goods were owned jointly among partners.”

#### *Education levels among the migrants*

The families from this community did not give importance to education. This is evident in Table 2. where 52.47% of the head of household are illiterate. While, only 24.75% had education level within primary another, 21.78% had studied up to secondary education levels. It was only 0.99 percent who had studied up to higher education levels. This was because education was never seen as a means for social mobility as it was very rarely that a minority Hindu could achieve a salaried position back in his native society due to social discrimination. Respondents like Madan had pointed out “within this community no one works nor, had worked before as a salaried professional and instead all had worked in the fields. If someone from the community takes up a salaried job he is ridiculed by the community members.” Another respondent like Narayan had reflected that, “you will not come across a single one among all of us who had held salaried jobs. It’s either business but mostly, landless labour.” In fact, education was “seen not as improving their social situation or status but as something that provided them with an understanding of the world”.

*Table 2. Educational levels of the head of the households.*

Class/college standard up to which passed	Educational Level (in percentage)
I to V	24.75
V to X	21.78
XI and beyond	0.99
Uneducated	52.47

Education therefore, didn't count as an important asset for themselves among the head of the households (whose ages range from 30 to 60 years). Earning a livelihood is given more pre-dominance. However, such low educational aspirations are also closely related to the occupational profile back in their native society and even after their migration to India. All of the individuals had and continue to have occupation that is informal in nature with extensive migration undertaken in search of work- be it agrarian work (back in Sindh) or other-wise (as in Delhi). The women of the household are illiterate except one. The only exception is Vandana who had studied up to Class VI in the government High School at Hyderabad. Vandana had lamented that she "couldn't study further as back in her home-town once the girls turn eleven or twelve years of age they are withdrawn from the school by the parents citing security reason."

However, the mind-set of the parental generation was changing after migration to the city of New Delhi as they realize new avenues for social mobility for their succeeding generations through school education and the ability to access middle-class occupations like those of doctor, pilot and engineer through higher education. However, the benefits associated with becoming a citizen when it came to education, work and achieving social mobility did not figure actively yet in the life-world of the families as the Citizenship Act, 2019 was still not passed and the Citizenship Amendment Bill of 2016 was still under considerations at the time of study. The changing attitude of the parental generation is evident indirectly in Table.3.

*Table 3. Number of school-going children per household.*

Number of school going children per household	Number in percentage
1 to 5	67.36
5 to 10	7.92
None	28.71

The children from the families from this community during the course of the field-work were attending

government schools in the vicinity (i.e. within walk able distance) from the camp. While, male children attended the Government Boys Senior Secondary School, Magazeen Road, New Delhi on the other hand, the girl children attended the Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya Senior Secondary School, Magzeen Road or, the Nagar Nigam Pratibha Vidyalaya in the same locality. However, some of the parents were not satisfied with the schooling received in the government schools. This was evident when Dayal had reflected "learning is not good in the government schools. Particularly, it is true for the children attending the afternoon shift which is even worse. The afternoon shift of the local government schools are usually attended by the boys. The girl's schooling is fine as it is in the morning shift." He pointed out how private schools with quota for few students were doing better than the government schools.

The increasing interest in their children's school education on part of the parental generation was evident in the encouragement of tuitions for their children. Tuitions were held by local volunteers in one of the house of the pradhan's/elders between 10 A.M to 12 P.M for boys and between 2 P.M. to 4 P.M. for girls in the anganwadi that was located within the camp. It was also observed that there was a shift from focus on religious to secular education due to the demands of migration. This was evident when the families withdrew many of the children from, the Srila Prabhu International Gurukul Ashram in Udhampur located in the state of Jammu and Kashmir that was run by organisation related with the ISKON temple, to admit them in government schools in the city of Delhi when the government demanded that the community shift to a specific location within the city of Delhi citing security reasons. Also, for many of the families who before coming to this camp had been staying in Faridabad and had their children undertake their prior education there in both public and public schools.

However, it has to be noted that among those households with no school going children (28.71%) either the children were infants or, in majority of the cases over-aged (since they are above eleven years of age) to be considered for admission in the local schools. Many also did not have certification of prior schooling from their native society back in Sindh.

The inability to get admitted in the local school due to over-age was true for Meena from Matiari in Sindh who had lamented that her children didn't have their school certificates from Sindh especially her son Bhagwandas who was fifteen years old and was forced to work rather than study.

*Nature of work in the city of Delhi*

When it comes to the average age of the household head, except for one household in the camp that is run by a woman (who is forty years of age) all the other households are headed by men (whose age-group ranges from ages thirty to sixty years). A shift from agrarian work to other informal work was observed among the younger generation of those aged below thirty years of age. This can be related to their aspirations for social mobility in the future. The aspiration to take up diverse avenues of work within the informal sector was related to the aspiration to "live in city like a city-dweller". However, the parental generation undertook agrarian work in either the neighbouring states such as in Haryana (Faridabad such as Sohna Road, Palwal), Uttar Pradesh (in Nagla Charah) and Punjab (near Amritsar) or, within the National Capital Region during the harvest season of wheat and cotton. Agrarian work is also taken up so as to supplement the family's income.

*Table 4. Occupation among the refugees in the city of Delhi.*

Occupation of the Head of the Household	Total Number in the occupation (in percentage)
Mobile cover and accessories seller	64.36
Shop-keeper	10.89
Labourer	0.99
Farmer	4.95
Tailor	0.99
Social Worker	0.99
Doctor (homeopathic practitioner)	0.99
Others	0.99
Unemployed	14.85

However, the taking up of agrarian work was based on a number of conditions that ranged from whether the family had any small children in their nuclear family or, sharing of information on time among their networks (which usually travelled from the seven pradhans/elders of this settlement to the other inhabitants) or, the ability to bear the expenses of travelling to the field and staying over and arranging meals. This was summarised by Chandan

who had reflected, "those who have the cost to sustain themselves go to work in the fields. Others don't go. The place we go, we buy the tools from there itself. The cost mainly is that of the food, drinking and the cutting tools in the field. The cost of the farming tools and implements and other expenses apart from the travelling are approximately Rs.2000 to Rs.3000. Two of my sons had gone to cut wheat spending approximately Rs.100 everyday to reach the fields across the Yamuna River just behind the camp where they got one to three percent of the harvest in lieu of wages for working in the fields". For others like Reema working in the fields especially in places like Palwal had proved to be costly in terms of acquiring one's own food and she had reflected "to sustain three of us, we had to borrow about Rs.5000 from the shopkeepers in the settlement. The decision to undertake work in the field was partly undertaken for paying off debts of Rs. 20,000 that we had taken in Sindh and Rs. 10, 000 here in India respectively."

At times local networks are also not helpful in finding agrarian work. For example, when Mehengi and her husband Nanak Ram visited Uttar Pradesh to search for agricultural work in the month of May in 2017 they met a dead end as they couldn't find the mango plantations that they had heard of and had hoped to work in. Many of the respondents like Mann and his wife in spite of running their tea shop just outside the camp beside the highway preferred to go every year to harvest crops such as wheat and cotton in the surrounding areas of Delhi.

The local anganwadi worker had noted that many who went to work in the fields would bring back at least twenty to thirty maunds of wheat. The rate for such harvesting work as Chander had pointed out may range from Rs.400 (for harvesting cotton by two person in Palwal, Haryana to Rs.250 in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab). The returns from such work are often in grains that the workers can bring with them home. The return in grains can be as much as 10 to 15 kilos. These grains that the families brought back with them in lieu of wages were distributed among the extended kin or were kept for future especially marriage ceremonies. Sita had pointed out that the grains she brought back with her would be distributed between her daughter-in-law's uncle and her brother's family for whom about two to five kilos were kept reserved.

At times other camp inhabitants who were in need of the grains were given free of cost.” At times they grains are also sold off. Savitri had said that her “son Amar had got Rs. 6000 by selling one kilo of his share of the harvest. another twenty kilos was sold off to a stranger who had come to the camp. The amount one could get from selling the grains could be as much as Rs. 15,000 to Rs.20,000. Each sack of wheat could be sold for Rs. 1000 to Rs.5000.”

The informal work that the families undertake range from selling mobile-covers, owning small local shops, labour, farming, tailor, homeopathic practitioner, social work and other (as pesticide seller) as evident in Table 4. Unemployment is also present in many of the families and this is especially common among those families that had newly arrived in India. However, for those working in other informal work other than agriculture, the latter is always present in the memory and evokes nostalgia. This was evident when Kundan had said, “my heart lies in working in the fields. We used to do agrarian work there and sometimes even cut the crops at the time of harvest. Back in our place we used to grow water-melon, tomato, wheat and cotton. I remember the work with fondness. Working in the field is always better. Our ancestors were all peasant. Rice, water-melon, garlic, potato, spices and brinjals were produced by us. In villages working in the fields was enough to sustain ourselves in daily life.”

When it came to work in the informal sector of selling mobile-covers, 64.3 percent were engaged in selling mobile accessories in cart not only in the vicinity of the camp but, in various places across the city and the National Capital Region such as Moolchand, Barakhamba, Laxmi Nagar, Azadpur and Faridabad. Most of the materials are brought in wholesale (or in bulk) from the Kamala Nagar market. Many of them have taken up this occupation because it gives them easy and sure return unlike agriculture. The reason for taking the work of selling mobile-covers and accessories in the informal market was cited by Kumar who had reflected, “when I came to India, my brother had already come five years before. He helped me to set up my own business of selling cart of mobile accessories. This business is more lucrative than the other jobs that I had worked in before such as being a waiter and even working in one of the marriage bands

back in Sindh.” *For those engaged as shop-keepers* i.e.10.89% had their own shops immediately just outside the camp or in Faridabad. Only 0.99% of the breadwinners work as labourers while another, 0.99% each of the household head worked as tailor and homeopathic doctor respectively. Negligible proportion also worked as social workers. A majority of the unemployed had freshly arrived in the year 2017 from Sindh, Pakistan and were still in search of jobs.

#### *Religious, Social and Cultural Practices*

All the families are of Rajput descent. When it came to the socio-cultural practices that the members of the refugee community, one of the prominent characteristics is clan exogamy. When asked about the nature of clan exogamy, Nita had pointed out that a Panwar Rajput would not marry a Panwar but could marry other clans like Kori. Other respondents, like Manshi had pointed out that there was a hierarchy between families that are Saraunki or Dabi which are placed higher in the hierarchy when compared to others like Kori, Vadiyari, Rohodawada, Tekhrawada, Gadiyariah wadi, Madiyah wada, Hariyah wada, etc. Sometimes these would be referred by the families that fell under them. For example, Chandrama had pointed out that if Minu’s family is a Saraunki it would often be referred also as Minuwada.

Another practice that the members of the community have continued to follow and which preceded their migration is the lack of rigid dowry system. Chander, hailing from Nawabshah who when asked about dowry at the time of girl’s marriage, said that “dowry is not like here in India. Whatever the girl’s family gives the groom’s family accepts it and even if nothing is given it is fine”.

An interesting practice that the researcher found in terms of marriage was that engagement for marriage happens at a young age (as children) even though, the actual marriage takes place later between the ages of thirteen to eighteen years. Some of the respondents like Devika had pointed out that in her “community children get engaged in childhood and got married between ages fifteen to eighteen years”. However, this age at marriage also affected the education of the children as it led to school drop-outs or non-enrolment. However, today the age at marriage seems

to have increased as this community lead their lives in India. Many of the girls however, are getting married at eighteen and above years of age. Such practices maybe in anticipation of the citizenship that families from this community eagerly await for.

When it comes to religious worship as part of the social customs of the families, various deities or their symbols are worshipped by this community that range from Shiva, Hanuman and Jhooley Lal. What Steve Ramey (2007) had noted with regards to Sindhi Hindus when he said that such a community often have to construct and defend their own definitions of religion in environments where non-Sindhis challenge their practices due to their hyphenated identity maybe true as was evident in the symbols of worship that were put immediately outside their homes so as to legitimise their socio-religious customs.

#### CONCLUSION

This study has sought to elaborate the socio-demographic characteristics of a community on whom there are seldom any studies. For further ethnography work, it becomes important to understand their socio-demographic background to understand their life-world. For the purpose of this paper, focus has been put solely on the socio-demographic features of the families from the Sri Ram Sena Hindu camp. Therefore, this article has sought to focus attention on a

community which is currently waiting to enter into transactional relations with the Indian state as citizens.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted for this research work to my doctoral supervisor Prof. S. Srinivasa Rao of Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and to my respondents from the Sri Ram Sena Hindu camp in Delhi.

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