

## **BJP – The Saffron Years**

*The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all convictions, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.<sup>1</sup>*

A spectre is haunting the nation. The spectre of communalism. The rough beast, its hour come round at last, has been unleashed and slouches its way across the land. Even those who turn away, cannot escape its breath, now slowly poisoning the air. As the curtain begins to descend on the first phase of the saffron regime, they watch in disbelief, realisation dawning that what has been witnessed thus far is merely an overture, a prologue to the tragedy of history repeating itself.

If the last decade of the previous century saw the destruction of the Babri Masjid, clearing the ground for the cornerstones of a new edifice, the start of the new millennium has ushered in the era of holocaustian politics.

“Gujarat brings home to us with poignant intensity the consummation of the practices of communalisation of governance. These manifold practices reach, at the end of the day, the same ends: minority communities may exercise and enjoy only those basic human rights that the ideology of Hindutva may justify....The Gujarat carnage sculpts an ominous principle of governance: the democratically elected government owes concrete duties to the dominant majorities to devise ways and means that facilitate communal revenge.”<sup>1</sup>

### ***The hidden agenda***

In the campaign leading to the Lok Sabha elections of 1999, political speculation frequently revolved around the possible “hidden agenda” of the BJP, as it attempted to clobber up the coalition, that ultimately formed the government as the National Democratic Alliance(NDA). These concerns were mostly centred around issues such as the construction of the temple at Ayodhya, the repealing of Art. 370 (defining the status of Kashmir in the Constitution of India), a uniform civil code, and so on, that is to say, concrete, physically definable political goals and objectives, that could be used to hijack the coalition into directions other than what was stated in the NDA manifesto. And at the time, the BJP strained every sinew to vehemently deny any such secret motives or plans.

The BJP could of course justify its righteous indignation at such accusations, as it would have been politically naïve and premature for it to embark on any such adventure, at that stage. With hindsight, it is easy to see that it would need at least three to four years, to prepare the groundwork, for such an outrage to appear at least acceptable, if not

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<sup>1</sup> *From The Second Coming by W. B. Yeats*

reasonable and inevitable. And its task was cut out and clear to its ideologues and *pracharaks*. The partition of 1947 had carved up the country physically. It was now necessary to partition the Indian mind. Such social surgery had to be done skillfully, with sharp scalpels wielded by adept surgeons trained in the *shakas* of the RSS, while the patient was anaesthetized with fear.

In the words of K. R. Malkani, Vice-President of the BJP, “History is the philosophy of nations. And the Sangh Parivar has a very clear and candid conception of Indian history. Here was a great civilization whose glory spread from Sri Lanka to Java and Japan and from Tibet and Mongolia to China and Siberia. While it weathered the storms of Huns and Shakas and Greeks it wilted before the Islamic storms of the Turks. However, a 1000-year resistance saw this country bloodied but unbowed. Its civilization survived through the heroic efforts of the Vijayanagar Empire and of Shivaji, Rana Pratap and Guru Govind Singh and countless heroes and martyrs. ....*The RSS, founded by Dr Hedgewar in 1925 and consolidated by Shri Guruji after 1940, is the heir to this heroic, historic heritage.*

And a few pages later referring to the politics of Mandal and Masjid, “*Historic wrongs had to be righted, however, symbolically, for a lasting solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem.*(emphasis added).”

The hidden agenda of Hindutva has as its *leitmotif* the righting of these “historic wrongs”. And it therefore includes such diverse aims as the re-writing of history, the reconstruction of places of worship, the capturing of all secular space, the narrowing of liberal discourse within which democracy can function, and setting a style of governance where the minorities survive at the sufferance of the majority.

As Upendra Baxi has pointed out, in the essay referred to above<sup>1</sup>, “*the distinctive point of departure entails the following propositions:*

1. *Political power must always retain monopoly over construction of truth.* (The truth of history, as well as the truth of “minor incidents” such as a pogrom).
2. *Civil society and human rights movements ought to be marginalised.* (“Where are the human rights activists when terrorists attack innocent citizens?”)
3. *The mass media ought to be always socially responsible. Since there exist no ways to silence mass media, protected by constitutional rights of freedom of speech and expression ( a freedom that as much serves regime purposes as it occasionally contradicts these), all forms of investigative journalism ought to be tormented at the bar of journalistic ethics.”*<sup>ii</sup>

This brief report is an attempt to understand the events of these last four years in this light. A mere listing of the present government’s sins of commission and omission would be an endless litany. The events mentioned and described are those that reveal the underlying perspective. The “hidden agenda” of an organized and concerted effort to change the rules of the game, to once and for all, set up an environment that wipes out all

possibility of a secular and liberal dialogue, filling civil society with a sense of fear and foreboding.

### ***Pokhran and Pakistan***

On May 11<sup>th</sup> 1998, within days of the BJP-led government coming to power, India declared itself to be an overt SNW (State with Nuclear Weapons), by detonating nuclear devices at Pokhran. “The decision to conduct the blasts was not taken in the cabinet, following a 'strategic review' or consultations with the defence services. As RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan boasted, it was taken by the Sangh. Only a handful of RSS-loyal ministers were privy to it.

“Thus, the VHP's (Vishwa Hindu Parishad's) first response to Pokhran was to declare that the Hindus had finally "awakened" with the "Shakti" series of tests, and to demand that India be formally, constitutionally, declared a "Hindu State". Identically, VHP leader Ashok Singhal now terms Gujarat's pogrom of Muslims as signifying, indeed proof of, Hindu "awakening" or "resurgence". ... the VHP announced it would build a temple to a new national goddess, "Atomic Shakti", and carry Pokhran's radioactive sands in a rath yatra to each corner of India.”<sup>iii</sup>

The Indian establishment has been anything but clear about what the nuclear blasts were intended to achieve, The excuses, justifications and reasons range from a vague idea of deterrence (conventional and nuclear) to the threat from Pakistan (sometimes China), to building technological capability (The third anniversary of the blasts at Pokhran was celebrated as ‘National Technology Day’, an occasion graced by the PM). What, mercifully, was not advanced with any conviction this time, was that it was for peaceful purposes. For what is now becoming increasingly clear is that this is perhaps one of the most likely regions for the site of the next nuclear war.

However, such comments were consistently dismissed by the “nationalists” as racist slurs, emanating from the west. “Virtually the whole of the Indian bomb lobby in welcoming those tests declared that both countries going openly nuclear would actually bring about greater regional stability and peace.

“Therefore, the temptation is to now claim that Pokhran II was inevitable because Pakistan was threatening us anyway with its nuclear capability, or some other argument resting on the wondrous powers of nuclear deterrence. Anything to save face and the pro-nuclear argument, except the truth. The presumed nuclear threats from Pakistan and China were always the excuses, never the reasons. Indeed, the official declared position of this Indian government — that the Indian bomb is neither 'country specific' nor 'threat specific' — itself gives the game away. Pokhran II was supposed to be an expression of India's political manhood, a way of equipping oneself to participate in the tough, hard-headed game of global geo-politics as an ambitious and rising power.”

“Obsession with political manhood through greater military belligerence and power has always been the hallmark of Sangh ideology — the reason why it has wanted the bomb since the Fifties, well before the Pakistan or China threat could have been said to exist.”

### *Kargil*

The myth of nuclear capability serving as a deterrent to conventional warfare was blown away with the Kargil war in June-July of 1999.

Though the Indian military successfully repelled the intruders across the Line of Control (LOC), BJP-led government found itself hard-pressed to explain the initial failure to detect the intruders, the deficiencies in the equipment supplied to the armed forces, communication failures, and other controversies that constantly dogged it, as the dust of battle settled down. The response was to heighten the anti-Pakistan hype and raise the pitch of ultra-Hindu nationalist stridency to new levels.

“At the T. S. Narayanaswamy Memorial lecture on Nov.11, 2001 in Chennai (‘Proactive security measures can check Kargil-type intrusions,’ TheHindu, Nov. 12.) the main speaker, the Vice-Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Patney, was surprisingly forthright and candid....He asked as to why we were restricted from crossing the LoC and whether Kargil was a missed opportunity to teach Pakistan a long-lasting lesson! ...While Pakistan has always been aggressively “pro-active”, we have (only) been “reactive”! Also one of the aims of Pakistan, to bring Kashmir back to international centrestage, has succeeded and the Kargil victory looks “hollow” as the security forces have to now man 140 km of (additional) inhospitable terrain!”<sup>iv</sup>

“In India, the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) government has claimed "victory" in Kargil. It has drummed up jingoism but the campaign, successful in many cities, has not helped the BJP cover the costs of the Kargil operation: more than 400 soldiers dead and 600 injured (unofficial death toll is up to 2,000 considering the terrain in which the infantry had to fight), and expenses so far of 2.5 billion dollars.

“The government is under pressure to raise military spending. Guarding the Kargil LoC through a round-the-year military presence will cost 1 billion dollars a year. The demand for new intelligence-gathering devices and upgraded weapons could nearly double India's present military spending.

“The Government is drawing flak for its incompetent handling of the crisis from sections of the media and opposition parties had demanded a special session of the Upper House of Parliament to discuss Kargil.

“Instead, last weekend, it announced a four-man committee to investigate the Kargil crisis. The committee is headed by India's best-known nuclear hawk K. Subrahmanyam.

And, three of its four members are part of the National Security Council, which was clearly unprepared for the Kargil crisis.”<sup>v</sup>

But Kargil, cross-border terrorism, the ISI, and all the demons from across the border, gave the Sangh Parivar a convenient stick with which to thrash everyone in sight, who was not with them - Muslims, “pseudo-secularists”, intellectuals, communists, “leftist historians”, English media-persons, NGO’s, missionaries, human rights organisations, Amartya Sen, Mother Teresa – all now branded either as anti-national or foreign agents.

The last two were specially singled out by the VHP President Ashok Singhal as deserving the highest condemnation. This report from The Hindustan times says it all:

“Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) president Ashok Singhal's reported remarks against Nobel Laureates Amartya Sen and Mother Teresa have evoked sharp reactions from political parties, including the Left and the Telugu Desam, who said the comments were a manifestation of a 'sick mind' borne out of inadequate understanding of Hinduism. In contrast, the BJP responded guardedly to Mr Singhal's statement terming the Nobel prizes awarded to Prof Sen and Mother Teresa as part of a `Christian conspiracy to propagate their religion and wipe out Hinduism”<sup>vi</sup>

### *Attacks on Christians*

But the attacks on Christians have not been confined to such verbal volleys. In the run-up to the 1999 elections, physical attacks on Christians and their property including churches intensified, especially in Gujarat. Though not confined to Gujarat alone, the attacks here were the most vicious and brazen, as the state too, was ruled by the BJP, and these concerted assaults continued from April 1998 right through 1999.

According to a report published by Human Rights Watch, New York, “ Between January 1998 and February 1999, the Indian Parliament reported a total of 116 incidents of attacks on Christians across the country. Unofficial figures may be higher. Gujarat topped the list of states with ninety-four such incidents. Attacks have also been reported in Maharashtra, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Manipur, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and New Delhi. Attacks on Christians have ranged from violence against the leadership of the church, including the killing of priests and the raping of nuns, to the physical destruction of Christian institutions, including schools, churches, colleges, and cemeteries. Thousands of Christians have also been forced to convert to Hinduism.”<sup>vii</sup>

During the years under consideration, one of the regions that came under particular attention of the Sangh organisations, was the district of the Dangs in Gujarat. The Dangs is a forest area of some 1764 sq km. 94% of the population being adivasis (tribals).

“Not only Christian missionaries and their institutions but poor Christians, particularly dalits and adivasis, are under attack and have been systematically harassed by Hindu

fundamentalists under BJP rule. The state machinery is more or less in collusion with or indifferent to the miscreants. The Gujarat government has not only ignored the recommendations of the Minorities Commission but also questioned its need to visit the state. The prime minister has given a clean chit to the state government and said that the chief minister was not at fault and had taken action to prevent atrocities against Christians in the state. VHP leaders have openly said that the Gujarat government is carrying out their agenda. The Sangh parivar, including BJP ministers and other office-bearers, allege that 'people' in Gujarat are getting converted to Christianity, either forcibly or with all kinds of allurements. There is a conspiracy to create a Nagaland or Mizoram in Gujarat with a majority Christian population"<sup>viii</sup>

Going back to the Human Rights Watch account of what happened in the Dangs district, "In February 1998 the heads of the village police attacked a prayer hall in Divan Tembrum village while prayers were taking place, and physically assaulted the worshippers. In April, a crowd of 400, used tractors and iron bars to destroy St. Antony's Catholic Church and several other affiliated structures in different stages of construction in Naroda, a suburb of Ahmedabad city. The crowd smashed icons and stole the contents of the donation box. Witnesses said the crowd included members of the police, the VHP, and the local BJP government. In an interview, the head of the village council, Sumbubhai Maiatbhai, admitted to attending the demolition but claimed that the church was razed because it stood in violation of a local building code. Church officials said they were unaware of any such code violation.

"In June several prayer halls were burned in Ahwa town, Dangs district. On July 8, a Methodist man's corpse was dug up in a Christian cemetery in Kapadvanj and dumped near his church. Witnesses said local VHP leaders led this desecration. Attacks and harassment of Christian-run schools were also on the rise. On July 16, the Shantiniketan High School in Zankhav village, Surat district, was broken into and stoned; its playground was ploughed by a tractor. The school was run by Jesuit priests of the Loyola Education Trust. The following day large numbers of "hooligans" from the neighboring village entered the market place in Zankhav, and violence ensued. Prior to the incident, two local language dailies, the *Gujarat Samachar* and *Sandesh*, had published a series of inflammatory articles charging that the Jesuit priests were engaged in forcible conversions of tribals to Christianity and that the school was admitting only Christian students. The same month, suspected VHP and Bajrang Dal activists burned hundreds of copies of the Bible at the I. P. Mission School in Rajkot district.

"On August 9, a church in Ahmedabad was demolished by RSS activists. On October 9, the Home Minister of Gujarat, Harin Pandya, threatened evangelist Roger Houstma with legal action if he continued to hold preaching and healing meetings in Gandhinagar. The next day Houstma's meeting in Rajkot was attacked. On November 11, in Dahunia village in the Dangs district, several Christian tribals, including an ailing woman, were beaten up. Several Christian families in the village were forced to undergo a "conversion" ritual and bathe in Unai hot springs just north of the district. The village *sarpanch* (elected head of the village council) supported the attackers and said that Christians could not draw water from the village well or have their cattle graze with the animals of other villagers. The sarpanch also issued a decree preventing Christians in the village from working in any government or government-aided projects."<sup>ix</sup>

But the attacks were not confined to Gujarat. Perhaps the most dastardly act was the murder of Graham Staines and his two sons in Orissa.

“On January 23, 1999, in Manoharpur village in Keonjhar district, Orissa, a mob of Hindu extremists burned to death an Australian missionary, Graham Stewart Staines, and his two sons, Philip, nine, and Timothy, six, as they slept in their car. Over one hundred people reportedly poured petroleum on the station wagon and set it on fire. As the family tried to escape, the mob held them back while shouting pro-Bajrang Dal slogans and physically assaulted villagers who tried to come to their rescue. Staines had worked for over thirty years in a leper colony in the state.

“Police officials initially arrested forty-nine people in connection with the killing and identified them as members of the Bajrang Dal. Police also claimed that they had a photo of Dara Singh, the leader of the mob and active member of the Bajrang Dal who had been leading a campaign against conversions by Christian missionaries in surrounding areas.

“Investigations by the CBI, the Crime Branch of the Orissa police, and the Wadhwa Commission have all concluded that the conversion of tribals was a motivating factor behind the Staines murders. According to CBI Superintendent of Police Loknath Behera, Dara Singh had encouraged his accomplices to "go and assault the Christian missionaries who have come to Manoharpur, as they are indulging in conversion of innocent tribals into Christianity and spoiling our religion and culture.

“While the BJP condemned the murders, India's defense minister claimed that the attack was part of an international conspiracy to defame India, while Home Minister L. K. Advani came to the Bajrang Dal's defense by proclaiming that he "knew" these organizations, and that they had "no criminality in them."<sup>x</sup>

The man charged with the gruesome murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons in 1999 wants to serve the cause of Hindutva better by contesting in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.<sup>xi</sup>

The VHP does even better, as this report from PTI (Press Trust of India) shows:

NEW DELHI, DEC. 20. In an apparent endorsement of Dara Singh, prime accused in the killing of the Australian missionary, Graham Staines, and his two children, the VHP president, Vishnu Hari Dalmia, honoured his mother and gave her Rs. 25,000 at a function here on Wednesday.

Raj Rani, mother of Singh, who is behind bars after surrendering to police, his brother Arvind Kumar and Mukesh Jain, president of the Dharmarakshak Shri Dara Sena, were honoured at a function organised to celebrate the birthday of the former MP and VHP leader, B.L. Sharma 'Prem'. -- PTI 21/12/2002.

### ***The Saffronisation of Education***

In October 1998, at an Education Ministers' Conference, Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, the BJP Education Minister, publicly announced the agenda of "Indianisation,

Nationalisation, Spiritualisation”, a coded and loaded phrase for pushing through the RSS agenda in education and the takeover of cultural and academic institutions by the saffron brotherhood.

“Through the Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan, the RSS runs anywhere between 14,000-20,000 Saraswati Mandirs and Shishu Mandirs all over the country. Of these, it is reported that as many as 5,000 are recognised by and affiliated to either the CBSE or state education boards, most of them in states with BJP governments in power....In stark and revealing contrast to the hold that the RSS has over education, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) itself has a total of 5,391 schools affiliated to it.”<sup>xii</sup>

“Hate language and hate-politics cannot be part of history teaching in a democracy. But, unfortunately, prejudice and division, not a holistic and fair vision, has been the guiding principle for our textbook boards and the authors chosen by them.

Over the years, our history and social studies texts, more and more, emphasise a prejudicial understanding and rendering of history, that is certainly not borne out by historical facts. Crucial inclusions and exclusions (are to be found in) abstracts from state board texts, ICSE textbooks and college texts as well.”<sup>xiii</sup>

Below are a few extracts from the National Steering Committee on Textbook Evaluation, Recommendation and Report II, NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training).<sup>xiv</sup>

Publications of Vidya Bharati (Section VI of the report):

The Committee shares the concern expressed in the report over the publication and use of blatantly communal writings in the series entitled, Sanskriti Jnan in the Vidya Bharati Schools which have been set up in different parts of the country. Their number is reported to be 6,000. The Committee agrees with the report that much of the material in the so-called Sanskrit Jnan series is “designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of inculcating knowledge of culture in the young generation”.

The Committee is of the view that the Vidya Bharati schools are being clearly used for the dissemination of blatantly communal ideas. In its earlier report (January 1993), the Committee had commented on publications which had been brought out with similar objectives by the Saraswati Shishu Mandir Prakashan and Markazi Maktaba Islami and had recommended that they should not be allowed to be used in schools. The Sanskriti Jnan series are known to be in use in Vidya Bharati schools in Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere. The Committee recommends that the educational authorities of Madhya Pradesh and other states should disallow the use of this series in the schools. The state governments may also consider appropriate steps to stop the publication of these materials which foment communal hatred and disallow the examinations which are held by the Vidya Bharati Sansthan on the basis of these materials.

A series of booklets which is being used in the Vidya Bharati schools has been published under the general title of Sanskriti Jnan Pareeksha and Sanskrit-Jnan Pareeksha Prashn-ottari (Culture-Knowledge Examination and Culture-Knowledge Examination Questions-Answers). These books are in the form of questions and answers which are meant to be taught by teachers and memorized by students. They are also used for assessing children in an all-India examination which is conducted by the Sansthan. The Sansthan claims that during 1993-94, 3,55,282 students appeared in the examination based on this question-answer series. The total number of schools run by the Sansthan is claimed to be 6,000 with 12,00,000 students and 40,000 teachers.

Each booklet in the series comprises questions and answers on geography, politics, personalities, martyrs, morals, Hindu festivals, religious books, general knowledge, etc. Much of the material in these books is designed to promote blatantly communal and chauvinist ideas and popularize RSS and its policies and programmes.

Some examples of the kind of 'knowledge' of sanskriti these booklets are disseminating are given below:

1. The booklets include information and questions and answers on the 'geographical and political boundaries of India'. Besides Pakistan and Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and 'Brahmadesh or Myanmar' are all supposed to have been earlier parts of India. There is a question on Sri Lanka which reads, "What is the name of the island in the south which touches the feet of Bharat Mother, and which reminds us of Sri Ramachandra's victory over Ravana and which was a part of our country at one time?"

2. India is presented in extreme chauvinist terms as the 'original home of world civilisation'. One of the booklets (No.IX), for example, says, "India is the most ancient country in the world. When civilisation had not developed in many countries of the world, when people in those countries lived in jungles naked or covering their bodies with the bark of trees or hides of animals, Bharat's Rishis-Munis brought the light of culture and civilisation to all those countries." Some of the examples of the "spread of the light of Aryatva by Bharatiya Manishis" given are the following:

- (i) "The credit for lighting the lamp of culture in China goes to the ancient Indians,
- (ii) India is the mother country of ancient China. Their ancestors were Indian kshatriya
- (iii) The first people who began to inhabit China were Indians."
- (iv) "The first people to settle in Iran were Indians (Aryans)"
- (v) "The popularity of the great work of the Aryans — Valmiki Ramayana — influenced (Yavana) Yunan? (Greece) and there also the great poet Homer composed a version of the Ramayana".
- (vi) "The Languages of the indigenous people (Red Indians) of the northern part of America were derived from ancient Indian languages".

3. Many of these booklets have a section each on 'Sri Ramjanma-bhumi'. They present RSS-VHP propaganda in the form of catechisms to be memorized by the faithful as absolute truths. Some of the questions – answers in these sections are as follows;

*Q. Who got the first temple built on the birth place of Shri Ram in Ayodhya?*

A. Shri Ram's son Maharaja Kush.

*Q. Who was the first foreign invader who destroyed Sri Ram temple?*

A. Menander of Greece (150 B.C.)

*Q. Why is Babri Masjid not a mosque?*

A. Because Muslims have never till today offered Namaz there.

*Q. How many devotees of Rama laid down their life to liberate Rama temple from A.D. 1528 to A.D. 1914?*

A. Three lakh fifty thousand.

*Q. Why will 2 November 1990 be inscribed in black letters in the history of India?*

A. Because on that day, the then Chief Minister by ordering the Police to shoot unarmed Kar Sewaks massacred hundreds of them.

The rot is not confined to school text books. Even text books at the college level, including for the final year B.A. history course are full of venom directed towards the Muslims, especially when discussing such issues as the 'Invasion of Mahmud of Ghaznavi'.

The RSS success in these areas is due to the fact that it has been able to pack the managements of almost all important and prestigious institutions and academic bodies with its own supporters, who do not even make a pretence of academic autonomy.

This has led to a change in priorities and programmes for these institutions, which include such bodies as the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and the Archeological Survey of India (ASI). The former has put on hold the entire project of the publication of *Towards Freedom*, after withdrawing two volumes edited by KN Pannikar and Sumit Sarkar. Instead what is now sanctioned is a project on the mapping of the (mythical) Saraswati river civilization.

The ASI is similarly preoccupied with funding excavations and publications to prove that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India and that Indian civilization is essentially Aryan civilization.<sup>xv</sup> This is a crucial part of the parivar theory that Hinduism is therefore the only indigeneous religion, and all other religions are either foreign (Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism) or merely tributaries of this mainstream (Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism). This forms the core idea of the nation, Hindu Rashtra and nationalism of the BJP.

“This definition has its roots in the writings of RSS stalwarts like Golwalker and Savarkar, and is by their own admission inspired by the experience and practice of Mussolini’s Italy and Nazi Germany... According to Golwalker, ‘to keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by its purging the country of the Semitic races – the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by,’<sup>xvi</sup>

### ***The Culture Police***

Outside the realm of the formal education system, the Sangh Parivar aggressively imposes its code of political correctness (in its most perverted sense), on private citizens and their organisations, while deciding what is compatible with Indian culture and ethos, as defined by them. As will be seen from the following, this resort to violence over cultural matters, is now no longer restricted to the Sangh Parivar, though they emerge as the main culprits in a majority of the cases.

Writing in the Deccan Herald (“When Might is Right”, July 1,2001), K.S. Narayanan gives this chronology (by no means exhaustive), of the “achievements” of the culture police:

1998 - Disruption of Pakistani Ghazal Singer Ghulam Ali's concert: Shiv Sainiks disrupted Ghulam Ali's concert at Centuar Hotel in Mumbai. Uddhav Thackeray, Sena youth leader and son of Bal Thackeray, proudly owned up to have caused the disruption. The Sena justified the ban on Pakistani artistes citing that country's direct involvement with militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

April/May 1998. Paintings of Maqbool Fida Hussain: Bajrang Dal activists on May 2 ransacked the celebrated Painter's Cuffe Parade apartment in Mumbai in protest against his paintings Sita Rescued. These works recreated the scenes of Sita's rescue as described in Ramayana, but with a few artistic liberties. On April 28, about 400 Shri Ram Seva Dal,

Bhartiya Seva Dal and Bhartiya Yuva Morcha activists staged rasta roko and burnt the effigy of Hussain in Mumbai.

*August 1998.* Me Nathuram Godse Boltoy: The Marathi play by Pradeep Dalvi was disrupted by several Congress workers in Mumbai who protested that the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi was being glorified in the play. After several protests and court hearings, Maharashtra government was forced to ban the play.

*December 1998 - Fire:* A Deepa Mehta film the central theme of which was lesbianism drew flak from Mumbai's thought police chief Bal Thackeray. Criticism extended to acts of vandalism by Shiv Sainiks who were unleashed on theatre audiences. Finally, Deepa Mehta had change the names of the characters who bore Hindu names.

*January 2000 - Water:* The Shooting of Deepa Mehta's film based on the lives of Varnasi widows was stopped by the Uttar Pradesh government following attacks on the sets. The Sangh Parivar alleged that the film denigrated the country's image and culture and was a part of a Christian conspiracy to undermine Hinduism.

*February 23, 2000 - Hey Ram:* A group of West Bengal Chhatra Parishad activists affiliated to the West Bengal Congress (I) stormed into Mitra Cinema in North Calcutta and disrupted the show of Kamalahassan's Hey Ram. The demonstrators alleged that a poem by Bengali icon Jibanananda Das was recited in the backdrop of an erotic scene.

*June, 2001 - Gadar:* Muslim fringe groups in several places of the country protest against what they call "blasphemous" representation. They are against naming the heroine as Sakina, saying it was the name of the Prophet's daughter, and a scene in which she offers namaz with sindoor(vermillion) on her forehead.

Besides these type of outrages that have gone on unabated through 2002, are the yearly events such as violent protests across the country against the celebration of Valentine's Day. This usually involves attacks on couples suspected to be dating, vandalisation of shops selling cards or decorating their windows with Valentine's Day themes.

In a moving interview, given to Communalism Combat in December 1998, Mahesh Bhatt, director and film-maker, spoke about his feelings and experiences of making *Zakham*, a Hindi film dealing with the trauma of communal riots and polarisation.

“The film has revealed a lot to me about people seated in power, people who are supposed to be above biases. These people are so frightened. I think one of the basest of all things is fear. Fear erodes the individual. Fear erodes the Nation, the spine of the Nation. But you see this very fear flowing in the veins of the Nation. People are frightened. The bureaucrat who's frightened to take action. I can get angry with this kind of person for some days, but then I can also see that there is some sort of shadow looming over his or her head that is preventing him/her from acting. When I speak plainly, I see dread in the eyes of people there in Delhi.

*Is this the first film in which you've faced these obstacles?*  
Yeah, this is the first film which has run into this sort of problem. I mean I've had problems with the censors, but most of the times we agree with the kind of cuts that they

ask for. And they're not very major ones. But, this, when you make a film like this, which is genuinely built on one's perceptions, painfully arrived at having gone through the fires of living day-to-day life, having been scorched with the biases that have haunted my childhood... I lived with my mother, I've lived with my father and seen them suffer. Gone through the trauma of '92-'93, which left me completely traumatised, humiliated. How helpless I felt."

"I remember a terrible moment in my life. Just after the riots, we started shooting for a film of mine, at Nataraj Studios. We were shooting and I was at the unit on the phone, trying to reach help to one of my workers, a lights' boy, who was stuck at Behrampada. A letter was brought to me, it came from one of my workers. It read: 'Tell Bhatt Saheb not to cry for the Muslims' suffering so much, otherwise it wouldn't be good'.

*Who had sent you this letter?*

My own company. People within my own unit sent me this anonymous letter. I freaked out. I asked, 'Who has had the impertinence to send me this letter?' They were all quiet. I asked them: 'If tomorrow you're in bloody trouble, if I try to help you and someone stops me from helping you, should I listen to him?' That's when it hit me. The realisation of how deep it all ran. Our unit was like the Nation. The biases were there, everywhere."

The attacks are not confined to cultural events or expressions. They extend to the person of the artiste with equal vehemence. Shabana Azmi, film actress, star and Rajya Sabha M.P., is typically one of those who has to bear the brunt of such attacks.

The final characterisation comes courtesy Narain Kataria, the New York-based secretary of the Indian American Intellectuals' Forum. Mr Kataria, in a vilifying note being circulated via email, says "it is crystal clear that Shabana is a very dangerous woman and has the potential to create trouble in the society....

"It is not understood on what grounds this vicious lady has been allowed by the American embassy to come to this country and pollute the peaceful atmosphere," says Mr Kataria, a long-time member of the Overseas Friends of the BJP.

"Calling the attack on Ms Azmi a "travesty" that comes from the "bowels of the Hindutva movement," Vijay Prashad, director of the international studies programme at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, and author of *The Karma of Brown Folk*, adds: "If Gujarat must not become the future face of India, let Mr Kataria's antics not become the future face of the desi diaspora"<sup>xvii</sup>

If cultural policing is one side of the coin, political censorship by the formal establishment is the other.

M. V. Ramana describes the ordeal of perhaps one of India's most well-known documentary film-maker Anand Patwardhan, in "India: Censorship in the nuclear age", writing in *The Hindu* of July 27, 2002:

In the past he fought and won three court cases to get films of his - "Bombay Our City, In Memory of Friends and Ram Ke Naam" - shown on Doordarshan. "Jang aur Aman" explores the many effects of the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan: the problems faced by people living near the Pokhran test site and the Jaduguda uranium mines, the human toll in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Sangh Parivar groups and their hate crusades, the Kargil war, and the global commerce of death offered by arms

traders. But the film also offers hope by recording the growing peace movements, both in India and Pakistan....

That such a film offering rich fare for thought has been held up at the Censor Board is unfortunate. What is worse is that some of the Censor Board's objections are quite illogical. For example, it has called for deleting speeches by Dalits and neo-Buddhists attacking the upper-caste biases of the ruling elite, and visuals or dialogues about the Tehelka expose....

The Censor Board has also demanded the deletion of a much larger portion of Mr. Patwardhan's film by issuing the blanket diktat - "Delete the entire visuals and dialogues spoken by political leaders including Ministers and the Prime Minister". That much of this has appeared on Doordarshan and seen by crores of people - many times the number who can be expected to see Mr. Patwardhan's film - only underscores the Orwellian irony.

### *The Dalit Question*

Ever since Independence, caste has been cynically used in the vote-bank politics of elections. However, with the ascendancy of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar, the question of caste has taken on a different angle and a sharper edge for the votaries of Hindutva.

“The main thrust of these organisations is to build unity and harmony among the upper and lower castes. They reject the notion that Sudras occupy an inferior and degraded position, though they do not reject the caste system. Cooperation and unity of upper and lower castes for the protection of the Hindu dharma and Hindu samaj is called for. Hindutva consciousness and Hindu inspiration are the starting point for the realisation of power necessary for the self protection of Hindus....*The Vishava Hindu Samachar*, the organ of VHP, edited by K K Shastry, former president of Gujarati Sahitya Sabha often exhorts its readers: “All Hindus should unite against ‘vidharmis’ (people of other religions)... ‘Savarna’ (upper castes) Hindus should now become alert and not widen the gap between the castes. They must compromise with the dalits...”<sup>xviii</sup>

But not all Dalit activists may be so ready for such opportunistic and manipulative “compromises”. Udit Raj, the Chairman of the SC/ST Confederation is one of the more outspoken ones: “The heart and mind of the Sangh parivar resembles that of the Taliban, but their biggest difficulty is that in a pluralist nation like India, they are unable to fully succeed in their dubious agenda. However, whenever they find the opportunity, they never miss the chance to attack Dalits and discriminate against them in all walks of life. This is aptly illustrated by the fact that the upper caste private army in Bihar, Ranvir Sena, was left out of the banned list under POTO (Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance - now POTA after it was passed as an Act in parliament). The fact is that this gang, which has taken credit for several massacres of Dalits, are committed loyalists of the BJP... The BJP claims that the deletions (in history texts) are necessary to correct the distortions. Then why have they not glorified the history of Buddhism which was destroyed by the treachery and false propaganda of Brahmanism? Why are they not talking about the fact that Indian society has been enslaved by the caste system for centuries? Who benefited from the caste system? The Dalits or the Brahmins?”<sup>xix</sup>

These questions were sought to be raised by various Dalit organisations in India and abroad at the United Nations' World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination,

Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from August 31 to September 7, 2001. The proposal to discuss the caste issue at this conference was vehemently opposed by the Indian Government who pulled out all stops in a diplomatic and media campaign to prevent the Dalit leaders from raising the issue. Leading the charge were Bangaru Laxman and Omar Abdullah.

“Many participants of Durban summit, who had converged in the City today to discuss the post-Durban strategies for the Dalit campaign, alleged that the Indian government's delegation headed by former BJP National president Bangaru Lakshman and Union Minister Omar Abdulla made all out efforts "to defeat the Dalit agenda" at the summit. Registrar of the National Law School of India University Babu Mathew, a participant of the Durban summit, said that the government delegation pressurised organisers not to allow Dalits to raise the issue of caste discrimination in the meet on racism stating that it was an ‘internal matter’. The stand of the government delegation was not surprising as it comprised organisations like RSS, VHP, Brahmakumaris and others, the leaders said.”<sup>xx</sup>

In the end the efforts to have caste included in the formal agenda of the conference had limited success. In his opening address, the South African President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, while calling for an end to all forms of discrimination, mentioned India's caste system as well. Ms. Mary Robinson, the then Commissioner, United Nation's Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) emphatically mentioned India's caste system while listing out forms of discrimination to be discussed during the four-day conference.<sup>xxi</sup>

The move to have caste on the agenda had been supported very strongly by the National Council of Churches in India, the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

The LWF presented a strongly worded statement to the UNCHR “regretting the exclusion of caste-based discrimination from the declaration and program of action of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Despite the advance of democracy, and despite in some cases seemingly comprehensive constitutional and legislative proscriptions against discrimination of this type, such discrimination continues to be a daily and permanent feature of life for a significant proportion of the world's population....An estimated 250 million Dalits in South Asia, at least 3 million Burakumin in Japan, and an unknown number of 'caste' people in parts of Africa were gravely let down by Durban.”<sup>xxii</sup>

A little over a year after Durban, this item appeared in The Indian Express, on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2002:

### **5 Dalits lynched in Haryana, entire administration watches**

*Sonu Jain*

Jhajjar, Haryana, October 16: Less than two hours from the capital, this was the scene today outside the Dulena police post in Jhajjar district: patches of blood on the road, a pile of smouldering ashes. This is where five Dalits, all in their 20s, were beaten to death last night, two of them torched. They were doing what they have been doing for years: skinning dead cows to sell the hide. This time, however, "someone" spread the word that the cow was alive.

So a mob, returning after the Dussehra fair, dragged them out of the police post where they had taken refuge and lynched them to the cries of Gau mata ki jai. Watched by the City Magistrate, the DSP of Jhajjar

and Bahadurgarh, the Municipal Corporator's husband, the Block Development Officer and at least 50 policemen.

Says City Magistrate Raj Pal Singh who saw the lynching: "We tried stopping them but got hurt ourselves in the process. I was dragged a few feet away, otherwise I would have been killed." One FIR has been registered against "unknown people," while a second has been filed against the victims under the Cow Slaughter Act.

Local office-bearers of the VHP and the Shiv Sena have submitted a memorandum to the local police asking them not to take any action against the guilty. Local VHP office-bearers dare the police to take action.

"If they can kill our mother then what if we kill our brothers who kill her," says Mahendra Parmanand, the priest of the local temple.

"I will say it in front of the police that what they were doing was wrong and they deserve to be punished," says Ramesh Saini, VHP office-bearer.

Shishu Pal from the local Shiv Sena unit says that whatever happened was wrong but "could not have been helped."

The holy cow as a symbol has acquired a heightened political significance. And recently has been increasingly used as a measure of Hindu identity in the so-called cow-belt of the north.

In the "Politics of cow protection", Nonica Datta argues that "The cow-slaughter theory was specifically used to justify violence against the Dalits and Muslims. Popular ballads and stories abound highlighting the virtues of Kshatriya values embodied in acts of saving the cow from the assaults of Muslim butchers, who were allegedly supplied cows by Chuhras and Chamars...

"The cow remains a potent symbol in Haryana society. Yet, it has acquired a radically new meaning since colonial times. In a State where the relationship between the ruling Government and civil society is fragile, the notion of a Hindu identity built around the cow as symbol has acquired a new political significance. The police in Haryana have now taken on the role of gaurakshaks. Last year, in Palwal, egged on by a fiery Hindu "godman", civil authorities closed the town's meat-shops, a move which deprived more than a hundred butchers — mostly Muslims and Dalits — of their livelihood. A few months ago, in the wake of the Gujarat carnage, rumours of cow-slaughter led to a systematic campaign launched by the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and the RSS against the minorities....

"Violence against Dalits is rooted in caste politics that has dominated Haryana for the last 100 years. In Jhajjar, local traditions refer to the Chandals — a Dalit community engaged in cremations, and thus regarded as unclean — as "informers" of the Mughals at a time when the Jats were "fighting for the honour of their land". Notions of community derived from such competing versions of history. Early 20th century history is replete with instances of Dalits being constantly attacked by Jat cultivators, being denied access to wells and other public spaces, and stigmatised as luchas (rogues)."<sup>xxiii</sup>

The local police and the apologists for the VHP and the like have trotted out various justifications for the incident. The five were skinning a live cow. (Since then the carcass of the cow has been sent for a post-mortem). The mob thought the five were Muslims! The FIR refers to the accused as a mob. No suspects have been identified.

“All this is a cruel joke for Ratan Singh, father of 27-year-old Virender Singh, one of those burnt alive. A resident of Badshahpur village in Gurgaon, Ratan Singh says that this is nothing but a cover-up.

'We have been doing this for three generations. There is no question of them skinning a cow by the side of the road. They worked on contracts which they got from Municipality auctions,' he says.

'The truck the five Dalits were travelling in had hides and would never carry a carcass.' According to him, his son and his nephew Dayachand hired a truck, picked up hides from Farruqnagar and were going to Karnal to sell it. A trader from Karnal, Kailash, was with them.

Dayachand, in his early 30s, has left behind his young wife and two children. Dayachand's father Budhram alleges that as per his inquiries, the police stopped the truck and asked the five Dalits for a bribe.

'When they refused to pay, they were beaten up and a case registered under the Cow Slaughter Act. Since one of them got seriously injured, they had no option but to spread the story that they were killing a cow.'

Totaram and Raju were the driver and the conductor of the truck. Raju was only 16 and his father Ram Pal is a sweeper in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. 'We were told at three in the morning that here had been an accident and that our sons were admitted in the Jhajjar Civil Hospital,' says Ram Pal. 'When we rushed there, it was difficult to identify the bodies. They were half burnt, their eyes gouged out.'<sup>xxxiv</sup>

### ***The Gujarat Genocide***

*The dragon seeds sown by the 1969 riots have sprouted over the years. Gujarat's regular annual harvest began to include gory communal clashes and mob violence. We saw the full flowering of this culture during the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. As the great charioteer Lal Krishna Advani moved through Gujarat, he left in his wake a series of riots....*<sup>xxv</sup>

“The following is an extract from an eyewitness account. It is written by an officer of the Indian Administrative Service:

'Numbed with disgust and horror, I return from Gujarat ten days after the terror and massacre that convulsed the state. ... As you walk through the camps of riot survivors in Ahmedabad, in which an estimated 53,000 women, men, and children are huddled in 29 temporary settlements, displays of overt grief are unusual. ... But once you sit anywhere in these camps, people begin to speak and their words are like masses of pus released by slitting large festering wounds. The horrors that they speak of are so macabre, that my pen falters... The pitiless brutality against women and small children by organised bands

of armed young men is more savage than anything witnessed in the riots that have shamed this nation from time to time during the past century...

‘What can you say about a woman eight months pregnant who begged to be spared. Her assailants instead slit open her stomach, pulled out her foetus and slaughtered it before her eyes. What can you say about a family of nineteen being killed by flooding their house with water and then electrocuting them with high-tension electricity?’

‘What can you say? A small boy of six in Juhapara camp described how his mother and six brothers and sisters were battered to death before his eyes. He survived only because he fell unconscious, and was taken for dead. A family escaping from Naroda-Patiya, one of the worst-hit settlements in Ahmedabad, spoke of losing a young woman and her three month old son, because a police constable directed her to "safety" and she found herself instead surrounded by a mob which doused her with kerosene and set her and her baby on fire.

‘I have never known a riot which has used the sexual subjugation of women so widely as an instrument of violence as in the recent mass barbarity in Gujarat. There are reports every where of gangrape, of young girls and women, often in the presence of members of their families, followed by their murder by burning alive, or by bludgeoning with a hammer and in one case with a screw-driver.’<sup>xxvi</sup>

The genocide in Gujarat was meticulously planned and implemented with military-like precision. The use of the word genocide has been questioned in various quarters. It is used here not to arouse or to inflame passions, but in a realistic and legal sense. The justification for its use is provided a little later, in the relevant extract from the two volume report of the Concerned Citizens Tribunal, which included besides academicians and NGO representatives of unimpeachable standing, two retired Justices of the Supreme Court and a retired judge of the Mumbai High Court.

Through the lasting images of bestiality and barbarity, the carnage is marked with the signs of a systematic buildup, connivance of the state, sexual attacks on women, hate speech and retrospective justifications.

Sustained and systematic efforts were made by organisations like the BJP and its *Sangh Parivar* affiliates to communalise Gujarati society, through large-scale distribution of hate literature and other means. Hinduism was given more and more aggressive interpretations with a conscious design to promote a feeling among Hindus that they, the majority community, were being treated unjustly through ‘appeasement’ of Muslims by various ‘vested interests’. The view that Muslims were fundamentalist, anti-national, and pro-Pakistan was systematically promoted. In some cases, Hindus were even exhorted to take up arms to defend their interests.

After 1992, there was a relative lull punctuated by stray incidents of violence against Muslims. From 1997 to 1999, especially in south Gujarat, a new trend was visible. The *Sangh Parivar* managed to create a divide, turning Hindu tribals against Christian tribals. In ’98 and ’99, Christian institutions – churches, schools, hospitals were systematically

targeted particularly in Dang, Surat and Valsad districts. This divided the tribal community into two camps — Hindu and Christian.

In the words of Joseph Macwan, at the height of the riots “some of our Christian missionary organisations (were) providing relief to the victims. This was opposed, some Christian community leaders were even pressurised, and official machinery was used to intimidate them. When I pointed out that these very elements had been responsible for the attacks on the churches in the Dangs and Ahawa, the leaders had no response. Instead, I was told that because of people like me the entire Christian community would suffer one day; who will protect them then? I was told that I would be held responsible.

I had a similar experience with the Dalit and Christian communities of the affected villages. For obvious reasons none of them had the courage to support the Muslims. They were so terrorised that they were willing to do the bidding of the upper castes. They also thought that the violence was legitimate. They had not forgotten the VHP slogan, ‘*pahle kasai, phir isai*’ (Muslims first and Christians thereafter). But they do believe that people like me will be responsible for attacks on the Christians. My mind is numb after experiencing the power of misinformation. All those who know me made one request, ‘please keep quiet.’<sup>xxvii</sup>

“An atmosphere of threat and intimidation has deeply affected the social fabric of Gujarati society. In 1999, during the Kargil war, violence erupted in Ahmedabad city when Gujarat’s Muslims were subtly and not-so subtly projected as being pro-Pakistan and anti-India. In 2000, Muslim property running into crores of rupees was looted or destroyed all over the state in ‘retaliation’ to the killing of Amarnath *yatris* by terrorists in the Kashmir valley. The activities of organisations like the VHP, RSS and BD have become more and more brazen as they defy the law, confident that with ‘our government’ (BJP) in power, they need have no fear of any censure or penal action.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

The Tribunal has recorded in detail, eye-witness accounts of the violence against women and reports.<sup>xxix</sup>

**1.1.** A distinct, tragic and ghastly feature of the state sponsored carnage unleashed against a section of the population, the Muslim minority in Gujarat, was the systematic sexual violence unleashed against young girls and women. Rape was used as an instrument for the subjugation and humiliation of a community. A chilling technique, absent in pogroms unleashed hitherto but very much in evidence this time in a large number of cases, was the deliberate destruction of evidence. Barring a few, in most instances of sexual violence, the women victims were stripped and paraded naked, then gang-raped, and thereafter quartered and burnt beyond recognition.

**1.11.** According to the evidence recorded by the Tribunal, the leaders of the mobs (many of whom have been identified) even raped young girls, some as young as 11-years-old. The young girls were made to remove their clothes in front of 1,000–2,000 strong mobs who humiliated and terrorised the girls. Thereafter, they were raped by 8-10 men. After raping them, the attackers inserted sharp swords, knives or hard objects into their bodies to torture them before burning them alive. In the many bouts of communally incited pogroms that have taken place in different parts of the country, never has there been this depth of perversion, sickness and inhumaneness. Even a 20-day-old infant, or a foetus in the womb of its mother, was not spared. They flung babies in the pyres that they had prepared. They cut up people, threw them in a well known as ‘*teesra kuva*’ and then burnt them. The police supported the mob during the assault by shelling tear gas shells on the hapless Muslims. They also opened fire on men when they were trying to defend the women in the area. The State Reserve Police was very complacent and indifferent saying, “We

have been given orders to do nothing for 24 hours in Naroda." Women pleaded with the police and the SRP to stop acting partially and save the children at least. They begged before these policemen, laying their children at their feet, but it made no difference to them.

The scrutiny of the evidence, which was before the tribunal, also reveals that there was systematic preparation for unleashing the violence all over the State. The attackers had with them the lists of persons and properties of the victims. The lists could not have been prepared without an access to government records and agencies like the state intelligence, the sales tax department, the revenue department and the state electoral rolls. The Muslim localities were identified before hand, as also the property and business houses belonging to the Muslim community.

Apart from carrying petrol and kerosene and using gas cylinders, the members of the mob used chemicals. The chemicals had the capacity of destroying the identity of the persons burnt by burning at high temperature and for a long period of time. There was also evidence of the use of gelatin sticks. The inflammable materials were used on a large-scale. All these things were not possible unless there was a good deal of preparation much in advance, and to the knowledge of the Government machinery.

There was a complete failure of the criminal justice system. As the Tribunal has recorded:

(ix) The police participated in the violence and, in spite of clear and well-documented evidence against the police, no policeman has been prosecuted or proceeded against otherwise;

(x) Search and seizure of weapons and looted material have not been effected at all, despite direct evidence of armed mobs committing the crimes;

(xi) Most of the prosecutors who are in charge of these cases owe allegiance to the organisations perpetrating the crimes, with the result the victims have no confidence in the due process of law;<sup>xxx</sup>

As discussed above the learned judges have given a definitive judgement on the question of genocide and the complicity of the Chief Minister Narendra Modi:

**1.6. The Gujarat carnage was especially coloured by state complicity in the violence, premeditation and planning behind the attacks** on the lives, dignity, livelihoods, businesses and properties of a section of the population — Muslims — and a selective assault on their religious and cultural places of worship. Muslim women were targeted as objects of their community and similarly abused with an inhuman level of violence and sexual crimes. Economic and social boycott of the community was openly encouraged and continues in many parts of Gujarat, to date. Agricultural land holdings of Muslims, small and large have been taken over by dominant community and caste groups. Livelihood for Muslims has been snatched away and there is a clearcut and ongoing design to economically cripple the community.

**1.7. The chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Narendra Modi has been held by this Tribunal to be directly responsible**, along with cabinet colleagues, and organisations that he leads and patronises – the BJP, RSS, VHP and BD. For all these reasons together **there is no way that the post-Godhra carnage in Gujarat can escape being called squarely what it was – Crimes against Humanity and Genocide.**<sup>xxxi</sup>

What does the future hold for Gujarat and the country?

These are some of the answers :

## "We'll repeat our Gujarat experiment"

Vishwa Hindu Parishad international working president Ashok Singhal today termed Gujarat as a 'successful experiment'—and warned that it would be repeated all over India. Singhal, in Amritsar to inaugurate a physiotherapy centre at the Shivala Bhaian temple, said, "Godhra happened on February 27 and the next day, 50 lakh Hindus were on the streets. We were successful in our experiment of raising Hindu consciousness, which will be repeated all over the country now."  
—*The Indian Express, Sept 4 2002*

"Godhra happened and the next day, 50 lakh Hindus were on the streets. We were successful in our experiment of raising Hindu consciousness, which will be repeated all over the country now..."  
—*Ashok Singhal, speaking in glowing terms of the fact that whole villages had been "emptied of Islam. People say I praise Gujarat. Yes, I do", inaugurating a physiotherapy center in Amritsar quoted in The Asian Age, September 4, 02*

## Gujarat to decide country's politics: Togadia

VHP International general secretary Praveen Bhai Togadia warned that "Godhra ka uttar aaj Gandhinagar, kal Dilli aur parson Pakistan mein diya jayega" (the reply to Godhra will be given today in Gandhinagar, tomorrow in Delhi and the day after in Pakistan).  
— *Praveen Togadia, international general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in The Times of India, Sept 15, 2002*

In the name of Gujarati *asmita* (identity, self-pride), the electorate of Gujarat have given the BJP another five years to rule over them.

In the words of Upendra Baxi, "appeals to majoritarian democracy emerge as the best solvent of all indictments of state complicity in organized political violence. The message here caricatures all notions of political sovereignty and of minority rights. Buoyant Hindu majorities, in the wake of the Gujarat violence, now stand invested with the power to *retrospectively justify* large scale political mayhem, rape, looting, and murder. Anticipated/engineered plebiscitary verdicts stand touted as democratic versions that expurgate the Gujarat-type modes of ethnic cleansing!"<sup>xxxii</sup>

*"There are many religions as there are individuals; but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dreamland. The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsees and the Christians who have made their country are fellow countrymen and they will have to live in unity if only for their own interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor has it ever been so in India."*

— **Mahatma Gandhi**, quoted by Jagmohan Reddy and Nusserwanji Vakil in the Judicial Commission Report on the Ahmedabad Riots, 1969.



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- <sup>i</sup> Upendra Baxi, *Notes on holocaustian politics*, Seminar Issue No. 513, 2002.
- <sup>ii</sup> Italicised portions are quotes from Baxi's essay, *Ibid.*
- <sup>iii</sup> Praful Bidwai, *From Pokhran to Gujarat*, Hindustan Times, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2002
- <sup>iv</sup> V.R.P. Sarathy, *View from the other side*, The Hindu, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2001.
- <sup>v</sup> Praful Bidwai, *Kargil Raises Risk of Nuclear Confrontation*, IPS Material, 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1999
- <sup>vi</sup> HT Correspondent, *Remarks on Amartya Sen: VHP stance reflects its sick mind: TDP, Left*, The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, December 29, 1998.
- <sup>vii</sup> Human Rights Watch Report, India: Politics by other means: Attacks against Christians in India, October 1999, Vol. 11, No. 6 (C), <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/indiachr/>
- <sup>viii</sup> Ghanshyam Shah, *Conversion, Reconversion and the State: Recent Events in the Dangs*, Economic and Political Weekly, February 6, 1999.
- <sup>ix</sup> Human Rights Watch report, *Ibid.*
- <sup>x</sup> Human Rights Watch report, *Ibid.*
- <sup>xi</sup> Special correspondent, *VHP Push For Politician Dara*, Telegraph, 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2002.
- <sup>xii</sup> Teesta Setalvad, *Education with Values*, from *Against communalisation of Education*, Pg. 108, Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust and Sabrang.com, 2001.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Teesta Setalvad, *How textbooks teach prejudice*, Communalism Combat, October, 1999.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Reproduced in *Communalism Combat, Cover Story*, October 1999.
- <sup>xv</sup> Nalini Taneja, *The Saffron Agenda in Education*, Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (Sahmat), August 2001.
- <sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ashish Kumar Sen, *BJP NY friend targets Shabana*, Asian Age May 22, 2002
- <sup>xviii</sup> Ghanshyam Shah, *Caste, Hindutva and Hideousness*, Economic and Political Weekly, April 13, 2002.
- <sup>xix</sup> Udit Raj, *Who killed Buddhism?*, Hindustan Times, December 27, 2001.

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<sup>xx</sup> DH News Service, *Leaders accuse Centre of suppressing voice of Dalits*, Deccan Herald, September 19, 2001.

<sup>xxi</sup> Chandra Bhan Prasad & Vivek Kumar, *Indian caste system figures at Durban meet*, Pioneer, August 30, 2001.

<sup>xxii</sup> Frank Imhoff, *UNCHR Hears LWF Statement on Caste-based Discrimination*, from the Worldwide Faith News archives, [www.wfa.org](http://www.wfa.org)

<sup>xxiii</sup> Nonica Datta, *Politics of cow protection*, The Hindu, November 18, 2002.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Sonu Jain, *Action on Dalit murders: cow sent for post-mortem*, The Indian Express, October 18, 2002.

<sup>xxv</sup> Ashis Nandy, *Obituary of a culture*, Seminar Issue No. 513, 2002.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Harsh Mander, *Cry, the Beloved Country: Reflections on the Gujarat Massacre*, unpublished report circulated over the Internet, 21 March 2002. (Quoted in 25, above).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Joseph Macwan, *This 'unique' land*, Seminar Issue No. 513, 2002

<sup>xxviii</sup> Concerned Citizens Tribunal-Gujarat 2002, *Crime against humanity*, Vol 1, Pg. 16.

<sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xxx</sup> Concerned Citizens Tribunal-Gujarat 2002, *Interim Findings and Recommendations of the Tribunal, Crime against humanity*, Vol 1, Pg. 251

<sup>xxxi</sup> Concerned Citizens Tribunal-Gujarat 2002, *Genocide, Crime against humanity*, Vol 2, Pg. 153.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Baxi, *Ibid.*