



March-April 2002
Genocide

Dateline Gujarat

Inside Hindutva's laboratory

The following brutal and violent actions on the ground, backed by state level policy decisions reveal how in fact the current political dispensation has been running in direct violation of the principals of equity as enshrined in the Indian Constitution and in fact like a laboratory of *Hindutva*. It proves the anti-democratic thrust of *Hindutva*'s project.

Communalism Combat has been tracking the slow erosion of Constitutional principles within government, the administration, the law and order machinery and, worst of all, *the ground level feeling of insecurity among different sections of the population*, since the BJP began ruling there in early 1998. The track record has been ominous, leading up in a sense, to the current explosion. Gujarat, the laboratory of a hate-filled politics was crying to happen.

Serious dilemma for law and order machinery in Gujarat

Gujarat 1998-2002 presents a genuine conflict between the rule of law as specified in the egalitarian principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution and the existence of a political dispensation, the BJP, backed by its hit squads like the VHP, the Bajrang Dal, the Hindu Jagran Manch and now even the Shiv Sena (September 2000 took the Mumbai-based Shiv Sena to Ahmedabad for the first time!) whose worldview and style of functioning are partisan and inegalitarian.

November 13, 1997 – August 16, 1998

There were over 40 recorded incidents of assaults on prayer halls and churches belonging to Christians in the state. (The worst incidents were the attacks on century old educational institutions in Naroda and Rajkot (the St. Mary's and IP Mission School, where copies of the Bible were also burnt) and violent attacks against religious assemblies, as well as four major incidents against Muslims in Randikpur and Sanjeli that even involved Muslims being forcibly evacuated from their villages and their transport businesses being usurped by sections of the assailants

Another extremely offensive incident was the forcible exhuming of the body of Samuel Christian, a Methodist Christian, by the VHP (ably assisted by BJP corporators –*Indian Express* dated July 27, 1998) simply because he was buried in a burial ground over which the local VHP-BJP leadership had only recently begun a dispute.

April – July 1998

The state of Gujarat witnessed a spate of pamphlets authored by the VHP, Gujarat, Hindu Jagran Manch, Gujarat or simply anonymously, which systematically justified and provoked inflammatory feelings and violence against Christians and Muslims. One such was titled "Baroda: Strong protests and agitation by Hindu youth against 'Christianisation and Blind Faith'" and appeared in the Vishwa Hindu Parishad News, April 1998, in Gujarati, published from Baroda. "Onwards Sanjeli –Let's unite to put an end to these unholy incidents of Hindu women being sold in Muslim countries-Let's respond to bricks with stones" dated July 7, 1998 was published by VHP-Bajrang Dal, Sanjeli (*Communalism Combat*, October 1998, Welcome to Hindu Rashtra). Keshubhai Patel's stint in power has been marked by a plethora of such pamphlets, often reproduced *in full* by mainstream Gujarati papers. Neither the publishers of these incendiary pamphlets nor the Gujarati papers have attracted section 153a and 153b of the Indian Penal Code, a section of law meant to guard against provoking of violence against members of a particular community.

July 1998

The Gujarat government ruled by the BJP, set up a Police Cell for Monitoring Inter-Religious Marriages, another step that is in clear violation of the Indian Constitution. An announcement to this end was made by the minister of state for home, Haren Pandya in the state assembly, and also justified by him on the grounds that such marriages were not made of free choice but were forced on Hindu women for ulterior motives.

July-August 1998

The same state government disbanded another police cell set up by a previous government to investigate atrocities against women.

December 1998

Dangs district in southern Gujarat saw Christmas time being reduced to a time of fear for the minority Christian community, which was systematically terrorised by the BJP-VHP hit squads. On December 25, 1998 churches and prayer halls were attacked at Gadvi village, Nadagkhadi village, Jamlapada village, Padalkhadi village and Dewan Tembrun village.

The next day, attacks continued at Karadiamba village and Vaki village. On December 27, 1998, prayer halls and churches were destroyed at Bordeli village, Bhondvihir village, Saverpada village, Gougen village, Mulchond village, Lahankhadmal village, Bharipada village, Raochand village, Pipaldhad village and Karenjpada village. Undeterred by the law and order machinery, attacks continued into the fourth, fifth and sixth days on December 29, 30 and January 3, 1999 respectively when prayer halls and churches at Mathalbari village, Jhalsod village and Kasadbari and Natyanuvat village were destroyed by goon squads led by Janubhai Pawar of the VHP. (CC, Conversions! January 1999)

Incidentally, due to a public outcry, prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had then visited Dangs, after which, instead of commenting on the failure of the rule of law, he called for a national debate on conversions! (*Conversions, Communalism Combat*, January 2000)

February 2, 1999

A circular was sent out by the Director General of Police(Intelligence) Gujarat State, showing a blatantly partisan attitude by the state. —: DSPs and Police Commissioners of Gujarat State to collect selective information about Christians and Muslims---From : Director of Police (Intelligence), Gujarat State, Ahmedabad Ref : No. :D.2 : Hindu – Christi/83/99 Date 02.02.1999. Issued by P.B. Upadhyaya. This circular (*Communalism Combat* has a copy) was later issued for Muslims. Following protests by groups, the circular and the census was not carried out but it declared the intent of the Gujarat government against the minorities — it violated Article 14 and 15 of the Constitution.

February 16, 1999

Within days of the first circular, another (D:2/2: Com/Muslim Activity/84/99 dated 1/2-02-99) was also circulated, containing similarly offensive questions about the Muslim minority community, that was also in violation of the Indian Constitution.

Organisations immediately approached the Gujarat High Court following which the circular was withdrawn from circulation. However it has still not been cancelled.

July 1999

On July 21-22, there was an outburst of communal frenzy provoked by blatant communalisation of the Kargil conflict. For two weeks before that, from July 7 and 11, 1999 the war at the border was cynically used by state and central BJP functionaries who needed to win an election in the state the following month. The death in Kargil of an army man, Mukesh Rathod from Meghaninagar, was used by the BJP MLA from the city Harin Pathak and union minister L.K.Advani to lead rallies through the city accompanied by Rathod's body, to generate anti-Muslim venom on the ground. Slogans like 'Ab to nagara baj chukka hai sarhad pe shaitan ka, Nakshe par se nam mita do, papi Pakistan ka;' and 'Khoon se tilak karo, goliyon se aarti; Pukarti hai yeh zameen, pukarti Ma Bharati,' proudly wall-written by BJP's Yuva Morcha, contributed their mite to the already tense situation.

On July 21-22, 1999, two Bajrang Dal activists including one Harshad Gillatwalla who was accused in the murder of a Muslim boy the previous year (1998), took the lead in the acts of provocation by setting fire to the Muslim owned Bhagyodaya restaurant in the Hindu dominated Memnagar area.

The flare-up, literally begging to happen, finally took place on July 20, 1999. Constantly abused for weeks, Muslims were agitated by the teasing of a mentally challenged boy by Hindus and demanded that an FIR be lodged by the police. Instead of leaving the matter to be settled between the police and Muslims, the BJP-VHP brought in their own mob which led to a full-fledged riot at Dariapur, Dabgarwad, Vadigam, Kallapur etc.

The second phase of this violence began on July 22, with a Muslim boy being stabbed and more stabbings of minority community members by leaders of the BJP and VHP near Dariapur gate, Gheekanta and Gomtipur areas. The names of senior functionaries of the BJP and VHP (city convenor of the BJP, Parabatbhai) were lodged as the accused in the FIRs of the time.

(*Communalism Combat*, April 2000, Face to Face with Fascism)

December 1999-January 2000

A bill against religious conversions, directly counter to Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, sought to be moved in the Gujarat state assembly, was moved, and thereafter put on hold after it generated a nation-wide controversy. The Bill is termed the "Gujarat Freedom of Religion Bill.'

July 1999

Through a campaign launched by Khoj education for a plural India programme, the social studies texts of Gujarat State were examined and shocking propositions that reveal the sectarian ideology of the centre were identified. This became the subject matter of a nationwide campaign that led to a Parliamentary Committee ratifying the problematic sections and asking the Gujarat government to make adequate changes. This has still not happened. "Muslims Christians and Parsees are foreigners;" "the Varna system is the best gift to mankind;" and the glorification of Fascism and Nazism are only some of the problematic sections. (See *Communalism Combat*, October 1999)

January 1 – July 2000

A spate of six more attacks on Christian schools took place all over Gujarat an individual prayer meetings of Christians were disrupted. Most Christians now aver that their prayers at churches in towns like Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot and Surat have to be conducted with doors and windows closed, so as not to 'upset and provoke Hindu organisations!'

(*Communalism Combat*, July 2000)

January 3, 2000

The Gujarat CM lifted the ban on government servants joining the RSS – a decision he was compelled to revoke a month later after the hue and cry that it generated.

February 2000

The RSS held it's massive *sankalp shibir* on the outskirts of Ahmedabad in which 30,000 persons participated. The entire state machinery was put at their disposal: trucks, municipal services, and ground taxes were waived. Keshubhai Patel was seen flanked by union home minister LK Advani on the occasion and eight state cabinet ministers participated. The 5-acre plot was provided free with water and electricity costs on the house (!) for the occasion.

February 2000

Secret Hindutva Document:

(*Communalism Combat* accessed this secret document from Gujarat which is a step by step guide for sanghis on how and why to break the law. It has been translated from Gujarati):

Aum

‘Now that we have our own government we should take proper advantage of it and should get our work done by it.’



‘We should arrange to have our men as witnesses. Often a real witness might also give answers anyhow when cross-examined and, as a result, the reliability of the witness suffers. So when we give the name of a witness in court, we first have to make sure that he will remain firm in court and also whether he is otherwise reliable.’



‘A recent state home ministry circular directs the executive magistrate (*mamlatdar*) to register a crime if the police is not ready to do so; we believe that such complaints can be made to the sub-divisional magistrate (deputy collector) and district magistrate (collector) also’



‘The main attack on Hindu Samaj is that our sisters of tender age are being abducted by offering them inducements and allurements and then they are made to sign the marriage register after getting converted by force. Hundreds of Hindu girls are being (converted to Islam) made Muslims like this in Gujarat state.’



‘It is not wrong if we can pick up the woman and keep her under our custody. But the girl’s people should take the initiative.’



Often, the girl does not agree and if a habeas corpus petition is filed in court, and there, if the girl changes her mind, we will be let down. As I mentioned earlier, these problems are not going to be solved by Law under the protection of the Police or the Court. Hindu Samaj needs to resort to social opposition to find a solution to this and even resort to violent attacks if necessary.

February 5, 2000

Recent bomb attacks on homes of Muslim families in the Paldi area of Ahmedabad, led by BJP corporators and motivated by the singular idea not to allow Muslims to move into the Paldi area took place at the recently constructed Tulsi Apartments within the Vishwakunj Society. A writ petition filed on behalf of the PUCL by senior advocate Haroobhai Mehta sought the intervention of the Court in protecting the fundamental rights of the individual Indian citizen that include the right to settle and reside anywhere in India (Article 19(1)(d)) was, unfortunately, not entertained by the Court. Naved Siddique, the builder involved in a partnership in the transaction is being threatened and told to evacuate and sell off those and remaining flats at a huge loss of Rs. 50 lakhs. Needless to say, no protection from the police or no redressal from the state government has been provided.

(The Asian Age, Feb 16, 2000)

February 19, 2000

Thirty hit men of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad vandalised the office of the mayor of the Ahmedabad municipal corporation, a BJP corporator, Malini Atit, demanding the immediate reconstruction of a temple near Uttamnagar garden, which had been demolished by the AMC. Despite the fact that public property had been destroyed, the mayor refused to lodge a complaint saying "This was our internal matter, we do not need the police."

(The Indian Express, February 20, 2000)

March 17, 2000

Bakri Id. The occasion was used this year, as in years previously, by the BJP-RSS-VHP combine, to provoke the Muslim minority by deliberate emphasis on the Cow Protection Act. Both the municipal commissioner and the police commissioner issued an appeal to citizens to be mindful of the act and members of the VHP and Bajrang Dal decided, suo motu to act as informants of the police despite repeated announcements that matters of law should be left to the police. Violence and tension resulted as well as an unnecessary death of a young Muslim.

(*Communalism Combat*, April 2000, Face to Face with Fascism)

Aug 1-10, 2000

State-wide violence directed *selectively* against Muslim property in Surat, Ahmedabad. Khed Brahma, Lambadiya, Rajkot and Modasa caused destruction to the tune of Rs. 15 crores (*Saffron On the Rampage*, Nov. 2000). The provocation? After Lashkar-e-Toiba militants gunned down 33 Hindu *yatris* on a pilgrimage to Amarnath, and the cross -fire that followed led to a total of 100 deaths, Pravin Togadia, directly indicted in the current round of violence, declared "*Vahan ka jawaab yahan denge*"(Aug. 1, 2000, Ahmedabad.) What followed was a ten day long, systematic destruction of minority property, damages for which have just not been paid. We reproduce excerpts of the collective fact-finding report published at the time:

As many as 85 criminal incidents have been recorded from all over the state in connection with the Gujarat Bandh related violence that began on August 3, 2000 (the day of the bandh) and continued until August 9, 2000.

An FIR lodged in Rajkot city at 3.30 p.m. on August 2, 2000 under 153a of the IPC (about the time that the international general secretary of the VHP was giving his bandh call in Ahmedabad) is against an accused who "tried to create tension with (by) giving a speech in a newspaper to damage and destroyed the Muslim religious places."

Another two FIRs lodged at Ahmedabad concern mobs led by Kamlesh Bhavarilal in the destruction of a dargah and the looting and destruction of the Famous Shoe Shop on August 3, 2000.

FIRs lodged in the Kheda Brahma village accuse Bajrang Dal president Jagdish Tarar of attacking Muslim establishments and homes with sharp weapons, an attack during which a police constable was also injured (on August 3, 2000).

In yet another FIR filed at Mahuva on August 6, 2000, a violent mob led by Shailesh Barot assaulted the complainant who is a constable and another SRP constable who were injured by pelting stones when they stopped a violent mob heading ominously towards the local *masjid*.

In Surat city, two BJP corporators, Ganesh Prajapati and Suresh Varodia have been accused of forming unlawful assemblies and carrying lethal weapons in their vehicles. The CP, Surat has stated, in an interview to members of the investigating team, that all those accused in FIRs during the bandh-related violence will be charge-sheeted.

The editor of *Dhapkar*, Mayur Pathak, was arrested by the Surat police under section 153 a of the IPC for fomenting violence between communities in the second week of August 2000. He was thereafter released by the Court.

Were the guilty punished?"

(*Saffron on the Rampage, A Fact-finding report of several human rights groups*)

December 2000

Christian Schools singled out

Christian schools in Gujarat and Goa (both states then ruled by the BJP) were being singled out for inquiries on their sources of funding and details about the origins of their establishments. Many schools in both states have received a circular from the District Education Officer (DEO) seeking to know "which countries they belong to" and also the "amount received by them in aid from abroad and from State and Union

Governments." These inquiries were not made in isolation; they were in the midst of a sustained hate campaign and propoganda against Christians which is also being recycled now.

January 2001

After the devastating earthquake that shook Kutch in Gujarat and even Ahmedabad city, studied discrimination in handling relief and rehabilitation was evident; displaying the inherently sectarian character of the party in power. Discrimination was so apparent that, when Fakirbhai Vaghela toured his constituency in Surendranagar district, he not only ignored the Muslim areas, he let off his ire at locals who, cutting across community lines, had begun organising relief. The writ of hard-line, unconstitutional groups like the RSS, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal was evident at the time, when they managed to exert pressure on Gujarat Governor Sundersinh Bhandari *not* to visit Surendranagar where there was discrimination.

January 2001

The Gujarat state education department issued a circular directing that every school subscribes to *Sadhana*, a weekly published by the sectarian outfit, RSS After this caused an uproar, it was not seriously implemented.

November 2001

Around 550 Muslims from Chanasma in Patan district were forced to migrate and move to Patan with only the sky as shelter. "Dead bodies of Muslims have been dug out and the land well-surfaced with saffron flags flying high over it." (Fact-finding report prepared by Indukumar Jani, Valjibhai Parmar and Raju Solanki.) "Chanasma's age-old Dargah land owned by Muslims, called Navgajapur, has been forcibly taken over by saffron-wielding men." In this period, the Christian minority was not spared either. In Dahod district, on September 19, Christians were forcibly prevented from watching a film on Christ. Earlier, on August 25, women and children from the IP Mission Orphanage at Jobat village in MP were attacked while on a picnic to the Kali Dam in Dahod.

January 2002

On the occasion of the anniversary of the earthquake, the state government issued a circular to all schools directing them to perform a *dharti poojan* on the first anniversary of the quake, also stating that Govt. recognition of the school depends upon this. The State Government, through its circular of January 21 - directing all the schools to line up their students to appease mother earth by lighting at least 101 lamps using pure "ghee," and chanting Sanskrit "slokas" - was not only spreading obscurantism and superstition but also trying to misguide the people as to the nature and real causes of the earthquake. The circular, issued despite a High Court order that the schools could not be compelled to hold 'pujas' according to Hindu rites, gave the institutions no option in the matter. On the contrary, it warned them of action if the instructions were not followed. And it asked the schools to send at least five photographs each of the 'puja,' along with a report which was to reach the office of the District Education Officer within two days of the event having taken place.

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