



By reducing the duration of the Amarnath pilgrimage (yatra) from 60 to 39 days, Amarnath Shrine Board, the central government and the state government of Jammu & Kashmir is only fulfilling the half-filled agenda of the separatists. The agenda of the separatists is to make the Kashmir valley Hindu-less. Amarnath yatra was the only thorn in the flesh of the Kashmiri separatists, because of which the Kashmir valley could still boast of Hindu presence. Earlier, the separatists used to attack the pilgrims but when this did not deter the pilgrims, they pressurised the government to reduce the duration of the yatra so that gradually, the yatra could come to an end. The central government and the state government is implementing this whole-heartedly. That the board is hand-in-glove with the separatists became apparent when the Hindus were attacked on the day of Holi in Rajouri after they took out a religious procession protesting the decision of the Board. They did not stop just there, the shops and homes of the Hindus were further attacked to terrify them. They also committed the heinous crime cow-slaughter. But the administration, in place of arresting the culprits, lodged false cases to implicate the Hindus. Even in Kathua, the separatists chanted anti-India slogans. Now, they have threatened to reduce the duration of the yatra to 15 days. Now, will the Board give in to their demands and further reduce the duration of the yatra next year? The duration of the Baba Shri Amarnath yatra till 2009 was of 60 days only. Then, the Hurriyat has threatened to decrease it to 30 days. After this threat only, the duration was reduced to 55 days. When the Hindu organisations protested this, they were reassured that this would be restored to a 60-day event again in 2011. But, it was further reduced to a 45-day event. When the Hindu sects opposed this tooth and nail, a sub-committee headed by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was formed, but later it was told that if the duration was increased, then the Hurriyat would again resort to terror tactics as in 2008. Illogical reasoning was put forward, the langars were cajoled away and the yatra was reduced to 39 days. For the 1st time in the history of the yatra, the langars were made to give in writing that the langar would be held only for 30 days. Will they now demand a further reduction to 15 days? Will the one who serves now decide how much and how long he will serve? The VHP alleges that the reduction in the duration of the yatra is completely anti-Hindu, anti-national and anti-constitution. Article 25 and 26 of the constitution forbids the state from interfering in any way with the internal affairs of any religion. When the mahurt and duration of the yatra is laid down, the traditions and beliefs of the people are very important in laying them down. According to these, this yatra should start with the jyeshtha purnima and end with the shraavan purnima. In the same vein, only 10 000 people can be allowed to undertake the yatra in one slot every day. Now, according to this fiat of the Board, only 390000 yatris



will be able to undertake the yatra this year. The projections are that this year there will be some 8 lakh people for the yatra which means that more than 4 lakh people will have to return empty-handed. Who will be responsible for this sin? Every pilgrim has a constitutional right to undertake the yatra and it is the responsibility of the Board to make the yatra possible for the pilgrim. However, the Board is not carrying out its constitutional duty, what is worse, it is crossing its boundaries. The Board is even overlooking the order of the High Court of the state which had directed that the yatra should be for a period of 60 days.

The VHP strongly condemns this anti-Hindu and anti-constitutional decree of the Board and declares a nation-wide agitation against the order of the Board. This agitation will start on the day of jyeshtha purnima itself and lakhs of Hindus will reach Jammu to for a darshan of Amarnath shrine. This will be done to uphold the belief in the Indian constitution, the Hindu ethos and the faith in the Indian judiciary. June 4th is jyeshtha purnima and the pilgrims will reach Jammu on the 2nd itself. The VHP issues a warning to the Board that it protects the beliefs and ethos of the Hindus, for it has been created for this very purpose. They should still do a rethink on their order so that any kind of untoward situation can be averted.