



*Special Plenary Session*

# Women and Violence in Gujarat

*Presentations*

Renu Khanna Trupti Shah  
Coordinators

Xth National Conference of the  
Indian Association for Women's Studies  
17th - 20th October 2002

Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

**Special Plenary Session**

**Women and Violence  
in Gujarat**

**Presentations**

**Renu Khanna And Trupti Shah**

*Coordinators*

**Indian Association for Women's Studies**

**October 2002**

# WOMEN IN A FRACTURED SOCIETY : THE GUJARAT POGROM AND AFTER

**Bina Srinivasan,  
Nandini Manjrekar,  
Renu Khanna ,  
Trupti Shah  
and Deeptha Achar**

## Women and the Hindu Right

Violence against women has always been a primary concern within the women's movement in India. Particularly since the 1980s when a court verdict acquitted those accused of rape in the case of an adivasi woman on the basis of her sexual history (the landmark Mathura rape case). Wave after wave of protest followed; this also led to an effort to understand the structural causes of violence against women, the forms of patriarchy used to invoke and socially sanction the use of violence and the role of women's collective agency in bringing about social change in this context.

The silence around rape, sexual assault and other forms of violence against women had finally broken and the country witnessed an outpouring of both protest as well as feminist literature. Violence against women was now firmly placed within the public realm, and it was through this that the state, law, society, community and family came under

a sustained feminist critique. In that Mathura's case was important as it revealed the powerful play of a combination of forces: the judiciary, the law, the police, caste and ethnicity, social sanction and the justification of the use of violence 'to control women's sexuality.

It was also the eighties that saw a re-configuring of rightwing forces in the political arena. With the strengthening of Hindutva forces there has been a conscious and systematic focus on women over the years. The focus has been twofold; it has addressed both Hindu women as well as women from the minority communities, in particular Muslim women. In building up an iconography of 'them' and 'us' the ideal womanhood and the 'enemy' have both been shaped and re-shaped. Several studies reveal how Hindu women have been trained to become the designated cultural reproducers within the Hindutva framework, how through this they have been given a space in the public

realm and how they have received instructions on proper social and domestic behaviour where any transgressions from patriarchal, Brahminical norms are frowned upon. This instruction has served the Hindutva purposes very well, as is obvious by the increasing participation of women in communal violence particularly since the 1990s.

In contrast to the ideal Hindu woman is the Muslim woman. While rightwing ideology builds up a vocabulary to describe and locate women from all minority communities, it is Muslim women who are central to the creation of this vocabulary, given their specific historical position. The Muslim woman is seen as the medium through which the community consolidates itself; she plays a key role in the reproduction of the community. The increasing numbers of the 'enemy' is then ascribed to her, and therefore she bears the brunt of the enmity in more ways than one. Unlike her Hindu counterpart who is de-sexualised and therefore pure and pristine, the Muslim woman is over-sexed (undoubtedly aided by her 'meat-eating' habits) and therefore unclean. A similar imagery is created for Hindu men, who are effeminate, tolerant and passive, whereas Muslim men are macho, fanatical and aggressive. This highly sexualised imagery is used to demonise the Muslim community and then serves to create fear which in turn leads to hatred and a justification of any means of violence to annihilate the community.

Feminist political analysis and action often leads to a confrontation with rightwing politics, as is quite well known. Rightwing groups in India have often taken up all issues central to women's interests, ranging from personal laws to beauty contests. In the process women's groups have been hard pressed to explain how they are different from rightwing groups, how feminist politics is premised on principles that are often antithetical to the rightwing project. This has been very much part of the struggle for women's groups and for the women's movement in India as a whole. However, the recent spate of violence in Gujarat, with its specific and widespread targeting of women has made the difference sharply visible.

### Women's Bodies as Sites of Violence

Various fact-finding teams have documented the central role of Sangh Parivar outfits acting with impunity in their hate-filled mission against the Muslim community, under the indulgent gaze and in many cases with the active participation of a partisan state machinery. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal have been widely accepted to be key perpetrators in the well-planned and systematic attacks on Muslim lives and property in cities, towns and villages. As in Partition, and more recently in Rwanda and Bosnia, in Gujarat too, women's bodies were sites of violence in this masculinist,

hegemonic project of subjugation. Unimaginable acts of sexual violence were perpetrated on women - young and old and even pregnant women - in Ahmedabad and villages in Panchmahals. (Survivors Speak and PUDR Reports). The scale of sexual violence against women in these areas remains inestimable, given the silencing of their voices through fear, trauma, threat of reprisal and no real hope of justice. Vadodara, also severely affected in the violence, did not report any case of rape, but Muslim women here nonetheless lived with the omnipresent threat of sexual violence as mobs (and the police) harassed and intimidated them both physically and through explicitly sexual abuse over the entire phase of the violence.

As victims, perpetrators and as key ideological focal points, women have been central to the violence in Gujarat. To begin with it has been justified in the name of women: in the war against the 'enemy' women's bodies have become the battleground. Rumours regarding minority attacks on and rape of Hindu women were routinely used to whip up anti-minority sentiment. On 27th February, 2002 itself there were rumours of women who were trying to save themselves from the burning bogie at Godhra being abducted and raped was instrumental in the attack on Muslim women en masse in various parts of the State. This rumour acquired added legitimacy on account of wide media coverage.

In adivasi areas rumours were spread about the abduction of adivasi girls to mobilise the adivasi community in large numbers to kill Muslims and burn and loot their property. This is particularly true of Panchmahals where non-adivasi Sangh Parivar leaders have been known to have been particularly active on this count. Fact-finding teams report that in Sanjeli-Randhikpur the issue of a Muslim youth marrying an adivasi woman was used to stir up communal frenzy in 1998 by Hindu communalist forces. The PUDR report states clearly that: 'Hindu communal leaders of the mobilisation campaigns in the adivasi areas have been successful in part in presenting attacks on Muslims to the tribal populace as a necessity to 'save adivasi women' and 'recover tribal honour' (See, 'Maaro! Kaapo! Baalo!' State, society and communalism in Gujarat, PUDR, Delhi, 2002 for details on violence in rural Gujarat)

Hindutva organisations have systematically used anti-Muslim propaganda that is designed to provoke. For example, in 1997 the Durga Vahini had distributed pamphlets that said, "Beware Hindus! There is an international plot using Muslim goondas to tempt and trap young college-going Hindu girls with love and marriage. Prevent your ward from mixing with boys of other religions, or else you can't prevent your sister, daughter from becoming Fatima or Julia." In July- August



1998, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad launched a vicious campaign on inter-religious marriages in Bodeli, Sanjeli and other places, attacking couples who had married across religious lines, and terrorising Muslim residents, in one case forcing them to flee their villages. 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. This move had little to do with concern for women's rights, being much more an aggressive stance to instil fear in any potential 'violators' of the Hindutva ideology and create a moral panic about innocent Hindu women being exploited by minority men. In fact, it was the VHP which 'abducted' one of these girls and kept her in an unidentified location to 'save' her from her Muslim partner. This girl later came out against their terror tactics, claiming that she had eloped out of love and not under coercion; another girl who had been allegedly 'abducted' also had to move the High Court to get justice. (Ref: fact-finding reports on the Sanjeli-Randhikpur incident by Sahiyar Stree Sanghathan and others.) While resources of the state were marshalled against the enemies (read minorities) of the Hindu Rashtra through creation of such monitoring mechanisms, women's safety cells which had been set up by the previous government to look into violence cases at all levels, were dismantled

by the BJP government when it came to power.

As the above incidents indicate, women are very much part of a systematic hate-the-Muslims campaign that has been in place for the last few years. They feel threatened by Muslims, economically and socially: "They have 4 wives and 20 children, they will overrun us, they don't use contraception etc. They are taking away all our business, we are becoming poor."<sup>11</sup>

Yet another widely circulated rightwing pamphlet said

*in the Godhra episode the Muslim 'gundas' had abducted about 25 to 30 women, then raped them, after which cut their breasts and inserted burning rods into their private parts. If we take the total of all the incidents that take place every day at various places, then, in Gujarat alone, there are at least 10 thousand cases of defrauding Hindu girls and as many cases of Hindu girls being raped, every year. Even after the Godhra episode they will continue to do the same with the same method but with a double intensity. They have murdered thousands of Hindus in Kashmir. Right in front of the eyes of the brothers and fathers, the Muslim terrorists raped their sisters and daughters and then killed them. On account of this hundreds of thousands of Hindus had to*

*flee from Kashmir. Hindus, wake up! If you want to save your sisters-daughters and if you want to save Gujarat and the rest of India from becoming another Kashmir then, from today onwards, keep a watch on your girls that they don't keep any sort of relationship with Muslims.*

*(Gujarat Carnage, 2002, A report to the Nation, Annexure 2)*

Another leaflet called "Jihad" has characterised the attack on Muslim life and property as a just and triumphant rape of the Muslim community. The least objectionable of the couplets says, "The sleeping volcano has woken today/ The Muslim people have been well and truly f..d."

These pamphlets lay bare the ideological building blocks of the Sangh Parivar. Women are clearly central to the entire project, and it is in attacking women that the Hindu Rashtra can become a reality. It is as repositories of community honour and child-bearers that Muslim women's bodies have been specifically targeted in the post-Godhra violence. On the other hand Hindu women have been given an unprecedented visibility both in terms of creating a fear psychosis in anticipation of an attack by the 'other', in terms of foregrounding them as the guardians of Hindu culture, and by extension, the Hindu Rashtra.

## Women as Colluders

According to eyewitness accounts women's participation in the violence took many forms. They included valorising and justifying the acts of violence, stripping women before they were sexually assaulted by mobs, dousing women, children and others with petrol before they were burnt to death, gathering and collecting stones and other weapons, participating in night-long vigils providing tea and snacks and looting shops and homes. Although many of these women owed allegiance to Sangh Parivar organisations (and included BJP leaders), there were others as well, such as erstwhile friendly neighbours - which makes the participation of women in the violence that much more disturbing.

Thus as active participants in the violence in Gujarat women have certainly traversed a full circle fulfilling their multiple roles as ideal housewives, mothers, daughters and equally as defenders of Hindutva. In this context it is significant that rightwing women's groups have also been 'empowered' to make representations to state bodies like the NHRC, the Parliamentary Committee for Women's Empowerment and the National Commission for Women. In some cases they have also managed to influence the reports of these institutions. Another interesting twist is added when these groups also claim to

work in camps holding trauma counseling sessions or distributing relief.

Gujarat represents a turning point in the history of the country. It is not only the unprecedented violence; it is also the method behind the execution of a plan that has been long in the making. Additionally, it is the long-term nature of the impacts on women's lives, regardless of caste, class and community. In an atmosphere vitiated by fear and insecurity, all women are affected. Also, when one section of women can be demonised, another section can come in for similar treatment at a later point. Hindu fundamentalism has clearly laid down the rules for all women; there is a real danger that all women can come under the ambit of these rules at some point in time as and when the Hindutva project unfolds. Any woman who transgresses these rules can be targeted. For instance, in Gujarat, in 1998 in Vadodara 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. If Hindutva has to retain its cutting edge, it would have to create a continuous stream of enemies. The enemy from within is very much part of its agenda.

Dalit and adivasi women have, more or less, allied with the upper castes during the violence, although for different reasons. This

alliance has increased in the Hinduisation of these women on a scale never before witnessed in Gujarat. However, Dalit women, frequently working class, have been badly hit by the post-Godhra violence. Continuous curfew as well as the atmosphere of fear has resulted in acute economic distress. Many women who worked as daily wagers or domestic help could not reach their places of work, and many have lost employment. Loss of earnings has resulted in a rising incidence of impoverishment and hunger.

Dalit women have expressed greater anxieties regarding life and property as compared to upper caste women at least partly because Dalit bastis lie almost always alongside Muslim bastis: Further, longstanding alliances forged by Dalit and Muslim women on the basis of shared socio-economic concerns, as also neighbourhood spaces, seem to have broken down. Reports of mass suicides among Dalits in Ahmedabad indicate acute insecurity and the breakdown of social support. It is an alarming trend also indicating a near-complete rupture of society.

In exceptional cases some women have also shown great personal bravery in order to safeguard life and property of their Muslim neighbours. Dalit bastis, have also been more prone to "combing operations"<sup>11</sup> conducted by the police, and many women



have been beaten and injured by the police, though the scale bears no comparison with that of Muslim women.

## Some Key Issues

### *The aftermath*

While all communities have been affected by violence, the position of Muslim households is not comparable to that of any other group. With their life and property under systematic attack, contending with unresponsive and biased police and administrative personnel, Muslim women have been facing a grim situation. Hundreds of families have been displaced and rehabilitation is a distant possibility. The social tensions of living in unsafe times is exacerbated by the deep sense of betrayal experienced by the women especially when they have suffered attacks by neighbours and children who 'grew up in front of our eyes'. In addition, a hostile state exacerbates the situation considerably. In particular for those women who have been either subject to or witnessed sexual assault. Insecurity and fear haunt their lives as they see the perpetrators of the violence being let off, and in some cases even threatening them with a repeat performance if they were to try to get back to their homes.

Women are consistently concerned for the effect the violence was having on their children's lives. On one hand, they are worried about the effects of uncertainty and

dislocation on children as well as about the psychological fallout on children who witnessed violence and experienced arrest. On the other hand, they are deeply distressed at the way their children's education was affected. Women feel that the insecurity felt by the Muslim community as a whole would also have ramifications not just on education, but even on the individual liberty of their children, especially daughters in the long run.

A marked feature of the post-Godhra violence has been the systematic targeting of livelihood resources of the Muslim community. An economic boycott of the Muslim community is also in place. Future livelihood options are severely curtailed. Firstly, as rehabilitation does not seem to be forthcoming and secondly, because they lack the confidence that their businesses would be safe after being rebuilt from scratch.

The violence meant that daily wage work, petty business and self-employed work came to a standstill. Both men and women have been unable to work and earn. Long-term prospects are grim ~ the well planned attack on the livelihood resources of Muslims, whether large industry/business or the humblest laari, has rendered economic rehabilitation a daunting task. This has been aggravated by the call for economic boycott of Muslims. It is in this context that productive economic activity of Muslim

women takes on a new urgency. We have reports of Muslim women, hitherto employed in home and small-scale industries, not being taken back to work, post-violence. Many erstwhile employers of these women feel threatened by the current call for a blanket economic boycott of Muslims given by the extreme right. The shrinking avenues for employment faced by the women take on added significance in the face of the present recession coupled with systematic destruction of livelihood assets of the community as a whole during the violence.

#### Trauma and Mental Health

Overriding fear has become a part and parcel of life for women. Most women display a fear of future for themselves, their families and community. Although fear and insecurity has permeated society at large, women contend with additional fears about sexual assault and abuse as well as with fear for safety of family members, particularly children. Most women express fear for a future where even a basic guarantee to life and property could not be taken for granted. Even women who had not suffered personal loss felt caught in the violence, merely by virtue of belonging to the minority community.

Muslim women have been traumatised by multiple betrayals. Corrosion of trust is most apparent in women who have been directly affected by the violence and arson. At one

level, women acutely feel betrayed by people in their neighbourhood. Witness to the fact that neighbours with whom they have lived all their lives, participated in and sometimes led, the attack on their community and the looting of property, has undermined their belief in a common humanity. The communalisation of neighbourhood spaces has also hit women very hard. They live in constant anxiety that children or livestock will cross the "border." They are sometimes unable to access civic amenities such as medical facilities, water etc. which lie on the "other" side. Tragically, suspicion has entered relationships that have lasted for decades, and it is very doubtful if the common cause that women have forged across communities can be rebuilt.

The effect of verbal abuse on women is stark, and members of the fact-finding teams believe that this arena of violence against women is, perhaps underrated. Humiliation, as a result of verbal abuse, rankled for long and carried almost as much weight as physical abuse. In almost all testimonies, women have remembered abuse and slogan shouting very vividly. Many are unable to even talk about it. Abuse involving their sexual relations with Allah humiliated them the most.

The women suffer from a range of psychosocial impacts including symptoms of post-traumatic shock syndrome. Sleeplessness,

recurrence of nightmares, reactions to sounds, fear of crowds are common experiences. Some of the more serious symptoms like withdrawal are also evident. The real challenge is addressing feelings of guilt, self-blame and low self-esteem. At a superficial level it is possible to work through these emotions. These women are placed within the context of the community, they need the protection of the community. The experience of violence has shamed them, and shamed the community too. It is important to understand that short term trauma counselling can only work if there is a long term process of deconstructing these feelings of shame.

This is also an ideological struggle which would challenge the secondary status of women, question gendered power equations that sanctions the use of violence against women to control and monitor them. The larger social and political context in Gujarat will also impinge on emotional rehabilitation. With this is tied up the issue of justice. Unless the survivors see a process of justice delivery, trauma will remain heightened. There will be some recurrence of trauma; there will be trigger points everywhere. Encountering some of the perpetrators of violence who live in the same locality will definitely have an impact. Justice, is therefore the real challenge. The state will obviously have to be involved in this process.

The women survivors are faced with a series of realities. Each one of them is tied up with the other and each one brings its own anxieties. Without a house it is difficult for them to feel secure. And without a means of livelihood, it is difficult to run a house. As physical security is a key issue and is not presently assured in their places of residence, they preferred to remain in camps. In camps the situation is far from ideal. There is no privacy and there is the danger of sexual molestation in camps too.

The camps were important as they were the only places that provided security. However, living in camps for extended periods has bound to have exacerbated problems. This is linked to proper and quick rehabilitation. Without rehabilitation the women are not going to be able to get on with their

lives. Currently their major anxiety is around safety, housing and livelihood. All these issues are interlinked and will have to be taken up simultaneously. Trauma counselling in this context also means that these issues have to be addressed.

Women are not victims of gender alone. They also bear the brunt of a patriarchal system that operates at the level of the community too, even a besieged community. The very same community which stuck together in terrified solidarity for its survival has also sometimes turned its back to women

who have been 'defiled' by the enemy. Women's rights activists have seen this prejudice in operation before and this should not come as a surprise. Yet it does seem rather unfortunate that a community that has intimate knowledge of large scale violations does not hesitate to further marginalise its women. It is therefore a complex motif.

#### Leadership and Organising

Many women have taken the lead in protecting themselves and their families. Key decisions regarding safety of the family, including determining places to hide, length of time of concealment, flight, its mode and direction, etc. have often been made by women.

During curfew, women have had to play dual roles. Since curfew was often lifted for women alone, many women managed important work outside the home in addition to their household chores. Irrespective of the tension between the two communities, some women of both communities took grave risks to save lives. Many women helped each other out in terms of everyday necessities.

The situation has also forced women to collectivise. Women have also got together to protest police atrocities against themselves and the arrests of underage sons. They have led initiatives to meet the Commissioner of Police and register FIRs. Despite enormous

pressures, women have protected their neighbours, menfolk and others in vulnerable and sensitive areas. Women have also been active in organising relief for those in camps or sheltering with families.

#### Role of the State

The cynical manipulation of the state machinery for the express purpose of terrorising and brutalising Muslim women is shocking and portends ill for the future of a society that is based on mutual dependence for its survival. The state in Gujarat has been involved at every level: from using electoral rolls to identify Muslim families, spreading anti-Muslim propaganda, ignoring/instigating mobs, complicity in the violence, refusal to set up relief camps or refusing to provide ration, making a mockery of compensation and rehabilitation and refusing to provide security to families wanting to return. It is clear that the state is out to erase the citizenship of the Muslim community in Gujarat, chilling evidence of which is provided by the fact that thousands of Muslim names have been deleted from electoral rolls according to recent newspaper reports. The erosion of democratic institutions in the state has been so complete that the usual mechanisms of justice have failed. In effect, the state as a democratic instrument of governance has collapsed completely. In its place is a de facto Hindu Rashtra.

Women feel deeply let down by state institutions, particularly the police. The partisan attitude of the police has dismayed them. Apart from suffering excesses at the hands of the police, many women have seen police indifferent and inactive, sometimes even colluding with mobs attacking them, conducting arbitrary combing operations in their localities, even though their localities were the ones under attack. They have watched innocent family members, old men, underage boys arrested while perpetrators of violence roamed free despite being named in FIRs. Women have lost faith in the fairness of almost all government institutions, and the ruling party, including the Chief Minister is held responsible for the current crisis in their lives. At the present moment, women feel secure only in the midst of their own community. One fears that this would lead further into the ghettoisation of the community.

Women have consistently complained about police brutality during "combing operations." Women were also deeply distraught regarding menfolk arrested in often arbitrary "combing operations" of the police. Their vulnerability, individually and as a community, both physically and economically, amplified their fear for their menfolk, particularly since they had themselves observed the partisan attitude of the police. There have been instances where discriminatory 'combing' has taken place, where police forces have selectively

combed areas and bastis of the minority community alone. This arbitrary combing has taken place despite the fact that it was the minority community that has been under attack. Some of their excesses are listed below.

- Pulling women from their homes, sometimes dragging them by the hair.
- Abusing, using curse words with reiiigio-sexual connotations.
- Beating women, including old, widowed women; sometimes so severely that medical treatment was required.
- Hitting pregnant women on their stomachs with butts of guns.
- Violating the right to practice religion by bursting into homes during prayer timings and treating the Qu'ran Sharief with disrespect.

Various women in oral and written complaints to the police have identified many police personnel involved in these atrocities, but no FIRs have been registered, nor has any action been initiated.

In some cases in villages in Baroda, Panchmahals and Dahod there has been intense pressure on the victims to withdraw the names of the accused from complaints filed with the police. Most cases of sexual assault have in fact not been recorded because of fear and because of social pressure.



Where do we go from here?

It is important to note that while economic rehabilitation needs to be undertaken on an urgent footing, it is imperative that economic rehabilitation should not be equated to interim relief alone. Although interim relief is crucial in the short term, the State has to address concerns about long-term employment opportunities for women. We have reports of Muslim women, hitherto employed in home and small-scale industries, not being taken back to work, post-violence. Many erstwhile employers of these women feel threatened by the current call for a blanket economic boycott of Muslims given by the extreme right. The shrinking avenues for employment faced by the women take on added significance in the face of the present recession coupled with systematic destruction of livelihood assets of the community as a whole during the March 2002 violence.

Social rehabilitation is an issue that has been totally ignored by the State. Many women are grappling with a collapse of their social order and loss of security in mixed neighbourhoods and are traumatised by a sense of betrayal by erstwhile neighbours, police and the State. Their fears regarding the safety of their children and concerns over their education would need to be addressed. Safe housing is also a central concern. The insecurity felt by the

Muslim community as whole, we fear would also have ramifications on the individual liberty of Muslim women in the long run.

There is a real need to reach out to all women with information de-bunking stereo types perpetuated by right-wing forces (about Muslims and bigamy, family size etc.), and economic indicators that show Muslims are among the poorest in the country. But at the same time, there is a need for reaching out at an emotional level too.

In conclusion, the Gujarat violence has rudely de-mythologised the 'women as peace keepers' notion. We need to urgently understand the development of the communal psyche in women, recruitment by right wing forces, and the appeal that these forces have for women. The so-called 'empowerment' many Hindu women (probably genuinely) experience through their involvement in the public sphere of militant Hindutva actions is actually accommodated within an aggressive majoritarian patriarchy which will unhesitatingly turn back on them. The discernible increase in violence against women in Gujarat can be seen to be a direct fallout of the breakdown of the social and moral order over the many months of communal violence. The economic distress due to the violence is reflected in increasing cases of domestic violence and incidents of collective suicides by the whole family including children. Most of the reported cases have

occurred in non-Muslim households - tribal, dalit or caste Hindu. We need to ask ourselves what strategies to adopt in this grim environment to work towards the possibility of a 'contradictory consciousness' among all women. We also need to understand the role of religion in people's, especially women's, lives. This is an area which secular/non-religious people have tended to ignore, in the hope that focusing on material conditions will make toiling people see the 'real' issues. How far we can go with such an understanding in the present scenario, however, remains another question.

#### References

1. State Sponsored Carnage in Gujarat. Report of a CPI(M)-AIDWA Delegation. March 2002-09-10
2. Survivors Speak. Citizen's Initiative. March 2002-09-10
3. Genocide in Gujarat. A Report on Violence in Dahod and Panchmahals. Forum Against Oppression of Women and Aawaz-e- Niswan. June 2002.
4. Violence in Vadodara: A report. PUCL-Shanti Abhiyan. May 2002
5. At the Receiving End. Women's Experiences of Violence in Vadodara. PUCL\_Shanti-Abhiyan. May 2002.
6. When the State Turns Fascist. Gujarat Genocide: A Women's Movement Perspective. Ad-Hoc Committee against Violence on women. June 2002.
7. National Human Rights Commission. May 2002.
8. National Women's Commission. May 2002.
9. Fact-finding and Documentation in the Riot Affected Districts of Gujarat. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. April-May 2002.
10. Gujarat Carnage. A report to the Nation. April 2002 Dr. Kamal Mitra Chenoy; S.P.Shukla; K.S. Subramanian; Achin Vanaik,
11. Carnage in Gujarat. A Public Health Crisis. Medico Friend Circle. May 2002
12. Gujarat: Laboratory of Hindu Rashtra. INSAF June 2002
13. 'Maaro! Kaapo! Baalo! State, Society and Communalism in Gujarat. PUDR. May 2002
14. Hard Facts. Citizen's Initiative. June 2002
15. Fact-finding Reports into Sanjeli-Randhikpur Incidents by Sahiyar, Gujarat Forum for Women's Studies and Action, NAWO, Movement for Secular Democracy and PUCL, August-September 1998.

## Understanding Violence on Women Post Godhara in Panchmahal .& Dahod Rural Areas

JANHVI ANDHARIA AND NAWAZ KOTWAL

Women are always the worst affected in times of communal carnage/riots and used as tools to serve the cause of violators. Not only has the (Hindu) male ego been satisfied but there is an ever strong belief that subjugation of women's body belonging to a particular faith directly indirectly brings humiliation/insult to the community as whole. Along with the life-long trauma that the women have to face, there is the feeling of guilt and helplessness in a certain percentage of the male members of the community.

Pattern:

Starting from February 28th, gang rapes, mass rapes, molestation were committed across Panchmahals and Dahod. Irrespective of age women were targeted. Even pregnant women were not spared.

In the villages of Anjanwa, Pandarwa, Kalol, Fatehpura, Sanjeli, the incidents were heinous, gruesome and the participation of majority women as spectators hurts all human sensibilities.

What is constantly talked about is mob fury and the sequence of events. But in this mob fury perpetrators of the violence did not forget to destroy all evidence of these crimes. Women were raped, cut and burnt. This was a conscious effort to deny the very commitment of such crimes.

Community Reaction:

Community leaders in the initial stages showed tremendous concern. Incidents were spoken of by them again due to the awkward and uncomfortable position that a man faces to talk and address a rape has always been there. In this situation all leaders have taken the help of woman volunteers/NGOs to talk to the victims and one cannot deny the support that was provided by them.

On the other hand rape within a family is being handled very differently. The support provided is very tentative, the reasons much complex than what we believe and needs much debate.

The NGO reaction has not been uniform and ranges from providing monetary support to judicial redressal and confidence building.

Legal Redressal :

The complexity of it stems from the denial of the crime. Manipulation of FIRs, statements, chargesheets and medico-legal cases leaves very little scope for a single conviction.

**Social Rehabilitation :**

A range of issues need to be tackled. Some survivors are single women and young children and therefore a need arises to address livelihood support and children education. Most victims have been displaced from their original residence and thus have to practically start life afresh. Besides handling the trauma. Where women whose husbands are with them there is renegotiation of the relationship with the husband.

## Gujarat - India's Laboratory of Fascism

SOPHIA KHAN  
Ahmedabad Office,  
Vikas Adhyayan Kendra,  
Mumbai

### Introduction

In 1947 we acquired our independence, with a price tag of partition which took place on religious grounds. Unaware of the gravity of price that we were to pay in the future we celebrated our independence. Some 60 million Muslims became the citizens of state of Pakistan. The remaining 35 million Muslims were left inside India, representing the largest minority in the country.

Creation of Pakistan proved to be the biggest blunder of the 20th century as far as Muslims of democratic India are concerned. After partition an average Hindu acquired the conviction that Muslims in India are solely responsible for the creation of Pakistan. So, at the root of Hindu-Muslim conflicts, the hostility, projected fears and historic prejudices of an average Hindu towards Muslims should be considered worth mentioning. Even today, slogans like 'Muslims are pro-Pakistani, anti-nationals, they must go to Pakistan or kabristan (graveyard)' etc. are heard throughout India, during Hindu-Muslim conflicts. At times such slogans themselves create such clashes. At such times, any anti-Pakistan issue instantly transforms into anti-Muslim.

With increasing religious intolerance in India, the condition of minority is becoming exceedingly distressing. States like Gujarat are highly vulnerable towards religious fanaticism. Gujarat is situated in far west of India. It is one of the most prosperous states housing various industries and Gujaratis have earned the name worldwide for being successful business persons.

A part of Gujarat's border touches the now Islamic State of Pakistan. This geographical neighbourhood has also been reason enough for the frequent news of Pakistan in Gujarati newspapers. The communal feeling in Gujarat has intensified after Indo-Pak war in 1965. The act of Pakistan shooting down the plane carrying the then chief minister Mr. Balvantrai Mehta, killing him instantly, had particularly disturbed the otherwise peaceful fabric of the state. The attitude of Hindus became very sharp and open during the war. Rumours flowed about the espionage activities of Muslim government officers. No one was above suspicion. So much so, there was a wide spread rumour, not verified by any-

one, that Mr. Mehndi Nawaz Jung, the then Governor of Gujarat was a Pakistani spy. The arrest of several hundreds of Muslims under the Defense of India rule, as a preventive measure during war, further confirmed the Hindus in their suspicion of Muslims' loyalty to India. The gallant role that Muslim soldiers played in the war against Pakistan evoked lukewarm response in Gujarat.

These feelings of 1965 were equally echoed in 1999. Loyalty of Muslims was questioned during the Kargil issue. The news of Muslim soldiers having died or wounded were not noted anywhere in any Gujarati newspapers (except "Gujarat Today"<sup>11</sup>, run by a Muslim trust). Many programmes were organised by Muslims like anti-Pakistani demonstration, burning the effigy of Pakistani Prime Minister, fasting, blood donation camps etc. in numerous towns and small villages of Gujarat. These were not noted by any Gujarati dailies, except Gujarat Today. At times they were given news value by the English dailies, yet these appeared in the form that these programmes were conducted by 'Muslims' (the word was inducted with underline). Muslims organising such programmes are considered especially noteworthy, and not as natural as organised by any other citizens of India. This is the general attitude towards Muslim minority in India.

## Context

The recent genocide of Muslims in Gujarat raises several questions about the structural changes in the harmonious intricate social fabric of Gujarat. Without getting into the economic history of Gujarat I take the position that a society whose main occupation has been trade and commerce instead of agriculture tended to be non-violent for centuries together. All the violence that is witnessed in the recent decades is a manifestation of the economic insecurity of the labour force alongside the quest of the national bourgeoisie to survive under the camouflage of nationalism. It is essential to understand the problems of Gujarat in this context of the changing economic structures. After its recognition as a separate state in 1960, its biggest city, Ahmedabad, was well known as the Manchester of India because it housed largest number of textile mills in India. Gujarat, even today in the race of industrialisation, stands third in the country for luring foreign investments. (It was second some time back, but has lagged behind due to political instability and ever increasing caste/communal conflicts.) While profit maximisation and de-industrialisation might be a good sign for macro economic analysts, the micro aspects in terms of hijacking the unemployed labour class by different narrow-minded communal groups, is very distressing.



The experiences of Gujarat make a point in this case. Because of the closing of textile mills casual labour have increased very sharply. Approximately 50,000 mill workers were rendered jobless by 1982. Another estimate based on the data from the Textile Labour Association suggests that in the early 80's there were 170-thousand full workers in the mills. By 1995 100-thousand of them were retrenched, affecting 550-thousand of the 3 million (18%) population of the city. The elite's hounding to capture political and economic power identifies their despair. They have created a design to mobilise the unemployed labour class. It has eroded the secular democratic fabric of the state and led to other common problems of urbanisation like migration, nuclearisation of the family, increasing unemployment, social alienation, mental stress etc. New shocking dimensions of caste and communal politics were added in Gujarat. The manifestations of stress in inter-personal, as well as intra-personal relations are evident in the form of caste/communal and gender conflicts. Every individual, and if put collectively, every community is striving to find their identity in this area of free market and satellite invasion. To withstand the process of globalisation people are turning to localisation in the social sphere. Ahmedabad being the largest and most important city of Gujarat, all these manifestations are seen here. It has been the pioneer of many conflicts. In

normal circumstances, the city is generally peace loving, safe and leads to development. It was tranquil up to 1980, after the initial communal riots in 1969. After 1980 it underwent a sudden political change and a chain of communal conflicts took place in the years 1981, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91 and continued till the demolition of Babri Mosque in 1992-93. Surprisingly the whole country, sans, Ahmedabad and Mumbai, was peaceful after the Babri Masjid demolition. An uneasy lull followed after that, which did not last long. In 1998-99 Muslims and Christians in Gujarat were subjected to a series of attacks by RSS outfits in the name of conversion. Various programmes were initiated to instigate Muslims and Christians during various public and religious functions. The atmosphere was also very hostile towards Muslims during Kargil conflict in July 1999

Hindu - Hindutva - Hindusthan

The onset of present extremism in Hindus was born in 1920 with the launching of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), popularly known as Sangh Parivar. Their main objective was to look into the interest of Hinduism. They remained publicly dormant for a long time and continued propagating their mal-intentions through various sister organisations. In 80's their movement gained momentum. In Gujarat also they were active in anti-Muslim propaganda.

Major points for propaganda against Muslims have been

- They are responsible for dividing India.
- They tend to be patriotic towards Pakistan against India. So, their patriotism is highly questionable.
- They have invaded India and destroyed our culture.
- They want to increase their population and can do so because they keep four wives. They also resort to conversion to achieve this.
- The major political party of India, Congress, appeases them.
- They are involved in smuggling, bootlegging and other illegal activities.
- Islam is a highly militant religion. It has been spread at the point of sword.
- They are violent by nature because they slaughter animals and eat non-vegetarian food.

Using such venomous propaganda, the RSS outfits could mobilise the minds of Gujarat's average Hindus. They considered it to be a great success. Having tasted this success in Gujarat for their anti-Muslim propaganda, the RSS planned their strategies to Hinduise the whole region and started implementing them. They said, "Gujarat is the laboratory for a Hindu Rashtra (country of Hindus)"

This was done through its various wings like Bharatiya Janta Party -BJP (political wing), Vishwa Hindu Parishad -VHP (outfit for popularising and guarding Hinduism), Bajrang Dal (outfit of youth) and Durga Vahini (outfit of women). They organised one programme or another in the name of Ram. This kept the issue alive in the minds of people and at times also got translated into violence. Such were the reasons for riots in Gujarat during 1989 and 1990.

Primary agenda RSS declared was of Hindu - Hindutva - Hindusthan (Hindu - Hinduism - Hindusthan, as a name of this country, which indicates place of Hindus). They are one of the most organised outfits, almost a role model for any administration. Under RSS they have various outfits for looking into various issues. The VHP wing, looking after guarding and popularising Hinduism has made their presence felt in many localities of Gujarat. A locality level branch is called Prakhanda. Information from each level moves swiftly, whether from the top stalwarts to the last level person or vice versa. This dangerous networking is being used for plotting and targeting plans/strategies that will achieve their malicious objectives set from time to time.

In 1990 Mr. LK Advani, a stalwart in RSS and now Home Minister of India and the country's Deputy Prime Minister, took out a Rath Yatra (Pilgrim on Chariot) and traveled

across the country in an air-conditioned van that was given look of a chariot. The purpose of this pilgrim was to accelerate the Ayodhya movement and mobilise Hindus. The starting point of the pilgrim was Somnath, a holy place of Hindus in western Gujarat. BJP has succeeded politically in its endeavour to ridicule the idea of secularism in India. After having taken the reigns of Gujarat in their hands, it initially created an illusion in the state that communal tension and riots have dissolved under their rule. However, the recent genocide disproved all their claims. The communal riots are the end product of communal politics, in the same manner genocide of Muslims in Gujarat is fascism in totality. In fact, this politics closely resembles the rise of fascism in 1930s Europe.

#### Recent Violence -A Genocide of Muslims

The series of brutal inhuman incidents that took place in Gujarat in the name of Hindutva after February 27, 2002 were publicised worldwide. Official reports on almost all the incidents are yet to be made public, but let us swiftly overview the facts.

On the morning of February 27, a group of Muslims attacked and burnt a coach of Sabarmati Express train killing 58 persons, most of them were claimed to be 'karsevaks' (members belonging to Hindu extremists Group) returning from Ayodhya town. More than one hypothesis have been put forward as a reason for this condemnable attack.

Government and Hindu extremists claim it to be an attack well planned. Even initial reports claimed involvement of Pakistani agency ISI. Other hypothesis claims that since last couple of months a huge crowd of such Karsevaks has been travelling to-and-from Ayodhya by this train. They harassed all Muslims on their way at every station. The burning of the coach was outcome of such harassment.

News of this attack traveled fast and Ahmedabad was gripped by an atmosphere of fear by the afternoon, as shops started closing down and people rushed back home. Yet, not a single untoward incident took place till morning of February 28. A very senior Ahmedabad based member of RSS was reported to have claimed that they took time for reacting because counter-action needed to be planned based on the data they had collected. All the isolated Muslim resident locality and business houses were attacked. A call of "Gujarat bandh on February 28" given by Hindu rightwing organisation was supported by the government so as to give a free hand to the hooligans.

They attacked even stray restaurants in huge complexes, whether solely owned by Muslims or, having even one Muslim business partner. Muslim families residing in Hindu apartments were attacked and burnt. Care was taken not to harm shops or houses of Hindus in the immediate neighbourhood while burning those of Muslims'.

All the army of the state, its ministers, the police, the administration (hospitals, fire brigades) choose to look the other way when violent forces were attacking Muslims. Reports

pour in even now that many ministers from the present state assembly spearheaded such attacks. This continued for many days and the toll of this is as detailed below:

The statistics from February 28 to March 30, 2002 are starkly chilling	
Hindus killed (in Godhra train Massacre)	58
Muslims killed in the so-called reaction to it (Govt. of India statistics)	900
Muslims killed (compiled from government and other organisations' fact-finding reports)	2,000
Missing persons	2,500
Relief camps for Muslims	103
Displaced Muslims in relief camps	1,13,697

*Courtesy: Pamphlets by Women's Vigil Against Violence in Gujarat (network of various women's organisation of Mumbai)*

Sexual violence against women has been grossly under reported. Many Muslim women have suffered the most bestial forms of sexual violence including rape, gang rape, mass-rape, stripping, insertion of objects in the body, molestation etc. Many, many rape victims have been burnt alive.

Based on some of the above evidence we can say that what has happened is nothing short of genocide of Muslims. The pattern of violence does not indicate spontaneous actions. The targeted nature of killings, destruction of economic establishments and the kinds of brutality that has taken place

indicate careful organisational planning and implementation by civil militia. These simultaneous timings of the attack and uniform pattern from Ahmedabad to far-flung rural areas imply a larger conspiracy of ethnic cleansing of Muslims.

As mentioned in the report "The Survivors Speak" a fact finding by a women's panel notes: "The singular targeting of only Muslims' homes, shops and businesses - and complete absence of damage to properties belonging to any other community' gives evidence of intent to destroy a particular religious group. Having ratified the UN Convention on the

Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1959 India committed itself to enacting the necessary legislation. It was also expected to institutionalise mechanisms for proper implementation. Today India appears to have violated the convention of which it was a prime mover in 1948.

#### Lessons Learnt

I have hypothesised that Gujarat is one of the most communalised states in India. This characteristic is often hidden under the garb of industrialisation, development and prosperity. Not many people will believe that caste and community consciousness could be used so successfully as a means of achieving supremacy over certain communities. Communalism has been a tool for establishing supremacy - social, economical and political, of upper caste Hindu groups. They have strategically involved Dalits, tribal communities and OBCs in the process of communal mobilisation. Evidence of their involvement has emerged very clearly in the recent violence in Gujarat. Communal hatred has thus spread and taken root among hitherto non-communal communities and areas in the state. It is therefore ever more imperative that social movements of dalits, adivasis, women, labour, environment and others resist communalisation of their respective constituencies and work towards promoting secular politics and exposing communal elements. Anything short of this

would lead to a situation when "nobody was left when they came to get me."<sup>11</sup>

To check this inherent use of communal politics, economic and social interventions have to be made to differentiate economic development from the vested interests of certain castes and communities. The involvement of minority community in the economic process has to be encouraged. The Government must ensure that no investments are made where sectarian considerations exist. One of the ways to combat the massive and total communal divide of the society would be to resist it at the economic level. The responsibility therefore rests not only with movements but on all economic activity groups like the business community, the professionals, the educational institutions, the civil servants, the bureaucracy to say a resounding 'NO' to communal politics being practised in any way within their respective sphere of influence and activity. Business communities should refrain from doing business with those that believe in and propagate communal hatred, from employing individuals who are communal in their offices or factories or making it a ground of disciplinary action. Professionals and educational institutions should adopt similar policies.

Over last two decades, there has been a shift in the political power structure in Gujarat. Leadership that was in the hands



of OBCs and Dalits has now gone to the hands of upper-castes. Policies of economic liberalisation and globalisation adopted in the state that began with the closure of textile mills in Ahmedabad and which continues unabated are among the main reasons of the loss of power and leadership of the marginalised sections and the growth of right-wing politics.

The government should not allow any group to subvert the process of law and distort the economy. Any individual or group that works against the spirit of the Constitution should be isolated and marginalised in favour of promoting the secular character of the Constitution. Special efforts such as those mentioned above enforced by the government are required to check the economic ghettoisation in addition to social ghettoisation of the minority communities. (After 1980, distress sale of houses increased so enormously that to stop social ghettoisation, the government had to pass an act named "The Gujarat Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property and Provisions for Protection of Tenant from Eviction from the Premises in Disturbed Areas Act, 1986<sup>11</sup>.)

The law enforcement machinery of police and judiciary has not escaped the process of communalisation. There is an urgent need therefore to re-orient the police functioning with respect to secular values of the state

and make them independent of political character of the Government machinery. In this matter, the recommendations of the Third Report of National Police Commission is relevant where it suggests the creation of a security commission that can act as a buffer between the political wing of the Government and the police. In recent years, there have been several instances where the police have either been found influenced by the Hindu fundamentalist groups or have acted under political influence of the ruling party. In order to restore the credibility of the administration at the law enforcement level, the police should strive to create an image of impartial institution committed to the secular character of the Constitution of India. The Police should be made absolutely accountable to the rule of law.

The rise of communal politics has undermined the city's pride in common heritage. While moving around the city of Ahmedabad, during the recent communal violence, I came across many structures of Muslim origin and cultural background that are of great monumental value and grandeur. However, these monuments are not considered as a part of our history and common heritage. Not many in our society are even aware of the existence of such monuments. The feelings of common greatness of our history, society and culture can only be emphasised if we project such monuments as common heritage of our society as a whole, instead of

treating them as belonging to either Hindus or Muslims.

Participation of the minority community in government and political power has been steadily marginalised. In the present Gujarat Legislative Assembly of 182 members, there are only three Muslim members. Even the Congress Party that claims to be a secular party have not encouraged Muslims to share political power. There is only one Congress member in the Assembly from the minority community. Such lack of representation in the political structures has resulted in dilution of the aspiration of the minority communities and has increased the level of alienation amongst them. Without any prospects of representing the community at the administrative and government level, minority leadership has become inward looking with the result that many in the minority community are falling prey to educational backwardness. Civil society must recognise

this phenomenon and realise the potential danger this could cause in society as a whole. It is therefore in the interest of the civil society to promote and encourage the emergence of secular, progressive and forward-looking leadership of women and men in the minority community.

Over a period of several years, history textbooks have been communalised and distorted. These distortions should be removed and history itself should be analysed objectively with emphasis on secular character of our ancient and medieval society. Only then can students have exposure to a pluralistic culture of India and may be motivated to work towards preserving the same. Our history ought to be a matter of pride and respect for all cultures and religions should be the basis of interactions in our society.

# Women in the Crossfire of the Relentless Siege on a Religious Minority

"Are we going to be 'allowed'<sup>7</sup> to forget ....."

SHEBA GEORGE

**SAHR WARU:** *Women's Act/on and Resource Unit*

Part of Citizen's Initiative and NAWO (National Alliance of Women) - India

Time and again, we are reminded that conflicts based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, color, languages are not reconciled with. It smolders within the human race time and again erupting in more and more perverse manifestations each time; giving each new generation, a legacy of pain, sense of wrong, violation and\* hate.

On the other side are the "us"; constantly struggling to sustain, build and expand those segments of our society who believe and practice co-existence, even accommodation in all our differences and diversities to preserve equality and the human dignity of life.

Each time, if we flip the pages of our history and look at the writings of our own feminist thinkers, activists and writers, who have tried to research and document the repercussions of violent conflict, their silence, or words exhibit a myriad of pain, disbelief and a cry for lasting change at the way women have been treated worse than cattle as the properties of men and societies, to display supremacy and vindication over the other.

As daughters, sisters, and generation "next" we have, like it or not inherited our violent histories, divides and intolerances. We are being compelled to play out roles of being harbingers of "peace, tolerance and co-existence"; when actually we want to really go ahead working for the indivisibility of Women's Human Rights. We are willing to work with the recognition; that we are not at the "same levels" as women and some of us face different denials added to our engendered identity; but the vastness and periodicity with which women as systematically being repressed and undermined through brutal and barbaric Violence at the individual level; by custodians of civil society and "allowed to be" terrorised sexually by the state so systematically and determinedly on the basis of differences due to religion, caste and other factors; is bringing us to an impasse; where our responses and efforts of the last two decades of what the Women's Movement has "enabled" for women has fallen through.

Our engagement with National bodies for Women's Advancement, National Commission for Women, our National Policy on Women; enhanced presence in decision making and political participation and work with United Nations processes have been put to the severest of test and failed. It needs a serious review for us to decide how and where we are going and who is determining the course of our today and tomorrow.

In Gujarat, many of us part of the Women's rights and civil liberties movement, were hapless witnesses to one of the most horrific, nauseating and dehumanised holocaust and genocide against a people holding an unacceptable religious identity. Though the political machinations are to capture and retain state power defined by the dominant and the paradigms of the dominant - the shocking ugliness played; has been widely written, condemned, publicised and whatever else.

Two hundred and fifty (mostly traceable) Women Raped, brutalised, mutilated and mostly killed; with no scope of evidence. Numbers of women who were stripped, burnt, had wooden pieces stuffed in their vaginas and cut up still alive - living stories; left as reminders to the communities; not to dare to "rise<sup>M</sup> again. Hundreds of young children carrying vivid scars of having seen stripping, rape and gang rape, mutilation, burn-

ing, kerosene being given to drink instead of water; wombs being slit open - so close to the partition stories and matching figures (3000 dead and / or missing in Gujarat Carnage in two days) the reminder of Sikh riots. The riots of 1993 had the report by AIDWA/CWDS/HDS/NFIW of the Women's Delegation findings reporting the vulgarised behaviours of Hindu Rightwing Terrorist groups on women in Ahmedabad and Surat. The advancement in Gujarat between 1993-2002 of the Hindu Terrorist frontal organisations, of the party in power; was what we saw of in the steady rise of women's active participation and mobilisation in rioting and looting in shilanyas, roles in electoral politics as well as provoking men of their community to sexually assaulting women of minority community (then it was "Surat ka scene banayenge" this time it was "Naroda Patia aur Chamanpura jaisa hal kar diya hota") in full display, also with this time women seen in Danilimda and Millatnagar - Shah-e-Alam areas, in Sarees - saffron bands and open swords "swearing abuses against Muslims"; areas of Gomtipur and Bapunagar had women helping men in preparing bombs etc. (for attack, not defence as would be claimed) and what makes us go over the brink was, even young girls themselves pushing other girls from the minority community into the fire.

The state completely capitulated and were co-actors in the Violence Against Women;

may it have been the politicians or law enforcing agencies; (the military went for a spin; when they saw how the civil society for which they gave their lives on the border; treated each other as enemies!)

Minority women were beaten black and blue; regardless of age or class and "shot to kill" by the police. Molestation, self-exposure and verbal abuse by law enforcing agencies was common place for Minority women to have to deal with. Midnight knocking, insinuations and insults to women and their young daughters was the lot to be faced "being Muslims". Rich women and college going girls from the Hindu majority; also did not fail us in looting Pantaloons (a huge departmental store) and shoe shops; "they did not mind wearing 'shoes' from Muslim stores". There are cases of abducted women too who are not traceable (Randhikpur and Chamanpura).

So we in Gujarat are dealing with a "conscienceless" society. A society that simply does not understand the other's grief, humiliation or horrific experience - 'Where they do not feel they did any wrong; ("Muslim deserved it; they had it coming for a long time anyway". "This is the answer for 1000 years of oppression Hindus faced and "their" (read Muslim minority) being pampered." "Even if it's true, they were Muslim

women, where it came to rape or sexual assault". It was said that "they must have been characterless anyway". So, where is the scope for remorse, repentance. . . . . where is the scope for hope?

The status of the process of Relief and Rehabilitation, recourse to indictments, and prosecution, compensations, displacement - all of these are continuing punishments and humiliation that minority women and the community continue to struggle with; the wounds are fostering - to date; there are more Muslims in jails, thousands out of job, many victims of torture, women running from pillar to post for death certificates and other proofs - not having the luxury even to feel their pain and sense of loss. Allegations and whisper campaigns of embezzlement, and compliance of women for sexual abuse as prevailing - today. Already victims of the worst ghettoisation they are being further pushed back into holes - vindication for the dominant majority. "Muslims ya to Pakistan mein raho ya kabrastan mein ya to ghettos aur slums mein". For now, that is the verdict for Gujarat's Minorities.

We are really broken in spirit and the rubble is worse than that of the Earthquake of January 26th 2001; from under which we have to rise.