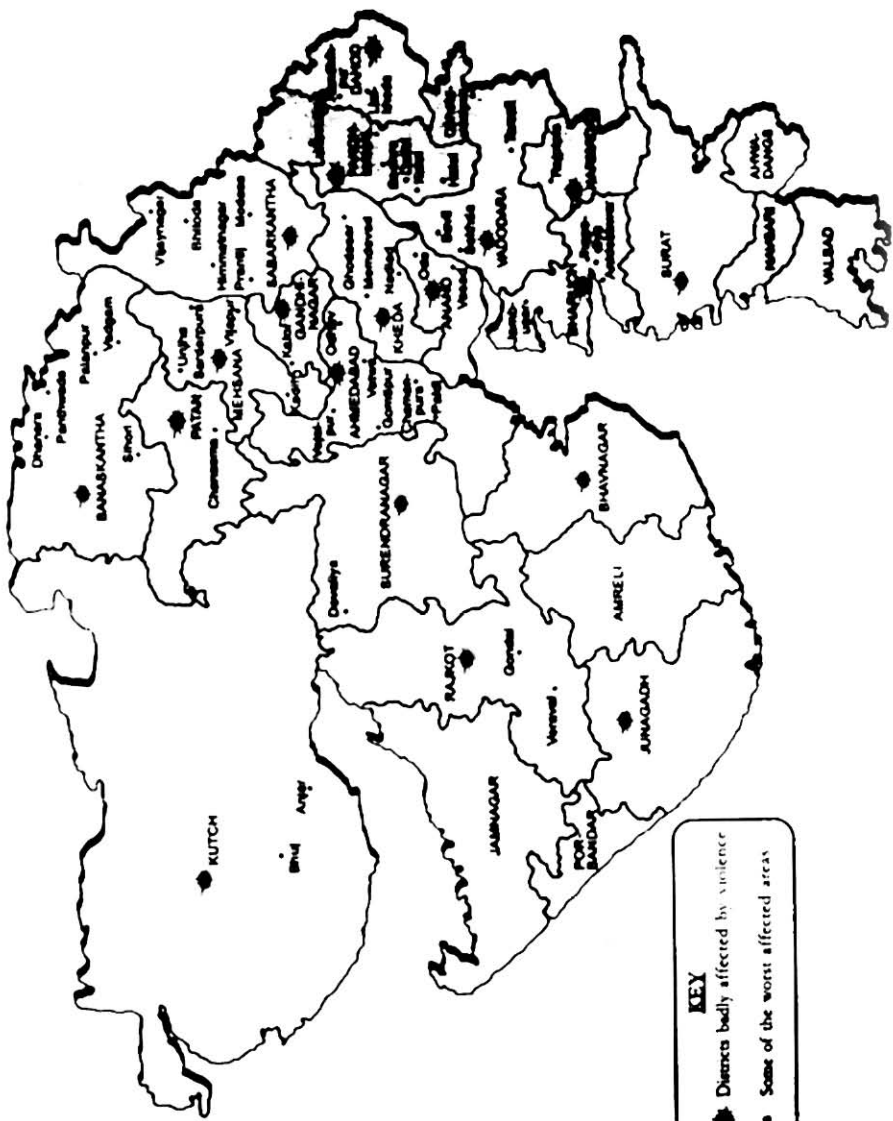


**SOWING HATE AND REAPING VIOLENCE  
THE CASE OF  
GUJARAT COMMUNAL CARNAGE**



**Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer  
Shama Dalwai  
Sandhya Mhatre**

# GUJARAT



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*For  
Victims of  
Gujarat Carnage*

## *Contents*

	<b>Page No.</b>
1. Gujarat Carnage In The Light Of History Of Communal Violence In India	01
2. BJP's Riot-Free India	28
3. Gujarat - An Area Of Darkness	33
4. All Is Not Lost In Gujarat	38
5. Myth About Muslims And The Gujarat Carnage	43
6. Gujarat Carnage - Implications For Secularism	48
7. Role Of Police In Gujarat Carnage	53
8. Godhra & After: Report Of Violence In Gujarat	58

# GUJARAT CARNAGE IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA

Asghar Ali Engineer

(I)

The Gujarat carnage which began on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2002 after the incident of burning of sleeper coach no. S-6 in Godhra in which about 58 innocent persons were burnt alive, has shaken the whole world, not just India. The violence unleashed with not so hidden complicity of state machinery and ruling party has not been controlled even more than 60 days after it broke out. The whole police force with some honourable exceptions has been communalised or has abdicated its duty. The administrative apparatus is no different. An honest and anguished IAS officer like Harsh Mandar from M.P. cadre resigned in sheer disgust when he saw his colleagues surrendered to the ruling apparatus without any compunction. We will throw more light on this later.

The frequency with which communal holocausts have been taking place in this country show that there is something fundamentally wrong with our political system as well as our secular governance. We adopted secular political structure due

mainly to pluralist composition of our population. Secularism was adopted not after independence but at the time the Indian national Congress was founded in 1885. The founding fathers of INC (Indian National Congress) were well aware of the pluralist composition of our population.

The leaders of freedom fighters had reaffirmed their faith in secular politics time and again. And, it must also be pointed out, that it (i.e. secularism) was not merely adopted as a political strategy but many of these leaders of freedom fighters had deeper conviction for secularism and secular nature of state. Among these leaders were Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and several others. These leaders were strongly committed to secular polity and made no compromises as far as secularism was concerned. Not only this, they often paid heavy price for their conviction.

However, despite sincere commitment of these leaders to secularism things did go seriously wrong and communal question assumed serious proportions **much before** our country became free. In fact our freedom was **got at a price**, price of vivisection of our country. Communal **question** could not be resolved to the satisfaction of elite of both the communities i.e. Hindus and Muslims.

Here it is important to throw some light on the nature of communalism. Communalism, as is often thought by some, is not product of religion; it is, in fact, product of politics of elite of a religious community. In other words religion *per se* does not give birth to communalism, a religious community does. It is also important to note that communalism was not product of medieval ages but of modern period. Medieval polity was not competitive, much less democratic. The modern colonial polity was competitive and proto-democratic.

It is competitive politics between elite of two or more communities, which give rise to communalism. And when third party in the form of colonial authority is present it assumes graver proportion. Though the British colonial rulers cannot be solely held responsible for genesis of communalism, they did play vital role in promoting it as well as in its genesis. Right from the day the British rulers sensed the damage Hindu-



Muslim unity can cause to their empire they began dividing them and distortion of history proved to be quite a powerful instrument in doing so. History text -books were so written as to make Hindus feel that the Muslim rulers oppressed Hindus and demolished their temples and humiliated them.

This engineering of division between Hindus and Muslims by the British rulers became more aggravated by competitive politics between the elite of the two communities. Hindus and Muslims were two major communities in India then and even now after partition. Muslims then constituted approximately 25% of India's population. The real division was brought about on the question of share in power and not by differences in religious beliefs. The real question was not what Hindus believed in or what was nature of Muslim religious dogmas. The real question was how political power on one hand, and government jobs on the other, would be shared between the elite of two communities. This could not be resolved to the satisfaction of the Muslim and Hindu elite and communal tensions between the two communities became almost inevitable.

It is not our case that religion played no role; it did. But this role was not fundamental but instrumental. Religion, since it has powerful emotional appeal, was used (almost cynically) to mobilise believing masses. Religious controversies like music before mosque and cow slaughter became perennial issues in communal politics, especially before independence. However, real fight was not about music or cow; they could have been easily resolved through mutual dialogue. The real issue was share and control of political power. Even (Motilal) Nehru Committee could not resolve this deadlock in 1928, which can be described as water-shed year in pre-independence India's communal question.

Jinnah rose to eminence in freedom movement as an 'ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity' as Sarojini Naidu put it. He opposed Khilafat Movement because of participation in it of mullahs and dogmatic 'ulama. He differed from Gandhiji on this issue. Thus until then his secular credentials were immaculate. He was hardly believer in Islam the real sense of the world.

However, soon he became a controversial personality, as he demanded share in power for Muslims, exceeding their population. Nehru committee eminently failed to resolve communal question as Muslim elite led by Jinnah demanded share in power and constitutional arrangement not acceptable to the Congress leadership. Frustrated Jinnah even temporarily withdrew from politics and settled down in England. His political re-birth in 1937 initially reconciliatory (he entered into an informal understanding with the Congress for sharing power after the elections in 1937) he soon evolved as an inveterate opponent of the Congress as the Congress did not fulfil its part of the understanding.

Thus Jinnah vowed to oppose Congress and claimed 'sole spokespersonship' of Muslims which was not acceptable not only to the Congress but also to other Muslim leaders, especially the nationalist Muslim leadership. Jinnah was far from a sole spokesman of all Muslims. Muslims in India were too diverse, in every sense of the word, to admit such claim. He had no following not only among southern Muslims (South was not so much communalised as much as the North of India but also among the Muslims of North. In fact he had following among a section of U.P. and Bihar Muslims both being Muslim minority states. It was minority phobia, which helped establish Jinnah's leadership among the Muslims of these two big states of North India.

He could establish his tenuous hold over Muslim majority states like Punjab and Bengal after much struggle and nearer independence (especially after 1945) when the elite of Muslim majority states came to realise that it is Jinnah who could ensure greater share in power at the Centre. It is after this realisation that Muslim majority rulers fell in line and began to listen to Jinnah. Jinnah had to use all the tactics to make them listen to him.

It should also be noted that Jinnah alone cannot be held responsible for partition of the country in 1947. The Congress leadership, its tactical mistakes, its haste for power and its refusal to accommodate even some of the lesser demands of Muslim elite, is equally responsible for partition of the country. Partition was certainly not inevitable, as it appeared to be, to

the Congress leadership in 1947. It could have been certainly averted if it had shown certain sagacity, magnanimity and statesmanship. Maulana Azad has, in his book, *India Wins Freedom* pointed out tactical mistakes committed by Jawaharlal Nehru and to that extent held him also responsible for the tragedy of partition.

The partition was made inevitable by series of tactical and other mistakes made by all the important political actors in the partition drama. But one thing is certain that these actors were representative of the Hindu and Muslim elite. Masses had no role in this drama. Hindu and Muslim masses were, at best, mute spectators and far from being actors. It is to be noted that there was no adult franchise during entire British period. Not more than ten percent of the Indian population was franchised and it is this narrow enfranchised population which decided the fate of our country in 1947. Had there been adult franchise it certainly would have impacted on the fate of India and partition, in all probability, could have been averted.

Masses of people had no interest in partition. Neither they were part of power structure nor did they have feeling of separatism. Separatism, it must be noted, is a political and not a religious phenomenon. Masses were far more integrated and even today are, than the political, cultural and religious elite who try to carve their niche in political power structure. The masses also share poverty and misery together. Unlike elite, their religious beliefs, superstitions and social customs and traditions have much in common. Initially it was separate electorate introduced by the British rulers in 1909 that led the foundation of separatism and this separatism was not product of religion but of politics of competition. Religion is not essentially divisive; it becomes divisive only in a given political context.

Here we are not holding politics per se as culprit. Question is whether it is people's problem-oriented politics or power-oriented politics. It is power-oriented politics, which is divisive and problem-oriented politics tend to be integrative. But it was essentially power-oriented politics, which brought about division of the country and it is power-oriented politics, which has made communalism so strong today.

We have dealt with controversial issue of partition as it has had tremendous impact on communal situation in India. The national leaders like Nehru and others thought that communal problem will be solved if partition is accepted. Partition was thought to be the only solution for the communal problem. However, it was a desperate solution. The national leaders were in a hurry to come to power and accepted a solution, which was worse than the disease. Partition, unfortunately, has become a wound, which refuses to heal even half a century after it became reality.

Partition was bad as such and the communal forces keep on misusing it for their own political ends, thus worsening the problem. Unfortunately the Hindu communal forces like the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha were equally responsible for partition and now they are further complicating the issue by raising the slogan of *akhand Bharat* (undivided India) and considering Pakistan as main enemy and casting aspersions on loyalty of Indian Muslims. They accuse Muslims in India to be pro-Pakistani.

## (II)

### POST-PARTITION INDIA AND COMMUNAL PROBLEM

India, despite partition on the basis of religion, resolved to be a secular state and promulgated its Constitution in 1950 accepting equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their caste, creed or race. It was undoubtedly a great step forward. Thus citizenship was prioritised over religion and ethnicity. Thus citizenship and not religion became the fundamental category. At the same time all citizens were given right to profess, practice and propagate their religion under Article 25 of the Constitution. Thus Indian Constitution was a creative blend of secularism and age-old Indian traditions. It was modern secular as well as respectful of religious freedom.

However, it was not easy to translate the Constitutional ideals into practice in a society so complex as India and so communalised as Indian society on account of endless communal controversies generated by politicians from either side. Even

the Congress party was not really secular functionally. Though it was a secular party notionally, ideologically, there were quite a few individual members who were subscribing to communal ideology. Also, the Congress made several compromises with communal elements and its governance was far from ideal.

Also, Nehru, who was sincerely committed to secularism and was quite critical of communal elements in his own party did not succeed in firmly putting them down. It was not possible for him to fully control the entire party machine. Communal elements wielded great deal of influence and no single individual, howsoever strong, could succeed in this respect.

Nehru, however, thought that as education, science and technology spreads people would tend to become more secular and rational. However, social growth is far more complex than this simplistic assumption on the part of Nehru. Firstly, education never spread among the masses, not even primary education, let alone scientific and technological one. Growth of primary education also has been painfully slow and tardy. Secondly, though the upper classes had access to higher scientific and technological education, it did not make them secular and rational in their intellectual persuasion. Human mind as well as human behaviour is influenced more by interests rather than by education alone. It is educated elite who gave birth to communal problem to safeguard their own political and economic interests. As pointed out before the controversy was about sharing political power rather than believing in this or that religion.

Also, the education system in India could never rid itself of the trappings of communalism. Even today the text-books are fundamental source of communal divide. The Indian ruling classes were as much interested in communal divide as the British imperialists. The Indian ruling classes used this divide to monopolise votes of this or that community. The Indian democracy, in other words, was manipulated on communal and caste lines by Indian politicians, which worsened the communal problem. A secular India could be built only if the political parties were thoroughly committed to secularism and honestly followed the provisions of the Constitution.

Indian state was characterised as 'soft state' by Gunnar Myrdal in his *Asian Drama*. And it remained soft to communalism also. And the state remained not only soft towards communalism it also encouraged it if it paid political dividends. The political role of the Congress in early eighties was nothing but exploiting communal sentiments to win over certain sections of Hindu society. We will throw more light over it later.

Though there were no communal riots for several years during fifties after partition riots stopped around 1948, however, it proved to be a temporary respite. The Jan Sangh came into existence in early fifties and the ban on the RSS was lifted soon after it was imposed. The RSS and the Jansangh preached Hindu communalism openly which was subscribed by a section of the Congress also. Nehru was fighting, so to say, a losing battle against communalism. A virulent outbreak of communal violence took place in Jabalpur in 1962 when Nehru was alive. His own Congressmen in Jabalpur were involved in supporting those who perpetrated the violence. He was just a helpless spectator.

The Jansangh not only grew in strength but also became more and more aggressive. The RSS kept on doing background work of spreading communal ideology. Nehru was thoroughly shaken by the Jabalpur riots and constituted the national Integration Council. However, the NIC could hardly play the role, which could be played only by secular parties like the Congress. But the Congress, even under Nehru, had no political will to do so. It kept on wavering between secularism and communalism. More the RSS and the Jansangh communalised the society, more the Congress leaders inclined towards communalism.

The result was a series of communal riots in early sixties in places like Jamshedpur, Durgapur, Ranchi and places in West Bengal, then ruled by the Congress. Nehru's pre-independence thesis that majority communalism is aggressive and reactionary and that the minority communalism was defensive proved to be more true in independent India. In most of the riots more Muslims were killed than the Hindus.

When Mrs. Gandhi rose to power in late sixties after splitting the congress, she was seen as champion of secularism,

on one hand, and of weaker sections of society, on the other. She, however, did not champion the cause of secularism and socialism out of deeper political convictions but as a strategy to gain support of these sections and she did emerge as a Messiah of the poor and the minorities and her position soon became formidable in political sense.

But those opposed to her i.e. the Congress (O), the Swatantra Party and of course the Jansangh struck back and organised massive communal riot in Ahmedabad in 1969. Ahmedabad riot of 1969 was greater in casualties and in intensity of violence than the Jabalpur riot of 1962. It shook the country once again. More than 1000 persons were killed in '69 riots in Gujrat though killed less brutally than in the present carnage in Gujrat. This riot of 1969 was aimed at weakening the position of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. It was also first major step the Jansangh took in consolidating its position in Gujrat. It was also the first major step towards capturing power though it took about two decades for it to finally do so.

The Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, another communal outfit, which subsequently emerged as a major communal party, was formed by a section of the Congress in Maharashtra to oppose the Nehruvian ideology of secularism and socialism. It is alleged that Shri S.K.Patil, the then BPCC President, was behind its formation and S.K.Patil was known for his rightist views. The Sena soon grew beyond control of the Congress bosses and began widening its political base by spreading communalism. It launched anti-south and anti-Muslim tirade soon after its formation. However, its anti-South tirade weakened and anti-Muslim attacks became stronger and stronger.

The Bhivandi riots of 1970 were organised by the Shiv Sena in 1970 in which more than 250 people were killed. Bhivandi riots also shocked the nation and the Justice Madon Commission, which was appointed to inquire into it published its report in seven volumes and passed strong strictures against Shiv Sena and also the police for its communalised role in controlling the riots.

The political situation began to change with emergence of secessionist movement in Bangla Desh in 1970 and all political

parties in India were supportive of separation of Bangla Desh from Pakistan. Thus the ground reality was such that communal violence abated. Mrs. Gandhi once again emerged as a great heroin. However, this too did not last long and Jai Prakash Narain launched anti corruption movement against her which ultimately resulted in imposition of emergency in 1975. Most of the opposition leaders were arrested including the RSS and the Jansangh leaders and no one was left to organise communal riots. Thus throughout emergency communal peace prevailed.

In 1977 emergency was lifted and elections held. Under pressure of events some of the opposition parties emerged together to form the Janata Party. The Jansangh also opted for merger and vowed to follow Gandhian socialism and secularism. However, the RSS did not approve of Jansangh leaders' new stance and series of communal riots broke out from 1977 to 1979 in places like Aligarh, Benaras and Jamshedpur. The Janta Party ultimately collapsed in 1979 and the Congress came back to power in 1980 although with much reduced majority. The Muslims did not vote this time for the Congress as much as expected by the Congress. Mrs. Gandhi was upset by loss of Muslim votes and hence tried to develop a pro-Hindu slant to compensate for loss of Muslim votes. This, as we would see, proved disastrous as far as communal situation was concerned.

On the other hand, the Jansangh, which had merged in the Janata Party, separated itself and now re-christened itself as the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and since it had accepted secularism and Gandhian socialism while merging with the Janta Party it tried to retain it or so it pretended. But soon it shed its pretensions. Apart from its innate communalism now the BJP was also faced with competition from Indira Gandhi's Congress.

Indira Gandhi, as pointed out, tried to court upper caste and middle caste Hindus and thus tried to usurp the traditional Hindu vote bank of the then Jan Sangh and now BJP. In 1980 riots broke out in Moradabad and a myth spread that it was Arab money (petro-dollars) which fuelled the riots. Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet minister gave a statement to this effect. The impression



went round that Mrs. Gandhi was behind this propaganda that petro -dollars were responsible for the Moradabad riots. This was to court the Hindu vote bank, it was said.

Then came the controversial issue of conversion of some 100 dalit families in Minakshipuram district in Tamilnadu to Islam. All the studies showed clearly that the conversion was due more to harassment of dalits by upper caste than to any preaching of Islam by Muslim missionaries. Yet, a myth was popularised supposedly by Mrs. Gandhi's machinery and VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) that petro-dollars were used for conversion to create a strong constituency among the middle class vocal Hindus. It is even alleged that Mrs. Gandhi used the VHP to promote her agenda among the Hindus. Some journalists told me that she used the Hindu card in Jammu to attract the Hindu votes and she won all seats in Jammu which was traditionally a Jansangh stronghold.

She also allegedly accentuated the Punjab problem and Sikh militancy in order to win the Hindu sympathy. It is also alleged that Shri Bhindranwala who set Punjab on fire was her creation. Thus she was systematically encroaching on the traditional vote bank of the Jansangh (and now BJP). This upset the BJP leaders. Again when elections were held to Loksabha in 1984 after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination the BJP under the President ship of Shri A.B.Vajpayee got only two seats. This further upset the BJP hard-core and now decision was taken by the leadership of the BJP to promote the Hindu militancy to snatch the Hindu vote bank from the Congress.

It was this decision which changed the very nature and intensity of communalism in India and it ultimately saw the BJP in power at the Centre and in states like the Gujrat and U.P. This decision of the BJP, it will be seen, had very long term consequences. The Gujrat carnage was also ultimate result of this militant Hindutva.

### (III)

## BJP - THE NEW MILITANCY

After the Loksabha elections of 1984 Shri A.B.Vajpayee resigned bad L.K. Advani considered hawk in the BJP took

over and gave the BJP a new shape. In this new *avtara* it raised new questions which the Jansangh had never raised before. It even put a question mark on Nehruvian concept of secularism and began to attack it as 'pseudo-secularism'. Even while adopting secularism and Gandhian socialism while merging with the Janta Party (JP) it had never raised such questions about Nehruvian secularism.

It now started a strong propaganda that Nehruvian secularism is sham and is meant only to create Muslim vote bank and to create this Muslim vote bank it indulges in 'appeasement of Muslims'. The example given for the appeasement of Muslims was separate Muslim personal law, which allows Muslim to marry four wives whereas Hindus can marry only one. Thus the subtle implication was why Hindus cannot take four wives. Thus the Hindu male should be as superior to female as the Muslim male to their female. And since this was not possible and to undo Muslim appeasement the BJP demanded implementation of common civil code.

This demand was further aggravated by the agitation orthodox Muslims launched on the question of what is known as the Shah Bano case. The Supreme Court decided the case of maintenance for divorced wife in her favour under section 125 of the CrPC. This was construed by the Muslim leadership as 'an interference in the Shariah law' and the Shari'ah law being divine could not be changed or interfered with. The Muslim leadership, without realising the long-term consequences launched a very aggressive movement forcing the Rajiv Gandhi Government to change the law for Muslims. An Act was passed called Muslim Women (Protection on Divorce) Act which made section 125 of Cr.P.C. inapplicable to Muslims.

This was great set-back to secularism and angered even committed secularists. The BJP naturally fully exploited passage of the Bill by the Parliament as an act of appeasement of Muslims. The Hindu middle classes were easily convinced and began to support the BJP demand for a common civil code. Thus common civil code became an important item on the Hindutva agenda. Unfortunately a secular measure acquired strong communal tones.

When the Muslim Women's Bill was passed Rajiv Gandhi, as a balancing Act, got the Babri masjid doors opened for Hindus to worship Ram Lalla . It thus unleashed another controversy, which was exploited to the hilt by the BJP for increasing its vote base. In fact so far the BJP's political base was restricted to upper caste Hindus mainly in urban areas and it found it impossible to come to power particularly at the Centre with this narrow urban base. The Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy opened new vistas for the BJP to exploit.

The BJP chalked out a strategy to use this controversy to expand its political base in rural areas and among lower castes too. Lord Ram is universally respected and worshipped by all Hindus whatever their caste. Thus the BJP saw a golden opportunity in exploiting this controversy for political purposes. The Ramlalla could bless them with the Hindu votes. The BJP thus launched an aggressive movement for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya and its cadres went to villages and took out processions of 'worshipped bricks' to be taken to Ayodhya for construction of Ram temple.

The BJP propaganda easily caught on and began to pay rich political dividends. This vetted its appetite for political power. Thus the decade of eighties was most dangerous decade in which not only Nehruvian concept of secularism began to be questioned but the communal forces succeeded in consolidating their political base. It was during this decade that large number of communal riots broke out, particularly in North India. Thus we have series of major communal riots beginning with Muradabad riot of 1980. Biharsharif witnessed riot in 1981, Baroda and Meerut in 1982 and Neli in Assam in 1983 in which more than 3000 Bengali Muslims were killed.

Neli was followed by Bombay-Bhiwandi riots of 1984. It was the Shive Sena, which was mainly involved in organising these riots. The Shiv Sena was sulking after it lost its anti-South appeal and to revive it Bal Thackeray, the Sena chief, also thought of using the Hindu card for increasing its appeal. The Sena leaders like Bhujbal provoked communal violence in number of places in Maharashtra like Panvel, Nashik, Aurangabad etc. to establish Sena Shakahas. Thus communal violence was

being engineered to consolidate Hindutva appeal wherever possible.

Anti-Sikh riots took place in early November after Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard. More than 4000 Sikhs were killed in this massacre in which leading Congress leaders were involved. However, it was an exceptional event since it was the first and last (so far) riot against Sikhs. Also, the Congress government at the Centre was involved in organising these riots for the first time.

The anti-Sikh riots of November 1984 were followed by Ahmedabad riots of February 1985 which continued, in phases, upto October 1986. These riots were organised to topple the government of Mr. Solanki, the Chief minister who had taken over reins of government in February 1985 in Gujrat by using the political support of what came to be known as KHAM formula (i.e. Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims). Solanki announced reservation in government jobs and educational institutions to get their votes in 1985 elections. The violence continued until Solanki Government was finally toppled. As through this KHAM formula Solanki tried to exclude the upper caste Hindus from power the BJP organised these riots to topple Solanki's government.

These riots, like the 1969 riots of Ahmedabad further consolidated the position of the BJP in Gujrat. The BJP was systematically focusing on Gujrat and succeeded in communalising the state as never before. Since dalits and backwards had supported the Congress the BJP worked among them to win over their support by making them proud of the Hindu identity. Earlier the Jansangh and later the BJP used the dalits and tribals to do the job of killing and looting. During the recent Gujrat dalits and tribals were used for this purpose on a very large scale.

The Ahmedabad riot of 1985 was followed by the Meerut riots of 1987 and Meerut riots were followed by Bhagalpur riots of 1989. Both these riots also saw great deal of police atrocities and police collusion in killing members of minority community. In Meerut the police dragged out 23 young Muslim boys from Hashimpura and shot them dead and threw their bodies into

a nearby canal. No action has been taken against these murderers so far. In Bhagalpur, Bihar, police took part in violence directly and when Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister suspended the police inspector involved, he was gheraoed and made to take suspension order back. A police inspector, in one of the villages in Bhagalpur district killed many Muslims, buried their bodies in a field and grew cauliflower over there.

In 1989 general elections, V.P. Singh and others made seat adjustment with the BJP in order to defeat the Congress and thus the BJP could win 88 seats in that election. Thus the BJP could increase its strength from 2 to 88 in 1989 Loksabha elections. V.P. Singh, perhaps, made a great mistake by making seat adjustment with BJP and multiplying its strength in Loksabha several times. The Ramjanambhoomi movement also helped the BJP gain strength. The final stroke was of course the Rathayatra which Advani, the then President of BJP took out in 1990 on the question of Ramjanambhoomi and which turned into 'bloodyatra' according to an editorial published in *The Times of India*. About 300 riots took place throughout India when the yatra was going on. It was a great tragedy indeed.

The Ramjanambhoomi movement was fundamentally political in character and was a clever ploy by the BJP to increase its strength in parliament in which it succeeded eminently but at the cost of thousands of human lives. The Sangh Parivar's ideology has been based, right from beginning, on hatred and violence. It remained unchecked because of soft policies of the state. The Congress regime always allowed a long rope and never punished the guilty in communal riots. The inquiry commissions were set up and its recommendations totally ignored.

#### (IV)

### BABRI MASJID DEMOLITION AND ITS AFTERMATH

Babri Masjid was ultimately demolished and Shri Narsimha Rao, the then Prime Minister, remained a silent spectator. He took no action whatsoever. Even the Central Reserved Forces,

kept 11 kilometers away from the site of the Masjid in Ayodhya were never deployed. The demolition was celebrated by the Sangh Parivar and was followed by outburst of communal violence in Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Bhopal, Delhi and several other places. Ahmedabad and Surat were worst affected by communal violence even then. In Mumbai alone more than 1000 persons were killed. In Surat there was case of several Muslim women being mass raped and search-lights were mounted so that all could see the event.

Though there was lull in communal violence after post-Babri riots but Gujrat remained hypersensitive throughout. Every year on occasions of religious festivals like Holi, Basant Panchmi and others, riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims as a matter of routine claiming few lives on every occasion. These incidents usually occurred in the old city areas of Daryapur, Kalupur, Shahpur etc. These areas are hyper sensitive even now. But now even posh areas of Ahmedabad, the so-called cosmopolitan areas of Ahmedabad city have become worst affected areas and now communal violence has spread to these 'cosmopolitan areas' too.

One important reason of old city being hypersensitive is that illicit liquor business is conducted from there and also various gambling dens are located there. Thus old city is centre of criminal activities. Both Hindus and Muslims are involved in these activities. One Latif, who was one of the dreaded gangsters, was eliminated by the police in so called encounter and now Muslim criminal gangs have been considerably weakened thereafter, leaving the field open for Hindu gangs. But crime by itself does not explain every thing. It is politicisation of the crime, which is important in explaining frequent bouts of communal violence in Gujrat in general and, in Ahmedabad, in particular.

Prohibition in Gujrat is a big farce. Liquor is available in all cities for the asking. Prohibition has given rise to organised crime in Gujrat as it is smuggled from neighbouring states where there is no prohibition. The organised crime needs political patronage and politicians use these criminals for their own political objectives. These criminal gangs are also working, more often than not, on communal lines further aggravating

communal situation in Gujrat, particularly in cities like Surat, Ahmedabad and Baroda which are communally already sensitive cities.

After the BJP captured power by itself in 1993 the situation began to further worsen. The Sangh parivar had, as pointed out before, had worked on Gujrat systematically since early sixties, to make it its fortress. With 1969 riots of Gujrat the Jansangh began to consolidate its position and since then it never looked back. This is precisely why Shri L.K.Advani began to contest from Gandhinagar, capital of Gujrat and Gandhinagar became a safe seat for him.

The Navnirman movement of early seventies of last century launched by Jaiprakash Narain against corrupt regime of Chimanbhai Patel, was also captured by the RSS elements and Jaiprakash was warned about it. However, he was also so consumed against anti-Congressism that he did not mind taking RSS help for the downfall of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Narendra Modi, now the Chief Minister of Gujrat under whose leadership recent Gujrat carnage took place, was then an active RSS Pracharak and it is said that Jayprakash Narayan took liking towards him as a dynamic young man.

It is important to note that RSS and Jansangh or BJP never lets go any opportunity to increase its influence. And Jayprakash Narain provided them an open opportunity to capture the movement. Also, by associating itself with an anti-corruption movement it got much needed respectability and the moral boost. Thus it became easier for the RSS to attract more youngsters towards it. The Navnirman movement had generated tremendous emotions as Chimanbhai Patel was seen as symbol of corruption and people of Gujrat wanted to overthrow him to end corruption. The RSS fully exploited these sentiments to enhance its prestige among the people.

It was thus due to these carefully planned strategies that the BP ultimately seized power in Gujrat. It had also projected itself as a party with a difference and people believed it. Of course while in power number of corruption scandals were reported. The BJP derives its support mainly from trading class and it is traders, builders and bankers who mainly indulge in

corruption and it is through this money that they finance BJP's electoral kitty. So how can BJP ever provide a clean and non-corrupt regime? But a slogan like 'a party with difference' appears quite attractive to those fed up with corruption and they are attracted to vote for BJP.

However, once it captured power in Gujrat the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, the most militant outfits of Sangh Parivar, became very bold and began attacking minorities openly. They also overworked to spread hate-ideology with all the facilities from the state. The first systematic attack began on Christians in 1998 (Muslims were always the target of the Sangh Parivar). They began to terrorise Christians and Muslims and if ever police intervened the VHP and BD activists warn them that it is their government and they would be suspended or transferred if they came to the help of their victims.

The Sangh Parivar had not attacked Christians so vehemently as they began to do since 1998. They raised the issue of conversion and alleged that the Christian missionaries were converting tribals through coercion and fraud. They burnt copies of bible and attacked churches. In Dang, which is a tribal area in South Gujrat, they attacked churches on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1998 and tried to terrorise the Christians. (For detailed report see "Violence in Gujrat – Report of the Citizen's Commission, Indian Journal of Secularism, Volume 3, No. 2, July-September 1999).

The attacks on Muslims also became vigorous and Muslims were forced to flee from certain villages of South Gujrat just because some boy had married a Hindu girl. A boycott was declared of all Muslims from Bardoli and Randikpur villages for this reason. Many Muslim hotels were either attacked or threatened. A Hindu Jagran Manch was also set up to attack Christians and Muslims. *Trishuls* (tridents) were openly distributed. Thus a climate of hatred against minorities was systematically conducted since the BJP came to power in Gujrat.

The recent riots in Gujrat must be seen in this background. The Gujrat carnage did not occur suddenly and simply in reaction to what happened in Godhra on February 27, 2002. The Sangh Parivar politically thrived only through hate politics,



opposing every thing that went in favour of minorities. And the regional media, which is read by a large number of middle and lower middle class people carry news and articles about this anti-minority campaign by the Sangh Parivar. Over the years it has created a mindset among the Hindus who question not only loyalty of minorities towards India but also consider them as most fundamentalist and fanatics and the Hindus as liberal and secular. They always maintain that secularism in India owes its existence to Hindus as Hindus are secular *per se* and they can never be fundamentalists or fanatics. Such propaganda has been swallowed uncritically by large number of Hindus under the influence of Sangh Parivar. If Hindus are secular *per se* how can one explain Nepal, a Hindu majority country, being a Hindu Rashtra?

Obviously there is more to it than Hindus being secular *per se*. It was more because of commitment to secularism of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Azad and others that India is secular. Even before partition the RSS chief Guru Golwalkar was pleading for Hindu Rashtra. But for leaders like Gnadhiji and Nehru India would not have been secular. The BJP leaders have been saying this from every platform that India is secular because of Hindus as Hindus are secular by their very nature. Ironically it is the BJP, which has been systematically communalising India.

## (V)

### THE GUJARAT CARNAGE

Thus it will be seen that Gujrat was communally quite sensitive even before the BJP came to power and it became much more so once the BJP took over and the Sangh Parivar began intensive communalisation of the Gujrat society after taking over power there. There is one more phenomenon, which ought to be taken into account, which has been having impact on the communal situation in Gujrat. This is the phenomenon of large- scale migration of people of upper caste Gujratis to U.K. and USA. These non-resident Indians (NRIs) naturally suffer from identity crisis and feel rootless in these countries and compensate for it by being ultra-Hindus and chauvinistically Indian, more Indian than Indians in India.

It is these NRIs from Gujrat, which is liberally financing the VHP. VHP has established its branches in these countries and promoting Hindutva politics among them. It holds regular summer camps for the children of these non-residents Indians. Most of them belong to middle classes in the USA and U.K. and overcome their rootlessness in that western society through this new identity of Hindutva. As their Hinduism gets diluted in those western societies they vehemently assert their Hinduness through Hindutva rather than Hindusim. The VHP has been financially thriving more because of these NRIs, especially in Gujrat.

There is yet another thing, which has to be taken into account in order to understand the background of this carnage in Gujrat. The defeat of BJP in U.P., Punjab (where it was in coalition with the Akalis) and Uttaranchal (where it had its own government) and also in bye- elections on two Assembly seats in Gujrat had created a great political crisis for its leaders. The people of these states had rejected BJP for its corruption and non-governance. The scandals during earth-quake and collapse of buildings constructed by contractors close to the BJP ministers and their relatives had further exposed the BJP's tall claims of 'party with a difference' and a non-corrupt party. Thus it was loosing election after election and after defeat in U.P. it was more particularly worried.

The elections were also due in Gujrat in March 2003 and there were clear prospects of loosing those elections. The only trick up its sleeve was polarisation of Hindus and Muslims and thus to consolidate the Hindutva forces. And the easiest way to do was to organise communal riots. All indications suggest that the carnage was well planned and executed with finesse. They were waiting only for a spark and the spark was provided by the burning of a sleeper coach S-6 at Godhra on 27th February 2002 early morning.

It was alleged, to add gravity to the incident that it was planned by the Muslim militants and extremists at the instance of ISI. Thus it was projected as the planned act. There were *karsevaks* in that bogey who were returning from Ayodhya. 58 of them were burnt alive within minutes of setting fire to the bogey. Even before any investigation was carried out conclusion

was drawn that it was a planned act.

Subsequent investigations by our Centre for Study of Society and Secularism's research team and also by others, especially by Rajdeep Sardesai, the political editor of NDTV, clearly showed that it was not a planned act but a spontaneous act on the part of some Muslims of Signal Falia, near Godhra station. Even the Railway Protection Force (RPF) in Godhra has written to the Railway Board, discounting the pre-planned conspiracy theory. It says the violence was the result of events at the Godhra station itself on February 27.

Actually there was altercation between the Muslim vendors on Godhra station and the *karsevaks* who refused to pay for tea and eatables and also were shouting slogans. They also beat up an elderly Muslim vendor and when his grand daughter tried to intervene, the *karsevaks* molested her and abducted her. Though the girl could wrest herself free and fled rumour spread that she was abducted by the *karsevaks* and taken into the bogey number S-6. Some of those vendors jumped into the compartment to rescue the girl but train started. They, therefore, pulled the chain and train stopped near Signal Falia where, after stone throwing and heated exchange of words, burning rags were thrown setting fire to the bogey.

Mr. Rakesh Asthana, DIG, CID also confirmed that there was no evidence so far of any larger conspiracy. It is interesting to note that Gujrat Minister of State for Home, Gordhan Zadafiya, who was all along insisting on a wider ISI-Pakistan conspiracy, now seems vague on the nature of the conspiracy angle. "The investigations are still going on and till they are complete, it's difficult to say anything", said Zadafiya.

After the train incident the VHP announced Gujrat bandh on 28<sup>th</sup> February. It was pointed out to this writer by some high police officials in Ahmedabad that the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi convened a meeting of the police officials and assured them that the Bandh will be peaceful and there was no need to take any special measures. According to this police official the police force thus became complacent. From the later evidence it can be said that Narendra Modi gave false assurance. Either he was party to the conspiracy or was naive

enough to believe that there would be no trouble.

On February 28 violence on large scale began and by the end of first day itself more than 100 persons were done to death. Thus violence had broken out with great fury. That it was well planned was obvious from the way the rioters were well equipped with gas cylinders, swords, petrol-bombs and mobile phones besides voters' lists and sales tax details for identifying the Muslim shops. A Muslim businessman told me that those Muslim shops whose owners did not pay sales tax could not be identified and hence were not burnt. Obviously the home work for all this was done much earlier and in a very systematic way. It could not have been done overnight and Mr. Modi's statement that violence subsequent to Godhra incident was in keeping with Newton's law of action and reaction is not borne out by the events that took place.

Firstly as an executive head of the state he should not give such a statement justifying violence and killing on such a massive scale. Secondly, the planned nature of violence, looting, raping and burning was quite obvious. If not the Chief Minister, some cabinet ministers were definitely involved in these operations. Many eye witnesses pointed out to us that mobs were being led by Mr. Harin Pandya- revenue minister in the Narendra Modi cabinet (and earlier Home Minister in the Keshavbhai Patel ministry) and Gordhan Zadafiya, home minister in the present cabinet. There were also reports that some ministers like Ashok Bhat even entered the police control room and gave instructions to the police not to intervene in the situation.

Many eyewitnesses also pointed out that police officials also were leading marauding mobs and many places were set fire to right under the nose of police stations. For example the dargah of Wali Gujrati, a prominent Urdu poet and a sufi saint, was bulldozed and a Godharya Hanuman temple set up right behind Shahi Baugh Police head quarters. Bulldozing operation must have taken quite some time as it was a pucca structure but no police help was forthcoming to stop razing to the ground the dargah. It speaks volumes about the role of the police.

Another shocking incident was burning alive of 39 persons

along with Mr. Ehsan Jafri , an ex-M.P. of the Congress party in his Bungalow in Chamanpura in Ahmedabad city. Mr. Jafri, a prominent personality of the city kept on phoning to various authorities, including the Police Commissioner and others, including various politicians he knew but no police help came. It is said that the matter even went to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who phoned Vajpayee to intervene and nothing happened. Mr. Ehsan Jafri ultimately met with violent death along with 19 members of his family and 20 others in the Chamanpura colony. It was pointed out to us by many that Jafri had campaigned against Narendra Modi in his bye election for state assembly and paid for it with his life and lives of several of his family members.

Even Muslim police officials of Gujrat were not safe. Some of them of course were transferred from field duties. Even those conscientious police officers who actively intervened in the situation and did not allow violence to spread were transferred from field duties to some obscure office work. A very high police official in Ahmedabad who himself was victim of such transfer, told us about it.

One Muslim Inspector General of Police was threatened by his own Hindu sub-ordinates and had to remove his police uniform to save himself. A person of the status of the High Court Judge was not safe in his official residence as he was a Muslim and had to shift, under advice from the Chief Justice of Gujrat High Court, to a relatives place in a Muslim locality. This speaks volumes about the role of the police and nature of violence in Gujrat.

The worst incident occurred at a slum in the city known as Naroda Patia where more than 100 persons, all poor Muslims, were burnt alive in full view of the police force. Many of the survivors told us that when they went to the police standing on one side of the slum, they pointed guns at us and pushed us towards the mob. Many Muslim girls and women from Naroda Patia were raped before burning them alive. One case of a pregnant woman Kausar was very heart rending. She was pregnant. They ripped her womb with a sword, extracted foetus and burnt it before burning her.

Naroda Patia incident alone would put any civilised

government to shame. But Narendra Modi government remained unmoved and did nothing to control the situation. The Government figures show about 100 persons killed in the Naroda Patia incident. But our independent investigation shows more than 200 persons were roasted alive. This estimate is based on interviews with survivors.

It would be in order to make certain observations about the Gujrat carnage. Firstly it is necessary to clarify that it was not a Hindu-Muslim riot like any other riot. It was carnage meticulously organised and executed. Secondly, though I have investigated all major riots in post-independence India beginning with the Jabalpur riot of 1962 to the Bombay riots of 1992-93 I have never seen such furious outburst of violence against Muslims. Also, no other riots were so meticulously planned and executed.

I have not seen such police inaction or complicity in any other riot though in all the riots police complicity has been more than obvious. A police officer was even spotted giving petrol from government vehicle for burning the people.

I have not seen in any riot the ministers being accused of leading the mob. Similarly though we have witnessed government inaction or indifference such as in Bombay and other riots we have never seen governmental machinery involved in executing the riots and the Chief Minister justifying it instead of controlling it.

Also, it was for the first time that few foreign nationals were killed in such communal disturbances. These foreign nationals were not mistakenly killed but deliberately as the victims showed their passports that they were British nationals. They were killed just because they were Muslims.

Also, it is for the first time that European Union or other European countries (not part of EU) that they sent their investigating teams and submitted *demarche* to the Union Government for failing to save the lives of innocent people in Gujrat.

It was for the first time that the opposition insisted on debating the issue on communal violence in parliament under

the rule 184 under which votes are taken after discussion. The Vajpayee Government was strongly censured by the opposition for its failure to act when innocent people were being massacred. However, the Vajpayee Government won by sheer number though it was strongly censured by the opposition for not doing anything in Gujrat when hundreds were being killed with such brutality.

Again, it was for the first time that even industrialists were seriously worried about damage to the economy of the state as international capital will shy away. Mr. Deepak Parekh issued a statement condemning violence in Gujrat. Also it was for the first time that CII (Confederation of Indian Industries) debated the issue for its impact on the economy of India. Both leader of the opposition Ms. Sonia Gandhi in its inaugural session and Prime Minister, reacting to her statement in the concluding session referred to carnage in Gujrat. It was really unparalleled in the history of CII.

The Prime Minister Shri Vajpayee not only failed in controlling the situation but also lost all his credibility by making totally contradictory statements in Ahmedabad and in Goa. He visited Ahmedabad on 4<sup>th</sup> April, more than a month after the carnage began. He visited Gujrat just for a day and when the worst was over. All these days he remained a silent spectator as if noting serious was happening in Gujrat.

In Ahmedabad in the Shah Alam camp he said that what face shall I show to the world. Mr. Vajpayee said that Gujrat events were a blot on India which enjoyed respect and prestige in the comity of nations because of the way the 100 crore people of diverse religion, culture and ethnic groups lived together happily, shared our griefs and joys, but never forget the message of peace and brotherhood. But what was happening in Gujrat was not only heart-rending but most inhuman and horrible, he said. He also advised Narendra Modi to follow the *raj dharma* (rulers' duty towards the subjects).

But in Goa where he addressed a public meeting on April 12, just a week after his Gujrat visit, after the national Executive meeting of the BJP, he made complete about turn and accused Islam and Muslims of militancy and conflict. He almost echoed

the Modi line on Gujrat and used the same language as Modi was using. He rhetorically asked who burnt the train in Godhra? While referring to Gujrat carnage thus implying that Gujrat carnage was reaction to Godhra event.

Adopting the RSS line he accused the Muslims all over the world as a "threat to peace and tranquillity". The Prime Minister said wherever "there is a Muslim population in the world, the country lives under threat of militancy and terrorism." He also talked of two Islams, one of compassion and peace and other of militancy and conflict. It appeared he had deliberately kept a escape rout by talking of two Islams. But while speaking of Muslims he had made no such distinction and had condemned Muslims as a community. When accused of Islam bashing he referred to two Islams he spoke of but never said that he had condemned Muslims as a whole.

Thus Mr. Vajpayee proved to be as much a RSS *pracharak* as Modi though he is crypto variety while Narendra Modi is open. It is interesting to note that in Goa Mr. L.K.Advani appeared to be more moderate than Mr. Vajpayee. It is difficult to explain this reversal of the role but it is sure that Mr. Vajpayee appeared far more militant than Mr. Advani. Mr. Vajpayee had said at a VHP meeting in Straiten Island in New York that "RSS is my soul" and in India also he had said earlier that construction of Ram temple is in keeping with the national sentiment. Thus it is very difficult to call Shri. Vajpayee as a statesman like Jawaherlal Nehru. Nehru was real statesman because he was honest to his ideology of secularism and nationalism. He was truly a man of breadth of vision and did not allow his politics to interfere with his vision.

Shri Vajpayee on the other hand, is basically committed to RSS ideology, which is rigid and sectarian and hostile to Muslims and other religious minorities. However, as a Prime Minister, he is required to keep balance between all religious communities but really cannot get rid of his RSS roots also and hence such contradictions in his behaviour.

It is more than 70 days since the carnage began in Gujrat and still incidents are taking place and daily innocent people are getting killed. The Prime Minister's 'Goa statement also



encouraged such violence. The BJP, which had promised 'riot-free India' in its manifesto is unfortunately supporting Narendra Modi despite his complicity in the Gujrat carnage and has stood by him. In fact the Goa meet has clearly shown that the BJP has fully approved of Narendra Modi's policies in tackling the communal situation in Gujrat. Thus there is little chance that peace will prevail in Gujrat in the near future. Such a situation bodes ill for India but BJP, in order to establish Hindu Rashtra in India would like many Gujrats to happen.



## BJP'S RIOT-FREE INDIA

Asghar Ali Engineer

The riots in Gujrat in which so far 704 persons have died (official figures, unofficially it is much more) is, perhaps, Independent India's worst riots, both in terms of numbers and brutality of killings. The BJP, in its manifesto of 1999 Lok Sabha elections had promised 'riot-free India', if voted to power. So this is BJP's version of riot-free India. These riots have not taken place in any Congress-ruled or any other party ruled state, but in a BJP-ruled state of Gujrat which, is also a laboratory of Hindutva.

Thus it is the 'laboratory of Hindutva' which became killing fields of people belonging to minority community. To be sure what happened in Godhra on 27<sup>th</sup> February morning was highly condemnable and no one who respects human life would ever condone it or explain away its occurrence. It was highly inhuman whatever the provocation by the *karsevaks*.

What followed from next day in Gujarat (when the call for Gujrat *bandh* was given) was utterly shocking. No secular democratic country would stand such horror killing. In a democratic country law should take its own course and people cannot be allowed to take revenge on the street. Those involved in Godhra massacre of *karsevaks* and some other innocent citizens in those two sleeping coaches (S5 and S6), were promptly arrested and the Chief Minister Narendra Modi even declared that they were arrested under POTO.

That means the law had started taking its course and soon inquiry was also to be announced. A protest *bandh* call by the VHP next day was hardly needed. *Bandh* calls are given when the government refuses to take action against some grave and shocking event. Here the Government was more than ready to take action. And despite having announced action against the culprits of the Godhra incident if *bandh* was announced by the VHP, was it necessary to kill hundreds of innocent people so brutally?

And if the VHP had gone blind by animal passion for vengeance what had happened to the Gujrat government and its administrative machinery? It is more than obvious that the government was unwilling to take any preventive measures to stop ensuing blood-bath. And knowing the nature of the VHP and Bajrang Dal's militancy it was not difficult to imagine the nature of blood bath. And even then if the state government did not take any measure, do we need any more proof for its complicity. Even army was not called for full two days and when called, was not deployed saying enough magistrates were not available to accompany each column of the army.

When Mr. George Fernandese was sent as trouble-shooter of the NDA Government and he pressed for deployment of army, his car was stoned publicly. Many insiders felt it was done at the instance of Mr. Narendra Modi. The brutal killings went on for about a week and spread to rural areas where large number of people were burnt alive, one cannot be sure so far how many bodies are being discovered.

Gujrat has not witnessed communal violence for the first time. Besides smaller incidents of communal violence, there have been several major flare-ups, particularly in Ahmedabad. The first major communal carnage took place in 1969 in post-independent India in which about 660 people died officially. The number of dead in the current riots have already reached 704 and which is also likely to exceed as more bodies are recovered from rural areas. The Chief Minister's office was busy giving out figures last month when Narendra Modi was contesting by-election to show how peaceful Gujrat was in the last six months since Modi took over as Chief Minister. Thus within six months of Modi's take-over the 1969 record has already been pushed to the second place.

Gujrat witnessed several more riots since 1969, in 1981, in 1985, in 1990, in 1992-93 and now in 2002 and several other riots in between. According to the *Times of India* report under Madhav Singh Solanki who was chief minister on three occasions, 276 people died in 117 incidents of mob violence. Under Amar Singh Chaudhuri, 582 persons died in 413 incidents of violence. And under Chimanbhai Patel, who was chief minister twice, 563 persons died in 370 incidents of violence. In 1990 when L.K. Advani-led *rath yatra* began from Somnath to Ayodhya, 220 people died; in 1992 riots after Babri demolition 325 people were dead and in 1993 another 116 people lost their lives.

All these riots which took place during the Congress regimes the Jansangh or the BJP's role was obvious though the Congress also cannot be exonerated by any means. The BJP had chosen Gujrat from the beginning as the laboratory of Hindutva. The question is of course why Gujrat was chosen? There could be number of reasons for this. Gujrat is predominantly state of traders where neither left movement had ever in influence nor any movement by lower castes, particularly the Dalit movement. *Dalit* movement acts as a countervailing force for communal movement. Gujrat never witnessed such a movement. Neither there was any Mahatma Phule there nor any Ambedkar.

The socialist movement was also very weak. No social reform movement as in Maharashtra ever took place in Gujrat. The reform movement called Swami Narayan movement attracted mainly trading classes, particularly the Patels in its fold. It never attacked the caste system. Also Gujrat, including Saurashtra, has largest number of princely states and feudal influence was very strong and since the independence the Jansangh allied with Swantantra party which was set up by Rajaji and which was joined in a large number by the princes.

It is, therefore, not very surprising that earlier the Jan Sangh and now the BJP, has systematically used the *dalit* masses to advance its own political agenda and also have always used them for attacking minorities. The poor *dalit* youth are always in the forefront of all the riots. The *dalit* leadership, itself very weak, finds itself almost helpless in controlling the

*dalit* youth to perpetrate communal violence. The job of killing is done usually by *dalit* youth and upper caste followers of the BJP keep themselves away from this 'dirty job'.

The middle castes are extremely conservative and unhesitatingly align themselves with the BJP and most of the NRIs in U.K. and USA also belong to these castes which help the Sangh Parivar generously. The NRI money has greatly helped the Sangh Parivar financially. They have really helped make Gujrat the laboratory of Hindutva. Also, every communal carnage has furthered the cause of BJP and its political agenda. And it is for this reason that it found it easy to come to power in Gujrat unaligned with any other political party. The Solanki government tried to take help of lower and backward castes and minorities through KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims) formula by giving them reservation in government jobs. However, a powerful anti-reservation movement launched by these middle castes and led by the BJP sabotaged it and Solanki himself was thrown out after more than year and half long communal violence in 1985-86 engineered by the BJP. Thus the BJP furthered consolidated its position and Congress was further weakened besides being torn by faction fights.

The recent carnage in Gujrat is culmination of years of unabated communal violence. It was for this reason that Mr.L.K.Advani also chose Gandhinagar constituency for contesting Lok Sabha elections every time. Every time communal violence takes place in Gujrat it surpasses itself in brutality from previous instances of violence. This time all deaths were most brutal, burning the victims alive and throwing even young children into leaping flames.

This time a concerted effort was also made to systematically destroy the economy of Muslims in Gujrat. Incidentally Gujrat is the only state where three trading communities of Gujrati Muslims have flourished over a period of time i.e. the Bohras, Khojas and Memons. All these trading communities are peaceful and almost a-political. They generally do not take part in political movements, let alone in any communal violence. Yet these communities have been increasingly suffering in the Gujrat riots and this time it has been very systematic destruction of their

factories, godowns and shops.

Because of the Sangh Parivar's intense activities in Gujrat all sections of Gujrat civil society and state organs have been thoroughly communalised. Even judiciary is no exception. When Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992 twenty judges, out of twenty three, according to a lawyer of Ahmedabad High Court, felt happy; only three said that they felt sad. No wonder that in all these riots over 33 years since 1969 hardly any culprit belonging to the majority community has been punished. The police and civil servants are no exceptions. Whenever riots break out in Gujrat they spread very fast as entire administrative machinery either looks the other way or even helps the marauding mobs. In the carnage which, broke out after the Godhra incident even minority judges and police officers of the high rank of Inspector General of Police were targeted. High court judges belonging to the minority community had to flee from their houses and their plea to the authorities fell on deaf years.

Some people have suggested that only a vibrant civil society can check communal violence but when the civil society itself is so highly communalised how can it check communal violence. There is so much illiteracy, so much poverty and unemployment, how can we have a vibrant civil society. Our politicians, particularly of the BJP variety are misusing religion for political ends recklessly as the Sangh Parivar has done in the last twenty years not only by challenging secularism (calling it pseudo secularism since early eighties) and then raising the Ram *mandir* issue and using it continuously election after election to increase the number of seats in the parliament.. It is crucial moment for Indian polity and Indian secularism. The BJP politicians are pushing the country to the precipice after climbing up to power. The strong resistance is needed now from the people. The secular parties are fighting among themselves, the Samajwadi with the BSP, the socialists with the Congress and some of them easily aligned themselves with the BJP to finish off the rival secular parties. This rank opportunism on the part of NDA partners should come to an end if they care for secularism and unity of the country.



# GUJARAT - AN AREA OF DARKNESS

Asghar Ali Engineer

A visit to Gujrat is a shattering experience for any sensitive soul. It is more than a month and it still continues to burn. The brutalities are of such a nature that one feels Gujrat has not entered an age of enlightenment or if it ever entered it has exited from it and has entered an era of darkness. Gujrat is an embodiment of brutality today with some honourable exceptions.

The opposition parties are demanding only removal of Narendra Modi. It is not enough; in fact Narendra Modi Government should be dismissed and President's rule should be promulgated. Many ministers of this Narendra Modi Government are deeply involved in organising the genocide. Mr. Zadaphia, Home Minister and Harin Pandya, the revenue Minister were seen by many eye -witnesses with the marauding mobs. Some FIRs also have mentioned their names.

As long as this Government is in power the victims and survivors can hope for no justice. The police is either not recording FIRs or framing very minor charges against the killers, looters and murderers. As long as this Government is there the guilty can never be punished. In most of the cases the participants in mayhem were assured that they would be fully protected. Only President's rule can make some difference. The present governor is also a RSS man. Many people pointed

out to me that the present governor should also be removed, though it does not seem possible.

The Gujrat carnage is an attack on Indian democracy, its diversity and pluralism. India has been plural, not since it adopted democracy and became a republic in 1950. India has been plural for ages and it always has been proud of its rich pluralist legacy. The Indian pluralism is the anchor sheet of our secularism. We cannot think of our secular democracy without pluralism.

But what has happened in Gujrat in last more than a month is a concerted assault on this pluralism. Muslims are sought to be completely isolated in ghettos and looked down upon as non-Indians. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its cohorts are distributing pamphlets on large scale with the blessings of the present Government for economic boycott of Muslims – not to sell to them and not to buy from them. There are many who are also implementing it. A Hindu doctor was stabbed by an unidentified person and these doctors decided not to practise in Muslim areas. But when a Muslim doctor was murdered no such hue and cry was raised. No one even showed such concern.

Many Hindu employers have already asked their Muslim employees not to come for work. The VHP enthusiasts are going round various schools and threatening its headmasters and principals to remove Muslim students from their rolls. It sends chilling sensation down one's spine what will happen if Muslim students are really removed from schools under threat from VHP and Bajrang Dal. The ghettoisation will be complete.

It is BJP and RSS people who never tire of accusing Muslims that they refuse to be a part of 'Indian mainstream'? Though this is not true but even if true who is responsible for their being out of stream. If they are expelled from Government and private schools will they not be driven into *madrassa* shells? The Government of Gujrat under the leadership of Narendra Modi is, it appears, silently encouraging the VHP enthusiasts to implement their plan of Hindu India, at least presently in Gujrat. This should not be taken lightly by those who care for secular character of Indian democracy. If it happens, even if



partially, it will be the beginning of the end of our pluralism and our secular democracy.

Today one can also see how administration surrenders itself to the fascist forces under their rule. For the Gujrat Government Indian Constitution does not exist. So much for the administrative machinery in Gujrat. The administration obeys all illegal and extra-constitutional orders of government of Gujrat. Anyone who insists on the rule of law is instantly transferred. Mr. Harsh Mandar, a conscientious IAS officer, was so disgusted with this state of affairs that he resigned in sheer disgust. He had written a very moving piece on the Gujrat carnage.

Like administration the police force has also proved to be quite obliging. Many observers have described it as a matter of shame for the police force. When the ex-director general of police Shri Julio Ribeiro visited Gujrat many top police officers avoided to meet him out of this sense of shame. He said in an interview, "Normally when I go to Gujrat senior police officers come to see me. This time, they tried to avoid me." When he was asked what was the reason for the failure of the police in Gujrat he said that "The top brass must take the blame. I did not sense a whiff of leadership from the top police officers. Senior officers have been reduced to mute spectators as they have little control over the force." (TOI, Mumbai, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2002)

I also spoke to a top police officer in Ahmedabad who himself has been a victim of Modi Government for being duty conscious. He was transferred because he did not allow riots to take place in his jurisdiction. He confirmed what Ribeiro has said in the above interview. And many lower officers and constabulary had full sympathy with the marauding mobs. Several victims of the violence told me that the police blocked their way and the mobs attacked them and burnt their relatives alive. And if they tried to run police fired on them.

In Bapunagar area it is alleged that police killed about 40 young boys at point blank range. The bullets had hit them, as post mortem reports show on their heads and chest. Many lives were saved just because the military arrived. The death toll

otherwise would have been much higher. And in case of Akbarnagar in Ahmedabad whole colony was destroyed just behind the office of assistant commissioner of police.

Gas cylinders were used in a big way to blast even *Pucca* houses. Who supplied them gas cylinders on such a scale? Several trucks loaded with gas cylinders were brought to Ansar Nagar where a *madrassa* building Jamia Qasim was set on fire. I saw the building, which was greatly damaged.

There is another factor which also should be seriously reflected upon: participation of *dalits* and backwards in this genocide on a big scale. Many have emphasised *Dalit-Muslim* unity to fight communal fascism. But the Hindutvawadis have instilled a sense of Hinduness among *dalits* for their misuse against Muslims. The huge crowds of ten to fifteen thousands which collected and surrounded Muslims from all sides mostly consisted of *dalits* and backwards. Of course in Gujrat there is no *dalit* leadership worth the name. Some who had taken lead for *dalits* during 1981 anti-*dalit* riots have become now totally ineffective and *dalits* who had shown anger against upper caste Hindus and vowed to fight them have united with them again. They were no doubt given liquor and money plus incentive of loot. But this does not explain the fury with which they attacked.

The constant propaganda against Muslims that they are the enemies and anti-nationals and must be taught a lesson also had its effect. The VHP, in order to fight Muslims with the help of *dalits* expresses 'solidarity' with them as Hindus and instils in them a strong dose of Hinduness de-emphasising their dalitness in such situation. In the political strategy of Hindutva *dalits*' support is important not only for Muslim carnage but also win elections with their support assigning them subordinate position.

They have also worked out strategy to buy *dalit* leadership by accommodating them in power structure. Be it Mayawati or Paswan, after arousing fury of *dalit* masses against the BJP and upper caste Hindus, have worked out their equations with the upper caste leadership. These *dalit* leaders, Mayawati and Paswan and likes of them kept quiet throughout Gujrat carnage.

Mayavati when asked about it quipped 'and what about Godhra incident?' Only those *dalit* leaders still outside power structure continue to show their anger against the upper caste Hindus. Thus it will be seen that politically *Dalit*-Muslim unity has never been very effective.

What was encouraging in this mayhem by Hindutvawadis is that the Muslims in relief camps were sad but not bitter and angry. This gives us some hope. Those who are business people like Bohras, Khojas and Memons are more worried about re-starting their businesses though it will be very difficult for them to find wherewithal. A top police officer told me that the Chief Minister Narendra Modi has clearly told them in a meeting that there is no question of doing any thing about rehabilitation (despite Prime Minister's announcement). He said only relief for few days should be given and the inmates of relief camps should be asked to go back to their 'homes'.

Another thing one should note is that there is lot of concern among people outside Gujrat for peace, harmony and secularism as never before. Many Gandhians who had kept mum during earlier riots are protesting this time and actively working for restoration of peace. The peace meeting in Ahmedabad which was convened by Mallika Sarabhai and disturbed by the VHP men was well attended from all over India. Chunnibhai Vaidya, a prominent Gnadhian from Gujrat is working for peace though he is receiving many threatening calls. There have been protests against the carnage throughout India, which is very hopeful sign. Though the BJP might have gained in Gujrat it will suffer reverses elsewhere in India. The allies of BJP in NDA will also undoubtedly suffer. They made noises here and there just for public consumption but showed no genuine concern for peace in Gujrat. The TDP, though worried about Muslim votes in Andhra Pradesh, has spoken out only after all damage was done in Gujrat. So has Paswan. It will certainly not go down well with their electorates.



# ALL IS NOT LOST IN GUJARAT

Asghar Ali Engineer

No one should lose hope for Gujrat. It is true the Gujrat carnage is heart-breaking. The tragedy is soul searing indeed. Violence is still continuing in that unfortunate state. And the Sangh Parivar is continuing its job of spreading hatred against minorities, both Muslims and Christians. Thousands of leaflets are being distributed by them to spread poison against them.

One of these tracts has surfaced in the Gujrat town of Kalol in North Gujrat. This leaflet, according to *Asian Age* asks Hindus to train their children in karate, keep them away from Christian educational institutions and go in for complete boycott of films featuring Muslim film stars.

One of such Gujrati leaflets even accuses Muslims of inciting labour unrest in various business enterprises run by Hindus and of running illegal liquor dens. The leaflet under question also calls for boycott of those business establishments in which Hindus and Muslims are partners. "Recognise them and isolate them and do not buy any thing from their shops, because, indirectly, Muslim partners also benefit from their profits." It goes on to say "If you stop buying goods from their shops then the Hindu partners will learn a lesson and break away from Muslim partners".

The leaflet also attacks educational institutions run by Christians. "With the intention of giving them (the children) the best of education you get them admitted in schools such as

St. Xavier and St. Anne's and consider it prestigious. In fact this is the biggest mistake of your life. In order to make the Hindus forget their religion, the Christian schools inject the tenets of Christian religion into tender minds of the students right from their childhood.

Even Hitler can learn a lesson or two from such propaganda against the targeted communities. Thousands of such and other leaflets are circulating in Gujrat today. But the Sangh Parivar is not the total reality of Gujrat. There are lakhs of Hindus who have good will for Muslims and there are as many Muslims who bear no ill will towards Hindus. In fact when the Sangh Parivar elements are busy distributing these venomous literature a Muslim despite his riot trauma continues to distribute copies of Gita, the holy scripture of Hindus.

Mr. Ishaq Chinwala, a resident of Vadodra and a Gandhian and a devout Muslim who distributes copies of Gita says, "What happened in the past one month cannot be defined as communal riots. It was a conspiracy to create poison in the minds of the people against Muslims. Secularists lost the battle. Mr. Chinwala's factory was burnt down during the riots. But it has not deterred him from distributing free copies of Gita which he has been doing for quite sometime. Mr. Chinwala belongs to Sarvodaya movement and is organising, with other NGOs *shanti abhiyan* (peace movement).

According to Chinwala the "conspiracy" that resulted in the pogrom of the past one month is a part of the RSS ideology. "Since 1947", Chinwala said, "RSS *Pracharaks* have moved from cities to villages spreading their ideology. They have poisoned the minds of the people and Godhra incident gave them the spark needed to ignite the fire they had planned."

Though his factory was burnt down along with 30 others belonging to Muslims, he has not lost hope. He says I am a Gandhian and believe in forgiveness. Some Muslims are unhappy with him for distributing copies of Gita and consider it as his pro-Hindu stand. However, Chinwala is undeterred and continues to distribute free copies of Gita.

The dargah of Shah Alam in Ahmedabad is another centre of Hindu-Muslim unity. Despite holocaust in the city the dargah

continued to attract Hindus and Muslims. Shah Alam Dargah is 600 years old. Right opposite the dargah is memorial of Narsinh Bhagat, a Hindu sadhu. It is believed that Narsinh Bhagat once showed concern on how their friendship could be made an example of communal harmony. To this, Shah Alam said that every person wanting to visit his dargah would have to light a lamp in Bhagat's memory.

Today even though most members of the communities seem to have become sworn enemies no one entering this dargah forgets to light a lamp in the memory of the Hindu saint. Zeenat Bivi, a inmate of the refugee camp said that it does not matter that we are in this camp because of VHP activists, lighting the lamp in memory of the Hindu saint is something we have been doing for years. According to most of the inmates of the camp this practice (of lighting the lamp) is of religious significance and no amount of atrocities can make them boycott it.

Bharuch is also a strife torn town of Gujrat. It is communally quite sensitive. But while Gujrat burns and people are being massacred in the name of religion, a Muslim and a Hindu family of Parsiwad on the bank of Narmada live in peace and harmony keeping the flame of friendship burning.

Mohammad Khanderao and Ramanlal Narayandas Mali's families have been living together, sharing the same kitchen and house for the past 44 years. Their children have been brought up together, taught virtues and values of both faiths and did not forsake each other even in such a crisis. Said Ramanlal's wife Ramila Patel that "My elder daughter Sona's *kanyadan*' (giving away in marriage) was performed by Mohammadbhai. My son Amit was named by him. Similarly Mohammadbhai and Mumtazben's two daughters Jasmine and Seema, were named by us.

Similarly Mohammadbhai said that "Ramanlal and I have been staying together since our bachelor days, when we struggled to ensure a decent life. Even after our marriage, we decided to live under the same roof with our families. Mohammadbhai has five daughters while Ramanlal has three children. When Moammadbhai and his wife Mumtaz went for

haj their daughters remained under the care of Ramanlal. Ramanlal maintains that my faith is in my heart and though I am a caste Hindu but that does not bar me from loving Mehjabin, Zeenat, jasmine, Seema and Minaz. For them I am as much a mother as for my children, says Ramilaben.

The residents of Ram-Rahim Nagar slum in Ahmedabad kept the flame of love and harmony alive while rest of the city was burning. They got on with their work as in normal days. This is the fourth time that this slum in which equal number of Hindus and Muslims live together has remained unaffected by communal hatred and killings. A temple of Lord Hanuman and a dargah by its side symbolise togetherness of two communities.

Mutual trust and love has ensured that the 20,000 inhabitants of the slum overcome every communal hailstorm that has broken out in Ahmedabad. One of the inmates of this slum Pyar Ali Kapadia who is also the president of Ram-Rahim Nagar Jhupdawasi Mandal says that humanity is our religion here. No body is worried about other's faith. This secular colour has, in fact, become a retreat for some 300 riot affected people housed in a nearby mosque. "Members have contributed on their own to arrange food and shelter for the riot victims, said Taj Bano Sayyed, who is co-ordinating the relief measures.

Poverty being their common enemy co-existence of Hindus and Muslims is at its best. People here are least concerned about the mandir-masjid issue. Ram-Rahim Nagar has never experienced the pain of riots and its ugly aftermath. Since 1973, the mandal, the local governing body comprising a 21-member executive committee, has maintained communal harmony and has ensured peace for its residents.

The village of Hilol, a Muslim dominated village in Sabarkantha district also held the flag of harmony aloft. The 11,000 Muslim population is again segregated in Sunni, Shiah, Devbandi and the Hindu population consists of Vania, Brahmin, Vanjara, Dalits and Durbar. The united village does not want outsiders to bring virus of communal hatred. Groups of 15 to 20 people have been guarding the village at night to foil any attempt by outside mobs to disrupt the village tranquillity.

Mention must be made here of individuals like Geetaben and Veersinh Rathod. While Geetaben laid down her life to save her Muslim friend (she was brutally stripped naked and killed by frenzied mob) Veersinh Rathod saved lives of some Muslim families at the risk of his life and is facing threats from Hindutvawadis. We salute both of them.

Several such other examples of communal harmony in the midst of communal frenzy can be given from Gujrat which has been torn apart by communal hatred. This goes to prove that hostility between Hindus and Muslims is not natural but created by powerful vested interests to fish for votes in rivers of blood. If common people – Hindus as well as Muslims – are determined to maintain peace and harmony it is not difficult at all. What is required is determination and strong will.

Even several localities in Mumbai had remained quiet while rest of the city was burning in 1992-93. Bhivandi, otherwise communally super-sensitive, also remained peaceful due to determination of people of this area. Hard-boiled communalists also could not disturb peace and harmony. After what has happened in Gujrat common people should gird up their loins and maintain peace while the vested interests are determined to disrupt the unity of the people. Nehru had once rightly pointed out it is communalism and not communism which is the real enemy of India. And let the Sangh Parivar, which claims to be 'super-patriots', know that India's external security cannot be ensured without internal security, which they are out to disrupt.





# MYTHS ABOUT MUSLIMS AND THE GUJARAT CARNAGE

Asghar Ali Engineer

A friend came from Gujrat and began discussing measures about bringing Gujrat to normalcy. Among others his suggestion was that it could not be one sided. What he meant was unless Muslims give up their separatist instinct and accept modern education and Indianness, things cannot change and Hindu psyche will remain anti-Muslim. I argued with him at length that it was not so and it was mere Sangh Parivar propaganda. After listening to my arguments it appeared he was convinced. Thus how necessary it was to propagate truth as against myths.

It is my conviction that unless those committed to secularism and communal harmony work hard and round the year we are not going to meet communal challenge. The RSS has been doing its propaganda against all religious minorities in general and against Muslims in particular for close to 77 years with consistency. The RSS *pracharaks* work round the year without any break. As against this the secularists wake up only when there is screeching headlines in newspapers about major communal riot and become complacent again until next riot takes place.

At least after the Gujrat carnage the secular forces should take communal challenge very seriously and start working consistently. It will also be necessary to train cadre for the purpose. Most of the Hindus including considerable number of

secularists believe the myths propagated by RSS. I would like to throw light on some of these myths in this article.

The first and foremost myth is that Islam teaches violence and separatism and that it justifies violence against non-believers and as our own Prime Minister put it "wherever there is a Muslim population in the world, the countries live under threat of militancy and terrorism." It is obvious that it was not Prime Minister but the RSS *pracharak* speaking which was constantly drummed into his ears since his RSS *pracharak* says. It is a matter of shame that the Prime Minister of a country speaks against a section of his country's population. It is clear condemnation of all Muslims, *not* a section of Muslims, as he later claimed.

A section of Muslims – albeit a small section – could be separatist and there are separatists in all religious communities including the Hindus. A section of Ahom Brahmins of Assam is part of ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) which is demanding separation of Assam from India. It is a great myth that all Muslims of India in pre-partition days demanded partition of India. In fact a small elite Muslims, to safeguard their interests like feudal lords, a section of educated middle class, high government officials and a section of big businessmen were, in fact, responsible for partition of the country. Even a section of Hindu elite led by Mahasabha believed in Hindu Rashtra and talked of Hindus and Muslims being two separate nations.

Even Sikhs became very militant and demanded Khalistan. How can then Shri Vajpayee could dub entire Muslim community as separatist and causing militancy. Obviously he said so with a political motive and as part of Sangh Parivar agenda. It is also to be noted that Pakistan was not an Islamic project. No Muslim religious leader of any prominence supported Pakistan. Jami'at al-Ulama-i-Hind (the organisation of Islamic theologians of India) led by Maulana Husain Ahmed Madani vehemently opposed two nation theory and countered Jinnah's arguments by extensively quoting from the Qur'an and *hadith* (Prophet's sayings and doings). Maulana Madani even wrote a book *Muttahida Qaumiyat aur Islam* (Composite Nationalism and Islam) and effectively argued against Jinnah and refuted all his

arguments for Islam being the basis of nationalism.

Pakistan was elite Muslims' project in which Muslim masses were not involved, as they saw absolutely no benefit. And precisely for this reason they did not migrate to Pakistan. And Islam was certainly not responsible for creation of Pakistan. Even a fundamentalist organisation like the Jamat-e-Islami led by Maulana Maududi did not support Jinnah's Pakistan project as Jinnah conceived of a secular and not theological state.

Another myth popularised by Sangh Parivar is of jihad. It is interesting to note that the word jihad has not been used even once in the Qur'an for war. It has been used in the Qur'an for utmost efforts to spread good and contain evil. For war it used the word *qital* (which literally means to kill). The Prophet has said that the best form of jihad is to speak truth in the face of a tyrant ruler. It is true that some Muslim rulers legitimised their wars of conquest by projecting them as jihad. But neither Islam nor Muslims can be blamed for it. Those greedy rulers alone should be blamed for it.

Islam stresses peace and not jihad in the sense of war. Qur'an permits defensive war and never aggressive ones. It requires Muslims to lay down weapons as soon as the adversary does so and never to pursue the enemy and never to kill any non-combatant. These things are well known to any serious theologian of Islam. Islam is basically religion of peace though, like other religions, it was misused by certain vested interests.

Another myth is about *darul harb* and *daul Islam* (i.e. about abode of war and abode of peace). There is nothing in the Qur'an about such concepts. These concepts were developed by the 'Ulama when people in other countries began to embrace Islam. When some people embraced Islam and were persecuted by the rulers the 'Ulama called it abode of war but also developed another category namely *Darul aman* (abode of peace). A country where though Muslims were in minority but were free to practise their religion was described as abode of peace and it was the duty of Muslims to live in peace and harmony with other non-Muslims.

Most of the 'Ulama in India maintained that India is an abode of peace and Muslims should live peacefully with Hindus. In 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Indian National Congress was formed Maulana Qasim Ahmed Nanotvi issued a fatwa urging upon Muslims to join Indian National Congress and fight against the British rule along with their Hindu brothers. He also collected more such fatwas and published them under the title of *Nusrat al-Ahrar* (help for the freedom fighters). Thus it is totally wrong that Muslims consider India as *darul harb* (abode of war) and Hindus as kafirs.

Many Ulama and sufi saints have even accepted Hindus as *ahl al-kitab* (i.e. people of the book) since Qur'a describes Jews and Christians as people of Book as they possess Torah and Bible respectively which are revealed books from Allah. Many sufi saints like Mazhar Jan-i-Janan of Delhi argued that since Hindus possess Bedas (Vedas) containing truth they are also people of the book. Mazhar Jan-i-Janan argued that Allah has promised in the Qur'an that He has sent His guide to all the nations then how can he forget India, a great nation?

Another myth about Muslims is that they refuse to go for secular education and prefer only madrasa education and madrasa education makes them religious fanatics. This hardly stands any scrutiny. No middle class persons send their children to madrasas, it is only poor Muslims who cannot afford secular education send their children to madrasas. In fact the cause of lack of secular education is poverty, not religion. But so popular is this myth that madrasa education is ascribed to religious fanaticism and orthodoxy rather than to poverty. One will hardly find middle class children of doctors, engineers, accountants, managers, etc. in these madrasas. However, unfortunately the size of middle class among the Muslims in India is very small. Today dalits and Muslims are almost comparable as far as poverty is concerned.

With better economic situation secular education will naturally increase among Muslims. But communal prejudices are so strong and communal violence has become so widespread that whatever economic prosperity a small section of Muslims achieve is destroyed. And then these very people accuse Muslims of sending their children to madrasas. It is in fact

communalists who throw Muslims out of mainstream again and again. Muslims are struggling to join the mainstream.

Another related question is of reforms. It is also related more to lack of liberal secular education than to religious fanaticism. As liberal secular education spreads among Muslims religious reforms would also become acceptable. Today, there is much more education among Muslim women than fifty years ago and hence there is mounting pressure from these educated Muslim women for necessary reforms in Muslim personal law like abolition of triple divorce in one sitting and regulation of law of polygamy. However, it is Gujrat-like carnage, which pushes Muslims back and make them reluctant to accept reforms. More the security of life and property and more will be acceptability for social reforms. When one's house is on fire, as one Muslim put it, one cannot draw up the plans for interior design and beautification.

And supposing Muslims are as fanatical as the Sangh Parivar projects them to be, can one kill them in mass for that reason? Can Gujrat carnage be justified on these grounds at all? If Sangh Parivar is really sincere for pushing liberal secular reforms among the Muslims they should do everything possible to make them feel quite secure in India and also make sincere efforts to economically uplifting them by providing opportunities in services, professions and businesses.

Educated Muslims should also do serious reflection and make sincere efforts to promote consciousness for modern education, economic upliftment and liberal reforms. They should promote the spirit of dialogue with secular and liberal Hindus to remove stereotypes and misunderstandings both about Muslims and Islam. Reforms are necessary, communal riots or no communal riots. It is for the benefit of the community. No community can survive intellectually in the modern world without reform and change.



# GUJARAT CARNAGE – IMPLICATIONS FOR SECULARISM

Asghar Ali Engineer

Gujrat carnage in which the Narendra Modi Government itself was involved has, much deeper implications for secularism as a state ideology. Secularism was adopted by the Constitution makers despite partition of the country on communal lines. Partition was followed by widespread communal carnage on both sides of the communal divide and despite \communal carnage secular convictions of our political leaders were not shaken. However, the RSS and Jansangh and its ideologues, partition or no partition, were never enthusiastic about secularism. V.D.Savarkar, father of the Hindutva ideology himself propounded theory of two rashtra (two nations) in 1938 Hindu Mahasabha session much before Jinnah propounded it in 1940.

Despite severe opposition from the Sangh Parivar (though it was not known by this name in those days) the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad adopted secularism as the political philosophy for Indian state. It was a great and courageous step, which proved to be cement for our unity and integrity so far. Pakistan was broken into two in 1971 and the concept of Islamic unity could not save it. However, India, despite much greater diversity remained united thanks to our political commitment to secularism.

The Sangh propaganda and partition of the country on communal basis as well as our historical legacy since the British period, created several problems for our commitment to secularism. Nehru had expected that communal violence will be a past history and that independent India will enjoy communal peace and political stability. He thought partition was the final solution of the communal problem. However, communal violence continued to erupt from time to time delivering blow after blow to secular credentials of our state.

Gujrat carnage represents the peak of communal violence in independent India. It was for the first time that state machinery was directly involved and Chief minister Narendra Modi not only justified it by saying it was natural reaction to the Godhra incident of burning Sabarmati Express but also looked the other way when innocent people were being killed most brutally and women were being raped. Even in 1984 Sikh massacre state was not so directly involved though it did have a role.

The Gujrat carnage has deeply shaken the whole nation and our civil society, though its secular political space has been increasingly shrinking, thanks to powerful propaganda machinery of the Sangh Parivar, specially the RSS, reacted strongly to this carnage. Writers, journalists, artists and poets are also now gradually rising to the occasion and doing their bit to promote communal harmony.

The opposition parties like the Congress, the Communists (CPI and CPM) and SP have also done their best in Parliament to oppose and expose the communal forces belonging to the Sangh Parivar in Parliament and outside. Of course all other parties have faltered some time or the other in their commitment to secularism but both the communist parties have been most consistent on the question of secularism and communal harmony. The Congress has also been shaken into some kind of awakening by the carnage in Gujrat. The Congress has repeatedly faltered in its commitment to secularism, if not notionally, functionally. Jawaharlal Nehru, among the Congress leaders, was the most consistent in his commitment to secularism. Mrs. Gandhi though appeared promising initially, but began to falter after emergency and even turned to Hindutva

in early eighties. She also manipulated Sikh politics on communal lines in Punjab and herself became its victim and was assassinated by her Sikh body guard.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had hardly any commitment to any thing. He was not even brought up, like Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in secular ethos of Nehru family. He hardly had much understanding of intricacies of Indian politics. He encouraged both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism to his advantage but failed. He changed the Supreme Court judgement in the Shah Bano case and passed the Muslim Women's (on Divorce) Act giving blow to secularism and then threw open the doors of Babri Masjid for Hindus to worship delivering another blow to secularism. He even went to the extent of laying the foundation stone of Ramjanambhoomi Mandir on the eve of general elections in 1989. He thus displeased Muslims and lost their support and hence lost the elections. The Congress has still not recovered from that blow.

The Congress thus lost all its secular credentials in the eyes of people of India. It lost support of minorities and suffered debacle after debacle in U.P. and some other states. The Gujrat carnage has given the Congress also a great jolt and it is re-emphasising its secular credentials. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi as the leader of opposition in the Parliament fought effectively against the BJP-led NDA Government on the issue of massacre of Muslims in Gujrat.

Mrs. Sonia Gandhi has at last realised that without giving effective fight to communal forces and without de-communalising Indian polity not only that the Congress cannot come to power again but Indian unity and integrity will be seriously affected. She even talked about raising a force to promote communal harmony but her concept about it is not very clear. She only talked about taking care of riot victims and sending women volunteers to the riots affected areas to take care of the victims.

Fight against communalism is no easy job. The Sangh Parivar has deeply communalised the Hindu middle classes and, as pointed out above, the secular political space has shrunk considerably over a period of time. The RSS *Pracharaks* work round the year with a sense of mission and spread



communal virus in the Indian society. The RSS can today boast of thousands of such *Pracharaks*. They are systematically trained for the job and are sustained economically by the abundant funds RSS has at its command collected from Hindu businessman every year.

The secular forces cannot boast of any such force. What Mrs. Sonia Gandhi has announced has no such concept. The Congress Seva Dal once set up with some such intention never worked with devotion or sense of mission. At best it looked after the arrangements at the AICC sessions. The Congress Seva Dal is no more an effective organisation. The socialists also had once set up *Rashtra Seva Dal*. It too is a historical entity now though symbolically it exists even now in parts of Maharashtra. It is only the RSS, which works with as much enthusiasm as it was set up with. Its enthusiasm and commitment to its mission has not waned. It has instead increased over the years.

There is great need today to reflect deeply as to why the RSS has been able to maintain its sense of commitment to politics of religious hatred whereas all secular parties and organisations have not been able to sustain their work even for few years. Does religious fanaticism inspire more than secular ideals? It seems so. But religious fanaticism brings great disaster to the country and to the humanity and we have seen this everywhere, not only in Gujarat.

It is high time that the secular political parties should honestly take stock of situation and take measures, which will save India from further disaster like the one in Gujarat. The secular parties should also realise that secularism should not be limited only to the attempt to get minority votes. Then they would find themselves in deeper morass. Unfortunately after Nehru secularism for political parties, especially the Congress, became only an instrument for minority votes. Its members, even at the best of time, were not seriously committed to it. Thus instrumentalisation of secularism exposed the Congress to the charge of "appeasement of minorities" though the charge was itself politically motivated and the BJP wanted to capture the attention of Hindu middle classes by levelling such charges against the Congress.

The Congress could not even refute such ridiculous charge because it was not seriously committed to secularism. Had it been so Babri Masjid would not have been demolished with impunity under the Congress rule. Narsimha Rao, the then Congress Prime Minister, thus destroyed completely whatever was left of secularism in the Congress. Thus the Congress party was completely alienated from all minorities and lost the election that followed.

Though the Congress now has realised the ill effects of its less than serious attitude towards secularism it is not so easy for it to revive the Nehruvian commitment to it. But there is hardly any other alternative. The leaders of the Congress should take secularism more seriously and not treat it as an instrument of power. Unity in diversity cannot be maintained without it. "Unity in diversity" was not merely a slogan for leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Azad. It was a political philosophy, the core of secularism. No society as diverse as Indian society can survive without the cementing force of secularism.

Secularism essentially means prioritising citizenship over religion. Though Constitutionally citizenship has priority over religion, our civil society, due to constant efforts to communalise it, is still grappling with this problem. Our education system itself is deeply infected with communal virus. Our text-books still demonise minority religions like Christianity and Islam and project history through communal angle. Thus secularising education system should be given top priority.

We need secularism today for building a vibrant civil society and not to win elections. The political parties should help build a new political culture, which is based on tolerance and respect for human values. Today our political culture is thoroughly infected with casteism and communalism. Post-Gujrat we must urgently realise the need for a new political culture secular and humanistic.



# ROLE OF POLICE IN GUJARAT CARNAGE

Asghar Ali Engineer

The role of police in communal riots in general and in Gujrat riots in particular has been far from desirable. I have been investigating communal riots in India since Jabalpur riot of 1962. The Jabalpur riot was such in magnitude that it had shaken Jawaharlal Nehru who had secular vision of India. The role of police in Jabalpur riots was quite shocking. Apart from helping the rioters the SRP men were accused of snatching gold bangles and *mangalsutra* from the necks of women. They gate-crashed into houses of riot victims and beat up women and took away whatever they could lay their hands upon. As it was my first investigation of communal violence I could not believe that the police could do all this. It was unbelievable indeed.

After Jabalpur, riot after riot I saw the role of police, which was strongly biased against minorities. In Meerut riots twice I witnessed role of police: in 1982 and 1987. In both these riots the role of PAC was worse than that of rioters. In 1982 Meerut riots the PAC killed at point blank the only son of one Dr. Shabbir and had him load his dead body on the truck. The PAC also destroyed Dr. Shabbir's dispensary completely. The same force killed several others who were hiding in their houses. Some women told me they had hidden their husbands in large trunks and they were pulled out of them and shot.

Justice Krishna Iyer also visited Meerut after this incident and was so shocked at the behaviour of PAC that he wrote an open letter to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, urging upon her to hold an inquiry into the role of the PAC.

Then again PAC repeated its role in Meerut riots of 1987. The PAC commandant Mr. Tripathi was accused of having pulled out 23 young boys from their houses in Hashimpura loaded them on a truck, took them near a canal outside the city, shot them dead and threw their bodies in the canal. Two boys miraculously survived to tell the tale. Again nothing happened. It was few years after the incident that FIR was recorded during chief ministership of Mulayamsingh Yadav. But nothing again moved beyond recording the FIR.

The role of police during Mumbai riots of 1992-93 came under severe criticism by various NGOs and above all by Srikirshna Commission, which named 32 officers as guilty of anti-minority bias and also Mr. Tyagi, a high police official was accused of being instrumental in killing some young Muslim boys in Suleman Bakery, near Minara Masjid. The authorities took no action and Tyagi was symbolically arrested and released immediately after great deal of criticism by human rights activists.

All this is bad enough and sufficient to shake minorities' confidence in the police. The same story repeated in Gujrat carnage after the Godhra incident of 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002. Again the police in Gujrat aided and abetted the rioters. This time the role of IAS officers also came under severe criticism. Harsh Mandar, an IAS officer of M.P. cadre working in Gujrat with Actionaid India at a time was so enraged by the role of IAS officers of Gujrat and their total surrender to the political authorities that he did not think it fit to continue in such service and he resigned in sheer disgust. Harsh Mandar wrote in his article, "Numbed with disgust and horror, I return from Gujrat ten days after the terror and massacre that convulsed the state. My heart is sickened, my soul wearied, my shoulders aching with the burden of shame and guilt." He further writes, "The unconscionable failures and active connivance of the state police and administrative machinery is also now widely acknowledged. The police is known to have misguided people

straight into the hands of rioting mobs. They provided protective shields to crowds bent upon pillage, arson, rape and murder and were deaf to the pleas of these disparate Muslim victims, many of them women and children. There have been many reports of police firing directly mostly at the minority community, which was target of most of the mob violence."

It is not Harsh Mandar alone who writes about such role of the police in Gujrat carnage. Several others including some top police officials themselves have also condemned the police for what it did in Gujrat. Mr. Julio Reibero, ex-Director General of police, Maharashtra, even called them "eunuchs" for having attacked helpless people including old men, women and children.

Even after riots the police were not recording correct FIRS either under pressure from political authorities or because of their own communal leanings. Mr. Ribeiro told Times of India in an interview, "Apart from the usual complaints of inaction, people said that police were recording absolutely incorrect FIRs. I met a respectable Hindu gentleman who said that the police did not take down the names of the rioters he had seen and wrote that it was a group of unidentified people. If people who have seen their mothers and sisters raped and burnt before their eyes have no hope of getting justice they will all turn into terrorists." And then Ribeiro asks " Why are we talking about ISI and Pakistan when we are doing their job for them by creating terrorists."

Another top police officer Vibhuti Narayan Rai, now Inspector General of Police in U.P. who has handled several riot situations maintains that "any riot can be controlled in 24 hours if the administration wants to." According to a Times of India report, Mr. Vibhuti Narain Rai has written letters to all IPS officers in the wake of Gujrat violence saying that the police should not blame inadequate equipment and manpower for their failure. Large scale rioting can be checked even with such problems." Mr. Rai also said that it is essential that the police should be seen to be objective that's what sends the right message to the people.

In every riot police also indulges in revenge killing once its man is injured or killed. It goes totally berserk once a

policeman is hit. It happened in Deonar area of Mumbai during 1992-93 riots after a policeman was killed by unknown people. Several young Muslim boys had to pay with their lives. It was only a senior and upright police officer like Mr. Pawar who brought the situation under control. Same thing happened in Ahmedabad on 2<sup>nd</sup> April during Gujrat violence.

When a policeman Mr. Amar Rao Patel was killed the police fired in revenge and 10 persons including two women died and 14 were injured. Angry residents of *Patel ki Chawli* and *Modi ki Chawli* where seven persons were killed alleged that police was on revenge spree. The residents said there was nothing happening at the *Patel ki Chawli* which is one and half kilometre from where the police constable was killed. Nothing had happened there since February 28 and no violence had taken place there even before the police fired and killed 10 persons.

The police had its own version, of course. Inspector R.B.Parmar maintained that soft policing can not control a rioting mob. If a woman is injured it could be a stray incident or she could also be a part of rioting mob. Whatever the explanation firing was in excess and disproportionate to the violence by mob.

Is entire police force to be condemned? Though in riot after riot police does kill and arrest innocent citizens one cannot condemn entire force. There are officers who are unbiased and committed to professional handling of riot situations. Persons like Ribeiro and V.N.Rai, both top police officers are themselves good example of such people in the force. And there are many more such committed officers. Even in Gujrat we found many such officers during our investigations. Some officers handled the situation quite professionally but they were, unfortunately, not given free hand by the political bosses, particularly Narendra Modi. Such officers were instantly transferred and these transfers were either described as 'routine' or 'promotions'. It was more a culpability of political bosses than lack of professionalism among these officers.

There are number of factors which must be taken into account. Sometimes, nay more often, honest officers lack courage and do not act according to the rule book and surrender to the will of political bosses. Some who do get

immediately transferred and they become ineffective anyway. But in Gujrat most of the top officers just surrendered meekly before the politicians with few honourable exceptions. I met one Additional Commissioner of police who did not allow riot to take place in his area and was immediately transferred to an administrative job in police headquarters in Ahmedabad.

The police force is deeply infected with communalism and casteism at the level of junior officers and especially at constabulary level and it is constabulary which handles the ground situation. There is great need to disinfect constabulary and ranks of junior officers through reorienting courses. There is no thorough training in secularism at this level. I have conducted many police workshops and have seen the effects of such reorienting courses on the minds of junior officers and constabulary. Some top police officers in Maharashtra where I have conducted these workshops realise the importance of such workshops and co-operate in organising more and more of them. Such workshops are necessary in all the states.

As for top police officers what is needed is proper transfer and promotion policy. Transfers should not at all depend on whims and fancy of politicians. They have their own agenda and are not always committed to the rule of law. As recommended by the fifth Police Commission the transfers should be effected by a committee comprising Chief minister, leader of Opposition, D.G. of police and some eminent citizens. Such a transfer and promotion policy would reassure honest and professionally guided police officers and they will be able to do their job well despite pressures from political bosses.

There is also great need for changing the very model of policing. Our policing is still on the model of British colonial rulers. It has to change to democratic model from colonial model. If proper transfer policies are not evolved politicisation of police will continue to take place and this is disastrous from policing point of view. This is precisely what happened in Gujrat carnage. Some top officers were politicised and hence they did not handle the situation professionally and those who did got transferred most arbitrarily.



# **GODHRA & AFTER : REPORT OF VIOLENCE IN GUJARAT February-April 2002**

Shama Dalwai and Sandhya Mhatre

## **Introduction**

On 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2002 two compartments of Sabarmati Express were burnt down killing 58 Hindus, including 26 women and 12 children. This highly condemnable incident shocked the sensibility of the people of the country. This incident triggered off a massive operation of brutally killing and maiming members of the Muslim community over many parts of Gujarat. There has been a colossal destruction of people and property in the urban and rural areas of Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Bharuch, Baroda, Kheda, Anand, Mehsana, Sabarkantha, Gandhinagar and Surat district where the Muslims have been staying for a long time. What is more important to understand is that this violence continues in many parts of Gujarat till date.

The situation in Gujarat captured our attention for the following reasons:

- ❖ The disturbance was of a very high magnitude and the number of people affected was very large. The cruelty inflicted on the victims was unheard of in this country.



- ❖ Not only urban areas but many parts of rural Gujarat were affected.
- ❖ Most importantly, complicity of the State in containing violence was extremely disturbing.

We undertook a visit to Gujarat. Our purpose was two-fold: to meet the victims and to share their sorrow, and as social activists, to understand the causes that led to the terrible pogrom as well as to understand way to combat the factors that lead to such a devastating situation. We visited Ahmedabad, Godhra and Dohad from 1<sup>st</sup> of April to 8<sup>th</sup> April 2002. We first went to Ahmedabad and met the relatives of the victims of the burning of the Sabarmati Express and also interviewed the leaders and the organisers of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Then we visited a number of relief camps in Ahmedabad. After that we went to Godhra and Dohad and met and interviewed the Muslim victims, the local residents, and the respected citizens of different communities, government officers, police, lawyers, doctors and representatives and workers of all political parties and Tribals.



## Interviews

### ❖ Survivors of Sabarmati Express Incident At Godhra

"Jeeviben was very smart. She used to tell us that we shouldn't just sit at home. We must go out so that we get to know the world around us. We would get knowledge by meeting educated people. We may also get work..." These are the words of Premben Dabhi, a woman who had accompanied Jeeviben Dabhi, and who was burnt alive in the ghastly attack on S-6 compartment of Sabarmati Exp. on 27 Feb.2002 at Godhra.

These women, about ten in number, are residents of Mazoor Gaon, a locality in Ahmedabad. They had left for Ayodhya on Feb.22 and were scheduled to return on Feb. 27. They had stepped out of their home for the first time in their life, on the request of their neighbour and friend Jeeviben. Bharatiben, who was an upper caste activist of the VHP from another locality (her address and contact numbers were not

known to them), accompanied them. The group consisted of women who belonged mostly to the Vankar caste, which is a schedule caste in Gujarat. They left for Ayodhya with happy anticipation. The prime object was of course *Ram Darshan*, but this was also a pleasant outing for women whose children were sufficiently grown up to take care of themselves.

On their return trip these women had got into different compartments, wherever place was available. Jeeviben and Permben were in the ill-fated S-6 compartment, whereas the other women got into adjoining compartments. As the train started from Godhra, they were startled by the stones that were pelted from outside. Immediately, the passengers closed the windows of the same side. Soon after they saw smoke all over, it was so thick that they could not see anything. Suddenly the train stopped. There was a big noise and total chaos. Somehow with the help of some young people these women managed to get out of their compartment on the other side of the train. After some time they came to know that compartment S-6 was attacked by Muslim miscreants with stones and petrol bombs so the entire compartment was engulfed in fire. They later realised that they had lost their two friends forever.

It was a terrible tragedy for Mazoor Gaon which is a *basti* accommodating the textile workers of Ahmedabad. Most of the locals belong to the Vankar caste. About fifteen years ago many people from this area worked in various textile mills, as textile was a big industry of the city. However, the last ten years saw steady closure of the mills and retrenchment of workers without compensation. As a result, many were left jobless and were forced to stay at home. Jeeviben's husband also was a worker in a textile mill and was retrenched without any compensation. Presently there is a general atmosphere of recession with no new industries developing. As a result of this, they were deprived of jobs in the organised sector and take up any work that is available in the informal sector. We asked women about the pattern of their employment. Both the women and the youngsters said that they are engaged in doing *phaltu kaam* (low level useless work). Interestingly, this was their perception of the work they were engaged in. Usually, men work either as casual labourers or get some odd job that can be carried

out at home. Women also get the job work at home or they work as domestic servants in a nearby locality. It is often a case of daily earning and if there is no work on a particular day, then it is *chullah bandh*, (the kitchen fire cannot be lit).

The aspiration of this group of women and particularly their leader Jeeviben were obvious from the interview of women accompanying her. Women's movement after 1980 aroused and promoted the aspirations of women for their self-development as well as for the improvement of the circumstances in which they and their families lived.

The VHP, that masterminded the "revenge project" in the name of Godhra victims and carried it out with savage force and precise planning, had never shown any interest in improving the lot of these women and their families. Their problems of untouchability, poverty and unemployment were not the VHP's concern. In fact, ten years back, during the anti-reservation agitation, people of this category, who were always the "other", had become "enemy other" for VHP. Later VHP made an acquisition of the "other" and even took them for *Ram Darshan* to Ayodhya. A worthy person like Jeeviben, who provided leadership to the women of Mazoor Gaon, died in the brutal attack by the Muslims at Godhra. But the loss of precious lives was neither the concern of Muslims who carried out the inhuman act, nor of the VHP who resorted to genocide in the name of revenge.

Had any of them been really concerned, then, they would realise the effect of communal violence on these poor residents of Mazoor Gaon.

Jeeviben's friends who went to Ayodhya as *Karsevikas* now sit at home with their families today because there is no job available in the surcharged atmosphere. Women know what *Chullah Bandh* means. As they look at their hungry children, they probably wonder, "Is this the homage that they pay to the Godhra victims?"

### ❖ Survivors of Naroda-Patia Carnage

The team met the survivors and eyewitness of the carnage at Naroda-Patia, which was a terrible case of human right violation. (NHRC in its report has recommended entrusting five

critical cases to the CBI. These include the Naroda-Patia incident.)

The kind of cruelty and atrocities committed at this place were horrifying and unheard of before. About two fifty to three hundred persons are expected to have been killed in the incident. Moreover, the violence though led by the VHP, Bajrang Dal and BJP leaders, was actually resorted to by the persons staying in the neighbouring housing societies named by the victims as 'Gangotri' and 'Gopinath'. Most of the residents of these societies are the middle class employees of various government organisations such as Gujarat State Transport, State Reserve Police etc. The victims were specially terrorised by the participation of these people in violence against them because they had day to day contact with these societies, their children used to go to the same schools as that of the children from the said societies. Sometimes they had attended marriage functions in each other's houses. Muslims had a confidence that they would get protection from the people in these neighbouring societies in times of crises. However, this confidence was totally shattered in no time when the mob attacked and the society's people not only participated in violence but they were also responsible for carrying out the brutal torture done to women and children. The whole incident and the pattern of atrocities are given in the words of survivors of carnage in their own words as follows:

### ❖ Interviews at Shah-E-Alam Relief Camp

❖ **Naeem Shaikh:** "We have been living here in Naroda-Patia for the last thirty years. Such a thing has never happened, we did not ever imagine that it would happen. There was a good harmonious relation between the two communities, a lot of social interaction. We attended their weddings they attended ours. Now we have lost faith.

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, suddenly we heard shouting, asking us to go out of our houses. We had no weapons to retaliate with. Some of those people were from this locality, behind them was a mob dressed in *shorts* and *banians* (T-shirts) with *orange bands* round their heads. They had swords acid bottles and gas cylinders with them. Police Inspector K. K. Mysorwalla, as well

as Bipin Autowalla were with the mob. They thought this was a good opportunity of exterminating us. We picked up courage and threw stones at them but they did not disperse. Instead they threw bombs in our direction; the houses in front caught fire.

They caught young girls and young wives and humiliated them in the presence of their family elders from their families. Everybody started running to save themselves. Just opposite there are two housing societies called Gangotri and Gopinath; we approached them and told them what was happening. They told us that only our belongings were being destroyed or looted and nothing would happen to us. In Gangotri there was a dilapidated hosiery workshop that was closed we took shelter in the workshop. They told us they would supply us with water and tea and they pulled the shutter down. They told us to keep silent / maintain silence.

There were sixty to seventy families in Gangotri and forty to fifty in Gopinath with whom we had good relations. Everyday I used to go to sell bread and biscuits (from my bakery). They told us not to worry because we were like brothers. They said that all the people in the mob were outsiders. They told us not to allow children to talk.

The persons leading the mob were not from the two societies (Gangotri and Gopinath). They were from the shopping centres outside, they were the owners of hotels and big sweet shops, mobilewalla, Das hotel owner, Police and CRP were also present.

At about 4.30 or 5.30 p.m. the shutter was opened and we were asked to leave. There was a Maharashtrian policeman who told us to get out. So I took my family and walked out and found that we were surrounded from all sides. Three sides were blocked and there was only one opening near Gopinath, we rushed there. Then they threw petrol, kerosene and set the whole place on fire, they threw burning tyres from the top (terraces or upper floor). They struck me with a sword. They blocked the passage to prevent people from going out. They stood there firmly till people died.

There was a blazing fire and everybody was thrown in it.

At least 250-300 people were killed. I lost my mother, sister, brother-in-law, Sister-in-law, two nephews (6 and 8 years old). They held the boys by their feet and lowered them into the fire and then dumped them in it. They were so brutal that they even killed very old women. They pushed a hundred year old woman into the fire. They showed mercy to no one young nor old.

I have a daughter. She is with her mother. My wife began to run, they struck her with her sword it almost severed her arm— only a little was left— her arm was dangling and had to be operated.

Now my daughter is with my wife at her mother's place. When we were running away I threw my daughter and my nephew out. Someone caught them and handed them to my wife. My wife thought I was dead. Thank god! We are united and all three of us are together.

The attack on us was carried out by people from Gangotri and Gopinath, people known to us. They displayed pictures of the Godhra incident and told us they were now avenging those deaths. I could not believe that all those people who ate my bread and biscuits would be so brutal. They didn't spare the owner of the two provision stores where they ran a regular account.

Earlier there were no facilities in our area; the big highway was not there. As soon as the highway was built prices started shooting up. One house would also fetch a good price. Our landlord, Ketandas Somandas offered us two lakhs each to vacate our houses. He owns many chawls (16 to 17). Six months ago he asked us to vacate. His sons were with the mob.

**Mayaben Kondnani is BJP MLA** from our area. She was also in the attacking mob, there were other women too (8 to 10). The whole attack was planned by such big people. **Mr. Mysorwalla the PI** from Naroda-Patia police station was also present along with people living in the SRP quarters (Gangotri) next to Gopinath.

There was a marriage party returning from a wedding in Solapur, with the newly married couple. They also had gold

ornaments and money. An elderly woman asked for shelter for the children in the group and herself. The SRP people took the money and the gold and beat her to death.

Let me tell you about the pregnant woman they killed. Kausar Bano was our neighbour. She begged them to spare her, that she was pregnant. She told them to spare her though everyone in her family was dead and her husband had run away. They said – OK come, we won't do anything to you. (She was pregnant – full term) As soon as she walked towards them her belly was struck with a sword, the baby, who fell out was thrown into the fire, they tore her clothes and pushed her into the fire. I saw all this with my own eyes. None of her relative has survived, her brother, brother-in-law, her mother, her aunt (massi), no one is alive except her father and a twelve – thirteen year old boy. Her entire family is wiped out. They were the people who used to paint the flats in Gayatri and Gopinath during Diwali – yet they were not spared.

Someone from Gopinath struck Kausar with a sword. I don't know his name. But I can recognise them. I have been seeing them for years, I can identify them. (another man says) – I can identify them. Later, in the dark they could not make out whether anyone was alive, so they left. After a while, they came to check if people were alive. They grabbed the hair and pulled bodies out, put their hands in front of the nostril to check if they were breathing. I gained consciousness while all this was happening and had the presence of mind not to breathe. They thought I was dead. Later the police arrived. At first I did not speak, then I told them that I was alive. They looked for others who were alive (there were few). The rest were dumped in a truck and taken to civil hospital.

We got nothing for the dead. Our people were killed right in our presence and we have no proofs they say we need certificates and FIRs

All the bodies were put in a truck taken to Civil hospital and from there to Dare Ka Ghumat Relief camp. The police came there and announced that people should identify their kin. At that time I was at the Civil hospital so could not identify anyone.

❖ **Shabana** : They attacked our Masjid from eight in the morning. When our Muslim brothers ran towards it, the police shot eight -ten of them down, mobs were coming from all directions so we ran towards the Gangotri Society, SRP men said, orders have come from above that today we should kill you. You wish to save your life? Then pay us.

" We ran towards Gangotri. There, behind the shutter all of us men, women, children had taken shelter, but Gangotri people said get out from here. They started pushing us towards Naroda and saw a mob eight -ten thousand strong. We backed away from them and people from Gangotri and Gopinath society started beating us. We ran into a lane. Then, in front of us they set fire to our mothers and sisters. They showed papers and said, " you Muslims have burnt the train. We will not spare you today. We will rape you" They raped and then set fire to those women. They cut off the chest of a woman and then set her on fire. Our Muslim brothers covered us and brought us here."

They did not spare even breast-feeding babies. Tearing them away from their mothers, they threw them in fire. Women were stripped, raped and then burnt. One woman begged, "brother, let me go, I haven't done anything," They said, "You are one of those who burnt the train". She still said, "how can you be sure that they were Muslims? They could be Hindus wearing cap. This may be a ploy to torture Muslims. At any rate we poor people suffer."

❖ **Najma Begum**: They burnt my two, children to death. They burnt my back (she shows her back). I saw a little girl whose ear, hands and feet were burnt.

Women were stripped naked. In the urinary passage (vagina) sticks were shoved in, cricket bats (handles) were shoved in. It was terrible, My mother's name is Zarina, and my sister is Naseem. (age17) both of them were burnt alive.

❖ **Qureshi**: They created such terrible atmosphere that I am scared to go back! It was the birthday of a boy of six and a girl of seven. Both were burnt in my presence. I fainted. They wore white dress and blue shirt.



Women were raped, thrown into a well and burnt together. Two month old child was burnt alive. A five year old boy was burnt to death in front of his mother

People groaning with pain due to burns were asking for water. "Here is water", they said and urinated on them, and those who tried to help the people were set on fire, were beaten up and also set on fire. Urinating, they said, "take water, you set fire at Godhra, didn't you?" They burnt my father-in-law. He was seventy years old.

- ❖ **Zaheda:** They burnt my sister-in-law's two children one two month old son and two years old daughter, (they lived behind the mosque at Naroda-Patia)

My eighteen year old daughter's marriage was to take place. They took away everything that we had bought for her i.e. gold, silver, everything.

- ❖ **Mariam Bibi:** They burnt my own child. They made them drink petrol and set them on fire. They said, "go to the Border, there you will have your police" pushed people into one dry well and then set them on fire. That well is behind S.T. bus workshop, in front of the old Masjid.

S.T. (State Transport service) people pelted stones, SRP, police shot at us and Gangotri people started beating us. We were attacked from all sides.

- ❖ **Sharifa Bibi:** They burnt my own son. Women were stripped naked and paraded. We ran when we were attacked by SRP, Gangotri people. Then came the Sindhis, then Shiv Sena, Marathi and so on. We had no way to escape. People from neighbourhood came prepared. They came from outer areas in *Khatara* (vehicle in bad condition). We had nowhere to go!

- ❖ **Hussena Banu:** They caught my brother, struck him with sword on arms and neck. Then tied him and poured acid on him. Before dying, my brother prayed to Allah. I was watching from the toilet. After they left I went to my brother and touched his face and realised that he had died. Then I poured water in his mouth. He was twenty three year old. He was our only brother and we are four sisters. He

was the only earning member in the family. My brother was married, he has a four year old daughter. I know the attackers, and they are from the neighbourhood.

- ❖ **Rafikan Bao:-** They burnt my husband and three children. Only my 18 years old eldest daughter is still alive. They came at about eight o' clock and said, "we will only make a search", Then they poured petrol and diesel and set fire to our house. They said "go near the well which was dry. Then they beat and pushed some of us into the well and set fire. Gangotri and Gopinath people raped and burnt. SRP people were also with them. (In reply to a question about where do the residents of Gangotri work, she said.) They work in State Transport, SRP, some are police people. Some SRP people are retired and staying in Gangotri and Gopinath.
- ❖ **Mebool Hussainbhai Shaikh:** A mob of 20,000 along with police came towards us. We ran to get my brother's child and police fired. Police was with the mob itself. They were thrusting knives at the stomach of women. They killed one foetus. In so many cases they raped women. I can't tell you! Police and SRP were with them and those S.T. workers who threw burning tyres (There is a big S.T. workshop near this basti) 20,000 liters of Kerosene they had from ration shop, they poured it and burnt. Kauser Banu, pregnant woman, her brother, sister-in-law, two nephews and mother were burnt alive. They cut Ayubbhai in front of me, and then burnt him pouring Kerosene or petrol. My child was crying. I told my wife "gag his mouth, otherwise we will be burnt alive". Bhavani Singh said, "run this way" ( In reply to who was Bhavani Singh) he is a driver working at National Transport Service. We ran and 150 -200 people were burnt alive. At that time we couldn't make out who was friend and who was foe. We were so helpless!

Gangotri and Gopinath people spread such terror. It was a blot in the name of humanity. I phoned and asked for help but K.K. Mysorewala (P. I.) refused. "It is free Hindustan", he said. "But in this free Hindustan we are living like in Jail!"

It is alright, that the committee is helping us now. That is why we are alive today, but no government help has come. The government has not come in this one month. If we are settled somewhere else then only we can be alive. Sonia Gandhi was supposed to come but could not come because of security problem. We called people like Amarsingh Chowdhari but they too could not come because of security. Gujarat government refused to provide security.

❖ **Shamshad Begum:** They burnt my mother-in-law. Her two daughters were raped and burnt. My two aunts were burnt, my sister-in-law's one-year child was burnt. My eight years old granddaughter's arms were broken. Her sister thirteen years old was raped and burnt. We have small business of making tube light, night lamp etc. Recently my husband and his elder brother had got material from Bangalore, it was looted and burnt.

❖ **Farida** Several of us hid in the toilet those women who were raped and burnt were asking for water. But where to get water? So we got it from the toilet.

Women from SRP families also said, "Burn them, burn them.... so that they also realise how those who were in that train felt." So I said, "then where would be the difference between you and them?" With innocent little children in our lap we folded hands begging for mercy, but they rudely shoved us back. Then the mob told women, "You, Gangotri people, go away. We will kill the Muslims. So they locked up their apartments and went away"

❖ **Saira Bano** (a volunteer at Shah-E-Alam camp) all the women who were brought here were without any cloths on their body. The whole bus smelt of kerosene.

❖ **Raja's Story :** My name is Raja. I am 12 years old. We went towards Gopinath society and hid inside. When the mob came they threw us out. People from *Gopinath* beat us, not people from the mob. We ran into a lane (gully). They burnt my mother and my sister. My mother begged "let us go we have not done anything". They said that the people in the train (at Godhra) had not harmed anybody. Then they cut my mother's limbs threw her down and burnt

her. I stood and watched, then I started running and they pelted me with stones. I ran and climbed a compound wall on top of which there was glass, then someone hit me with a chain

When I regained consciousness they grabbed me by the hair and started stabbing me, just then a *Marathi* (Maharashtrian) said "you have raped women now spare the children". They said "this same child when he grows up will stab us in the back". The *Maharashtrian* said " We will tackle that problem when it happens (in future). He asked me to run away. I did not run for fear of getting caught. I walked slowly. The people from the mob said that they were paid to kill us, if we paid them they would save us.

## B. Interviews : V. S. Hospital

- ❖ We took a long time in the V.S. Hospital to finally reach the children who suffered from burns in the riot. When at last we reached the ward, we saw a ten-year old boy suffering from burns in his face. He had big scars on his face due to burning. Though his wounds had healed, the face looked distorted. We asked his father **Abdul Majid Shaikh** about the incident. He said, "The attack by the mob on our locality was led by the BJP MLA **Dr. Mayaben Kondanani**. She gave a signal directing them to attack our locality. If she is brought before me today I will tell her, we elected you to the assembly and you brought this disaster on us. My wife and six children were thrown in fire and burnt by the people in the neighbouring ( Gangotri and Gopinath) society. Now my remaining two sons are with me here in the hospital.

28<sup>th</sup> of Feb. 2002 was a black day in the life of **Mohamed Ayub** and his family. On this day his wife completed twenty days of her maternity. When the whole basti ( Naroda-Patia) was burning this woman took her kid and ran out of the house in search of a safe place. In that chaotic situation a baby-boy fell down from her arms. His hands and feet were burnt in the fire and had wounds on them. With the treatment he got in the hospital his wounds had healed and only the signs were left. An upper part of the

mother's body above the waist was severely burnt and it was covered with a cloth. Her baby was fast asleep on the bed near its mother.

His father took the baby-boy in his arms and coming to the open space near the ward he said "On that day all of us got scattered and then came together in the camp. One, out of my three sons, was killed. The other people around him were so deeply submerged in their sorrows that he kept his personal sorrow for the death of his son aside and tried to console the other people around him. He took us to a woman lying on another bed and said, " Her tragedy is terrible, You listen to her!"

- ❖ **Parveenbibi** was lying on the bed and was in a lost state of mind. Her sister-in-law standing besides her, said to us " something terrible has happened to her! Actually, even from my family three persons were killed, my husband and two children, but two of my sons are alive. However, in her case all her family members( her husband and three children) are killed . She is left alone. When the woman who was lying quietly on bed, heard these words of her sister-in-law she started talking inconsistently. She said "All my family members were killed. Why did they do such a thing? They killed four person of my family. Instead if they had killed two persons from every family, everybody's grief could have been shared!"

**Sushilaben** a nurse in the ward listened to this and could not control herself. She ran out of the ward and started weeping. All the patients and their relatives repeatedly told us that they got a very good treatment and efficient medical service in the hospital. Therefore, they could be cured much faster than their expectations.

## Ram-Rahim Nagar

Ram-Rahim Nagar is another locality in Ahmedabad, which was attacked after Godhra tragedy. People from both the communities i.e. Hindus and Muslims have lived together mace fully for many years. However, according to residents this time the unity was broken where by in the *chawls* where Dalits lived, the saffron flags were put on. The *chawls* of Muslims were

attack and they were driven out. At present they are all staying in the relief camp organised by the deputy mayor of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. Few Dalit neighbours of these Muslims are staying in the same camp, along with them. We met these people in the camp and interviewed one person who was a social activist in the *basti*.

- ❖ **Usmanbhai** : The people living here are workers of textile mills. The textile mills have closed down since last 4-5 years and the residents of this area are unemployed. The women in the families now pick papers, plastics and other recyclable materials and sell them for a meagre earning. If something is not done quickly, then the people here would be ready to undertake anything for livelihood.

On 28<sup>th</sup> February, Haren Pandya, minister in Gujarat Govt. was present when the shops were being looted. The minister encouraged and abetted the looting of Muslim shops. When we complained to the DCP about the incident the DCP told us that he was helpless and could not do anything in the matter. He further said that he had orders to fire only on the Muslims.

The attack on Ram Rahim Nagar was pre-planned. Our chawl is exclusively inhabited by Muslims and was therefore attacked. They reached an understanding with the neighbouring chawl that they would not be attacked. They were asked to vacate and leave their chawl. Then we were attacked from that side. They used inflammable gas like  $SO_2$ . The people who caused death, burnt and attacked like Ajay Sharma, Makhiya Chamanwala, Sonu Nigam, Kesrimal etc. were not arrested. These leaders carried revolver in their hand and were giving directions to attack. The Police did not take any action on them. Whereas during combing, 44 Muslims were arrested from our area. Shakeel Ahmed was also arrested and abused. Walibhai also was tortured and accused of leading the mob and firing. From where could we get so much strength to fire on BSF? We do not have qualification (SSC) to get recruited in the military.

There are two communities in this area -Dalit and Muslim. Both these communities cannot exist here without each other. I do agree that this is a whirlwind, which will subside after

some time. But who kicked this whirlwind and who encouraged it? Yesterday the policemen told us that you all are Muslims and will be killed. They killed two people. They arrested the maulvi offering *namaaz* and alleged that we had guns, revolvers and bombs. If we had wouldn't we use them? we are insecure even in this camp. We ran with sticks of firewood in our hand for self-defence. There were two gentlemen amongst us - Shakeel Ahmed Khan and Wali Mohammed. They both were arrested under PASA by way of preventive detention. They were also charged for attempt to murder. Both of them helped every body in the area. Here there is a mixed community. Shakeel Ahmed Khan was a local leader in Ram-Rahim Nagar. He was honest, and a good leader who has not even killed an insect. He was arrested under false charges and we could not do anything. Even the Congress Party could not do anything.

Police entered the houses of Muslims and started breaking all the furniture and belongings of the Muslims, even though nothing untoward had occurred in the locality. Police fired on our boys and 80 boys were arrested. Attackers came from outside and surrounded us from all the sides. We had no where to escape. While the mob entered from the gate, police just mutely watched.

Usmanbhai told us that "I have a very good friend called Arvindbhai who is a dalit and follows left ideology." Arvindbhai told Usmanbhai that "*ham harijanbhai ko to unhone patthar banake rakha hai. Uska mooh tumhare aur karke rakh diya hai Hindu vote lene ke liye.*" (the BJP has been using dalits as missiles to be thrown on Muslims to muster Hindu votes) The BJP could not fulfil its election promises and lost elections in UP, MP, Punjab and Delhi. The BJP was worried. Therefore they targeted minorities.

In the last meeting Hindus and Muslims were together. It was for preparation of the birth anniversary of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, which falls on 14<sup>th</sup> April. We all respect this man who is responsible for our rights in this country. Convenor of the Meeting was also Shakeelbhai. What then was the purpose of arresting him?

Usmanbhai was together with Manoharbhai and told us that they both had to live together.

## Kakariya Municipal School :

This was a relief camp where Hindu victims were housed.

- ❖ **Dilkusha Ramjibhai:** "On 28<sup>th</sup> when the bandh was announced, after namaaz, there was sudden attack. All the basti people carrying acid bottles and petrol bombs came and attacked. One old woman died. We tried to resist but could not."
- ❖ **Deepa** told us that she is a domestic servant. "After lunch, I was washing utensils when a stone was hit from the direction of Muslim basti. We also threw stones at the Muslim basti. Other Muslims joined them armed with knives and started beating one of us. Police arrived and beat one of our boys and shooed all of us away. Muslims residing in the adjacent building attacked with acid bottles and petrol bombs and our houses were set on fire."
- ❖ **Shantaben** told us, "We stay in Shah Alam Toll Naka. We are dalits. From neighbouring building where Muslims reside, acid bottles were thrown. We ran leaving our houses open. One person was killed and two were injured. Since over a month we have been staying here. We get everything but till when we will stay here? We want to go back to our houses. We weave baskets how can we stay here? We need support. Those whose houses are burnt, they want their houses. Muslims surround us on all sides. They throw burning missiles and acid bottles, tease women. Where will we go with our small children. Since the attack was during day we could run to safety. What will we do if the attack is at night? Hindus and Muslims had met to express our solidarity. But next hour, bomb was thrown. So whom can we trust? We are afraid - they are armed, but we do not have any weapons."

We also visited Hindu victims staying near Calico Mill quarters. About 200-300 victims were temporarily staying there. Some of them were earlier working in Calico Mills but the Mill is closed. All of them are dalits from Vankar caste. Their houses were also broken and burnt. The victims got sufficient food but they were worried how and where do we go. They were all casual labourers. They wanted to reset their houses and have



permanent security.



## ❖ The Violence in Panchmahal District

We reached Godhra on 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2002. When we entered the Shiv hotel in Godhra, we opened the topic to the Hindu boys working there. They told us with enthusiasm, " Nothing happened in Godhra. But you go to Pandarwada and see. It has been totally cleansed. Prime Minister Vajpayi is coming on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2002. After he goes back all the Muslims are to be cleansed." The dialogue indicated the situation in Godhra town and particularly the partition of mindset of two communities in Godhra.

The anti-Muslim pogrom in the Panchmahal district that followed the gruesome burning of 58 people in Sabarmati Express on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002, affected 4396 families from 436 villages and these are now staying in the camps for rehabilitation in Godhra, Dohad, Halol, Kalol, Santrampur, Fatepur, Zalod and Shehara. The number of dead and wounded is 241 and 338 respectively and a search is going on for those who have disappeared. We feel that the search is going to be futile. In this district, 2769 houses, 1459 shops, 103 Masjids, Madrasas and Dargahs and light and heavy vehicles have been destroyed. The total economic loss in this district is about Rs. 1555 crores according to Iqbal Mohammed who managed the Godhra Relief Camp. There were violent incidents in 96 villages in Godhra district and 16 villages in Dohad district. 49 people died in these incidents and 231 have been seriously injured. When we were moving in these two talukas we saw that 947 houses, 464 shops, 61 Masjid and other religious places, schools and dispensaries were burnt alongwith the furniture within. No other community except the Muslims suffered any loss in rural area. We also visited the camps where, victims were housed. The victims were housed in two different camps in Godhra City. One camp was at Bohara Musafirkhana and second was near Iqbal primary school. In the camp at Godhra in Bohara Musafirkhana 40 Families and in the camp near the Iqbal primary school about 1639 families were staying. There were three relief camps in Dohad housing 875 families. We

took interviews of 57 affected people from these camps and also had some group discussions with them.

All the victims of the carnage from Randhikpur, Baria, Pandarwada Mora, Vejalpur, Golwa, Suliyat, Gondli, Sanjeli, Jalod, Kala Daugari, Borgaon, Simlia, Panded, Malukh, Shaniada, Baria Kasba, Garbada, Fatepur of Panchmahal District. Chota Udaipur, Kheda-Pavijailpur, Kundal, Motha-Amadara, Oliya Kalam, Pani, Mothi Khandi, Selvasa, Ghutial, Kadwal, from Baroda district are staying together in these camps.

## ❖ Interviews at Godhra Relief Camp

❖ **Fatima Nuraj Shaikh (Pandarwada):** She said, "On 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2002 When the Hindus from our village whom we knew started looting and burning our house, we i.e. men women and children together went to meet the Sarpanch of the village. We appraised him about what was happening. Sarpanch took us with him to his farm and provided for our stay there. He was with us for an hour. After some time Channa Master Bhil came there. Then the Sarpanch left the farm telling us that since then Channa Master would protect us.. After some time a crowd of 60 to 65 people with sticks, swords and knives approached towards us and started beating us. They started beating my husband by a sword. Then I fell on his body to save him. They did not spare me. (After showing us the intrusions made by the sword on her face, head and back, she told ). They cut my hair by the sword. They dragged me and other women to other place and Hindus whom we knew raped us." The left hand of this woman is fractured and she was in the hospital for twelve days. "My husband and his brother together with other men attacked by swords in front of me and my mother in law, Aminaben Rasul." When Aminaben realised that all of them were dead, She herself brought all the dead bodies together and again went to the Sarpanch to ask for an explanation about their disaster. She told us, "The Sarpanch telephoned the police. When the police came I took them to the dead bodies and requested them to bury these in the mortuary. The police took all of us with the dead bodies in a police van to the Lunawada police station and registered the complaints. The copies of the complaint and death certificates

were not given to us even though we asked for them. On the other hand they shouted at us and put us in a van and brought us to the Godhra Camp". She said with rage "I worked hard on the field of Jasubhai and wished for his prosperity. With great difficulty my son had completed the I.T.I course. They killed him also. I am living in this village for the last forty five years but I never imagined that such things would happen. The relief camp is like a prison. If I get an opportunity I shall go back to the village and ask Jasu Patel. My two young sons are killed. Why am I spared? Kill me also".

All Muslims from Pandarwada are in this camp but they are not there with their entire families. Many men and women have lost their family members and there is a question whether they are living or not. They told us that in the one sided violence by Hindus 23 people were killed but the dead bodies were not returned to their families even for the last rites and the police have destroyed all the evidence.

❖ **Fatima Faquir Mohammed : (Randhikpur) :** On 28<sup>th</sup> February, trouble started in the village at about 10 p.m. in the morning. There were sixty families of Muslims . The Brahmins, Baniya, Dalits and Thakurs in this village threw stones on the Muslim houses and burnt them. So about 30 to 35 people went to the neighbouring Chunadi village. After one hour they felt unsafe there also, so they went and stayed in the Masjid in Kuwajad village. On the same night a woman gave birth to a child in the Masjid. An old woman thought that if the women stayed in the Masjid the rioters would not attack them. They discussed among themselves and told young men to run away from the place by taking advantage of the darkness. With four men and children, the thirteen women stayed in the Masjid at Kuwajad. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March at noon, when the attackers started burning the village Kuwajad, they went to Khudra with the infants and their mothers. There, the adivasis gave them shelter for two days. But there also burning started. Then the adivasis told them to use their clothes. When they were going in this adivasi clothing the Hindus in Chhapadwad recognised them and they came and attacked them. Hitting him with a pipe they killed Yusuf Musa Patel,

a man of about 45 years old. At the same time about 20 to 25 Hindus got down from a bus coming from Randhikpur. They dragged by force eight women into the fields and raped them. A three year old girl named Saleha and an infant born in the Masjid were cut down and thrown away. A one and half year old girl, who survived is so shocked that she gets fever, very often screaming fiercely, she cannot do any thing normally, and tightly embraces her grandmother.

- ❖ **Banusabil Qureshi (Randhikpur):** Said that being threatened that —“they will suffer if they do not vote for the BJP in the Gram Panchayat elections. All of them voted for BJP and got it elected. But, they have made us widows and homeless”. According to her on the 28<sup>th</sup> all people in the Mohalla had gone out for work and many houses were vacant. When she saw that- Modi, Raval, Vania and Kumar are Hindus from her village were burning the neighbouring Muslim houses, she went shouting to the next Mohalla and with 150 other people ran to the adivasi basti. “We saw from the small windows of adivasi houses that after burning our houses as if it was Holi around them they were playing *Garaba*”- She and the other women from her village told, “An adivasi sarpanch Kadchha Singh saved us. He sheltered all of us in his house for one night and then told Bijalbhai Patel, another adivasi leader from Chunadi village to give shelter to all Muslims. Bijalbhai collected all adivasis from Chunadi village by beating the drums told them to give protection to the Muslims in their own houses.” They were hiding in this village for three days. Early morning they escaped and stayed in the nearby forests and at night took shelter in the houses of the adivasis. On the fourth day Bijalbhai with the help of Dohad police brought them to the Godhra camp.
- ❖ **Bilkis Patel (Devgad Baria) :** She is 29 years old and six months pregnant and had come to her maternal home at Randhikpur. Her father used to sell milk in this village and before her marriage she used to help him in his business. Three men from the village Jaswant Naik, Govind Naik and Naresh Moria whom she knew raped

her and seven other women. They were shouting slogans "Jay Shriram" while doing so. All these women were hiding themselves in a naked state in the hills near village Chhapadwad. The Rathwa adivasis gave them clothes to wear. After some time the police came there. One villager recognised six out of 19 bodies collected by the police. All other bodies were torn and unrecognisable. What happened to the other 13 bodies and the men who ran away is not known to these women up till now. After taking down the complaints of all these women, the police of Limkheda police station, brought these women to Godhra.

- ❖ **Mohamedibhai (Ghumli -Dohad);** Since last 40 years, he was staying in Ghumali village. He was running a cement business, which was rented for a 99 year lease from an adivasi - Laxman Somjibahi Pasaya. On 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2002 Pasaya informed Mohameadibhai about the looting and burning of Muslim shops and houses in nearby villages and advised him to leave the village for some time. Mohameadibhai agreed with the advice, and with the help of Laxman Somjibahi Pasaya he shifted some stock of cement to another place. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 4 p.m., a mob of around 50 people alongwith the local VHP leader came from Chari village. Local VHP leader Bacchhubhai Khaber angrily asked the villagers *"Wo Kaha gaye? Musalmanoko bhaganeka hai, wo yaha rahe nahi sakte!"* The armed mob set fire to Mohmedadibhai's shop. Mohammadibhai was hiding in an adivasis house. He saw from a small hole in the house he Bacchhubhai Khaber who had a liquor bottle in one hand and a mobile in the other. On his mobile he was constantly in contact with other VHP leaders, giving information about the attacks in loud voice.
- ❖ **Sajauddin Yusuf** staying in **Mandav Village** (Dohad) since more than one decade with his family. He is only one Muslim in this village. He leased land for his shop and house from Adivasi Chachiben Amadara . On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, a mob of 150 people came to the village. When he saw the mob, he ran to the house of adivasi called Dama Shanker. From his house he saw with his own eyes that the mob cut light and phone connections, then they set

fire to his house and shop. After that, the Bajrang Dal activist gave threats to Dama Shanker, to refuse shelter to Sajauddin Yusuf. Despite the threats, Dama did not ask Sajauddin to leave his house. Sajauddin left on his own and went to Zoj village. In this village also Adivasi Nana Ukka gave protection for one day till police came to the village alongwith a vehicle sent by Bohara Jamat to rescue him. Police took them to Godhara. After one month Sajauddin Yusuf visited Mandav. All adivasis gave him moral support. They told him that, he could come back. But the 68 year old Sajauddinbhai was not yet ready to return.

- ❖ **Nissar Bhai** : He is a primary teacher and resident of **Mora village**. On 28<sup>th</sup> February around 10 a.m in a car numbered GJ 3538 some people belonging to BJP and VHP had come to the village when casually he asked-why the car had come there, he was told that the car was brought there for the wedding of Thakur's daughter. Nissar saw the luggage of pamphlets, sticks, iron rods and *trishules* in the car. When he was going at 11 a.m. to the school he saw trees cut and thrown at the main road crossing in the village, and Hindu mobs burning Muslim shops. When Nissar got the information from his Hindu friend that when Muslim men will go to the Masjid for prayer on Friday, their houses will be attacked. He gave this information immediately to the Sarpanch on telephone. Hearing this the adivasi Sarpanch Anil Sangada consoled Nissar and told him to come to his house and that he was informing the police about it. After some time 25 policemen with four vans came to the village for preserving peace. They were accompanied by the *Mamladar* but he left after sometime in a police van.. When the Muslims villagers went to the police for protection after looting and burning started in the village, the police told them that they have to look at both sides. At 9 p.m. when the police got the information that Abdul Gani's shop on Jaldanda Road was being burnt, all the police force went in the direction of that shop. At that time the Muslims saw a mob of four to five hundred people with petrol bombs, detonators and chemicals burning all shops in the square.

All things in the Masjid were burnt and thrown on the ground and a saffron flag was hoisted at the Masjid. They were shouting slogans like 'Bharat Mata Ki Jay' kill, beat, 'Go away to Pakistan'.

They saw Bharat Dangi, Bamnia, Vikram Kalu, Bhai Palas, Vijay Machhar, Mahesh, Puna Bhangre and other Bhils staying in Suliyd looted Muslim houses. Bharat Dangi, a Bhil from Suliyat village was promised suitable reward for his men who participated in the looting and burning incidents of houses indicated by the VHP leaders. After the looting and burning was over, Bharat Dangi demanded his reward. When refused, Bharat Dangi threatened that the VHP leaders would meet the same fate as that of the Muslims if he and his men were not paid their promised reward for their participation. The VHP reported the threats to Mora Police Station and Bharat Dangi was incarcerated. Bharat Dangi spit the name of the VHP leaders who were with him. However, none of them was arrested. The Police refuse to give any information as to in which jail Bharat Dangi has been incarcerated. When there was beating of people and burning of houses, one Saeeda Abdul Razake asked the D.Y.S.P Chauhan what is all this happening here? On that the D.Y.S.P Chauhan said this is nothing compared to what happened at Godhra when the Muslims tried to stop a crowd coming from the front the police / scuttled them aside and allowed the crowd to come on. At 2 a.m. the police told the Muslims families to come with them but these families rejected the suggestion, because they were suspicious. The crowd continued to burn the houses and shops, which were half burnt, and to loot the shops till the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of March. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March two buses of BSF came to the village and hiring a bus and a truck the Muslim families were brought to the Godhra camp in safety. Now they do not have courage to return to their village.

- ❖ **Siraj Husain** : On 2<sup>nd</sup> March in **Bhikapura village**, of Pavijetpur Taluka, Dist. Baroda, eight Muslim families were staying since last seventeen years. Local Bajrang Dal leader and activists forced Muslims to leave village. One

of the adivasi Mohansing Rathwa went with these families to drop them at Chota Udaipur. When Siraj Husain went after one month to Bhikapura, the adivasi returned his things, which could be saved from fire. Adivasi are calling all Muslims to come back to the village.

- ❖ **Faqrudinbhai:** A resident of **Kundal village** of Baroda district, is at present staying at Godhra Bohari Musafirkhana. On 6<sup>th</sup> March Navalsingh Nadsinghbhai Rathwa, *sarpanch* of Kundal Village, requested the BJP leaders not to destroy Muslim shops. However, they didn't listen. The sarpanch then went to Faqrudinbhai and informed about the BJP leader's intentions. Faqrudinbhai's shop was adjoining adivasi houses. Faqrudinbhai's shop was torched on that day by a mob. The *sarpanch* informed the police and caused a *panchnama* to be prepared and also disclosed names of those involved in the attack to the police. The Sarpanch gave shelter to all Muslim families for two days in his home. Faqrudinbhai and Mohammed Roshan Ali told us that all the families alongwith their women and children left adivasis house early mornings, spent the whole day in forest without food and returned late evening to the *adivasis* houses. Adivasis treated them well. On the next day when the VHP activist came to the village and warned the adivasi not to help the Muslims and help in destroying Muslim shops, the *sarpanch* did not oppose due to the pressure and in their pressure even pretended removing roof tiles. Then outside mob looted and set fire to the shops. After this event Navalsingh Nadsinghbhai Rathwa, contacted the adivasi MLA Mohansingh Rathwa and informed him to shift the Muslims to a secure place. Mohansingh Rathwa agreed and sent his boat from sukhi dam (Doongarwad) to Kundel. Navalsingh Rathwa sent two adivasis with the Muslim families. When they reached Doongarwad, Mohansingh Rathwa took them in a jeep to a Bohra musafirkhanaa at Pavijetpur.
- ❖ **Haji Rafik Bhai (Baria Kasba):** According to him, on 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 clock in the morning a mob of 400 came to (Kasba) to loot and set fire to Muslims property. BJP activist Rajendra Ramanlal Shah , Gopal Soni, Pankaj



Chowhan, Shahar Pramukh Ghanasham Soni and owner of the Anuradha Electronic shop were leading the mob. He said " In our Kasba many Muslims are in transport business, some of them are drivers and they were on duty. Since then 110 men have not returned home. We don't know whether they are alive or not! We have already given a list of lost persons to the collector and the police, but with no response from them yet.

- ❖ **Firoz Mohmed Hanif (Baria Kasba):** He is a Driver. He told " When looting and burning started at Piplod. I left my duty and came back home. While I was on the Piplod-Matwad road. I saw the mob of 30. I hid near the hill to save myself, from where I saw that the mob was beating Habib Gulam Mohammed and Firozkhan Dawodkhan Pathan. When I enquired about them at late night after reaching the village I found that they had not returned. Both of them have not been traced till today.
- ❖ **Musabhai (Baria Kasba) :** Idris Mohammed Mansuri and Musabhai of this village were coming on Golwa-Ghoghumba Road on their two wheeler. They were stopped by the Bजारंग Dal mob and beaten. Musabhai who was sitting in the back seat, ran away and hid himself in the trees nearby. When Idris Mohammed Mansuri was running away leaving his bicycle he was stabbed by the mob. When Musabhai returned after two days and told the villagers about the happening the villagers, with the brother of Idris, started searching for Idris on the Golwa-Ghoghumba road with the help of his cousin and villagers. There they found his GJ-17 - 3384 number Bajaj two-wheeler in a burnt state. When all of them went to the police station the police gave a piece of the pocket and his watch to the relatives. The local people reported to us that the police told the villagers to cremate the dead body of Idris.
- ❖ **Chandubhai Mina (Garbada):** He is adivasi ex-sarpanch and Congress Taluka Pramukh of Dohad. Garbada is an adivasi majority village. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March at about 2 a.m., a mob of fifty to sixty people threw stones on Muslim houses. The Muslims ran to the market area. Chandubhai gave them shelter. Later, on the same day, a mob of Bhils

was sitting on the hills beyond the main road in the village. VHP shouted slogans *Jai Shri Ram* to signal the Bhils to begin looting the shops and houses. At night all these houses and shops were burnt, but the crowd did not enter the market. VHP systematically spread rumour that the Muslims have killed the adivasis coming in a tractor. However the adivasis did not believe the rumours. That was because the *adivasis* had seen the looting and burning in the village in front of the police.

- ❖ **Vanraj Damor (Dohad)** is a Computer Engineer and District Convenor of Adivasi Youth Congress of Gujarat. According to him, in Panchmahal district, the activist and the organisers who were trained in the Bajrang Dal *shakhas* (branches) were working in these villages for the last ten years, and have created a communal atmosphere at the village level.

He further said "On the approach road to the Dohad city there is a Dargah and a Masjid. Near it, there is a RSS shakha and also a temple. On 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. the Dargah and the Masjid were demolished and the VHP and Bajrang Dal activist hoisted a saffron flag. Next day Tasgul Pathan, a prominent Muslim, was stabbed by a sharp weapon at this place. When I got this news, I myself and other Muslims friends went to the Dargah and came to Dohad. We handed over the dead body to Tasgul's parents. At the same time, there was tension in the Muslim locality. When they threatened that they will not leave the Hindus now, I called the collector and the DSP. A meeting was held of both communities and a resolution was passed to establish peace. "

- ❖ **Ahmed Kalota** : Mr. Kalota stays in **Godhra** town and he is a District President of Janata Dal (S). In his detail interview, he raised many questions about Sabarmati Express incident. He said that it was unfortunate the present Government saw the incident of Godhra station on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002 as one pre planned by the minority community. Kalota further said that "*Man may lie, but circumstances will not.* If the incident was a pre planned one, then why the Muslim businessmen as usual opened their shops, factories and other establishments? The C.M.

Shri Modi visited Godhra within hours of occurrence of the incident. But more importantly, the CM visited the railway premises with pre-determined mind to declare that the incident was pre-planned. At the time of his visit, nearby religious places, houses and garages belonging to Muslims were being destroyed by members of Hindu community. Though the C.M. knew this, he did not direct any body to stop the destruction, as it was pre-planned by the RSS, VHP Bajrang Dal and other communal parties to destroy Muslims properties. Muslim community continued to demand for protection of Muslims in villages and shift them to safe place, but the government did not pay any heed. Many dead bodies of Muslims lay at several places though the authorities were informed. No arrangements were made to hand over the dead bodies to the relatives at home. On the contrary, the dead bodies were voluntarily being mutilated beyond recognition in order to spare the government from paying Ex-gratia amount. We still pray that these dead bodies be handed over to the relatives and the Ex-gratia amount coupled with cash doles be directed to be given to the affected persons immediately.

- ❖ **Maulana Husain Umarji (Godhra)** : Chief Maulvi of Godhra and president of Relief Committee runs a relief camp near Iqbal High School, Godhra. In the curfew bound area the outlaws started destruction of Muslims properties- in and outside Godhra city freely and fearlessly under the blessing of the BJP government. On April 7, Maulana Umarji along with leading Ghanchi Muslims made an appeal for peace, condemning the Sabarmati incident, asking for punishing of the guilty and praying for the souls of those who died. No local paper carried it. He has also been advising restraint at every Friday sermon, talking specifically against confronting the police. Umarji told us that the Government calculatedly falsely implicated Muslim elected members of the Municipal Corporation in the Sabarmati Express case in order to choke their voice and discredit their leadership. He further said that almost all prominent members of the Muslim community, including businessmen and social workers were falsely apprehended and arrested during night in order to humiliate them. While

POTO was invoked against those falsely implicated in the Sabarmati Express case, the government refused to use POTO against those who brutally slaughtered more than 1000 Muslims.



## 1. Findings

**1. Objective of Genocide:** In Gujarat carnage there was a clear objective of genocide of Muslims. Genocide means the economic, physical and the cultural destruction of a particular social group. The objective of the *sangh pariwar* was not just rioting and consequently killing the people, but it was a planned killing through pre targeted savagery attack on Muslim men, mass rape of Muslim women, and torture and burning of women and children. It was on such a large scale that they were terrorised and completely demoralised, not to return home again to lead a normal life. Of course, the objective of genocide could not be carried out successfully to its logical end for a variety of reasons, such as the very strength of the Muslim population in Gujarat on the one hand and the mounting national and international pressure on the other hand. Nevertheless, the events in Gujarat since 28<sup>th</sup> Feb., clearly indicate that a massive and meticulous plan of genocide had been made much before the Godhra incident. In their objective of genocide of the Muslim population of Gujarat the *sangh pariwar* operates at three levels, which can be described as follows:

**a) Physical extinction:** This time what happened in Gujarat was not a normal riot, which we have observed earlier elsewhere. In earlier riots, we have seen that people from two different religious (or otherwise) communities confront and attack each other. In consequence, the property is destroyed; persons from both sides are killed, in more or less number, of both the communities. This time however, it was the large-scale killings of one community by the other in a very systematic and pre planned manner while the governmental machinery was positively supporting the culprits. From the interview of victims who lived at Naroda- Patia and who are at present staying at the Shah-E-Alam camp, the following

points emerge:

- i) People who were attacked were totally defenceless and were taken by surprise.
- ii) Very large mobs attacked them and the mob was armed with sword, petrol, kerosene and sticks.
- iii) The victims got no help from their neighbours, in fact the neighbours joined the mob to kill and rape.
- iv) There was an involvement of the SRP and the Police in attacking Muslims.
- v) The viciousness of the attack is shocking - women and children were special targets.
- vi) It was not just rape but humiliation before killing. The women were stripped naked and sometimes paraded and then they were raped. After that they were burnt to death. Torture in the form of pushing sticks and handle of cricket bats in their vagina was common.
- vii) Pregnant women had their stomach ripped open by sword and the foetus was taken out and thrown in fire.
- viii) Children were beaten and burnt, with unimaginable cruelty and torture.
- ix) There was no escape route for the victims. They were attacked from all sides.

The Victims interviewed by us in the rural camps told us that from 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2002, processions were arranged in all over villages by local VHP, Bajrang Dal and BJP groups of 60 to 70 people shouting '*Inko Yahanse Bhagao, Pakistan Bhejo*' and started looting them from noon. The mob came on cycle, motor cycles and jeeps and were hurling petrol filled plastic bags and igniting them with fire crackers and tyres. They burnt the houses, shops, Masjid, dispensaries, workshops and factories of Muslims. Eyewitnesses told us that they had maps of the village with plot numbers and lists of Muslim families. It makes it clear that even in rural areas the attack was so pre planned that the tiny minority of the Muslim population had no chance to escape.

In the villages where Hindus dominated and where the adivasis are in minority, the members of the *Hindutva* organisations inflicted much serious damages on the Muslims which included looting and burning of Muslim shops, raping Muslim women, children and even burning alive and killing Muslims. While in areas where the adivasis dominated, the VHP could not go beyond looting and burning the shops and houses of the Muslims with the help of Bhil adivasis.

As reported to us by the organisers of the relief camps at Godhra, more than 300 Muslim men, women and children were brutally murdered in villages of Panchmahal district. But the Chief Minister declared the deaths of only eight persons. On the roads of villages, Muslim drivers of vehicles were brutally killed, the dead bodies thrown in cabin of vehicles and burnt so that no sign remained of the brutal murders.

The narratives of the victims interviewed by us left no doubt in our minds that Muslims were targeted in such a pre-planned manner that they were not able to receive any help from any quarters. Services of Government institutions were also availed of. Direct help of police was very much evident. From the interviews of the victims of carnage executed in various localities common points emerged. We were told that police in all the localities, when approached by the victims, uniformly expressed their inability to protect them as "they had no orders to do so". Data and information gathered in course of its normal day-to-day functioning by the various departments of the Government seemed to be made available to the BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal to carry out the pogrom.

**b) Economic destruction:** Destruction of Muslims seems very calculated and pre-planned because of the accuracy of attacks on pre-determined targets. The Godhra incident was just an excuse. If not Godhra incident, other incidents could have provided excuse to attain their objective, as they have done earlier to prove that the minorities started the riot. For example, Radhabai Chawl event in Mumbai in January 1993, in which a Hindu family was burnt alive allegedly by the Muslims. This incident was stated to be the starting point for the violence that erupted in Mumbai. Later, this was proved to be wrong and the Srikrishna Commission Report rejected

this theory outright. The *sangh parivar* had systematically collected the information about Muslims and their property in Gujarat for last few months. As a result, they could attack single Muslim houses, shops and business premises in Hindu Majority areas where it was virtually impossible to recognise that they belonged to Muslims. Even big *basties* of Muslim's surrounded by Hindus, particularly in the outskirts of Ahmedabad, were systematically attacked and burnt. In rural areas too, Muslims were attacked, looted, their houses burnt in such a manner that they can not return to the same place to start their occupations again, thus completely clearing the villages of Muslims. Mr. Patel, Secretary of Bajrang Dal of Ahmedabad boasted before us. "Eight hundred villages from Panchmahal are cleared of Muslims". In very remote areas of Panchmahal district the single *Bohara* shops and houses of Muslims were looted and burnt and they are thrown out of the village not to ever return again.

**c) Attack on Religious and Cultural Diversity :** Religious and Cultural symbols were wiped out particularly by attacking the religious shrines like *Mosques, Madrasas or Dargahs* etc. Not only were these places destroyed, but also no signs of their earlier existence were allowed to remain. We found that the Bajrang Dal flags were hoisted at these places. At some places new roads were constructed with the help of Public Works Department within matter of hours immediately after destruction of the religious shrines/institutions. At some other places, after demolishing Muslim religious shrines, Hindu idols of Hanuman were installed and established accompanied by pujas (worship).

The hatred against the Muslim identity is evident in the criticism of the *burkhas* worn by women or the caps worn by Muslim men. In fact, these are just symbols of a cultural heritage, similar to *bindi, tilak and mangalsutra worn by the Hindus*. This intolerance is a contribution of a *Bramhanical* mindset, which is directly in contradiction with the pluralistic approach of the Hindu society.

The Indian Constitution, as well as the law of the land has recognised the plurality of culture. But the hatred and intolerance is systematically created in community consciousness

against the cultural symbols of Muslim community so that it would be impossible for them to live together with Hindus. Or the community is forced to *ghettoize*. A similar attitude is seen in the activities of organisations like *Tablighi Jamaat*, which has launched the campaign against the composite culture and living together of Hindus and Muslims, emphasising the new separate identity of Muslims, thereby indirectly serving the purpose of the *sangh pariwar*.

## 2. Communalization of Society :

**a) Pre Godhra planning and preparation by the *sangh pariwar*** : The VHP has been sending volunteers to Ayodhya since February 22. Three batches had gone on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup>. On their way to Ayodhya, the train halts at Godhra at night. On one of these trips, 101 VHP volunteers from Godhra had boarded the train, and been welcomed by their companions inside the train with loud shouts of 'Jai Sree Ram'. Police had increased *bandobast* that night.

With an eye on getting thousands of Hindus to Ayodhya on March 15, 2002, and also to expand their base, the VHP had thought of a simple campaign: getting as many Hindus as possible to recite the 'Ram Nam mantra' for two and a half months continuously. The Hindus were given a *jap mala*, and told to recite *Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Ram*. These Hindus then qualified to accompany the VHP to Ayodhya to make their ritual offering in the *maha-yagna*, which was scheduled to begin there in February. Since the last ten years Bajrang Dal gave training to their cadres at various areas of Gujarat. After completing the training BD gave certificate or card with *patta*, *trishul* and *danda* to trained *Sevaks*. For this training BD collected a fund of Rs 51/- from the trained cadre.

**b) Post Godhra actions to create communal hysteria:** Ironically, the shocking incident at Godhra proved to be a great boon for the *sangh pariwar*. They exploited this tragedy to the fullest extent to create a violent anti-Muslim atmosphere all over Gujarat. Different organisations were activated to promote communal frenzy.

(i) Right after the Godhra incident a call for a *Bandh* was given for the next day i.e. 28<sup>th</sup> feb.2002 to protest against



the burning of the *Karsevaks* in Sabarmati express.

- (ii) The arrival of the 17 charred bodies of the victims of the Sabarmati Exp. at Ahmedabad on 28<sup>th</sup> morning was given a huge pre-publicity through all the media sources. VHP and Bajrang Dal gave a call to organise condolence meetings all over Ahmedabad. The meetings were meant for paying homage to the victims through the programme of *besnas and bhajans*. Moreover, all over Gujarat they had given a call for *Ghantanad* (ringing the bells) and organised protest marches.
- (iii) The funeral procession turned into a public programme. The deceased persons lived in different areas of the city, such as Mahadeo Nagar, Janta Nagar, Kakria Pada etc. The procession was to start from each of the victim's house and converge on a common meeting place. The VHP president Mr. Giriraj Kishor was to lead this procession further to the cemetery. The mob increased in large proportions while moving towards the cemetery. After completing the last rites, the atmosphere was so charged with hatred by that time that while returning the mob attacked the Muslim *basties* that came on its way. Since then, violence started all over Gujarat. The pattern followed was the same. First, the people gathered on the street wearing a headband that carried the name of VHP or Bajrang Dal. They carried *swords, danda and trishul*. The attack began with the pelting of stones, throwing of petrol bombs, then looting and burning of houses and shops belonging to Muslims. It was carried out in the presence of the police force. Finally, the brutal killings of the Muslims, rape and torture of women and children were carried out.
- (iv) The mobs attacked Muslim shops and houses so accurately that it was clear that they had prior information about the Muslims and their properties.
- (v) The mobs were composed of three types of people. A group with weapons in hand wearing VHP band, the other group of people collected from the neighbouring areas, and a third small group of leaders who directed the mob.

Often the mobs constituted of thousands of people, sometimes even more.

### 3. Muslims Attacking Neighbours :

Most of the Hindus who were in relief camps belonged to the lower castes among the Hindus, particularly Dalits. Though they were not the victims of physical violence, they were driven out of their houses by looting and burning of houses by the attacks of Muslim neighbours mostly from the same *basties*. They have no confidence and willingness to go back to their homes without guarantee of protection. This is a reflection of the communalisation of Muslims in the areas where Muslims are in majority.

### 4. Adivasi and Violence:

Even if the *adivasis* participated in the pogrom led by the Hindutva organisations, they did so neither because of ideological convictions, nor out of any hatred towards the Muslims. Here it would be useful to recall that from the colonial period, *Bhils* have been deprived of their traditional dependence on forest and forest produce. So deprived, a section of *Bhils* has been forced to live by indulging in criminal activities and looting for generations. In Panchmahal district there are many incidents of help rendered by the *adivasis* to the Muslims as gathered by us from the victims we talked to in the camp. VHP used a deprived section of, *Bhils* to loot and burn the houses of the Muslims.

Except the *Bhil adivasis*, no other tribe *Rathwas*, *Kolis*, *Bhois*, and *Naikadas* participated in the violence. On the contrary, these *adivasis* gave clothes to women who were raped. They gave protection day and night to many families in their own houses during the present carnage. They went and expressed their sympathies with the people living in relief camps and gave the victims moral courage to return to the villages.

### 5. Role of the Government:

The complicity of the government that was observed in the post Godhra carnage was unprecedented. There was an

involvement of the entire government machinery from top political leaders to the lower level police constables. Given the reported presence of senior ministers in police control rooms, even the lower level cadres of the police force seem to have acted with the knowledge that they are free to behave like other common men in the society with all their usual anti-Muslim prejudices. Their involvement in the carnage took the following three forms: first, when they (especially the police) remained passive spectators, second, when they instigated mob violence and third, when they actively participated in the carnage.

The ruling political party BJP, itself called for a '*bandh*' on the 28<sup>th</sup> Feb.2002, and openly justified violence stating that there would be reaction of Hindus against the Godhra incident all over Gujarat. Even the chief minister Mr. Narendra Modi, instead of telling people to be patient and to maintain peace, instigated the Hindus with a statement that there would be a natural reaction of Hindus against Sabarmati express incident.( see Times of India, J.F. Ribeiro,May 2002)

Contrary to expectations that the state government would take immediate preventive measures to prevent a backlash after the Godhra incident, chief minister Mr. Narendra Modi ordered the police not to act in such a manner that the feelings of the Hindus would be hurt. For example, at Naroda-Patia when Muslims were surrounded by violent mobs on all sides, they requested the police for help. But the police replied, " We do not have orders from above to protect the Muslims". Therefore, all kinds of cognisable offences were committed, such as looting, killings and rape in front of the police who were the silent spectators.

When the mob attacked the houses of Muslims by throwing petrol bottles the houses were burnt and Muslims started running amok. The police fired on these helpless people.

Neither did the police accept the complaints nor did they register the names of the culprits in the FIR, even when the victims specifically identified them.

In the Shah-e-Alam camp we were told by the volunteers as well as by the victims that the survivors were brought to the Dargah in a bus sent by some concerned people, of the

Muslim community, who later organised the camp. When the bus reached Shah-E- Alam Dargah, most of the women were naked and the whole bus stank of petrol. The conditions of the survivors proved that they did not get any help from the police.

The government did not organise any relief camps when more than one lakh people had lost their homes and belongings and became refugees. Even after so many days i.e. 50 days, the mob attacked the relief camp at *Dariya Khan Ghumat*, (which is half a km. distance from the police commissioner's office), with the demand of shifting the said relief camp to some other area. This is a reflection of the complete lawlessness that was prevailing in Ahmedabad after so many days and inaction and the failure of the govt. in controlling the situation.

MLAs and MPs of BJP participated freely and fearlessly in the disturbances in the Panchmahal district. For example, one Pravinbhai Prabhatsinh Cahuhan is the son of a Minister of BJP government, who when informed about the deed of his son, replied that he will do what ever he likes. He owns 14 vehicles each of these occupied by 50 miscreants were utilised to kill and destroy Muslims' property. Though Muslims filed complaints stating specific names as accused, none is arrested by the police.

The Chief Minister Narendra Modi visited the site of Sabarmati Express immediately, but he did not have time either to visit the affected villages in Panchmahal, or even to visit the innocent Muslim victims in the same district .

Transfer of the govt. officers, and high authority police officers from those towns where they prohibited VHP and Bajrang Dal to execute their retaliation project, clearly reveals the government's motive behind these transfers. During the present carnage the control of the *sangha pariwar* over the government. machinery has been intensified so as to make the government. Officers act like puppets in their hands.

## PERSPECTIVES

Prof. Imtiaz Ahmad has pointed out that, "Such (communal) violence is usually sparked off by fairly superficial and trivial

causes though underlying them are deeper considerations of political representation, control of and access to resources and power etc. These trivial causes come to occupy a symbolic significance for the group and conflicts arise from any interference with the group's autonomy, security and identity."

For understanding the root cause of the present carnage in Gujarat we need to probe into the politics of Gujarat during the recent past.

### ❖ Politics of Gujarat

In every society, there is a struggle of the weaker sections to improve the conditions in which they are living. It requires a share in resources whereby they can enjoy the benefits of development to improve their economic conditions, social status and cultural fabric. In underdeveloped society, political power becomes an important instrument to get access to resources, because through the political power under control one can give direction to the size and pattern of development and also intervene in the allocation of resources and the distribution of the results achieved.

Caste is a primordial category in Indian society. Socialisation of an individual is mainly within the caste group. The individual's caste based identity remains even when he/she enters into larger social orbits. For getting share in power even in the present democratic set-up, one takes the help of one's caste group. For the people belonging to upper caste, there are other instruments, such as their own resources, education, economic-cultural power and general respectability in society, to climb up the political ladder. But, for a person of lower caste, his caste is his only instrument through which he gets the required strength to get a share in the political power. In adult franchise, numbers count for getting political representation. Therefore, individuals belonging to the lower caste have now found it possible and advantageous to enter politics through caste based organisation so as to get a better bargain for themselves. Of course, this does not mean that gaining power by the leaders of the lower castes automatically guarantees the betterment of the poorer sections among them. It requires the mass consciousness for the definite goals to be achieved through power, as also the organisations to implement the policies.

This process of caste entering into politics as a caste group has certain consequences as given below:

Firstly, it gives strength in politics to individuals belonging to the weaker sections in society. The other powerful caste groups are, many a times, interested in forming an alliance with this low caste group to acquire political power. In this process a new caste alliance is formed through compromises between different caste groups. Automatically, it leads to the increase in mutual understanding among groups, resolves conflicts and increases strength of all the groups in the competition for power, political representation as well as in sharing the resources, which are accessible through power. This ongoing process in India's democratic polity has been advantageous to different social groups, who could attain a long term alliance in different states of India. For example, *Maratha* and *Neo-Buddhist* alliance in Maharashtra under the leadership of Sharad Pawar or *Yadavas* and *Muslims* in Bihar under the leadership of Laloo Prasad Yadav.

The second effect of this caste alliance is notorious. The social group, which remains out of the ruling alliance, constantly tries to form new caste alliances with other groups in society and to break the alliance of ruling caste groups in society. Similarly, the ruling alliance of the caste is always under pressure to retain power and for that matter breaks the alliances that are opposing their rule. This process creates the tensions in society whereby caste conflict and communal conflict are a consequence.

The political parties in India represent these alliances of different social groups. They provide an umbrella of organisations as well as a political ideology to bind different social groups together. Coming to Gujarat, we find that till 1975 the ruling elite consisted of upper castes and the educated middle class of urban areas and the Patels / Patidars of rural areas. However, during 1970s there was a rising consciousness among the backward people, which increased their aspirations of political power. Considering this phenomena the Congress party in Gujarat presented a new combination of castes by the end of 1970s. It's traditional support base in upper castes being eroded by the Navanirman and Janata party, it brought the new

*Kshatriya* castes (OBCcaste) in alliance with *Harijan*, Adivasi and Muslims, which was popularly known as KHAM strategy under the leadership of Madavsinh Solanki, while the strategy articulated by Jinabhai Darjee, KHAM alliances acquired power in 1977 and continued till 1989. The striking effect of this alliance was the side-tracking of Patels and Baniyas from the political power in Gujarat. There was no *Patel* minister of the cabinet rank in Solanki's ministry. Even other upper castes from urban areas were kept away from power. All these groups were economically powerful and they were part of the ruling elite of Gujarat, before 1980. Obviously they became extremely restless when deprived of political power. Throughout the 1980s these disgruntled groups of the upper castes were in search of tactics to get power again. The anti-reservation movement in urban areas was definitely an attempt of the upper castes and Patels, clandestinely supported by the *sangh parivar*, to dislodge the ruling alliance by creating unrest against the Congress government. On the other hand they terrorised a section of dalits (one of the component of KHAM alliance). The urban middle class of the upper caste provided natural base to the movement. However, the Kshatriyas and OBCs also started a pro- reservation movement, which developed an open caste conflict between the upper castes and the OBCs, with dalits and adivasis also getting mobilised in the pro-reservation agitation. The BJP as a national party found it inconvenient and therefore to overcome its failure, it tried to turn the caste conflict into a communal conflict since 1985.

BJP became the vanguard force of all upper castes throughout 1980's. To weaken the government and break the ruling alliance was a long-term strategy of the BJP in Gujarat since then. For achieving this objective, it launched variety of programmes such as *Shobha Yatras* and *Rath Yatras* etc. One should remember here that even L.K. Advani, the president of BJP in 1990 had started his infamous *Rath Yatras* from Somnath in Gujarat.

Gradually, the party started getting success in its strategy for which number of factors were responsible. Those can be discussed as follows:

First, after 1985 the lower classes from the caste groups

of KHAM alliance were alienated from the Congress party and started joining the BJP. Prof. Pravin Sheth has explained this phenomena very clearly :

"The entropy of KHAM as the so-far enduring social base of the Congress can be traced to the elitist attitude of the leaders towards the respective mass of these four numerically castes / communities. The KHAM strategists filled in the vacuum caused in the structure of the Congress party by the withdrawal of the Patel and urban middle class from it in the wake of the Nav Nirman movement of 1975. Protagonist of the KHAM sought to mobilise the KHAM backward groups in the name of social justice. What actually happened was cornering the fruits of power, patronage and development by the new KHAM elite to the negligence of the KHAM masses. The average voters of these backward groups, perceiving this elitist trend got alienated from the leaders who reaped visible advantages of the Congress rule in the name of the backward masses. The communal riots of mid 1980s and the Ram Shila Pujan helped them reorient their religious and political affiliation to the BJP." ( Pravin Sheth, 1998)

There is no doubt that the transfer of power from the upper caste leaders to lower caste leaders is a necessary condition for taking society towards social justice. However, experience shows that the leaders from the lower caste gradually become the part of the established system and can not really deliver the goods to the large majority of poorer sections among them. The rule in Gujarat under KHAM alliance also led to the same situation for the masses. Unfortunately, there is no other alternative political combination (or party) in Gujarat, which was sympathetic to the caste oppression of the lower castes as well as conscious of solving their economic problems of poverty and unemployment. Such combination, if existed, could possibly take these masses towards the path of socio-economic transformation. But in absence of any such political combination the only alternative available to the alienated masses of KHA (Kshatriya, Harijan and Adivasis) in Gujarat politics was the BJP.

The second factor responsible for developing a new aggressive political culture in Gujarat is the growing insecurity



arising out of unemployment due to closure of textile mills and a depressing scenario in the economy, as elsewhere in India, during the last decade of the last century. The new technology and globalisation have injected more competition and instability in the job market for the middle classes of Gujarat also. All these problems are commonly shared by the middle classes coming from the OBCs and Dalits with their counterparts from the upper-castes which is comparatively large in size. Making an alliance with this middle class of the upper castes is an urgent requirement for the middle classes from backward communities. This attracts a section of middle class from the backward communities towards the *Hindutva* brand of nationalism. The middle classes from backward communities often like to pose themselves as the saviours of *Hindutva* more aggressively than their counterparts among the upper castes. This partly explains their role in the communal conflicts in the last decade and the present carnage also.

BJP had especially concentrated in the rural areas mainly dominated by the adivasis. For example activities of the VHP, Bajrang Dal and the BJP have been gaining ground in the Panchmahal District. Most reported that the activities of the *sangh parivar* in the rural areas have gained good ground alongwith the Ramjanmabhoomi Temple movement in the nineties. The local political picture began to change slowly after late 1980s. Generally the adivasis are nature worshippers. The Hindutva Organisations constructed small and big temples in the places where the adivasis were worshipping their idols. The Hindutva organisations through their resources performed *bhajans*, sermons, *Geeta darshan* etc. amongst the adivasis and tried to impose non-adviasi culture through these activities.

When the BJP came to power in the state, the Bajrang Dal got unbridled opportunity to create an atmosphere of anti-Muslim sentiments in rural areas. In the *Gram Panchayat* elections they threatened the Muslims that they will not be able to stay in the village if they don't vote for BJP.

The other programme of the BD and VHP was to stifle the minorities economically. They called for boycott of the Muslims. They distributed pamphlets amongst the Adivasis and Dalits and also organised different programmes for them. One

of the pamphlets distributed by the Hindutva organisations called upon Hindus to pressurise Muslim land owners to sell their fertile and irrigated land at throw away price to the Hindus. The pamphlets also called upon the adivasis to forcibly evict the Muslims tenants to leave the houses and the shops rented by them.

It is imperative to note at this stage the role of a section of Muslim community in communalising the society and politics of Gujarat. The population of Muslims is about 8.5 per cent in Gujarat, which is less than the national average. Gujarat has the unique distinction in the country of giving three Muslim trading communities - Bohras, Khojas and Memons. There are other indigenous Gujarati Muslim communities, including the fishing community along the coastline of Gujarat. Significant number of Muslims are settled in Kutch, Jamnagar, Junagadh and Ahmedabad. These communities are well integrated in the local culture. The Gujarati Muslim communities have taken little interest in politics or by and large have remained supporters of the Congress Party, except for a brief spell following the emergency and demolition of the Babri Mosque on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1992. The Muslim community taken as a whole is however, grossly under represented in the Gujarat legislature. Muslim leaders who have credibility and a large following have been generally marginalised e.g., we take the case of Mr. Ahmed Patel. He has been a very important and senior leader of the Congress. But he has never received any importance in the State, and generally been shifted to party organisational work in the Centre.

Besides the Gujarati Muslim community, there are also migrant Muslim communities from other states. Muslims are either artisans or self employed as petty hawkers and in other sectors. A section of the Muslims in Ahmedabad was employed in the textile mills, which are now closed. Due to increasing unemployment and lack of other means of livelihood, a small section of the Muslims is attracted to bootlegging and other illegal means of livelihood. An illustration of this point is Latif Khan. Till he was shot dead in an encounter by the police sometime ago, Latif Khan was the top man in the lucrative trade of bootlegging in the only state still imposing prohibition.

Latif Khan was dreaded by one and all. The Media also created a larger than life image of Latif Khan as Dawood Ibrahim's man in Gujarat. Latif's men were feared but Latif also gave the community a criminal face and a criminal image. During the war with Pakistan, the Muslim criminals were also projected as potential anti-nationals and probable Pakistani agents. Long after the war, even an ordinary Muslim is still perceived as a potential anti-national. Latif's activities as well as the media projection of Latif left little doubt in most Hindu minds that Muslims are not only criminals but also anti-nationals. The *sangh parivar's* anti-Muslim campaign thus was easily believed by unsuspecting minds.

These different factors discussed above have shown how the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan Adivasi and Muslim) alliance attained by the Congress in 1980 was finally broken by 1990. Since then the politics of Gujarat has taken a new turn. BJP attempted to form a new influential social base, described as PAKH (Patel, Adivasi, Kshatriya and Harijan) of their power, in place of the KHAM of the Congress. Under PAKH alliance the conflict between the upper and the lower castes was temporarily resolved and the ideology of *Hindutva* became the binding force for them.

BJP could exclusively acquire power in Gujarat in 1995 through the PAKH alliance. However, there have been number of alliances and re-alliances and changes thereafter in the BJP mass base. Mr. Shankarsinha Vaghela created a big challenge before this alliance when he defected from the BJP. In spite of all this, BJP could manage to remain in power in Gujarat. Moreover, it always keeps its *Hindutva* card ready if there is any threat to its power. *Shilanyas* in Ayodhya was organised on 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2002 by the VHP, keeping view of the UP election. Dr. Pravin Togadia, a secretary of the VHP was giving inflammatory speeches all over the country but more so in Gujarat. Therefore, the ground for anti-Muslim pogrom was already prepared even before the Sabarmati exp. incident. Recently, it was found that the incumbency factor had started operating in Gujarat, i.e. masses started feeling that the govt. was unable to fulfill its earlier promises, given at the time of election through which they got power. In this situation, the BJP

government, it seems, found it convenient to take out its weapon of *Hindutva* to reunite the alliance, consolidate its base and strengthen the government. The carnage that followed after 27<sup>th</sup> Feb.2002 in Gujarat was a consequence of the BJP government's consolidation strategy. Thus, it is preparing for the coming Assembly election in Gujarat, at the cost of law and order situation. Moreover, the human rights violation was never its concern any time in history. It is very confident, yet, that the people of Gujarat will pardon its failure of governance for the so-called noble objective of *Hindurashtra*.

## Hate Campaign

Even before 1990 there had been a systematic campaign of the *sangh pariwar* against the Muslims. It got momentum in 1990 when the V. P. Singh government announced the implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report, particularly regarding the reservation for the backward classes. Under the leadership of L. K. Adwani the BJP started a *Rath Yatra* apparently with the objective of building a *Ram Temple* at Ayodhya, but with the hidden agenda of destroying the *Babri Masjid*. The *Rath Yatra* and the *Ram Mandir* campaign demonised Muslims as an enemy symbol against *Ram* who is perceived as a symbol for the **Hindu religion** and the **Hindu nation**. Muslims were stereotyped as fanatic violent, cruel and anti-national and so a danger to the Hindu community and the nation. Certain distorted ideas about the Muslim were inculcated in the minds of the average Hindu whose perception of the Muslim community became disturbingly negative. The distortion of the Muslim image was accompanied with a heightening of religious fervour, through such rituals as observing certain festivals, and making use of religious symbols such as the *Gangajal* and the *Ram Shila* reaching out to a large part of the Hindu population. The role played by the print and electronic media, as well as the revised school text books, in strengthening the negative image of the Muslims, was considerable. Some such myths propagated by them can be mentioned as follows;

1. After the partition the Muslims have got Pakistan as their Muslim nation and now ours is a Hindu nation. Though

some Muslims did not go to Pakistan their loyalty has always been with that nation. For example as seen during the Indo-Pak cricket matches, the Muslims celebrate with crackers the victory of the Pakistani team.

2. Even in our own country they are not ready to give us land for *Ram Mandir* at Ayodhya where *Ram* was born. The Government of India does not respect our sentiments regarding *Ram Mandir* but is ready to send them to *Haj* and thereby the government pampers the Muslims.
3. Due to the practice of polygamy Muslims have four wives and many more children so population wise they will outnumber the Hindus in near future.
4. In *madrasas* they preach terrorism.
5. Because of the Muslims the country remains backward. For example, women wearing *burkhas* is a sign of backwardness as against the modernity of Hindu women.
6. Historically Muslims have been the aggressors who have been extremely cruel. In particular, They have been seen as rapists. To protect the honour of our women we should take "revenge" today for the past wrongs.
7. Muslims are favoured whereas the Hindus are oppressed and exploited in their own country.

The continuous propagation of these ideas through all media channels all over the country by the *sangh parivar* has particularly influenced the middle classes of all castes and especially those who can read. Zoya Hasan, a renowned political scientist has written

*"Clearly secular consciousness in India is only skin-deep. This is largely the consequence of policies and strategies pursued by the Congress for three decades and the Janata in its regime. It continues to view communal violence as a law and order problem. It has not been able to recognise the fact that the part of the antagonism stems from outright ignorance and distortion of information. In spite of living together for centuries most Hindus and Muslims don't know about each other's values, traditions and customs. Each has a stereotyped*

*and distorted image of the other. Such images must be counteracted because the communal problem in our view, has as much to do with ingrained prejudice as with political rivalry and economic competition." (Zoya Hasan, 1991)*

Her observations unfortunately still hold true.

## Effect Of The Hate Campaign

It is clear that the present carnage was not the result of a moment of passion. Such actions are the result of long nourished deep hatred that makes human beings act in this demonic way.

When it comes to communal frenzy, Muslims are equally prone to violence, which includes arson, loot and murder. But what is most disturbing about the events in Gujarat is the fact that, communal violence has taken the shape of well-organised inhuman torture perpetrated on women and children, for which Hindus have been responsible. The hate campaign along with other socio-economic-political conditions described above seemed to have led to this Hindu mindset.

For the *Hindu Rashtra*, as conceived by the *sangh parivar*, Muslim men are the "enemy symbol". They are supposed to be traitors. Therefore given the chance they should be suppressed and even destroyed. This brainwashing is so intense that the uncontrolled hatred goes even towards children. A Muslim male child is considered to be a potential demon. The idea is that they will add to the anti-national population in future, thereby creating further danger to the *Hindu Rashtra*. During an interview Raja, who is just 12 years old, narrates that, how a Marathi neighbour saved him from another man from that same colony who was asking him to kill Raja. The argument that the attacker forwarded was that, even though Raja was small and innocent today, he will grow up in future to cause trouble. So he should be burnt to death. Fortunately, the first man was quite assertive in protecting Raja. However, the dialogue shows a kind of insecurity, fear and hatred that is built up in the minds of Hindus through false campaigns. Rape of their own women causes a deep shock and revulsion in the Hindu mind because of the extreme value he attaches to the

physical chastity of a woman. The *sangh pariwar* has always made use of this psychology prevalent in the Hindu society to arouse communal feelings and to justify communal violence. This phenomenon reminds one of the attitudes towards women of his 'own', and women of the 'other' community, by the ideologue of *Hindutva*, V.D. Savarkar. In his book "Saha Soneri Pane from Indian History", he writes,

*"Shivaji is praised for sending the daughter-in-law of the Nawab of Kalyan with honour. But did he (Shivaji) or Chimaji Appa forget the rape of Hindu women by Muslim invaders? Those women raped by Muslim invaders must have shouted in anguish 'Shivaji, Chimaji Appa don't forget the rape committed on us by the Muslim Lords. You should terrorise them in such a way that they should shiver with terror as to what will happen to 'their' women' when Hindus will come to power. When they will realise that 'their women will also be subjected to such atrocities, then only they will stop doing these atrocities on Hindu women'" (Savarkar, 1991)*

One must say that the BJP government of Gujarat and the *Hindutva* politicians are following their ideologue in this matter in letter and in spirit!

Rumours of Hindu women being raped and killed and their breasts cut off are very common in every communal riot. They are systematically spread through the language papers. For example, on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2002, *Sandesh* a local Gujarathi newspaper, published a news item on the day after the Godhra incident, of abduction of Hindu women from the Sabarmati express. It was mentioned that they were raped, their breasts were cut off and they were killed. This news spread immediately all over Gujarat and created a frenzy among Hindu men and women. The intensity of hatred was so high that even a child if he was a male and Muslim was treated as a potential rapist. Children were killed very happily as though it was a destruction of evil.

After several days " *Sandesh* " clarified in a corner of the paper about the falsity of the earlier news. The clarification of course passed unnoticed and the first news had already done the damage. The frenzied mobs were carrying these newspapers

while rioting and killing and shouting slogans " *Khoon ka Badla khoon*".

In this mad frenzy, the mobs mass raped 13 year old girls as well as 70 year old women. Muslim women are hated because in their *burkhas* they are supposed to be the symbols of backwardness. Muslim women are also considered morally degraded as they live with cruel, anti-national rapists and they increase the Muslim population. The fear that Muslims will outnumber Hindus is so great that even small girls are hated as breeding grounds of Muslim evil. Interviews reveal that rapists were saying two things. One, they showed the newspapers carrying the Godhra incident to their victims and told them "We are taking revenge for whatever happened in Godhra", Secondly, they said, "*tum ko bachche chahiye kya? Lo ham dete hai*". (Do you want children? Here bear our children. The girls were humiliated and then killed.

The *Karsevaks* are treated as haloed people as they are special devotees of *Ram*. As such they become symbols of *Hindu Religion* and *Hindu Rashtra*. It is indoctrinated by the *sangh pariwar* in the minds of people through their propaganda that the heinous crimes committed in the name of *Ram*, *Hindu Religion* and *Hindu Rashtra* are morally justified.

### ❖ The New Generation of India

One of our Muslim friends had gone to Ahmedabad on 19 th April 2002 to review the situation. His Hindu friend in Mumbai had requested his cousin in Ahmedabad to accompany him there. A man called Manish came to take him to the city in his own car. After spending the whole day with him, Manish apologetically told him in the evening, " Sir, I actually want to invite you to my house for a cup of tea. But I am helpless, as I can't guarantee your safety in my colony. Even if a five year old Muslim child comes to my society by mistake, it may not go back alive". This was the state of affairs in Ahmedabad on 19 th April 2002 i.e. 50 days after the Godhra incident. Such was the grave divide between the two communities in Gujarat!

We met a number of small children at Shah -E-Alam and Darya khan Ghumat and the V. S. hospital. Most of them are survivors and witnesses of horrible killings of their dear ones,



of looting and burning their own houses and belongings, books, clothes and toys. Some have even seen their mothers and sisters being raped. They survived because they hid in places unnoticed by the mob. Children normally play in and around their basties and know places where they can hide. In the Interview some children told us how they were hiding in places from where they could see what was happening. But the people in the mob had many other vulnerable prey than to search for the hiding children. Many of the surviving children narrated their stories without any touch of innocence. They seemed to have internalised the violence.

In the V. S. hospital, we met a boy who got burn injuries on his face and saw with his own eyes his brother or younger kids dying by being thrown in the fire. What will he think about this incident after ten years? Will he continue to weep or will he try to take revenge for that which is sculpted on his mind? Is this not the beginning of the circle of destruction of this society?

The situation is volatile. Children have to get a healing touch and hopes of a better future. Only then can they be made to forget their horrible experience. In the absence of this they can become potential terrorists. This can be a great danger to the nation as well as to the Hindu majority of this country, in whose interest the *sangh parivar* has carried out the project of revenge.

At this stage we would like to express our concern for another category of children who have taken part in violence with the elders, fathers, neighbours and VHP activists. There are other male children who witnessed the violence against "enemy others" but have not directly taken part in it. From the interview of survivors it is clear that the persons in the neighbouring colonies were the main culprits of violence against them.

According to psychiatrists, those who take part in violence against innocents lose peace and tranquillity in their future life. They are haunted by feelings of guilt permanently in their later life. Urvashi Butalia has given such examples in her book "The Other side of Silence" written on people who experienced the

partition of India.

*The transformation of the 'other' from a human being to the enemy, a thing to be destroyed before it destroyed you, became the all important imperative. Feelings, other than hate, indifference, loathing, had no place here. Later, they would come back to haunt those who had participated in the violence, or remained indifferent to its happening. A seventy-Year old professor recounted how, as young volunteer with the RSS in Patiala, he remembered hearing the screams of a Muslim woman being raped and then killed in the nearby wholesale market. He had listened, and felt nothing because, he said, 'at the time, as members of the RSS, we were not allowed to feel for "them" '. Fifty years later, he wept, tears of mourning for the woman, and for his own indifference. (Urwashi Butala, 1998)*

After that experience the person was not free of deep sense of guilt.

Some children in this group may get criminalised for ever. Once the violence is internalised, and a person is habituated to violence, it becomes a legitimate weapon to resolve a problem. It can be used against those who do not accept that person's viewpoint or act against his interest.

Thus by supporting the revenge project of the *sangh pariwar*, proponents of violence are taking a great risk for their own families and the entire Hindu society. They are pushing their young male children on the road to crime with dire consequences, which are unimaginable today. The child can become a young man without happiness or peace and with feelings of guilt and lack of confidence resulting in failure in life. Alternatively, a young man though not branded a criminal can still become violent. This type is prone to domestic violence creating danger to women within the family. Whereas communal violence is sporadic, domestic violence is a sustained phenomena, which disturbs family peace. Thus, the violence started against enemy "others" i.e. Muslims, may take its own course and turn against "our" own family members, especially women -wife, daughters, daughter-in-law, sister and even mother.

Another consequence of children either taking part in, or witnessing violence is the destruction of the democratic fabric of our society. It is inculcating the view that differences of opinion, grievances, anger can not be resolved through dialogue but by attacking and killing the "others" i.e. whoever is the enemy at that moment of time.

The *Hindutva* project and the actions of the *sangh pariwar* are thus taking society away from Hindu morality as well as from the democratic spirit developed through the long history of Gandhian National Movement and the Indian constitution of Dr. Ambedkar. It is better that we show our children the right direction through values that build up a more humane society.



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