

**Threatened Existence: A Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat**  
**Report by the International Initiative for Justice (IIJ)**  
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## Annexure I

### What happened in Gujarat before and after the burning of the Sabarmati Express<sup>1</sup>

The following narrative draws from various sources: newspaper reports, fact-finding missions and other reports, which came out after the Gujarat carnage. It pieces together the sequence of events that occurred in Gujarat before, on and after 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002, and details of the extent and nature of the terrible violence against Muslims in Gujarat in the months that followed.

#### Before 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002: The Build-up of Arms and Information Against Muslims

*Although it has been repeatedly suggested that the burning of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra on 27 February 2002 triggered the violence against Muslims in Gujarat, much evidence reveals the planned nature of these attacks and casts doubts on the representation of events that occurred on 27th February. Reports show a systematic attempt to identify Muslims in various areas by singling out their homes and establishments much ahead of that date. They also reveal that arms had been procured and distributed widely to the public as part of the plan to target the Muslim community.*

- As far back as November 2001, the magazine Communalism Combat reported that 4,00,000 ‘*trishuls*’ (three-pronged spears associated with Hindu mythology) – lethal *Rampuri* knives disguised as religious symbols – were distributed by the Bajrang Dal countrywide. The *trishul*, like the *kirpan* (Dagger) for Sikhs is exempt from the provisions of the Indian Arms Act. Before the campaign for construction of the temple, the VHP, Bajrang Dal and the RSS had distributed thousands of *talwars* (swords) and *trishuls*. The BJP functionaries also participated in all *talwar-trishul* ceremonies, in which processions were organized in towns and rural areas. Training camps in firearms were also reportedly conducted in many places.
- It is claimed that for some two weeks before February 28<sup>th</sup>, LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) cylinders were in short supply in Ahmedabad city, so much so that middle class consumers had to book them far in advance and there was a long line of people waiting to procure them. The rioters however were adequately armed with thousands of LPG cylinders, obviously collected in advance, with which they blew up Muslim commercial establishments.
- In the town of Jhalod, Dahod District (where the town of Godhra is located), it was reported that all Hindu houses were marked with saffron flags *before* the 27<sup>th</sup> of February itself. This was done the day before *Id* (Muslim Festival) that was on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Further, in the evening there was a rally of around 100-150 VHP/ Bajrang Dal supporters, and meetings were held at various places following this.
- In Limkheda, the district sub division of Dahod District, about six to eight weeks before 27<sup>th</sup> February, a list of all Muslim households and properties was prepared. A VHP leader who is a development officer in LIC (Life Insurance Corporation), Limkheda, had begun instigating people by saying things like, “These Muslims do not allow the *mandir* (temple). They should be killed.”

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Dossier prepared for the International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat in December 2002.

- In five districts of Gujarat, Muslims said that a few months prior to the attacks, a household survey was conducted by women activists of the VHP to find out details of Muslim properties. The revision of the electoral rolls during the same period seems to have come in handy in distinguishing Muslims from others. Victims also pointed out that some TV cable operators had helped in identifying houses and other Muslim establishments. Furthermore, there are newspaper reports quoting VHP leaders as saying that they had a "list" ready.
- In Sanjeli village, Dahod District, three months prior to the attack, there were huge meetings in which VHP, and the Bajrang Dal had announced, "Sanjeli will burn" and burn it did. In Pandarwada village, Panchmahals District, in mid-February, meetings were held where the BJP/VHP/Bajrang Dal leaders made provocative statements from loud speakers to frighten Muslims and to instigate Hindus to arm themselves to confront the Muslims.
- Reports also indicate that the mob had prior information about Muslim-owned establishments; in a secret circular to the police the Gujarat Government had asked them to furnish details of Muslim organizations in their area. This information was collected as far back as 1<sup>st</sup> February 1999.
- It is also claimed that some 8 months prior to the attack, the Gujarati language newspaper, *Sandesh* had published an article in which it listed many Muslim owned establishments, which were not widely known as these had non-Muslim names or were only partly owned by Muslims. It would appear therefore that the rioters had access to Government records from the Sales tax/Excise departments and the like, which are not normally available.

The environment therefore was already highly charged and polarized, and a systematic hate campaign by right wing forces against the Muslim community was in progress. At the same time a sustained attempt was being made at politicising and using the *Babri Masjid – Ayodhya* temple issue. This was constantly being used to organize large and violent groups of Hindu men and some women.

In January 2001, the VHP *Dharma Sansad* (Religious Parliament) decided that the construction of a *Ram* Temple on the site of the *Babri Masjid* would start on March 15, 2002. The campaign had clear political motives, as it conveniently coincided with the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Assembly elections and was seen as a major factor that would help the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gain electoral support. (Ayodhya, the town in which the contested site is located, is in the state of Uttar Pradesh.) The UP election results announced in February, however, were not favourable to the BJP.

January onwards, many areas in Gujarat and the whole country were placed on red alert due to the aggressive mobilization by the VHP for cadres to join in rebuilding the Ayodhya temple Movement. Groups of *kar sevaks* (religious volunteers) now calling themselves *Ram sevaks* began going to Ayodhya to prepare for this eventuality. Various BJP MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) had been arranging for tickets for the *kar sevaks* from the special quota allotted to them as elected officials; many *kar sevaks* were also travelling ticket less. For three weeks in February trains carrying the *kar sevaks* to and from Ayodhya had been stopping daily en route at the Godhra junction station.

Even before the events on 27<sup>th</sup> February at Godhra, there had been instances reported of provocative behaviour by the *kar sevaks*. On 25<sup>th</sup> February *Jan Morcha*, a Hindi daily published from Faizabad (near Ayodhya), detailed instances of provocative behaviour by *kar sevaks*, who allegedly beat and threatened Muslim passengers, insisting that they chant '*Jai Shri Ram*' (Hail Lord Ram). Provocative statements, aimed at the Muslim community, were made by the VHP in various places with regard to the building of the temple, which further added to the prevailing tension.

### **The Violence That Followed The Burning Of The Train**

The VHP called for a *bandh* (widespread closure of markets, offices, activities etc.) for the two days following the burning of the Sabarmati Express train at Godhra. It was reported that the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, had called for a meeting with police officials at his residence in Ahmedabad the evening of 27<sup>th</sup> February. The purpose of the two-hour meeting was to direct officials not to take action against the VHP mobs, should anything happen. Modi apparently made it clear that there would be justice for Godhra during the *bandh* and ordered that the police should not come in the way of "the Hindu backlash". The Director General of Police, K. Chakravarthi, is said to have protested against such instructions, but he was silenced by Modi. All this was revealed by a minister in the state cabinet who voluntarily spoke before the Concerned Citizen's Tribunal, a non-official tribunal investigating into the massacres. It clearly indicates that the head of a state government had, by his directives, promoted lawlessness from February 28<sup>th</sup> by directing the police chiefs to keep their forces under leash. It suggested a formal sanction given by the State to the subsequent killings. Various other factors also contributed to creating an atmosphere for violence.

Reports indicate that the violence was State wide, affecting at least twenty-one cities and sixty-eight provinces. Information from these areas also suggest a consistent pattern in the methods used, undermining government assertions that these were 'spontaneous' 'communal riots.' There is more than enough evidence to show how there was State complicity in the attacks all along. As one activist noted, 'no riot lasts for three days without the active connivance of the State.' 2000 people were killed in the violence although the official figure is 762 (822 including Godhra). 2500 people are 'missing' (or killed) according to unofficial estimates and around 113,000 people were displaced and were living in relief camps.<sup>2</sup>

Attacks on Muslims took place in 19 districts of Gujarat, and were particularly intense in 8 districts along the northeast and southwest axis. These were Ahmedabad, Sabarkantha, Panchmahals, Mehsana, Anand, Kheda, Vadodara, and Dahod. The attacks took place in distinct phases. These districts were engulfed in the most organized armed mob attacks between February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup> when most of the attacks were concentrated. This was the most intensive, bestial and horrifying phase of violence, marked by large scale hacking, looting, raping and burning men, women and children to death. Mobs continued to be on the rampage until mid-March. Nowhere were the mobs less than 2-3,000, more often they were over 5-10,000 in number.

The communal tension and violence that followed signalled an episode of destruction that would last for months to come. In Ahmedabad district the most intensely affected areas were Naroda Patiya, Vatwa, Paldi, Gomtipur, and Ahmedabad city. Men, women and

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<sup>2</sup> Communalism Combat, 77-78 (2002) 17.

children were hacked and burnt to death and thrown into a well and several others are still missing. In Chamanpura, a locality in Ahmedabad City, 70 people were cornered by a raging mob for 7 hours during which time they were tortured, butchered and almost all burnt to death, including former Member of Parliament Ahsan Jaffri. In Vadodara City, 14 people were killed in what has come to be known as the “Best Bakery incident” where the family and employees were hacked and burnt to death and in some cases literally baked to death in the bakery ovens.

Another horrifying feature of the violence in Gujarat was the speed and extent to which the violence simultaneously spread to rural areas, in some cases to places that had no history of communal tension. In Sabarkantha district, 94 villages were affected. In one village, over 60 people were burnt alive in the vehicle in which they were trying to flee the attackers. In Panchmahals district, 400 villages were affected and death tolls are extremely high. In one case of severe mob violence, a Hindu mob chased the Muslims into a nearby canal, cornered them and then proceeded to hack and kill all of them. In Mehsana district, not only were people hacked and burnt, there were also reports of acid being thrown on victims after they were slashed by swords. In one village of Mehsana, nearly 30 people were cornered into a house and electrocuted to death. Similarly in Anand and Kheda districts people were cornered or trapped and hacked to death or burnt alive.

What is significant in the rural areas is that all of the Muslim population in a village under attack was displaced. In the cities on the other hand, the integration of Hindu and Muslim communities made it difficult to displace the Muslim population entirely.

Violence against women was a crucial element of how these massacres were executed. Rape, sexual assault and humiliation were some of the most systematic and consistent mechanisms for violating Muslims and their communities. Women were stripped of their clothes, gang raped, often publicly, and finally, in almost all cases, burnt or hacked to death. Pregnant women were not only not spared the brutality of rape but also had their abdomens slashed open and their foetuses thrown into raging fires. Children as young as 3 years old were sexually assaulted or raped before being burnt to death by the Hindu mobs. One of the survivors of gang rape had the Hindu symbol of *OM* cut out on her head. According to hospital reports, women and men had *OM* cut out on other part of their bodies as well and mutilation of women’s breasts was a common feature of the violence.

Mobs ranged in size from 500 to 20,000 but their tactics and tools were so similar that it is impossible to ignore the organized and systematic nature of these massacres of Muslims in Gujarat. By and large, the attackers were identified as RSS, VHP or Bajrang Dal by the survivors, often wearing saffron t-shirts or headbands and chanting *jai shri ram* at every opportunity. They were often people known to the victims, either as neighbours, customers, or even friends. Attackers were armed with gas cylinders, spears, swords, acid solvents and diesel/petrol bombs. They also used guns, knives and home made weapons such as petrol soaked rags set on fire, and sharpened sticks. Still others were equipped with swords and *trishuls* – which were distributed widely by the Bajrang Dal and RSS. One particularly unexpected and disturbing element of this violence was the mobilization of tribal people from the hills for looting and burning Muslim establishments. Armed mobs also continued to patrol areas and chase away fleeing Muslims and in some cases gassed them out of their hiding places.

Another phase of violence began on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March the day of the '*Shiladaan*' in Ayodhya. It was less intensive and destructive than the first few days of violence but was like a steady war of attrition. By this time the violence had spread to almost all parts of Gujarat, including some places that had never experienced communal tension. Areas seriously affected in the first few days of violence were not seriously affected in this phase, as the destruction there had been complete and all Muslims there had fled to relief camps. There was continued violence with incidents of stray stabbing, stone pelting and street level confrontations between both communities. A number of Muslims returning home in affected areas to retrieve their things were killed; in one incident, a van full of Muslims being escorted by the police to a relief camp was set upon fire by a mob and burnt. A number of people of both communities were killed in police firing. Most places remained under curfew as incidents of looting and arson of abandoned properties took place. The role of the police in this phase of the violence was worse than what it was earlier and this was also the time when the police were arresting Muslims and taking action against them.

Besides this gruesome violence there was a systematic attempt to humiliate and terrorise the Muslim community by using foul language and threatening to kill, even if there was no killing. Most importantly, but not surprisingly, there were attempts to desecrate religious structures and scriptures. Women's bodies were spared the acts of gang rape in many places at this time but they were verbally assaulted, harassed and treated as objects of consumption almost everywhere. So although in legal terms though there were fewer women 'abused' in this phase of violence, almost all women from the Muslim community were attacked in different ways through out this carnage.

#### **Details of Losses suffered:**

- 38,000 million rupees estimated losses suffered by the Muslim community.
- 30,000 million rupees estimated to have been lost due to closing down of shops, industries and commerce. The Gujarat Chamber of Commerce puts the figure as 20,000 million rupees.
- 1150 hotels were burnt in Ahmedabad alone.
- 6000 million rupees loss was suffered by the hotel industry.
- 5000 million rupees worth of property was lost due to hotels and restaurants being burnt down in Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad etc.
- 20,000 workers from the hotel industry were rendered jobless.
- Over 1,000 trucks are estimated to have been burnt.
- Transport companies lost business amounting to 700 million rupees.
- 10,000 million rupees were lost in damage to textile mills in Surat alone.
- 55 Mosques and *Dargahs* were destroyed in Ahmedabad city and district alone. 180-200 Mosques and *Dargahs* destroyed in other places.
- 20,000 two-wheelers and 4,000 cars were burnt. Insurance claims worth 80,000 million rupees were lodged by owners of two and four wheelers.
- 90% of commercial establishments have been wiped out on national highway no 8.

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- “Violence In Vadodara: A Report”: People’s Union for Civil liberties (PUCL), Vadodara and Vadodara Shanti Abhiyan May 2002
- “Genocide In Rural Gujarat: The Experience Of Dahod District”: Forum against Oppression of Women and Aawaaz-E-Niswan, Mumbai, May 2002
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- Political observers smell a rat behind delay in army deployment: The Kashmir Times, March 9, 2002
- The hate train: *Peter Popham*, Independent.co.uk, March 20, 2002
- RPF report dispels conspiracy theory: *S. Satyanarayanan*, Tribune News Service, April 9, 2002
- Cops admit killing more Muslims: *Vinay Menon*, Hindustan Times, May 3, 2002
- We were told to go slow, Gujarat Cops tell Gill: *Rathin Das*, Hindustan Times, May 5, 2002

- What did Modi tell Chakravarthi? : Times News Network, May 29, 2002
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### ***Articles***

- “Gujarat Carnage: Victims of the Saffron Tide” in Gujarat Development April 27, 2002
- “Surviving on the Edge in Gujarat” by *Malini Ghose*, Times of India, August 15, 2002
- “Narendra Modi's long haul” by *Dionne Bunsha* in Frontline, September 14-27, 2002
- “Fascism's Firm Footprint in India” by *Arundhati Roy* in Frontline, September 30, 2002

The above reports as well as reports published after the writing of this document and films on the carnage can be accessed on the web at the following sites:

Concerned Citizens Tribunal - Gujarat 2002: An inquiry into the carnage in Gujarat  
Volume I & II

<http://www.sabrang.com/tribunal/volI/index.html>

<http://www.sabrang.com/tribunal/vol2/index.html>

### ***Websites***

- [www.onlinevolunteers.org](http://www.onlinevolunteers.org)
- [www.sabrang.com](http://www.sabrang.com)
- [www.riotinfo.com](http://www.riotinfo.com)



## Annexure II

### Support from the diaspora to the Hindu Right

The *Sangh Parivar* mobilizes much of its resources from overseas Hindu Indians, particularly those who have adopted *Hindutva*, as an acceptable part of their world-view. The appeal of *Hindutva* for non-resident Indians (NRIs) stems in part from managing the challenges of integration into racist societies such as North America and Europe where they are still considered second-class citizens. *Hindutva*, then, creates for these diasporic Hindus, an imaginary community of other Hindus – all participants in a simple, single, monolithic identity. It also gives them an imaginary link and ownership of project 'India,' as cultural ambassadors, even as they continue to live abroad. As such, the *Hindutva* project effectively manipulates religion through the guise of affirming cultural identity to further their sectarian agenda.

On the other hand, the *Sangh Parivar* is also drawing resources from unsuspecting Indians based abroad. Under the cover of fundraising for 'charitable', 'educational' or 'relief' activities, organisations affiliated with the '*Sangh Parivar*' directly support the *Hindutva* agenda in India. In the process, they indeed encourage communal divisions within the diaspora. Furthermore, it should be noted that their discourse is sometimes sophisticated enough to fool uninformed donors or patrons: liberal corporations, government funds or naïve students contribute without knowing to the strengthening of the Hindu extreme right in the sub continent.

There are VHP units, in USA, UK, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, West Germany, Hong Kong, Australia, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, etc. VHP has recently been formed in Spain and Zambia. More units will soon be formed in Portugal, Thailand, South Africa, Guyana and Sweden. The VHP also has several associate organisations in countries like Mauritius, Myanmar, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Guyana, Malawi, Tanzania, Thailand, Indonesia, Fiji and Nepal.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this report, however, we will concentrate on the various umbrella organisations cultivated by the *Sangh Parivar* in the USA and the UK that allow *Hindutva* to knit a systematic and united web. The success of VHP of America and UK can be seen in terms of their financial clout - as they are the primary mode of channelling dollars and pounds into *Hindutva* politics back in India.

In North America *Hindutva* operates through several organizations. Its principle flag bearers are the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* of America (VHPA) and the Hindu Students Council (HSC). The VHP of America and HSC for instance conducted the World Vision 2000 conference in Washington D.C in 1993, which became a rallying point for overseas Hindus and a ground for further recruitment in the wake of what many commentators called a "celebration" over the destruction of the mosque in India. Through the university network built by the HSC

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<sup>3</sup> [www.vhp.org](http://www.vhp.org)

and its clever use of the Internet as a way to mobilize fellow Hindus through chat-groups etc, the VHPA was able to gather together a dispersed Hindu-Indian population.

In the U.K., a dozen *Hindutva* affiliated organisations mirror the structure of the Indian RSS and its affiliates. At the core lies the *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh* UK (HSS UK), the oldest group, formed in the mid-1960s, which imparts physical and ideological training to its cadres. The *Hindu Sevika Samiti* UK is the women's wing and is modelled on '*Dharmapatni*' ('loyal wife') to the dominant and exclusively male HSS UK. The National Hindu Students Forum (NHSF), thanks to a systematic recruitment campaign on campuses, has become the largest body of Hindu students in the UK. It shares the same office address as the HSS UK and helps circulate, among others, the publications of the *Hindu Sabitya Kendra* (HSK), a *Hindutva* literature dissemination centre. UK-based *Hindutva* groups have been successful in establishing themselves as the 'true voice' of the Hindu community in the eyes of the British State. For example, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP UK), published "Understanding Hindu Dharma", a textbook widely used in religious education classes and endorsed by numerous local education authorities as part of the official syllabus<sup>4</sup>.

As in North America, fundraising and channelling of financial resources to *Hindutva* activities in India is key. The HSS UK fundraising arms include the *Kalyan Ashram Trust* (KAT), which specifically gathers funds for RSS projects geared towards *Adivasis* ('tribal' populations). Another example is the UK branch of SEWA International (SI). Despite its claims to the contrary, SI UK is involved in securing funding for highly politicised sets of activities, such as the ones of *Sewa Bharati* (the Indian RSS's sectarian welfare wing) or those of *Vidya Bharati* (the RSS's educational wing). True to the strategic 'division of labour' that serves *Hindutva* purposes so well, some organisations are more openly linked to political parties in India than others. For example, the VHP UK, set up in 1971, aligns itself on the ideology of the Indian VHP while the UK Branch of Overseas Friends of the BJP openly lobbies for the Indian Hindu nationalist BJP party. The VHP UK and the HSS UK also maintain strong links with their Indian counterparts - organising joint meetings, disseminating written materials, attending international events, etc.<sup>5</sup>

An attraction for the NRI is that he/she is not treated as just another *Hindutva* foot soldier. Their location (in North America or UK) and their ability to access resources (in dollars) make them relatively powerful members of this global family. There is no doubt that the support *Hindutva* gathers from the diaspora allows the project to grow steadily. For example, between 1990-92 the average annual income of the VHPA was \$385,462. By 1993, this had grown to \$1,057,147. Another powerful US-based organisation linking with the *Sangh Parivar* is the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF), which raises funds ostensibly to support development and relief activities in India.

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<sup>4</sup> The information in this section is compiled from the following sources: Chetan Bhat and Parita Mukta, "Hindutva in the West: mapping the antinomies of diaspora nationalism", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23.3 (London: May 2000); "The *Sangh Parivar* in the UK", *Indian Muslim* (London: March-April 2003).

<sup>5</sup> For example, "60 HSS workers and VHP UK representatives attended the World RSS camp held in Bombay in December 2000- January 2001" while the "Bauddhik Pramukh (Chief Ideology Propagator) of the Indian RSS attended both the HSS UK Sangh Shiksha Varg (annual camp) and the VHP UK Dharma Sansad (religious conclave) held in Leicester, UK, on 4 August 2001"; in *Indian Muslim*, March-April 2003, 4.

These *Hindutva* offshoots do not disclose their connections with extremist politico-religious forces in India and deny any involvement with the propagation of hatred they actively support. Such organisations take full advantage of a lack of public awareness regarding their real aims. As a result, many unsuspecting US corporations such as CISCO, Sun, Oracle, HP and AOL Time Warner have ended up making large contributions to IDRF. For instance, in the fiscal year 1999, Cisco Foundation gave almost \$70,000 to IDRF - placing IDRF among the top 5 of Cisco grantees.

Progressive campaigners are actively involved in exposing the global connections and economic ramifications established by the *Sangh Parivar*. November 2002 saw the inauguration of the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate (SFH),<sup>6</sup> a movement in the US led by a coalition of people – professionals, students, workers, artists and intellectuals – who share a common concern that sectarian hatreds in India are being fuelled by money flowing from the United States. Their first campaign is Project Saffron Dollar which aims to put an end to the collection of money by Maryland based IDRF.

Although the IDRF purports to be a non-sectarian, non-political charity which funds development and relief work in India, a recent report documents in detail the fundamental connections between the IDRF and the *Sangh Parivar*.<sup>7</sup> Amongst other documents, the SACW/Sabrang report examines a tax document filed by IDRF (at its inception in 1989) with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the US Federal Government, which establishes that raising funds for the *Sangh Parivar* is the primary reason for the existence of IDRF in the US.<sup>8</sup> The SACW/Sabrang report indicates that 82% of the funds disbursed at the discretion of IDRF go to *Sangh* organizations and nearly 70% of the funds are used for "hinduization/tribal/education" work, largely with a view to spreading *Hindutva* ideology amongst *Adivasi* (tribal) communities. Less than five percent of their funds go to agencies that do not have a distinct Hindu-religious identification. The IDRF, which raised over \$10 million between 1997 and 2001, is currently under investigation by the US administration as part of a wider scrutiny of US-based tax exempt organisations which fund radical causes around the world.

A London-based pressure group - the South Asia Solidarity Group - is also exposing the international forces at work through an investigation of Hindu diaspora organisations' financial links with the '*Sangh Parivar*' in India. A number of *Hindutva* organisations enjoy the status of registered charities<sup>9</sup> in the UK, a major factor enabling them to raise funds on a large scale. This has prompted activists to challenge the charitable status of such fake NGOs that divert funds collected in the name of 'welfare' or 'relief'. In recent years local VHP UK branches successfully secured funding from sources as varied as the London Awards for All

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<sup>6</sup> [www.stopfundinghate.org](http://www.stopfundinghate.org)

<sup>7</sup> "A Foreign Exchange of Hate", is co-published by the South Asia Citizens Web (SACW) based in France, and Sabrang Communications, Bombay, India.

<sup>8</sup> The report offers the following: *Form 1023, duly filled by IDRF executives when it was created in 1989, identifies nine organizations as a representative sample of the types of organizations IDRF has been set up to support in India... All nine are clearly marked Sangh organizations.*

<sup>9</sup> UK Charities are registered with Britain's Charity Commission and, as non-political organisations, benefit from tax exemption. The HSS UK (registered in April 1974) and the VHP UK (registered in August 1972) are enjoying charity status, while Sewa International UK branch uses the charity number of the HSS in its fundraising campaigns.

Scheme (which is linked to Lottery funding<sup>10</sup>), the Community Chest Fund (another source of funding linked to the Lottery), various London Boroughs (that is, the municipal councils) as well as obtain support from several mayors.

Since September 2002, campaigners have put pressure on Britain's Charity Commissioners to de-register organisations such as the VHP UK, the HSS UK and Sewa International. They presented extensive research to Charity Commissioners documenting the fact that, for example, Sewa International (whose gross income rose from £748,355 in 2000 to £2,175,971 in 2002) raised £4.3 million in connection with the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, most of which was used for sectarian rehabilitation projects. In a petition delivered to the Charity Commission on 8 March 2003, a coalition of NGOs denounced the fact that "one organisation which received £92,000 from Sewa International, the *Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram* in Gujarat, is directly implicated in the February-March 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom."

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<sup>10</sup> The 'National Lottery' or 'Lotto' is the UK's central government-run lottery whose proceeds are distributed to charities by a body, the Lottery Commission, which has input from the central government.

### Annexure III

#### RSS and Allied organizations

The RSS, since its inception in 1925, has seen its fundamental task as that of moulding a new kind of Hindu man whose character will be modelled on the virtues of past Hindu heroes to implement its ideology. Such men will see themselves as cells of the vast Hindu nation, and will strive selflessly for its consolidation, social upliftment, and defence against external and internal enemies. Their moral example and selfless activism will act as a lever to regenerate all aspects of Hindu society and create an organically united Hindu nation. The RSS organization sees itself as a hierarchical family.

Its basic unit is the local *shakha* (branch). The *shakha* meets daily and consists of 50-100 members (*swayamsevak*s--volunteers). Although the typical *shakha* includes all age groups from young boys to men over forty, the majority of participants are usually between 15-25 years of age. A *shakha* meeting lasts for one hour, during which RSS ideology and values are inculcated by means of Sanskrit (language rooted in Brahmin culture), prayers of devotion to the Motherland (*Bharat Mata*), traditional Indian group games, traditional Hindu physical and martial arts drills, and group discussions of ideal moral qualities as well as ways to serve the Motherland. Participation in the highly structured *shakha* meeting and its rituals has the character of an act of religious devotional service (*bhakti*) to the holy, all nurturing *Bharat Mata* and the great Hindu family. *Shakha* participation also develops close personal bonds between *swayamsevak*s as well as ties of loyalty to RSS ideals and leaders. In accordance with the overriding concepts of Hindu brotherhood and unity, caste distinctions are not recognized in RSS activities, and the caste system as it is today, is frowned upon as an institution whose inequities divide the Hindu community. While most RSS *swayamsevak*s are from the higher and middle castes, *Dalits* are encouraged to join.

The RSS organizational structure is hierarchical and centralized. At the apex of the pyramid is the *Sarsangchalak* (Supreme Guide), who is presumed to have “guru-like” charismatic powers. In public matters he speaks, usually after consultation with senior RSS members, for the whole organization. The central RSS headquarters are in Nagpur, Maharashtra, with regional, state, and local divisions reaching down to the *shakha* base. The structure of the organisation forms its key link and the *pracharaks* (missionaries) its core cadre. Usually recruited in their twenties and unmarried, *pracharaks* are full-time workers who have undergone a rigorous selection process. Normally highly educated, they live austere and can be shifted around within the organization or loaned out to various RSS-affiliated organizations. Within the RSS organization there is constant feedback between the lower and higher levels. State and all-India festivals and other public events regularly bring *swayamsevak*s and *pracharaks* from different localities together with upper leadership levels. This reinforces the feeling that the RSS is a great, all-Indian family.

Although the membership attrition rate is high, RSS socializing methods seem to have a powerful formative effect on most who participate in the organization. The RSS believes in slow and methodical work with individual families. They begin by individual contacts with family members and its workers seek to bring every member of the family into the fold of the RSS. The organisation also offers programmes and activities for every members of the family. Women are inculcated as mothers and loyal workers into the ideology of the Hindu right. They encourage militancy among women, and give them physical training; but at the

same time, the ideology of the Hindu Joint family, inherently oppressive to women, is revered.<sup>11</sup>

Militant tradition in certain strands of Hinduism is revered by the RSS. The young men and women in RSS *shakhas* are given physical training in calisthenics and drills. Across North India, the RSS *shakhas* are also linked to wrestling gymnasiums, the *akhadas*. The *akhadas* are to strengthen the 'weakened' Hindu male body and prepare them to protect the Hindu nation by attacking the enemy when the time is ripe. Each *akhada* is for this purpose dedicated to Hanuman (a celibate god, who is revered as an obedient disciple/servant of Ram) and every *akhada* has a Hanuman temple at which members offer prayers.

The *akhadas* are an effort to bring Hindus together in one space much like the Muslims offering *namaaz*. According to Christopher Jaffrelot, the RSS functions on the principles of "stigmatization and emulation". That is to say, that it first stigmatizes and then emulates the 'enemy' so as to beat them at their own game. The Muslim therefore is aggressive and organised (because they offer prayers in one place, the *Masjid*, without any distinction between those who gather to pray) and has to be condemned because he wages a war against Hinduism or the Hindu nation. On the other hand, to become equal to the aggressor, the Hindu has to emulate those very practices because Hinduism is in danger. This leads to a strategy of "assimilating those cultural traits which give the opponent his superiority and prestige in order to resist him more effectively..."<sup>12</sup>

Physical strength is celebrated by the RSS workers and it generates confidence among young men and women. This physical training is supplemented with ideological indoctrination where young men and women are familiarized with key ideological Hindu nationalist texts. They are also given information on Hindu nationalist history and organization. They are fed selected religious history and given an outline of the vision of Hindu *Rashtra*. The minorities are then depicted as obstacles to the realization of this vision. The vicious and threatening images of the 'other' are kept alive in the collective memories of RSS workers through selective readings of history and factually questionable events and stories. Muslim men especially are singled out as lascivious persons who abduct and rape Hindu women. The training focuses on producing loyal and unquestioning workers who are respectful of the organisational hierarchy and offer unquestioning obedience.<sup>13</sup> These cadres are very active during riots and also during elections.

RSS membership has increased rapidly since 1975, when the number of its *shakhas* was between 7500 and 8500. By 1985 there were approximately 20,000 *shakhas*, and in 1993 *India Today* estimated the number at 30,000.<sup>13</sup> The most rapid relative growth since 1977 has been in the four southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. By 1982 there were approximately 5600 *shakhas* in these states.<sup>14</sup> On the basis of written sources and personal interviews conducted in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in 1991, Douglas Spitz, Sr.

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<sup>11</sup> Tanika Sarkar, "The Woman as Communal Subject: Rashtrasevika Samiti and Ram Janmabhoomi Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35.35, (31 August 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s* (Penguin: New Delhi, 1999) 16.

<sup>13</sup> Sarkar, "The Woman as Communal Subject."

estimated that there were then well over 6000 RSS *shakhas* in the four southern states and that the number was growing.<sup>14</sup>

The central publication house of the RSS, the *Suruchi Prakashan*, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, published a book in 1997, *Param Vaibhav Ke Path Par (On The Road To Great Glory)* by Sadanand Damodar Sapre, a senior RSS functionary. This book contains details of more than 40 organizations created by the RSS for different tasks. The preface of the book itself declares that “without the knowledge of the different kinds of activities of the *Swayamsevak*s (the volunteers of the RSS) the introduction of the RSS is incomplete. Keeping this in mind it has been attempted in this book to produce the brief information about the diverse activities of the *Swayamsevak*s. This book covers the organizational status of the RSS affiliates till the year 1996. We believe that this book will prove to be of use for those who want to understand the RSS with the *Swayamsevak*s”.

**Following is the list of organizations mentioned in the RSS book. The serial numbering is the same as in the book. The bracket has been added to explain the nature and function of each organization.**<sup>15</sup>

1. AKHIL BHARTIYA VIDHYARTHI PARISHAD (Student)
2. VIDYA BHARATI (Education)
3. BJP (Political party)
4. VHP, BAJRANG DAL, DURGA VAHINI, DHARAM SANSAD OR RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT (Anti-minority organisations). The RSS insists that *Dharam Sansad* (Religious Parliament) is the highest supreme body of the Hindus. This book tells us: “Vishwa Hindu Parishad established *Dharam Sansad* in 1984.” It means that *Dharam Sansad* or the Religious Parliament will be constituted by the VHP)
5. AKHIL BHARATI VANVASI KALYAN ASHRAM (Tribals)
6. BHARTIYA MAZDOOR SANGH (Working class)
7. BHARTIYA KISAN SANGH (Peasants)
8. RASHTRA SEVIKA SAMITI (Social work)
9. SEWA BHARATI AND TATSAM (Social work. These two have taken over all the governmental welfare programmes in slums and poor areas even in cities like Delhi, which has a Congress government. These are basically fronts to divert government funds to the RSS. They have also recently got a licence to send children abroad for adoption.)
10. VISHVA VIBHAG (Foreign Affairs)
11. AKHIL BHARTIYA RASHTRIYA SHEKSHIK MAHASANGH (Education)
12. BHARTIYA SHIKSHA MANDAL (Education)
13. RASHTRIYA SIKH SANGAT (Sikhs)
14. SWADESHI JAGARAN MANCH (Economics. It gets crores of rupees from government departments)
15. DEEN DAYAL SHODH SANSTHAN (Intellectual)
16. BHARAT VIKAS PARISHAD (Same as No. 9)
17. BHARTIYA ITIHAS SANKALAN YOJNA (History)

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<sup>14</sup> Douglas Spitz, Sr., "Cultural Pluralism and Modernity in South Asia: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh," *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?*, Ed. Crawford Young (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Ram Puniyani, *Hindu Right Wing Organisations*, (Delhi: Media house) To be published.

18. SANSKRIT BHARATI (Sanskrit language which is also a favourite of the University Grants Commission these days)
  19. SANSKAR BHARATI (Culture. Was in the forefront against artists such as M.F. Hussain and films like 'Fire')
  20. AKHIL BHARTI ADHIVAKTA PARISHAD (Lawyers)
  21. HINDU JAGARAN MANCH (Anti-minority. It owned up the terrible attacks on Christians and Muslims in Gujarat and other parts of the country)
  22. SAMAJIK SAMRASTA MANCH (Anti-reservation front)
  23. AKHIL BHARTIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD (History)
  24. PRAGYA BHARATI (Religious)
  25. VIGYAN BHARATI (Science)
  26. LAGHU UDYOG BHARATI (Industry. Huge government funds are made available to it.)
  27. AKHIL BHARTIYA GRAHAK PANCHAYAT (Consumers)
  28. SAHKAR BHARATI (Co-operative. They also get huge government funds)
  29. POORVA SAINIK SEWA PARISHAD (Ex-servicemen)
  30. BHARAT PRAKASHAN (Publishes mouthpieces of RSS such as 'Organizer')
  31. SURUCHI PRAKASHAN, DELHI (Publication)
  32. LOKHIT PRAKASHAN, LUCKNOW (")
  33. GYAN GANGA PRAKASHAN, JAIPUR (")
  34. ARCHANA PRAKASHAN, BHOPAL (")
  35. AKASHVANI PRAKASHAN, JULLUNDUR (")
  36. BHARTIYA VICHAR SADHANA, NAGPUR (")
  37. SADHANA PRAKASHAN, GUJARAT (")
- & ABOUT 10 MORE PUBLICATION HOUSES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.



## Annexure IV

### The History and Ideology of the Right Wing in India<sup>16</sup>

We witness forces of globalisation and localisation that manifest themselves in the tensions between free markets, erosion of boundaries of nation States and cosmopolitan identities on the one hand and the emergence of particularistic identities that are religious, ethnic, sexual or gendered on the other. The project of nationalism is implicated in these tensions. The exercise of State building which many post-colonial states undertook in the 1940s and 1950s, required religious or community identities to be subsumed under national identity. Citizenship rights in these new nation States were meant to create autonomous, rights-bearing individuals. However, increasing assertions of local identities, especially religious and ethnic identities have challenged this historical project of nationalism since the decade of the 90s. As a result, we remain poised at intersections where many dimensions of identities – local, national and global – converge. The rise of religious extremism illustrates this phenomenon and must be examined for its adverse implications for vulnerable sections of society, especially women.

In the case of India, the newly independent State sought to build a secular, socialist, non-aligned and democratic State in 1947. It also sought to construct citizenship by subsuming local identities, especially caste and religious identities, within national identity but it did so unevenly. For instance, it gave certain community identities public recognition by giving oppressed castes affirmative action rights and religious minorities the right to practice their own religion and to run their own educational institutions.<sup>17</sup> However, the rise of the Hindu right since the late 1980s has led to the erosion of the foundational State policies of the Indian State. Since the Hindu right assumed power in the late 1990s, Indian democracy and secularism has come under threat, socialism has given way to economic liberalisation and the State has been desperate to woo the global powers of the world.<sup>18</sup>

This section outlines the rise and growth of the Hindu right in India. It profiles the ideological content of Hindu right wing discourse and traces its position vis-à-vis women specifically. It examines how colonial policies contributed to the reification of religious identity. Thereafter, it gives a picture of political developments in India right from the nationalist movement in the early twentieth century to present times, and deliberates on the factors responsible for the rise of the Hindu right.

#### Definitions and Introductory Remarks

The term ‘communalism’ was coined by the British and can be seen as a product of the age of reason. During the nationalist movement, the term was used to refer to particularistic attachment and allegiances, which hampered the creation of a self-governing nation. In its present commonsensical usage, ‘communalism’ in the Indian context refers to “a condition of suspicion, fear or hostility between members of different religious communities.” In academic terms, “... the term is used for organised political movements based on a proclaimed interest of a religious community, usually in response to real or imagined threats from other religious communities. It also denotes movements that make sectional demands on the State (such as demands for affirmative action programmes) or demands for creation of new nation States.” Other definitions include the understanding of communalism as

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<sup>16</sup> Source: Dossier prepared for the International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat in December 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Gurpreet Mahajan, 'Multiculturalism: The Problem' and 'Rethinking multiculturalism', *Seminar*, no. 484, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> A. Vanaik, 'The New Indian Religious State,' *New Left Review*, no.9, May-June 2001. pp. 43-68.

“...the belief that because a group follows a particular religion, they would, as a result, have common social, political and economic interests”.<sup>19</sup> Communalism has also been called “... a position in which politicised religious identities claim primary legitimacy.”<sup>20</sup>

The term *Sangh Parivar* (Collective Hindu Family) is used interchangeably with the term ‘Hindu right’/‘Hindu nationalists.’ ‘*Sangh Parivar*’ is consciously used by the Hindu right to refer to a variety of organisations – political parties, cultural and religious organisations and other affiliates of the Hindu right – that adhere to their philosophy. This term also connotes the imagined bonhomie and rigid hierarchy of the imagined North Indian upper-caste Hindu joint Family.

The electoral front of the Hindu right is the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (henceforth BJP). The Maharashtra-based regional political party, the *Shiv Sena*, is also considered a Hindu nationalist party. The ‘cultural organisation’ of the Hindu nationalists is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (henceforth RSS). The RSS is the organisational and ideological backbone of the Hindu right. It stays away from the ‘lure’ of politics and in doing so, acquires moral legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Its main strength is its loyal, dedicated and highly disciplined cadre. The ‘*Vishwa Hindu Parishad*’ (henceforth VHP) is an organisation of the Hindu ecclesiastical order, which focuses on unity among Hindus in India and in the diaspora. Its youth wing, the *Bajrang Dal* is particularly virulent in its operational tactics and rhetoric. Almost all these parties and organisations are rigidly hierarchical: there are no internal elections, democracy is not encouraged and dissent is not tolerated. Members of one organisation often cross over to other organisations of the *Sangh Parivar*. For instance, most office bearers in the BJP have been trained by the RSS. The Hindu right runs social welfare centres, medical centres, schools, orphanages and other services. The Hindu right also runs trade unions, student unions and controls sections of the print media as well as other media.

### **Ideological Articulation of the Hindu Right**

V. Savarkar, ideologue of the Hindu right, has defined a Hindu as a person “... who regards the land of Bharatvarsha from the Indus to the seas as his father land as well as his holy land.”<sup>21</sup> Given this logic, the Hindu right claims that Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists are part of the Hindu fold as India is also their ‘holy land,’ but that Muslims and Christians are not, because their holy lands lie outside the borders of the country. The default implication is that religious minorities will always have more pressing allegiances outside the nation and are likely to be ‘traitors.’ The *Sangh Parivar* seeks to monopolise the definition of Hinduism and what it means to be Hindu in order to make it congruent with its own political project. Its ‘Hinduism’ draws selectively from Hindu upper caste, North Indian religious traditions and favours certain ‘Gods’ or epic heroes over others for political reasons specified later. In doing so, it reviles the plurality of religious traditions, rituals and practices of other communities, such as the *Adivasis* (indigenous people or tribals), who are now categorised as ‘Hindu.’ Further, in its monolithic Hinduism, the *Sangh Parivar* negates the syncretic nature of different religious traditions in India, which have shaped and determined each other to a large extent. This history is evident in the art, literature and architecture of the subcontinent,

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<sup>19</sup> G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in North India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> S. Freitag, *Religious Rites and Riots: From Community Identity to Communalism in North India 1870-1890s*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1982.

<sup>21</sup> V. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, (Pune: V.G.Kelkar, 1928) p. 10.

which the *Sangh Parivar* tries actively to subvert. Hindu supremacist ideology that drives the call to a Hindu nation is called '*Hindutva*' and is referred to many times in this text.

The Hindu right believes that Hindus, who comprise the majority community, are the only citizens of India and that only they, given their ethnicity, can determine the common good of the polity. "Hindus alone are the legal citizens of *Bharat*, as it is, they alone inherit everything in this land from times immemorial..."<sup>22</sup> Consequently, other minorities cannot be seen as equals. They must assimilate in order to qualify for Indian citizenship. For instance, one RSS leader claimed:

"The foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture, that is, they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-old traditions but must also cultivate the attitude of love and devotion...in a word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizens' rights."<sup>23</sup>

A related theme that runs through the literature of the Hindu right is that Muslims and Christians are not original habitants of the land like the Hindus (specifically upper caste Hindus) and that they came here as 'invaders.' This necessitates a selective distortion of history, which they attempt by claiming that Aryans were the original inhabitants of the land, in contrast to prevailing scholarship that establishes that it was the *Adivasis*. The imagery of plunder and defilement of the land by the invaders is woven around the body of 'Mother India,' which stretches from Kashmir to Kanyakumari in the south. The discourse is littered with popular stories of Muslim rulers who 'looted' India and desecrated temples. It projects Hindus as a feminised race easily vanquished by the Muslims.<sup>24</sup> Hindu kings who 'resisted' this onslaught are glorified and seen in a communal light, such as in the case of *Shivaji*, a warrior-king from Maharashtra who is eulogised for his struggle against the Mughals.

The Hindu right then seeks to militarise Hindu religion and stresses the importance of military power to prevent the emasculation of Hindus and preserve the nation. The RSS indoctrination programme includes both physical and ideological training. The mother country becomes conflated with the body of Hindu women and her rape and plunder justifies not only the rape of Muslim women but also becomes an opportunity for Hindu men to reclaim their manhood. Correspondingly, the territorial integrity of the motherland remains a strong current in the discourse of the Hindu right and it has opposed both the partition of India and the nationalist movement in Kashmir. "The Congress cut the country into two. The Communists would cut it into ten. The sole aim of the RSS is to generate forces for the consolidation of Hindustan from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari...Muslims are

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<sup>22</sup> *Organiser*, Vol. 10, Oct.20, 1952, as quoted in C. Baxter, *Jan Sangh: A Bibliography of an Indian Party*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>23</sup> M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1984). pp.55-56.

<sup>24</sup> The idea of the feminised 'native' is not new and is recurrent in colonial literature and discourse. The 'emasculation' of the native was used to reinforce his racial or cultural inferiority and thus justify colonisation. The Indian nationalist movement mobilised this feeling of emasculation to translate it into moral superiority of the natives in relation to the colonisers. The Hindu right keeps this idea of emasculation alive to use it as a call to violence against the 'internal enemy'.

lying low in wait... *Bharati* Christians would have to mend their ways. Their subsidised attempts to impose their creed on poor Hindus is repugnant.”<sup>25</sup>

The Hindu right seeks to mobilise Hindus against what it calls ‘the minority appeasement’ policy of the Indian State and the Congress Party. The term ‘minority appeasement’ is used to protest against the special group rights granted to Indian minorities – such as the right to be governed by personal laws based on religion and the right to run their own educational institutions – by the Indian constitution. The Hindu right is also vehemently opposed to the religious conversion of people of the oppressed castes, who turn to other faiths in order to exit the rigid and discriminatory caste hierarchy in Hinduism. The Hindu right does not favour democracy and advocates a Presidential system of governance with fixed tenure of office, so that a minority government cannot be ousted by a vote of no confidence. It also proposes a ‘*Gurusabha*’ (Council of the wise) comprised primarily of religious leaders who would advise the upper and lower houses.<sup>26</sup> Minorities in such a State would not be given any special privileges or rights. There is a great emphasis on unity among Hindus while keeping caste inequalities and other hierarchies alive, a tension that the Right has not been able to address. These are some of the elements of the theocratic, authoritarian Hindu *Rashtra* (nation) that the *Sangh Parivar* advocates.

The Hindu right takes an uncritical attitude towards Western knowledge systems. Indeed, it celebrates science and technology as buttresses to State power, which can be used to further homogenise the nation.<sup>27</sup> Its belligerence was evident when it conducted nuclear tests in India, in its war against terror and in the BJP’s aggressive anti-Pakistan propaganda, which has frequently brought the country to the brink of war with Pakistan. The Hindu right’s economic policies are also fraught with tensions. On one hand, the BJP is aggressively pro-liberalisation and has opened India’s market to global capital. On the other hand, the RSS takes an anti-Western stand (as it links India’s ‘moral downfall’ to Western influence), and makes an ambiguous call for ‘*swadeshi*’ or ‘self reliance’ in economic matters. However, these tensions notwithstanding, the entire Hindu right has benefited from the post-globalisation social disquiet, which has been channelled into aggressive cultural self-assertion of the Hindus.

### **Women in the Ideology of the Hindu Right**

As there are no intra-party elections in the Hindu right, very few women have made it to top positions within the *Parivar*. Those who have are mostly widows or unmarried women, and women members of the Hindu clergy. The RSS itself is an exclusively male organisation that does not admit women but runs a separate women’s wing called the *Rashtrasevika Samiti* (Organisation of Women in the Service of the Nation), established in 1936.

The structure of the *Samiti* is hierarchical and modelled closely on the RSS where members are given both the physical and intellectual training necessary to erect a Hindu nation. Although women have been inducted into the Hindu right they have been mobilised in a way that reiterates traditional gendered roles. The RSS places great emphasis on family values and mobilises women as faithful mothers of the nation who will raise dutiful sons and spread the message of *Hindutva* to their sisters in a quiet, domestic way. Domestic matters are

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<sup>25</sup> *Organiser*, Vol.16, Dec.3, 1951, as quoted in Baxter, *op.cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Vanaik, *op.cit.*, p.59.

<sup>27</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

women's primary responsibility: work in the *shakhas* (branch offices) too must happen only with the permission of the family and family work still comes before *shakha* work. *Samiti* workers are taught never to rebel openly against their families and to use 'persuasion' in matters of domestic conflict, ill treatment from in-laws, choice of life partner etc. There is no political mobilisation around contentious issues such as gender, or class.<sup>28</sup> Sources of tension or rupture within the family or community are not addressed, and there is no discourse of rights except in the context of the Hindu community's entitlements as a whole. Gender is subsumed within the family and the family within the nation-State. The Hindu right wing's concern for women's rights is limited to their insistence on a Uniform Civil Code for all Indians, instead of Personal Laws that allow different communities to be governed in 'personal' matters on the basis of religion. However this demand is based more on the desire to stop 'appeasing minorities' and to make them conform to Hindu law rather than on any concern for gender justice. This is discussed more fully in the upcoming section on the post-independence era.

*Rashtrasevika Samiti* members, who are mostly from the middle class, visit each other informally in their homes and spread the word through neighbourhood contact and kinship networks. They help out in domestic crises but not in a way that questions traditional gendered practice: for instance, they may pool resources to help a family to reduce the burden of dowry but will not question the practice of dowry itself.<sup>29</sup> Most women in the *Samiti* have relatives in the RSS. Induction of individual families into the ideology of the RSS has been crucial to its mobilisation strategy and the women of these Hindu families are encouraged to be part of the RSS women's wings.<sup>30</sup> This kind of prolonged contact maintained over generations is responsible for the proliferation of the saffron ideology we see in society today.

*Hindutva* revives the dichotomy of Woman as the ideal and opposite of Western moral and social degradation and its attendant evils of widow remarriage, adultery and divorce. It lays a great emphasis on female chastity, using the parallel of *Sita*, wife of the mythological hero *Ram*,<sup>31</sup> who withstood the test of fire to prove her sexual purity after she was rescued from a demon by her husband. The Hindu right also upholds the practice of *Sati*,<sup>32</sup> evidenced by its defence of the *Sati* of Roop Kanwar in Rajasthan in 1984, on the grounds that it is authentic religious practice. Threatening the purity of the Hindu woman is the lascivious, over-sexed Muslim man who, according to the propaganda of the Hindu right, has been raping Hindu women for centuries. In fact, the oral myth of the *Samiti* states that it was established when Muslim criminals raped a Hindu woman in front of her husband.

Violence against women is integral to the project of political violence perpetrated by the Hindu right. The fictional rapes of Hindu women since the Middle Ages justify the rape of Muslim women by Hindu men. The Gujarati press invented the rape of three Hindu women by Muslim men in Godhra recently, which served not only to justify the mass rapes of Muslim women in the following riots and but also to conjure up a sense of outrage at the

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<sup>28</sup> Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, Sambuddha Sen, *Khakhi Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Press, 1993) p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> Dowry is the practice of giving money and other goods to the groom at the time of marriage, as compensation for taking on the 'liability' of the woman he is marrying.

<sup>30</sup> Basu et.al., *op.cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Ram is a hero of the epic *Ramayana* and is also worshipped as a deity in some parts of India.

<sup>32</sup> The notionally voluntary suicide of a newly widowed wife by ritual burning on her husband's pyre.

supposedly long history of wrongdoings of the Muslim community. The collective dishonouring of the Muslim community by defiling the bodies of 'their' women is seen as a way to destroy the sources of pleasure, nurture and reproduction for Muslim men and children.<sup>33</sup> Women have been especially targeted in riots through the 1990s but the sadism in the acts of rape and murder of women in Gujarat is unprecedented. Rape and murder is seen as the way for Hindu men to reclaim their manhood and are to be performed as their sacred duty, as is evidenced by the saffron underwear and khaki shorts worn by the attackers in Gujarat. One VHP pamphlet circulating in Gujarat during the riots and signed by the state general secretary contains the following poem:

The volcano which was inactive has erupted  
It has burnt the arse of the *miyas* (Muslim men) and made them dance nude  
We have untied the penises that were tied till now  
We have widened the tight vaginas of the bibis (Muslim women)<sup>34</sup>

In the riots during the decade of 1990s, right wing Hindu women urged and encouraged their men to rape Muslim women. Sadhvi Ritambhara, a religious figure of the Hindu right, delivered inciteful hate speeches exhorting Hindu men to remasculinise themselves by fighting Muslims. Women came out in droves to participate in and support the destruction of the *Babri Masjid* in 1992 and some 20,000 courted arrest. In 1998, members of the *Shiv Sena* women's wing vandalised theatres across India that were showing *Fire*, a film depicting a lesbian relationship. The *Sangh Parivar* now has an active women's cadre and women have participated widely in looting, rioting and killing in communal riots recently.

The militancy and participation of women in violence may appear to be a contradiction when seen in the light of the Hindu right's discourse on Woman as selfless mother and wife. However, the Hindu right wing has encouraged militancy and religious hatred among women by calling upon these very identities. For instance, in the controversy surrounding the supposed 'occupation' of Ram's birthplace by the Mughal ruler Babar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *Sangh Parivar* inverted the earlier pattern of a femininised love object. Here the beloved but estranged object was the birthplace of a revered *male* deity ('occupied' by a mosque), which women had to liberate for him.<sup>35</sup> This reversal of roles where a woman must save a male deity puts her in an active and empowering position and calls for the development of not only a "trained, hardened, invincible, female body" but also its sacrifice in an "impending apocalyptic war."<sup>36</sup> The need for physical strength and courage is also necessary to seek vengeance against imagined Muslim assaulters and to instil a sense of confidence within women. The women's wing of the VHP, the *Durga Vahini*,<sup>37</sup> which operates mostly in urban centres and small towns, organises regular camps for women at Hanuman temples and includes martial arts and other physical training required for patriotic war. However, women primarily remain the wombs of heroes in *Hindutva* ideology and the call to fight is still predominantly male.

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<sup>33</sup> Tanika Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror in India: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 37, no. 28, July 13, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Basu et. al., *op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> Basu et. al., *op.cit.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>37</sup> Durga is a feared militant goddess who carries numerous weapons and Durga Vahini means vehicle of Durga.

The following description of the “paradox of the *Rashtrasevika*” sums up the contradictory position of women in Hindu right wing politics well:

“undoubtedly empowering in some ways, but bringing women from a traditionally conservative social stratum into public space in a regimented, colourless, grim manner, in a violent campaign of blind hatred geared to produce citizens of an authoritarian Hindu *Rashtra*, on the ruins of secular, democratic politics.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Colonial Construction of “the Hindu” and “the Muslim”**

Historians have argued that in pre-colonial India, people’s identities were fuzzy and heterogeneous.<sup>39</sup> People apprehended their identities in terms of membership in caste, sub-caste, regional and linguistic groups. While religious identities were part of these intersecting identities, religious differences were not the fundamental basis of differentiation between communities.<sup>40</sup> The British justification of the colonising project was based on the perception of Indian society as barbaric, chaotic and unruly. For the colonisers, the religious bigotry of the Indian people was a supreme example of the irrational nature of the ungovernable natives. The colonisers saw Hindu and Muslim identities as mutually distinct and antagonistic. According to the colonisers, religious differences between Indians automatically spilled over into religious hatred and created problems of law and order for the rulers, and they used the term ‘communalism’ to describe this animosity.

The colonial perception of Hindus and Muslims as separate nationalities shaped many colonial policies that served to reinforce the perception of difference, such as the policy of enumerating and classifying the population on the basis of religion in the census. Family laws were also based on religion and customary practice. In 1919, the colonial government introduced separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims. Colonial historiography and reports often converted anti-colonial, caste- or class-based uprisings into ‘religious riots,’ erasing the reasons behind differing constellations of communities and decontextualising them from the root issues.<sup>41</sup> With the growing popularity of the print media, these official narratives received wider attention. These policies led to a new community consciousness, which rose above the localised identities and helped in the creation of all-India Muslim or Hindu communities.<sup>42</sup> These policies in turn fixed the boundaries of religious communities<sup>43</sup>. Thus,

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<sup>38</sup> Basu et. al., *op.cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>39</sup> G. Pandey, *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* Gyanendra Pandey has shown how colonial records fail to capture the dynamics of the formation of heterogeneous caste/religious coalitions and solidarity between different communities at different points in time. He has pointed out that in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, between 1890 and the 1910s, large Hindu cultivator castes such as Koeris, Kurmis and Ahirs teamed up with Brahmins and Rajputs against the Muslims around the issue of cow sacrifices. However, between the 1910s and the 1920s, when Koeris, Kurmis and Ahirs united to press for caste mobility, Hindu and Muslim Zamindars (landlords) joined hands to suppress these low peasant castes. Pandey points out that British records report both these riots as ‘religious riots’ between Hindus and Muslims. Such a static view of a society fails to capture the ground reality of political convergence of communities around different issues at differing points in time and space. Besides, these early official records established a meta-narrative which served as a blue print for later reports of ‘religious riots’.

<sup>42</sup> Bernard Cohn has focused on this ‘documentation project’ of the British Raj, which he sees as both “totalising” and “individualising.” This project depicted the totality of the people who were to be governed (‘the Indians’) but also marked off religious, ethnic groups and castes. Cohn argues that the study of social history of colonial India can also be understood as a construction of knowledge by the colonial state. For instance, colonial data collection for the production of dictionaries and grammar to be used in educational institutions played an important role in the construction of language communities. [Bernard S. Cohn,

these policies naturalised religious differences between communities and attributed religious significance to collective actions of the people when there was none. The British also exploited differences based on religion in their policy of 'divide and rule' by which they patronised and supported rulers of different kingdoms to fight against each other, depending on their particular interests in the region.

### **Nationalist Movement and Emergence of the Hindu Right**

The politicisation of community identities during colonial times led to political formations around those very identities in the anti-colonial struggle. On December 30, 1906, the Muslim League was founded in Dhaka. This was the first major political group, which appealed to Muslims as a community, but it was not hostile to others.<sup>44</sup> In response, a United Bengal Hindu Movement began in 1907. Some urban *Arya Samajis* came together to form the *Punjab Hindu Mahasabha* in 1907, which spread to other parts of India and by 1914, it had called itself the *Akṣhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha*. The *Mahasabha* opposed the separate electorates for Muslims, which were proposed by the *Muslim League* and adopted the slogan of "One Man, One Vote."

Given the colonisers' revilement of Indian culture and the missionary projection of Indian culture as primitive and barbaric, several cultural revivalist movements emerged in response. The Arya Samaj was one such movement of Hindu revival and social reform that appealed to persons of nationalist and revivalist leanings. As a result, the *Arya Samaj* became a common background for nationalist leaders during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and many members of the *Hindu Mahasabha* were also members of the Indian National Congress. In 1925, Lala Lajpat Rai, a Congressman who was also linked to the *Hindu Mahasabha* laid down the objectives of the *Hindu Mahasabha*. This programme has influenced the Hindu right up to present times. The objectives mooted by Lala Lajpat Rai were: To organise Hindu *Sabhas* through the length and breadth of the country, to provide relief to Hindu men and women who have been victims of communal riots, to reconvert Hindus who were forcibly converted to Islam, to organise '*akṛbadas*' (gymnasiums) for Hindu youth, to popularise Hindi, to celebrate Hindu festivals, to open Hindu temples and halls, to promote good feeling with Mohammedans and Christians, to represent the communal interests of Hindus in all political controversies, and to work for the upliftment of Hindu women.<sup>45</sup> This articulation of religion based politics led to a split within the Congress party in 1926. Some

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Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996)].

<sup>43</sup> For instance, scholars describing the hardening of community boundaries often cite the events in Kerala, where peasants rebelled against Muslim landlords. In order to suppress the peasants, the landlords established a 'Khilafat king' and attacked them. This event was viewed by the colonial state as an inter-religious conflict leading to a breakdown of law and order. It was also publicised in the print media as such and was perceived largely as an attack on Hindus. This led to riots across North India [Christopher Jaffrelot, The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s, (New Delhi: Penguin, 1999) p. 20].

<sup>44</sup> The objectives of the Muslim League at that time were:

"To promote among the Musalmans of India feeling of loyalty to the British government and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of the government with regard to any measures.

To protect and advance the political rights and interests of the *Musalmans* of India and to respectfully present the needs and aspirations to the government.

To prevent the rise among the *Musalmans* of India of any feelings of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the other above mentioned objectives of the League."

[A.B. Rajput, The Muslim League: Yesterday and Today, (Lahore: Ashray, 1948); quoted in Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 7].

<sup>45</sup> Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 15.



Congress party members joined the *Hindu Mahasabha*, while others began articulating a secular agenda. However, tacit links between a section of the Congress Party and the *Hindu Mahasabha* remained during the nationalist movement as well as in post-colonial times.

In another significant development, Hedgewar founded the Hindu right wing 'cultural organisation' *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) in 1925.<sup>46</sup> The goal of the organisation was to militarise the Hindu religion and to promote religiosity within society to make it coterminous with the *Sangh*. The organisation devoted its formative years in creating a loyal and disciplined cadre. From 1932, its handpicked organisers went to every part of India and established *shakhas*.

Literature on the Hindu right in the pre-partition era suggests that it did not attract many followers at the time. Political participation of all sections of society increased dramatically from the 1920s according to the history of the Indian nationalist movement. The Congress Party was able to capture the imagination of the people through its organisational skills, charismatic leadership and innovative programmes. As a result, while the Hindu right, and especially the RSS, worked steadily and silently during this time, their presence did not register with the masses. In the 1930s, the Government of India Act opened up the electoral process but the *Hindu Mahasabha* lost heavily in the 1937 elections and later, in the 1945 elections as well. The *Hindu Mahasabha* was also not able to impact policy decisions and it was not seen as one of the significant voices in national politics at that time.<sup>47</sup>

The demand for the partition of India emerged and acquired momentum only during the final decade of colonial rule (from about 1937 to 1947). This demand brought religious identities to the fore. Reports suggest that there might have been a brief spurt in the popularity of the RSS during this decade. The RSS was vehemently against the idea of partition, which carved out the Muslim-majority state of Pakistan. The partition, as described earlier, led to large-scale migrations both to and from the newly formed states and was accompanied by large-scale communal violence in which both Hindus and Muslims were killed. In Punjab at that time, the RSS was "involved in a plot to eliminate Muslims in large numbers in selected *tehsils* to change the composition of the population from Muslim

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<sup>46</sup> The stated objective of the RSS, according to their website ([www.rss.org](http://www.rss.org)) is:

"The R.S.S. stands for the spread of Hindu culture. Culture means a value system. So the R.S.S. wants to establish a certain value system which in Historical process is called Hindu value system, but is essentially a humane value system. The essential ingredients of this value system are:

a) The truth is one but can have plural manifestations. This plurality need not be in conflict with one another; it can be cooperative and complementary. To understand, appreciate and realize the unity in a tremendous vortex of diversities, should be the humanity's goal of life.

b) The whole universe is permeated with the Godly Spirit. Let us first offer, whatever we earn to this Spirit, then only can we become eligible to feed ourselves. This is succinctly expressed in the Isha Upanishad.....

c) Our concept of *Dharma* is based on the universality of spirit. Therefore, *Dharma* according to Hindu is not simply a bundle of rituals. It is a principle of universal harmony - harmony between an individual and society, harmony between human society and outward nature or *Prakriti*, harmony between individual soul and the universal soul.

d) *The mission of the R.S.S. is to unite and rejuvenate our nation on the sound foundation of Dharma. This mission can be achieved by a strong and united Hindu society. Therefore the R.S.S. has undertaken the task of uniting the Hindus. Rejuvenation of the Hindu nation is in the interest of the whole humanity.*" (emphasis added).

<sup>47</sup> For instance, The Crips Mission in 1946 ignored the Hindu Mahasabha. The party managed to secure an audience with the Cabinet Mission in 1948, but its demand, including its opposition to the cessation of Pakistan was ignored in the political arena.

majority to non Muslim majority.”<sup>48</sup> The RSS was also implicated in a similar manner in Kashmir.<sup>49</sup> The first President of *Azad* Kashmir has written that, “A plan was hatched [by the RSS] to completely wipe out the Muslim population in the city of Jammu... All branches of the RSS were supplied with their quota of arms and ammunition.”<sup>50</sup>

## **Post-Independence Political Developments and the Hindu Right**

### ***From 1950s - Early 1970s***

The trajectory of political developments in post-colonial India shows a distinct pattern. The newly formed nation State in 1947 defined itself as a secular polity and sought to pursue the path of national unity, social cohesion and economic development. In particular, the Indian State refused to entertain any demands for secession on the basis of religion, culture or region. It accorded to minorities the freedom to practice their own religion and to protect their cultures and languages. The Indian State, at the time of its inception, also gave special group rights to Scheduled Castes and *Adivasis*. It made the applicability of laws relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance etc. contingent upon the religion of the person concerned by enacting Personal Laws for different religious communities as noted before. Although the State reformed elements of Hindu customary law and practice that were translated into the Personal Law of the community, it did not do the same with the Personal Laws of the minorities. Instead, it ambiguously stated that a Uniform Civil Code that would be identical for all communities should be enacted at a later stage. The *ulema* (Muslim clergy) came to be perceived as mediators between the Muslim community and the State because of the erosion of the Muslim League’s support base after partition and its separatist politics. However, the State’s policies such as federalism on a linguistic basis, its socialist planning process and reasonable economic growth in early years of independence contributed to relative harmony between various religious groups.<sup>51</sup>

The Hindu right could not make any headway in the Indian political and social sphere during these decades. There were several reasons for this. One of them was that the Congress pursued a dual policy: Its top leadership continued to espouse secularism in the public sphere and introduced policies to this effect, while its lower cadres were allowed considerable leeway in pursuing religious agendas. Thus, although the Congress was seen as a ‘pro-Muslim’ party, it housed many Hindu traditionalists as well. As a result, the Hindu right could not monopolise the Hindu vote.<sup>52</sup> Besides, the Indian National Congress enjoyed the support of a large section of society that was mobilised during the nationalist movement, and it was seen as a party that could represent and accommodate the interests of diverse populations. The Hindu right did not have a socio-political vision or a party organisation to compete with the Indian National Congress at the time. In fact, there was overt public disapproval of the Hindu right during that time, as Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, an RSS office bearer, on October 30, 1948, a year after India achieved

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<sup>48</sup> This data is based on an official intelligence report prepared by the Government of Punjab, West Punjab, 1948. The report was titled *RSS in Punjab*, and is cited by Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Sardar Ibrahim Khan, *The Kashmir Saga*, (Lahore: Ripin Printing Press, 1965), quoted in Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. (New Delhi: Sage Press, 1991); Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

<sup>52</sup> Jaffrelot, 1999; Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

independence. The RSS was banned following this incident and its leaders were imprisoned. While the ban lasted only 6 months, the organisation's activities were severely constrained. Hindu right wing parties such as the *Hindu Mahasabha* did not fare well at the hands of the electorate in the two successive elections of 1952 and 1957.

After the ban of the RSS in the 1950s, the Hindu right realised that it needed to engage in some damage control, in order to widen its support base and to have a say in electoral space. It attempted both to make inroads into electoral politics and to develop a cultural base in the 1960s by floating new parties and cultural and political organisations. The opportunity to build a political party arose when there was a split in the *Hindu Mahasabha* and its leader, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, left the party. The RSS and Shyama Prasad Mookherjee floated a new party, called the *Akshil Bharatiya Jan Sangh*.

In 1964, the RSS leader M. S. Golwalkar turned his attention to the highly diverse and disorganised Hindu ecclesiastical community. He realised that the lack of a unified purpose hampered the RSS vision of a united Hindu society. Golwalkar invited selected religious leaders to Bombay in August 1964 and floated an organisation called the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*.<sup>53</sup> At its inception on August 29 in Mumbai, the General Secretary expounded the perceived dangers to Hinduism:

“The declared object of Christianity is to turn the whole world into Christendom – as that of Islam is to make it ‘Pak.’ Besides these two dogmatic and proselytising religions, there has arisen a third religion, communism [...] the world has been divided into Christian, Islamic and Communist, and all these three consider the Hindu society as a very fine rich food on which to feast and fatten themselves. It is therefore necessary in this age of competition and conflict to think of, and organise, the Hindu world to save itself from the evil eyes of the three.”<sup>54</sup>

In programmatic aspects, the VHP has sought to work in tribal areas of the North East, which are ‘susceptible’ to Christian influences. The VHP also works on ‘social welfare.’<sup>55</sup> It specifically focuses on building linkages between Hindus in different countries as well. Similarly, in Maharashtra, a nativist party demanding new economic opportunities for Maharashtrians was launched. The party's contention was that migrants from South India were being given preference in employment in the rapidly industrialising state. The party called itself the *Shiv Sena* and mobilised the discontent of Maharashtrians against South Indians. The party is known to rely on muscle power to coerce its opponents; it is virulently anti-Communist and has used dubious strategies to counter Communists in the state. There was a rise in crime, bootlegging, smuggling, extortion rackets and drug trafficking in Maharashtra following the period of State-sponsored development in the late 1960s. Although the Sena publicly attacked gangsterism it brought the ‘fallen’ henchmen of these gangs into its fold. Other political parties in the state also used *Sena* henchmen, or *Shiv*

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<sup>53</sup>Its objectives were to consolidate and strengthen Hindu society, to protect and spread Hindu values, ethical and spiritual, and to make them relevant to contemporary society, and to establish and strengthen links among Hindus living in different countries. [W. Anderson and S. Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987). p.133].

<sup>54</sup> Jaffrelot, *op.cit.* p. 197.

<sup>55</sup> By 1981, the VHP claimed to have 3000 branches in 437 of India's 534 districts. It operated 442 hostels, orphanages and vocational schools, some 150 medical centres and published 10 Hindu journals. [*Hindu Vishwa*, Nov. 1981, pp. 11, 33, 36 as cited in Anderson and Damle, *op.cit.* p. 134].

*Sainiks* (soldiers of the *Shiv Sena*) as they are known, when necessary during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>56</sup> The *Sena* decided to turn to *Hindutva* ideology when it became a partner of the BJP in 1984.

Thus, during the decades of 1960-1970, the Hindu right concentrated mainly on organisation building. They co-opted/floated student organisations, trade unions, cultural and social welfare organisations. They also made inroads into the print media and started their own mouthpieces. However, political analysts argue that they did not succeed in capturing the imagination of the people during this time as was evident in the electoral defeat of the *Jan Sangh*. The vote share of the *Jan Sangh* did, however, go up in 1962 and 1967 when India went to war with China and Pakistan respectively. Their virulent patriotism gained them some electoral support but it was not sustainable.

### ***From 1970 - 1990***

The fragility of the Indian State's project of secularism, national unity, social cohesion and economic development has become apparent since the 1970s. The 1970s saw the decline of the Congress Party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. Her leader-centric style of functioning, her practice of appointing Chief Ministers of states herself and the discontinuation of internal elections within the party led to a decline in the organisational pluralism of the party. Between 1975 and 1977, Indira Gandhi imposed authoritarian rule in India under the guise of a 'National Emergency.' The emergency was lifted in 1977 following the spectacular electoral defeat of the Congress Party, bringing the *Janata Party* into power. The *Janata Party* was supported by a wide range of parties across a broad ideological spectrum which had united in their efforts to overthrow the Congress Party. The Hindu right was part of this coalition. However, the gains of the Hindu right were minimal, as other parties were not comfortable with their *Hindutva* agenda and openly distanced themselves from it.<sup>57</sup>

After its split with the *Janata Party*, the *Jan Sangh* decided to reinvent itself. It renamed itself the *Bharatiya Janata Party*. However, an examination of the party manifesto does not show a shift away from the *Hindutva* agenda. The manifestos prepared during the 1970s and 1980s spell out visions such as "the maintenance of Hindu joint family, caste structure and law and the displacement of English by Hindi as the official language." They opposed separate concessions for minorities in matters of education and personal laws. They also opposed State control of the economy and favoured more liberal policies towards business and industry.<sup>58</sup>

The decade of the 1980s saw an escalation of communal conflict, a resurgence of Hindu nationalism, caste wars and a rise in regional separatist movements in Assam, Punjab, the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, and later, in Kashmir.<sup>59</sup> The *Shiv Sena*, in Maharashtra, took an openly anti-Muslim, anti-*Dalit* and anti-Communist stand and masterminded riots in Bhiwandi, Thane and Mumbai in 1984. The VHP's mobilisation around the issue of *Ram Janmabhoomi* (Ram's birthplace) also led to rioting in Bihar, where the Muslim population in the town of Bhagalpur was almost wiped out. The escalation of tensions around cultural, regional and religious identities questioned the very basis of the Indian nation-State.

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<sup>56</sup> Dipankar Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: The Shiv Sena in Bombay*, (New Delhi: Manohar Press, 1982).

<sup>57</sup> Jaffrelot, *op.cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Brass, *op.cit.*, pp.77, 78.

<sup>59</sup> Freitag, *op.cit.*

The Hindu right as a whole also tried to capitalise on different crises, time and again. Several events at the national level gave it the opportunity to play the religious card. In 1981, in a well-publicised event, a large number of *Dalits* converted to Islam in Meenakshipuram, in the state of Tamil Nadu. The VHP mobilised against this conversion and highlighted the ‘return’ (reconversion to Hinduism) of two sub-castes in Rajasthan in 1986. The VHP also organised a month-long ‘*Ekatmata Yagna*’ (national integration programme) in 1983. The purpose was to raise funds for religious orders and to work implicitly for Hindu unity. In order to garner votes without depending on party organisation, Indira Gandhi turned to populism in the 1970s and early 1980s. Later, both Indira Gandhi and her successor and son, Rajeev Gandhi turned to religious politics to capture the Hindu vote bank.

The youth wing of the VHP, the *Bajrang Dal*, was formed during the anti-Sikh wave that swept the country in 1983-1984 after *Operation Bluestar* (a military operation against Sikh militants). To neutralise Hindu support for Indira Gandhi and the Congress, the RSS planned an all-out attack on the government on the issue of *Ram Janmabhoomi* (Ram’s birthplace) which is discussed in the next section. Riding the wave of anti-Sikh sentiment, the *Bajrang Dal* organised several *trishul dhaaran* functions (trident presentation ceremonies) throughout the country. The activists were given a knife-like trident to be slung across the shoulder – an answer to the *kirpan* (dagger) worn by the Sikhs as a holy emblem. The *Bajrang Dal* has come of age during these 14 years. It has faced a ban and managed to mushroom successfully into an all-India organisation. Born to counter ‘Sikh militancy,’ it has since identified new targets.

The VHP’s strategies to Hinduise the nation did not gain it many supporters at that time as the nation’s attention shifted away from *Hindutva* and to Indira Gandhi’s assassination carried out by her Sikh bodyguard in 1984. Riots broke out against Sikhs in North India following this event. Rajeev Gandhi, Indira’s son and successor, justified the violence as the ‘natural outcome’ of any calamitous event. In North India, and especially in Delhi, the Congress led government ‘allowed’ the riots to happen and, in the first case of State collusion in communal riots, many Congress leaders joined the rioting mobs.

Relations between the State and the Muslim minority also catapulted into the limelight during Rajiv Gandhi’s reign with the *Shah Bano* case. In 1984, the Indian Supreme Court passed a judgement in the case of *Shah Bano*, a divorced Muslim woman who had approached the court for maintenance under Section 125 of the *Criminal Procedure Code* (CrPC) after her divorce. The CrPC is a uniform criminal code, applicable evenly to all citizens of India, irrespective of religious affiliation. *Shah Bano*’s husband took refuge under Muslim Personal Law and argued that he was not entitled to pay her maintenance beyond the period of *Iddat* (a period of 3 months and 10 days immediately following divorce). The court awarded maintenance to Shah Bano but opined that the Indian State should enact a uniform civil code to ensure that women obtained their marital rights.<sup>60</sup> The judgement created a furore within the Muslim community as the more conservative, vocal elements expressed their concern at the eminent ‘danger to Islam’. The subsequent elections saw the defeat of the Congress Party and led the coalition government at the centre (led by the Congress Party) to pass the *Muslim Women’s (Protection of Rights upon Divorce Act* in 1986. This act removed divorced Muslim women from under the purview of Section 125 CrPC thereby relegating them to the diktats of Muslim Personal Law and divesting them of the secular

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<sup>60</sup> *Mohammad Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Khan* AIR 1985 SC 945.

rights granted to all women in India. While this development was debated across the political spectrum, the Hindu right gained considerable mileage from it. It accused the Indian State of 'appeasing minorities' and began demonising the Muslim community as parochial, backward, pre-modern and resistant to the formation of a political community.<sup>61</sup>

During these decades, the Hindu right became part of coalition governments in various state assemblies. Indeed, even the Communist parties entered into alliances with the Hindu right as the entire opposition sought to defeat the Congress Party. This politics of cooperation helped the BJP consolidate its electoral gains and widen its support base. However, until the late 1980s, the Hindu right could not make inroads into electoral politics on its own. This is also because the Congress Party started using the Hindu card after 'Hindu resentment' over the *Shah Bano* case. The Hindu right could not yet capture a significant Hindu vote, but the ground had been set for 'religious politics' by the 1980s. The Ram *Janmabhoomi* issue provided the perfect plank for the Hindu right to distinguish itself from the Congress and position itself, both culturally and politically, as being truly concerned about Hindus and Hindu sentiments in the country.

### **The *Sangh Parivar* and the Ram *Janmabhoomi* Movement<sup>62</sup>**

In Ayodhya, a town in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a mosque named the *Babri Masjid* was built in 1528 by a general of *Babar*, the founder of the Mughal dynasty. The local myth is that the mosque was built in order to replace an ancient Hindu temple of Ram, built in the 11th century A.D. The local myth further declared that *Ram* was born on that site. The British rulers heard the story when they annexed the kingdom of Avadh in 1856. They put a railing around the mosque, so that Muslims could worship inside and raised the platform outside so that the Hindus worship there. Following partition, given the communalised atmosphere, the Indian State placed a guard outside the temple after closing the site. However, on the night of December 22, 1949, an idol of Ram was planted in the mosque by a group of young Hindus who were never caught or arrested. Riots ensued after this incident and the army quashed them, but the idol of Ram was never removed. Leaders of Hindu and Muslim communities filed suits in court after this event.

In 1984, the VHP agitated to unlock the 'temple of Ram.' The issue once again brought some attention to this dispute but failed to capture national attention, given the assassination of Indira Gandhi at that time. However, a district and sessions judge of the Faizabad court ruled that the disputed site should be opened to the public. This triggered communal violence in Uttar Pradesh and Bhiwandi in Maharashtra. On March 30, 1988, Muslims staged a large protest. After this, the Ram *Janmabhoomi* issue came to occupy centre stage in politics and in the *Sangh Parivar's* rhetoric. The Congress tried to woo the Hindu vote after the *Shah Bano* case with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi raising the Ram *Janmabhoomi* issue and supporting the VHP's case in a rally in Ayodhya.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Zoya Hasan (ed.) *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State*, (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994); Amita Parashar, *Women and Family Law Reform in India*, (New Delhi: Sage Press, 1992); M. Mukhopadhyay in Ratna Kapur and Brenda Cossman (eds.), *Subversive Sites: Feminist Engagements with Law in India*, (New Delhi: Sage Press, 1996); Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, in Ratna Kapur and Brenda Cossman (eds.), *Subversive Sites: Feminist Engagements with Law in India*, (New Delhi: Sage Press, 1996).

<sup>62</sup> This section is based on the discussion of the issue in P. Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

In a coordination of rituals and political manipulation, the VHP engaged in an operation to bring bricks from villages across North India in order to lay a foundation for the Ram temple in 1989. This led to communal violence in North India. The heaviest casualties occurred in Bhagalpur, Bihar, where the Muslim population was almost wiped out. Ultimately, the VHP was allowed to lay the foundation outside the mosque, on undisputed land.

In 1990, after the *Mandal Commission* report and caste riots, the BJP decided to reopen the agitation. They organised a 'Rath Yatra,' a ritual procession that passed through ten states of India and was led by L. K. Advani, the current Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of India. The BJP, along with the VHP and their allies, engaged in the worship of the 'bricks' of Ram (*Ramshila*) in and across villages and towns of India. These sacred bricks were brought in organised processions and were to be used to build the temple of Ram at the disputed site in Ayodhya. Members of the Bajrang Dal, the youth wing of the VHP, offered cups of their blood to L. K. Advani. The BJP and its allies ran a highly successful audio and video campaign, which used and distorted Hindu religious symbols, myths and stories to suit the BJP's message<sup>64</sup>. These were played on cable television and across street corners and used virulent, inciteful and derogatory language against the Muslims. However, before the procession could reach Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, L. K. Advani was arrested by the government of Bihar. The government of Uttar Pradesh also opposed the procession. They were supported by the coalition government at the Centre and the BJP withdrew support to the national government.

Thwarted in their attempt to storm into the state of Uttar Pradesh, the BJP continued with its campaign and spread false allegations of violence committed by state governments against its religious activists. It claimed that thousands had been killed by the state police and BJP wings displayed the ashes of the 'martyrs' in order to incite anger among Hindus. Finally, on December 6, 1992, at the culmination of a rally organised by the BJP and the VHP in Ayodhya, *kar sevaks* (religious volunteers) attacked the *Babri Masjid* with weapons and other instruments and razed it to the ground in a matter of hours. The entire event was well planned and BJP leader L. K. Advani, among other such luminaries of the present BJP-led government, was present at the site.

Following this event, communal violence broke out in many states of India and especially in strongholds of the BJP and its allies. The riots were carefully orchestrated and planned by the BJP and its allies. In the city of Mumbai, the *Shiv Sena* systematically targeted Muslim homes and businesses. The riots in Maharashtra also exposed the tacit consent of the police force, as cases of police inaction were brought to light. This was also a visible indication of the communalisation of State organs such as the bureaucracy and the police.

### **Capturing State Power and Providing Governance: The Hindu Right in the 1990s**

The Hindu right's ascendancy to power finally came about in the 1990s and two specific political developments contributed to it. In the 1990s, an independence movement in Kashmir flared up. The 'Pakistan hand' was soon implicated in influencing and fuelling this struggle. While both Hindus and Muslims were affected by the general violence that

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<sup>64</sup> For instance, a year before the yatra, national TV broadcasted *Ramayana*, a schoolbook version of the ancient epic, which became very popular among the middle classes. The BJP used this epic in multiple ways, even designing L.K. Advani's vehicle to resemble the vehicle of Ram. It also gave party tickets to actors who acted in that serial.

pervaded the state, Kashmiri Hindus were forced to migrate out of the state. The BJP politicised this issue. The idea of territorial integrity is central to the Hindu right's vision of India and they vehemently opposed the Kashmiri's language of self-determination. The BJP and their allies took this opportunity to demonise Muslims in general, and portrayed Indian Muslims as being pro-Pakistan and thus traitors. The project of liberalising the Indian economy also began in 1991. The BJP provided an agenda of hate to the unemployed and those affected by Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). However, the beneficiaries of economic liberalisation were, to a large extent, the upper castes and the middle class, the traditional supporters of the *Sangh Parivar*.

However, caste violence and changing caste equations provide the key to understanding the BJP's capture of State power. In September 1990, the V. P. Singh government, a coalition of opposition parties, announced an increase in reservation for Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in government jobs and educational institutions, extending the affirmative action programme proposed by the Mandal Commission to include sections of society besides *Dalits* and *Adivasis*. This action unleashed a tremendous backlash from upper castes and some students immolated themselves in protest. Caste riots raged in northern and western parts of India. The BJP and its allies, whose traditional support has been from the upper castes, saw this opportunity to play upon the insecurities of their support base. The whole spectrum of the Hindu right revived the Ram *Janmabhoomi* issue, catapulting the BJP into the national political scene.

Since the BJP-led coalition came to power at the centre in 1999, the Indian State has abandoned the principles of socialism, secularism, democracy and non-alignment, or redefined them according to *Hindutva*.<sup>65</sup> The BJP led coalition has conducted nuclear tests, increased defence expenditure and led the country to the brink of war against Pakistan more than once. The BJP has accelerated the process of disinvestment despite heavy resistance from workers and has also opened the market to foreign capital and goods. They have legitimised the discussion of major changes in the Indian constitution as a step towards building a Hindu State. The BJP has also paid close attention to education. They have exalted military patriotism in school textbooks. They have selectively revised history according to *Hindutva* ideology to establish all Muslim rulers as despotic, backward and hostile to Hindus, to glorify Hindu kings and to indicate that Aryans were the original inhabitants of the land. Minorities have been under the threat of attacks and 113 cases were registered against the BJP for violence against Christians in Gujarat in the year 1997 alone. These ranged from attacks on churches and church personnel to Bible-burning incidents.<sup>66</sup> Regressive bills on women's rights, which threaten to undo many years of sustained work by women's movements, such as the bill on Domestic Violence, are being pushed in the Parliament. Laws that give the State sweeping powers without possibility of regular redress in the courts like POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act) have been summarily passed.

On all counts, whether it be within law, education, policy (both internal and foreign), the armed forces, the various arms of the State – administrative, judiciary, police etc. – *Hindutva* agendas are being aggressively concretised by the State. Against this backdrop, the events of Gujarat in 2002 can be seen as a further concretisation of the plans of the cultural and

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<sup>65</sup> Vanaik, *op.cit.*, p.43.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*



political ambitions of the Hindu right. This has been made possible by the consolidation of their power at both the centre and the state.

## Annexure V

### Years of BJP rule in Gujarat<sup>67</sup>

There is evidence to show that Gujarat was and is being treated as a laboratory by the *Hindutva* forces. One of the first things that the BJP did when it came to power in 1995 was to saffronise major cities and villages. Saffron flags, banners, posters and hoardings became the norm. In cities and villages, boards that said 'Hindu Rashtra's xxxx region welcomes you' were put up in every significant corner. Small and big temples (many of them painted saffron) mushroomed in every nook and corner. All along the state highways in particular, huge temples were constructed. Most government offices began to sport temples in their compounds where *pujas* were being done everyday. In effect, what the state witnessed was the transformation of public space into a saffronised Hindu area of activity.

There has been a drastic increase in RSS *shakhas* in Gujarat, and according to newspaper reports, at the *sankalp shibir* (resolution camp) held in Ahmedabad on January 7, 2000 the RSS had pledged to open a *shakha* in every village in Gujarat by 2005.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, on January 7, 2000 a *sankalp shibir* was also held in Naroda,<sup>69</sup> one of the worst affected areas in the recent violence.

RSS members have infiltrated the bureaucracy making it easy for them to gain access to electoral records, to conduct religion based census (almost immediately after the attack on Christians in the Dangs in 1998) to get information about Muslim and Christian schools and then to cancel their grants (1999-2000), to manipulate school curriculum, in short, to manipulate the State machinery towards the goal of *Hindutva*. In the year 2000, close on the heels of the RSS *sankalp shibir* on Jan 7, 2000, a 14-year old ban on government officials joining the RSS was lifted. This move was ominous as it opened up the RSS floodgates right into the heart of the bureaucracy in Gujarat.

Educational institutions have particularly been targeted. Christian missionary schools and schools with Muslim managements have been singled out. In 2000 the government came out with a roster of blacklisted schools, which were first asked to furnish their financial details and then their grants were either cancelled or cut down drastically throwing the school managements into a quandary. Christian missionary schools were at one point made the target of a vicious campaign where they were accused of forcible conversions of Hindu girls. The student wing of the BJP, the *Akshil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (ABVP) was particularly active in this. ABVP activists terrorised school girls from missionary schools into wearing *bindis* and bangles, thereby introducing a dress code. Similarly from time to time the ABVP has issued injunctions to girl students in colleges in Ahmedabad and Baroda to refrain from wearing Western dresses like trousers, jeans or skirts.

In 1998 in Baroda, the *Bajrang Dal* led a protest against a fashion show leading to the mob physically attacking the models. The ABVP in 1999 tried to pressurise the university authorities to introduce a dress code for girl students. Similarly a reported incident of molestation in the M.S. University was crudely exploited for political gains. The ABVP began a campaign against Muslim students saying that they were responsible for luring young Hindu girls into fraudulent marriages. The campaign went further and stated that because

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<sup>67</sup> Source: Dossier prepared for the International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat in December 2002.

<sup>68</sup> *Asian Age*, January 7, 2000.

<sup>69</sup> *Times of India*, January 9, 2000.

Muslim boys are used to eating meat, and have no respect for Hindu girls (read culture), they molest or rape them.

In July-August 1998, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* launched a vicious campaign on inter-religious marriages in towns and villages like Bodeli, Sanjeli and other *Adivasi* areas in Panchmahals, attacking couples who had married across religious lines, and terrorising Muslim residents, in one case forcing them to flee the village. Following this campaign, the BJP-led state government set up a cell to monitor inter-religious marriages, which would be responsible for ‘rescuing’ Hindu girls from such so-called ‘forcible’ marriages.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

**Annexure VI**  
**Socio Economic Reality of Muslims in India<sup>71</sup>**

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Muslims make up 12 per cent of India's 1.2 billion people.

On an average, more Muslims live on smaller pieces of land than Hindus.

19 per cent of Muslims and over 25 per cent Hindus in India have access to piped water.

30 per cent of Muslims and 43 per cent of Hindus nationwide have access to electricity.

In 1987-88, 57.6 per cent of urban Muslim males and 74.7 per cent of urban Hindu males were literate. A mere 4 per cent of class SSC examinees are likely to be Muslim, when Muslims in India constitute 12 per cent of the population.

Only 9 per cent of Muslim girls and 13 per cent of Hindu girls between 15-19 years are in school. According to NSS 1987-88 data, 32.8 per cent of Muslim girls and 40.6 Hindu girls in the age group five to nine have access to school education. In the age group 15 – 19, this figure drops to a chilling 8.8 per cent for Muslim girls and 12.6 per cent for Hindu girls. Both figures indicate the disturbing reality of our society. Over 42 per cent of urban Hindu women and 59.5 per cent of urban Muslim women have been deprived of basic education and are illiterate.

In the Lok Sabha, there have been a maximum of 49 Muslims or 9.04 per cent in 1980. Whether it was 1952 (23 members out of 489) or 1996 (27 out of 543), it has comfortably made up less than five per cent of the Lower House.

MIT sociologist Omar Khalidi quotes former Defence Minister Mr. Yadav in his forthcoming *Khaki and Ethnic Violence in India* — that “just one per cent out of a total 1100,000 men-at-arms” were Muslim. Khalidi cites a variety of reports to establish Muslim under-representation in the Assam Rifles (2.5 per cent), BSF (4.54 per cent), CISF (3.76 per cent), CRPF (5.5 per cent). According to Khalidi, there were 1.55 per cent Muslims in the

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<sup>71</sup> Given the distortions of history and false statements about the contemporary situation by the *Sangh Parivar* against the Muslim community, we give here a snapshot of the reality, based on objective databases, like that of the Census of India and the National Sample Survey Organisation. This note is based on an article in the Indian Express, dated 14<sup>th</sup> September 2003. [http://www.indianexpress.com/archive\\_full\\_story.php?content\\_id=31472](http://www.indianexpress.com/archive_full_story.php?content_id=31472)

Indian Police Service between 1947-56. By 1965, the figure had risen to 3.58 per cent, oscillating in a narrow band to finally settle at 3.65 per cent in 2002.

One out of every eight Indians is a Muslim; but 26 of every 27 senior police officers are non-Muslims. According to one account, even in 1994 in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where the governments claim to be the most sympathetic to Muslims, only 12 Muslims out of 2,700 were recruited as policemen. Out of 16,400 sub-inspectors in Bihar, there were 35 Muslims and out of 3,000 in Uttar Pradesh, 116 were Muslims.

There are only 1.6 per cent IAS officers belonging to the Muslim community (80 out of a total of 4,872); 2.5 per cent medical practitioners (1,064 out of 41,733) and 1 per cent chartered accountants (549 out of 54,000). Their position in the industrial establishment owned by the large corporations is no better. In a group of 2,832 industrial establishments owned by large corporate units, each with sales of Rs. 5 crores (1 crore=10 million) and above, there were only 4 units owned by Muslims with only 8 managing directors, that too in the lower echelons of the corporate sector.

TISCO, the biggest Tata concern, employed only 4.1 per cent Muslims in the executive cadre, 5.6 per cent in the supervisory cadre and 10.30 per cent among workers. The situation in Mahindra and Mahindra was worse: 1.48 per cent in the executive cadre, 2.25 per cent in the supervisory cadre and 5.02 per cent among the workers. A random survey made a decade ago showed that in Delhi Cloth Mills, out of 987, only two were Muslims. Of the 115 senior positions in Pond's, only 1 was held by a Muslim.

## Annexure VII

### Saffronisation of Education<sup>72</sup>

(Note: The colour saffron has been identified with Right Wing Hindu Ideology, and hence the entire exercise of pushing right wing philosophy in school text books has been referred to as Saffronisation of Education)

The *Bharatiya Janata Party* began its intervention in the field of Education by: 1. appointing various personnel in prestigious educational Institutes; 2. by encouraging through public funds and various other means schools run by the Right wing; 3. by changing the textbooks and the curricula at the level of schools and colleges to project Right wing ideology.

#### Part I: National Curriculum

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

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) of India was officially constituted in April 1982 (though it has been functioning since 1935) and its term expired in 1985. On October 19, 1990 it was reconstituted by the government through a resolution, which held that the CABE was the highest body to advise the Central and State governments in matters of education. The resolution stated that in the past, important decisions had been taken on the advice of the CABE and that it had provided a forum for arriving at a consensus on issues relating to educational and cultural development. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) formulated the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) without consulting CABE. State approval, a necessary requirement for any significant changes in the national education policy, has also not been taken.

Today the RSS runs more than 20,000 schools throughout the country. The acceptance of the RSS sponsored 'national curriculum' will enhance the number of those influenced by RSS ideology manifold and will cause a considerable shrinkage in the space for secular activities. Already more than 10,000 of these RSS schools, under different names, have affiliation to the Central Board of Secondary Examinations (CBSE) or various state education boards. About 18-20,00,000 students and over 1,00,000 teachers are already a part of its *Vidya Bharti* (Indian Education) network. In Goa, (a BJP ruled state) the BJP Chief Minister has virtually put the entire primary education system at the disposal of the RSS to do with it what it likes. The operationalisation of the National Curriculum will put the entire school education system under right wing control and will make it a breeding ground for the fascist *Hindutva* ideology.

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<sup>72</sup> Nalini Taneja, "The Saffron Agenda in Education"

<http://www.ercwilcom.net/~indowindow/sad/godown/edu/saffron.htm>;

T.K. Rajalakshmi, "The issues at stake," *Frontline*, vol. 19, no. 20, October 12 - 25, 2002;

Romila Thapar, "Secular Education and the Federal Polity." This is the text of her address at the 'National Convention Against Saffronisation of Education', organised by SAHMAT (August 4-6, 2001, New Delhi, India)

<http://www.ercwilcom.net/~indowindow/sad/godown/edu/rtsefp.htm>;

Ganashakti Newsmagazine: News Feature, "Education BJP Style: Saffronisation of Books."

<http://www.ganashakti.com/old/1998/981130/feature2.htm>.

- The books being targeted are predictably history texts by Romila Thapar, R.S. Sharma, Bipin Chandra, Satish Chandra and Arjun Dev. The reasons given are equally predictable--it is necessary, it is said, to remove the leftist bias in school education. In fact the 'burden' of history on the young child needs to be lightened. The child is made to dwell too much in the past it is argued. He/she needs to be more in tune with the contemporary world. Therefore he/she better know more about the current struggles for the Ram temple than the insignificant medieval period, and of course, the freedom struggle is important, but *Hindutva* leaders like Savarkar should be more adequately represented! Such pronouncements, made publicly and nonchalantly by Mr. Rajput, Director of NCERT, sound disturbing and ominous to say the least.
- The second major concern of the authors of the 'reformed' curriculum is nationalism and national pride. The RSS agenda is writ large in the document itself. It says that Western developments occupy too much space and must be replaced with emphasis on Indian contributions in science and knowledge, and Indian culture and tradition. The document has a completely uncritical view of Indian culture, identifies Indian culture primarily with brahmanical texts and Hinduism, and reeks of chauvinism in the name of national pride, the inculcation of which, according to the tenor and tone of the document, is one of the primary goals of education. It seems India has nothing to learn from others and never did!
- The history texts are nothing but a bald and unadulterated illustration of the RSS view of history and use of history for its sectarian agenda. This view presents Aryans as the original inhabitants of India; that Indian civilisation is essentially Aryan civilisation, that the ancient period of history when Hindu kings ruled was the 'golden' period and India made enormous advances during this period. According to this view, the coming of Muslims brought darkness, cruelty, backward social practices, and the Moghul kings were cruel tyrants who destroyed the already existing Indian nation. Hedgewar, Golwalkar and Savarkar are portrayed as the greatest freedom fighters, Muslims as a community are branded as traitors, primarily responsible for the Partition. Hinduism is in this view, synonymous with nationalism. The distortion of history is carried further in portraying the national movement as one unending struggle of the Hindus poised against Muslim power and then against the alliance between the British and the Muslims. This uninterrupted line of freedom fighters continues into the post independence period with the *kar sevaks* presented as patriotic heroes. Mulayam Singh Yadav (the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister who brought the *kar sevaks* demolishing the *Babri Masjid* under control) is supposed to be a butcher of Hindus. Even the mention of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi at the hands of a Hindu right wing extremist has been removed from the textbooks.
- Caste, child marriage, and sati (women "voluntarily" burning to death on the husband's pyre) are defended; Muslims, Christians and Parsees are called foreigners; Urdu is referred to as a foreign language and it is claimed that the first man on earth was born in India!

Following are some excerpts from the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission for setting up Departments of Vedic Astrology in Universities:

- “Vedic astrology is not only one of the main subjects of our traditional and classical knowledge but this is the discipline which lets us know the events happening in human life and in the universe on time scale.
- The distinguishing feature of this subject is that it makes us familiar with time, its nature and feature and its effects on human life and other events and that way it helps us to manage and make optimal utilization of time.
- It is a common feature that despite the best methods adapted for estimation, events happen in different ways and add to the worries, tensions and frustrations in life. Here Vedic Astrology can help to see the unforeseen, it being the subject dealing with time.
- Starting of the courses in Vedic Astrology in Universities will not only impart the knowledge of this subject to the people, but will also add a new dimension for research in the fields of Hindu-mathematics, *Vastushastra*, Meteorological Studies, Agricultural Science, Space Science etc.”

### **Some of the recent proposals mooted at the Education Ministers’ conference:**

In the Education Ministers’ Conference, the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry of the BJP-led Central government mooted some proposals which were nothing but efforts to communalise and commercialise the entire education system in the name of nationalisation. Some of the dangerous proposals were:

1. Sanskrit (*language totally controlled by upper caste Brahmins*) will be a compulsory subject up to the Degree level.
2. *Saraswati Vandana* (*Hindu religious prayer*) will be compulsory for school students irrespective of their religion, caste, creed etc.
3. All private schools, which are running for ten years, will be automatically recognised or certified.  
(*The main objective of this proposal is to recognise/ certify RSS run schools and to commercialise the entire schooling system. Through this move the State Government can be bypassed. (eds.)*)
4. Hindu culture will be inculcated among all the students right from the primary level up to the highest level.
5. The private sector will be encouraged to set up educational institutions. To achieve the goal of compulsory elementary education the private sector has to play a major role. (editorial note: this can be interpreted as the BJP-led Government trying to deny its own responsibility.)
6. House keeping will be introduced as a subject at the school level for girls.

## **Part II: Educational Institutes**

There are many books and articles on how various institutes have been affected by Right wing propaganda. Below are some indicative examples.

**Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR):** Its Council is now dominated by saffron sympathisers. The *Towards Freedom* project has been shelved following the withdrawal of two of its volumes edited by K.N. Panikkar and Sumit Sarkar. Along with this, projects on *Inscriptions of India* and *Economic History of India* pertaining to Railway Construction have also been shelved. Funds have instead been sanctioned and approved for projects on the *Indus Valley Civilisation* and on *Archaeology and Tradition*. In addition, a project on the mapping of the Saraswati river civilization has been given to RSS linked historians. The project is



affiliated to a private trust on archaeology, run by the infamous S.P. Gupta who had claimed that there was a Ram temple under the Babri mosque. The direction of research pursued and the funding pattern are obviously linked to the *Hindutva* agenda of proving that the Indus valley civilization was an Aryan civilisation.

**The Archaeological Survey of India (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.

**The Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR):** Huge funds have been made available to the Shyama Prasad Mookherjee Documentation Centre and the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Centre for Social Welfare, established by the BJP government. The ICSSR, whose mandate is essentially to fund the 27 state level institutes, has changed course by starving these institutes and directing funds for international level seminars and projects linked to the *Hindutva* agenda. For instance, the government has pledged some 40 millions for an Oxford chair on Indian History and Culture.

## Annexure VIII

### Testimony on the burning of the Sabarmati Express

Kartik, scientist, trade unionist, lawyer and human rights activist testified before the panel. He has been following up the burning of the Sabarmati Express case hearings before the Shah and Nanavati Commission.

“In the entire Godhra town and district, everyone knows only one story – that there was a conspiracy to hold the train somewhere about 20 km before Godhra. But since the train was late by four hours they could not burn the whole train so they collected near “A” Cabin and had just about resources to burn and destroy only one coach, that is, S-6.

“The facts that I give based on the hearings of the Commission prove that there was no conspiracy from the Muslim community.”

“I have quoted only from the Commission. The hearing is continuing. The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) has given the report and the Assistant director deposed before the Commission. The report made headlines saying that the fire was not started from outside the train. This is just a conjecture of the FSL director, nothing else. The FSL team threw water standing outside the train and tried to show that fire could not have been started from the outside. Then the FSL Assistant director comes to the conclusion in the second report that he gave, which is most dangerous, that fire was started by pouring 60 litres of petrol from inside the train. Before this report came, the Police had filed charge sheets against the accused on the assumption that the fire was started from the outside; but after the report came the Police had to change the entire charge sheet which is unheard of in Criminal Jurisprudence. Now they are in a worse position as the report itself is bogus, it has no basis. So now they would have to change the charge sheet once again. Now they have a witness, a boy who states that he carried the petrol, he went inside and poured the petrol. We all know how confessions can be extracted. But the evidence before the Nanavati Commission suggests that there was not a drop of petrol to burn the train.”

“There were three fights. First at the station there was a relatively minor fight. The train was stopped because there was chain pulling. The second fight started after the train stopped at 7:48 for 12 minutes. Hundreds of them participated in this fight. Stones and bricks were thrown from both the sides. *Kar Sevaks* also used bows and arrows in the fight. We have collected some of those. The *kar sevaks* had gone all the way up to Single Falia throwing stones, covering a distance of 50 yards from the train. They were outside the coach. Then the train starts. *Kar sevaks* run to catch the train and the Muslim mob follows them. Then the train stops. The train stops the second time near the cabin. There is no evidence why the train stopped the second time. A conclusion can be drawn that it was the driver, who stopped the train. The chain was pulled from four coaches. Three breaks got corrected. The fourth one did not get corrected. Due to the fight and stone throwing the driver must have decided to start the train. Then the train was stopped to correct the fourth break, which was of the compartment where the fight was taking place. The driver has given three different versions so far. The first time he says it was due to chain pulling. The second time he says the Muslim mob cut the hosepipe and the third time he says the disk was open.”

“The smoke was seen at 8:15 a.m. Everyone talks only about smoke and smoke and smoke. No one talks about fire. We have examined 9 *kar sevaks* from the passengers; we have examined the SP, and he says he did not see any fire. There was no fire at the ground level at all. The fire is found at two vestibule sides, one is on S6 and S7 and other at S5 and S6.

There was fire there. There is no conscious decision to burn the coach or to burn people; otherwise the Muslim crowd could have blocked the door. There is not even a single complaint that Hindus were being stopped when they were coming out. We asked the *kar sevaks* who were inside if anybody had stopped them. They said no. They had come out. The people inside broke three windows, ninety people jumped out. An interesting factor is that all the people who got burnt, have burns above their waist and not below the waist. Every single person is burnt above the waist. The head, face and hands are burnt.”

“No fuel fire could do this. The FSL director messed it up by saying that petrol was poured in. If petrol had been poured in the train, would people’s bodies have been burnt only from above? Sixty litres of petrol could have blown up the coaches.”

“Those people who ran out faced fire all across the top. We talked to one lady who managed to escape. I asked her whether there was fire on the ground. She said no, there was no fire on the ground. She is confused but she categorically says there was fire on the top and on the side. Her feet did not burn even when she was bare foot, had no shoes on. People died of suffocation. The *kar sevaks* who were in the train were hanging on inside the train up to twenty minutes. When they came out they knew that they had left people behind. There was no fire for twenty minutes.”

“My assessment is that, it was the thick rubber of the vestibule that was set on fire, probably using cloth and grease from the wheels. At the bottom there are steel sleepers and on the side there is round big rubber for absorbing shocks. Those things burnt on both the sides and that gave rise to black pungent smoke. So the smoke was pouring in from both the sides. The side of the rubber also caught fire; I have got photographs of that fire from VHP people who were there. The flames are leaping from the rubber. Now there is a tunnelling effect. There is this closed compartment with fire at both ends. This is called flash over. The fire starts eating the steel of the compartment. It starts grazing along the compartment at both ends. It goes through the top surface. By chance if the door or window is opened, then fresh oxygen supply comes in. There is a spurt and it is called flash over fire, where temperature goes up to 600 degree centigrade. According to me that is what happened. And the flash over also was helped by the luggage. Cloth bags are very inflammable. The luggage caught fire. Most of the *kar sevaks* were sitting on the upper birth due to the stone throwing that was taking place. And they were sitting with their luggage. Those people who ran out faced fire all across from the top.”

“People did not die of burning but of suffocation. Police also knew that there were people inside. Police Superintendent Mr. Bhargava deposed before Commission that there was no fire at that time only smoke and he knew that there could be people inside.”

“After the *kar sevaks* came out of the train, they were very aggressive and burned all the Muslim shops and houses near that area.”

“Police can never give us the correct facts. They keep changing their version according to political requirements. They have always gone by the requirements of the Chief Minister. The criminal case is actually totally weak. They did not do *panchnama* of the coach up until the next day afternoon. The Chief Minister Narendra Modi was inside the coach before a *panchnama* was done. First the police accused the ISI, then Mr. Kalota and Haji Bhilal. Now a third person, Mr. Kukure is being named. But Mr. Kukure was selling milk at that time. Mr. Kalota was the president of the Municipal Corporation. He was called by the police to control the mob and then implicated. The DSP says that he had asked Kalota to go away and

he had left. The police had even asked Haji Bhilal to go away because he had a beard and the *kar sevaks* were getting angry with him. He too had left.”

“The issue of molestation came out afterwards. There was a girl and her mother. There was also some minor incident of molestation. But it was brought up much later; even the Muslims did not know it then. We have also spoken to them.”

“So the fire was an unfortunate accident. The fire was a consequence of the brawl between two sides. There was no premeditation.”

Shri Rajendraprasad Misrilal Mina deposed as under:

On 27-2-2002 I was on duty as the Assistant Station Master at ‘A’ Cabin of Godhra railway station from 12 at night to morning up to 8 am.

The Sabarmati Express arrived at Godhra railway station at 7.43 am. Since the line was clear, the departure signal was given at 7.45 am. The train started at 7.48am. After some time the train was stopped after blowing the whistle. At that time there was no crowd between cabin ‘A’ and the train.

When the train started again I looked at the clock in the cabin and the time was 7.55 am. When the train reached near the cabin I was standing near the window of the cabin for showing the ‘alright’ signal. When the train arrived at ‘A’ cabin, the engine was blowing the whistle indicating that the chain had been pulled. The period between the restarting of the train and its arrival at ‘A’ cabin could have been around 5 to 6 minutes. I did not see any crowd at that time. It was about 8 o’clock when the train stopped.

When the train was moving with slow speed I had seen a crowd running towards and along with the train. When I got down from the cabin, some people from the crowd came near the cabin. Few persons from the mob were throwing stones on the train... The mob did not arrive all together but about ten to fifteen persons were coming and collecting together. There were also women and children in the mob.

I did not personally see as to who set the fire and how.

Shri Mohan Jagdish Yadav has deposed as under:

I am performing my duty as RPF Police Constable at Godhra. My duty was to do patrolling between ‘A’ cabin and CPWI from 8.00 pm on 26-2-2002 to 8.00 am of 27-2-2002

There is a culvert between ‘A’ cabin and CPWI office. I did not see any suspicious movement near and around the culvert before the arrival of the Sabarmati train at Godhra Station. I did not see any mob near ‘A’ cabin before the arrival of the train. I did not see any suspicious movement throughout the route between ‘A’ cabin and CPWI office before the arrival of the train.

On 27-2-2002 at about 7.45 am, when the Sabarmati express arrived at the platform, I was present in the front of CPWI office. We heard somebody shouting from platform no. 1. On hearing the noise, two of us went to platform no.1. We saw that stones were being hurled between the train passengers and outside people. Some passengers were shouting slogans of Jai Shree Ram. We told the passengers to go and sit in the train. We then raised our sticks and told the outsiders to go away and chased them away. I believe that the reason for the stone throwing was the quarrel that had taken place with the hawkers.

When the train started, we were still on the platform and while we were on the platform the train had moved about four coaches and had stopped. Once again we saw that people from both the sides were throwing stones. Once again we pushed the passengers to get into the train and chased the outsiders beyond the wall.

The passengers who were shouting and throwing stones were passengers of the two coaches. The people who were throwing stones from Singal Faliya, were doing so from behind the wall and some of them were trying to jump across the wall to enter the station. The passengers who were throwing stones, some of them were also going towards the wall and were shouting '*Jai Shree Ram*'. The people, who were throwing stones from outside were throwing pieces of bricks.

The depositions before Nanavati commission:

The Guard of the Sabarmati Express Shri Satyanarayan Punchuram Varma deposed as under:

I joined Sabarmati Express as the Guard on 27-2-2002.

There was chain pulling immediately after the train left Godhra station and I was informed about it by the Driver. Some passengers had been left behind at the station. The chain was pulled because the passengers were left behind. The train moved further after all the passengers had boarded the train. The train stopped once again after moving about one kilometre.

Shri Raju Bishankumar Bhargava, Police Superintendent of Godhra, deposed as under:

I had reached the burning coach at about 8.30 a.m.

I had seen people with black faces and with some burn injuries on the head coming out of the coach. I had seen ten to twelve passengers coming out of that coach... They were coming out of the door on the Godhra side... The injuries which I noticed on the passengers were on the upper part of their bodies.... I had not noticed any injury below their waist.

I had not seen any flames in the area of the coach, which I could see from the door. I had seen only smoke in that area... I had not noticed any flames on the floor of the area between the doors. I had also not smelt any inflammable fuel like petrol, kerosene, diesel etc.

Some persons were able to get down from the coach but according to my understanding others were not able to get out of that coach because they got suffocated... As I did not hear any cry for help from the passengers trapped inside that coach I presumed that they had become unconscious and therefore they were not raising any cries.

I had not seen any person from the Muslim community preventing the passengers in S-6 and S-7 from coming out of those coaches. No passenger had complained that they were stopped from coming out of those coaches.

## Annexure IX

### Case study of Mota Sarnaiya

Most houses in this village have been built at least partially, that is the outside walls have been erected and every house has doors, windows etc. We did not see the inside of the houses but the external structures were visible. We met the people behind the *Masjid* which is in the process of being rebuilt. Either because the location was out in the open, or because we were talking about livelihoods, most of our conversations were with men from the village. We spoke to very few women – only those who were themselves heads of households. Since the houses of the people from the Muslim community in this village are all in one area, we were able to talk to at least someone from almost every household. In case no one was available from a particular household, others provided that information. Hence for this village we have information for all the 89 affected households.

There are three main occupations that Muslim people from this village have been involved in. One is Haat Bazaar – which is trading in mainly goats and occasionally in cows and buffaloes. The former are traded for meat but the latter only for milk. At present almost every household with able bodied men is involved in this trade. Earlier (about 60 to 70 years ago) most of them were involved in the work of making and selling brooms and *chatais* along with the trade of cattle and goats. This is skilled work and over the years fewer and fewer people continued to be involved in it. About 15 households are today involved in this activity; but only for seven or eight households is this activity the sole means of survival. Five households have small grocery shops or *pan-beedi* shops in the village.

During the carnage all these households lost everything and had to move to Santrampur into the relief camp. After they came back to their village, most of them took up the same occupations that they were involved in before. We met them almost eight to nine months after they had started their work again and on an average we found that, across occupations and income levels, their incomes have reduced to 30 to 40% of what they used to be. A few of them have started daily wage labour in the construction business to supplement their incomes.

*Chatai and jhadoo business:* The brooms and the *chatais* are made from leaves that are available in the *Adivasi* hamlet. Making brooms does not require much skill but the making *chatais* is a more skilled occupation. The *chatais* also take a long time to make. The work involves going to the forests, collecting leaves, making the brooms or *chatais* and then selling them either in the local markets or wandering from village to village. There are only one or two people who are well known and who get orders for *chatais* during the marriage season. The payment for the sale is either in cash or partially in cash and the rest in kind (grain or corn). The main market is among the *Adivasis*.

*Haat Bazaar:* The work here too is mainly that of trading. They go around in the *Adivasi* hamlets and buy goats or cattle from them and then take them to the weekly market in different villages to sell them. Usually the main trading is in goats because it is less capital intensive and the goats are used for meat. During monsoons, however, they trade in the milk producing animals like cows and buffaloes. This work involves a lot of moving around and often involves staying out for the night as well.

In both these major activities, it is obvious that the Muslim population is very dependent on the *Adivasis* for both, the raw material and the market. Although the broom and chatai

business also needs skill, the haat bazaar is purely a trade and they are mainly middle men. With the tensions between the two communities, the effect on all aspects of these trades is very visible and hence the large drop in incomes.

Earlier the Muslims could easily get the leaves for the brooms and the *chatais*. But now the *Adivasis* are not as willing as they used to be earlier, to let them come to their villages and houses and collect the leaves. They are also not as willing to sell their goats and cattle to the Muslims. If they do sell then it is at a higher price, thus reducing the margin for the Muslim traders. The *Adivasis* have started killing the animals at their villages itself so they do not need to give the goats to the Muslims and besides some have started going to the market and directly selling their goats. As a result, the Muslims do not get the same amount of business.

Further, now the Muslim middlemen cannot travel far or stay overnight to buy goats from *Adivasi* villages as they have to return by dark before 5-6 pm. fearing for their security. This also reduces their business. The same holds for those who go from village to village to sell the brooms and *chatais*.

In the market, with the advent of new traders from amongst the *Adivasis* and the *Dalits* too, the business of the Muslim community has been badly affected. Often the new traders sell their products at a reduced rate (425/- for a goat instead of the earlier usual rate of 500/- and 550/- that the Muslims used to get or less than two rupees for the brooms). The *Adivasis* are also able to command a better price than the Muslim traders who are now afraid to fight for their rights. In *haats* and bazaars the traders just have to comply with the dominant business tactics of the *Adivasis*, or they gather in large numbers, and that is perceived as dangerous and a security risk.

With the *Adivasis* opening shops in their houses, the market for meat has also reduced. As the Muslim traders reported to the team, for every one goat that is cut in a Muslim trader's shop, 5 are cut in an *Adivasi's* shop. All this has meant that their businesses have reduced by 60% to 75 % (to 40 to 25%). Earlier while they used to trade 100 to 200 goats a month, now they can barely trade in 25 to 80 per month.

For those who have small shops, the main problem is that of cash flow and stocking of goods. Since they have very little capital, they have to get the goods for their shops on credit. Before the violence too they used to buy goods on credit; but then they traded goods of higher volumes and thus their credit was higher. Now they cannot afford to get more goods as they might not be able to sell them. While there is no system of charging interest, the goods are sold to them for approximately 5% more than the cost. Now they also have fewer customers; many of their earlier Hindu customers do not come and also discourage others from doing so (or are discouraged by Hindu shop owners) and the buying power of Muslim households has reduced considerably. Thus their business too has been curtailed and stands at 30% to 50% of what it was earlier. There has also been a growth of small shops in *Adivasi* areas. This has meant that fewer of them come to buy things from the Muslim traders.

With respect to social interaction, the *Adivasis* do come to Muslim weddings, but do not join in the feast. They just stay awhile, have soft drinks and leave. Their perception is that on the one hand, the *Adivasis* feel sorry for the loss the loss suffered by the Muslims and hence sympathise with them, while on the other hand, they are also alert and fearful of any reprisal.

### *The Panellists*

**Anissa Helie** is coordinator of the international coordinating office of *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*, UK, an international solidarity network focusing on the rights of women from Muslim countries and communities. In a global context of rising religious Right, the WLUML network looks at issues of militarisation, sexual rights and fundamentalisms – that is, the use of religion as well as ethnicity or culture to seek or obtain political power - within the Muslim world. WLUML's aim is to support the struggles of women from Muslim countries and communities by breaking the isolation in which women often find themselves confined. It also links them with the international women's human rights and feminist movements.

**Farah Naqvi** is an independent writer and consultant on issues of women, democracy and development. She is a founder of *Nirantar*, a women's organization that focuses on education, empowerment, literacy and political participation, particularly of rural women. She has also worked as a television journalist where she produced international features on women in global politics and women in Islamic societies. She was a member of the team which brought out *Survivors Speak*, the first fact finding effort to focus exclusively on the impact that the Gujarat carnage had on Muslim women. She has been working on the issue of Gujarat since March 2002.

**Gabriela Mischkowski** is a historian by training and co-founder of *Medica Mondiale*, a women's organization in Germany working to support war traumatized women. This project was initiated to provide medical and psychological care and support for women because of the widespread use of rape in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It has expanded to provide services in Kosovo, Albania and Afghanistan. She also conducted critical monitoring and extensive documentation of the *Foca Trial*, before the *International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia* (ICTY), which dealt exclusively with sexualized violence and enslavement.

**Meera Vellayudan** is a historian by training and currently working with the *Institute for Environmental and Social Concerns*. Her mother was the first Dalit women graduate in India as well as one of the eleven women on the Constituent Assembly, which drafted the Indian Constitution. She comes from a Gandhian family background and has been involved in the Indian women's movement since the late 1970s.

**Nira Yuval-Davis** is a Professor in Gender and Ethnic Studies at the University of Greenwich in London and is currently the President of the research committee on ethnic, race and minority relations of the International Sociological Association. A diasporic Israeli anti-zionist Jew, she has written extensively on nationalism, racism, citizenship and gender relations. She is a founder member of the organizations *Women against Fundamentalisms* and the *International Research Network on Women in Militarised Conflict Zones*. Currently she is a professor of Gender and Ethnic Studies at the University of East London. She has authored *Gender and Nation*, which has been translated into seven languages.

**Rhonda Copelon** is a professor of law at the City University of New York School of Law and Director of the *International Women's Human Rights Clinic* and board member of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City. She is a founding board member and legal advisor of the *Women's Caucus for Gender Justice*, has influenced the jurisprudence on sexual violence of the *ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals*, headed the legal advisors to the



judges of the *International Women's Criminal Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery*, and has been legal counsel in major international cases under the U.S. "Alien Tort Claims Act," including the 1980 case of *Filartiga v. Pena* and, currently, *Doe v. Islamic Salvation Front* addressing armed Islamist crimes against humanity and war crimes in Algeria.

**Sunila Abeysekara** is director of *Inform*, a human rights documentation centre in Colombo, Sri Lanka and works on issues of human rights abuses in conflict situations. She has been involved in monitoring the on-going peace process in Sri Lanka and promoting the participation of civil society, especially of women, in the negotiations at the local level. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the *Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development* and was recipient of the UN Human Rights Prize for Asia and the Pacific in 1998 for her work on women's human rights.

**Uma Chakravarty** is a feminist historian who has been associated with the democratic rights and the women's movements. She has been involved in investigations of riots since 1984. Most recently she participated in the PUDR fact finding mission in Gujarat on the state of criminal cases and rehabilitation of the victims. She has taught history at Miranda House, Delhi University and is the co-editor of *The Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation*.

**Vahida Nainar** has been a women's rights activist for the past 15 years. Beginning as a field worker with *Awaaz-e-Niswan*, she co-founded and directed *Women's Rights Action Group* for four years during which time she coordinated a nationwide study on women and the law in Muslim communities. She is also a researcher in international law and a Board member of Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, The Netherlands, Urgent Action Fund, USA, and Women's Research and Action Group, India. She is the former Executive Director (and the current Development Director) of the *Women's Caucus for Gender Justice* a network that intervened in the International Criminal Court process from a gender perspective by influencing the language of the justice mechanisms.