

SPRING THUNDER

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Papers Presented At
AILRC Seminar on
**Rising Hindutva Fascist Forces -
How to Stop them?**

SPRING THUNDER

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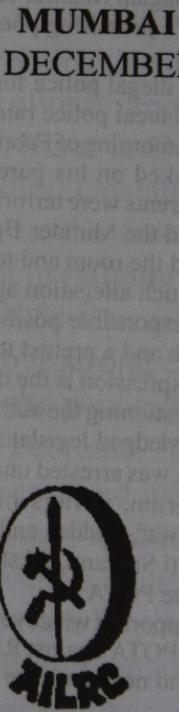
RUPEES FIFTEEN

Abdul to Political Forces, Mass Organisations and NGOs
End Your Support to the movement, Against the POTA
And the arrest of best Human Rights Under the POTA

**PAPERS OF
SEMINAR ON
RISING HINDUTVA FASCIST FORCES -
HOW TO STOP THEM?**

**Vali Gujarati (Dakni) Nagar,
Krantikari Lok Shahir Vilas Ghogre hall,
MUMBAI**

20-21 DECEMBER 2002



Binayak Sen, Secretary, Satyamev Jayate
Vidya Reclamation Society (VRS)

Appeal to Political Parties, Mass Organisations and Writers

**Lend your support to the movement against the POTA
and the arrest of poet Rivera under the POTA**

Aravind Babu (Rivera), a young Telugu poet and Convenor of Prakasam district unit of Revolutionary Writers' Association(Viplava Rachayitala Sangham-Virasam), Andhra Pradesh, was arrested and implicated under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). This is the first time a poet was arrested (22 Feb. 2003) under the draconian Act brought ostensibly to check "terrorism" a year ago. Aravind(22)is a sensitive and popular poet, who chose to write under the pen name Rivera(taken after the name of a hero in one of Jack London's short stories), published in almost all literary journals in Telugu and brought out a collection Sagam Kaalina vennela(Half-burnt Moonlight) in 2000. He is recognised as a promising poet and has been giving expression to his political beliefs.

Grey Hounds, a special illegal police force developed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, and local police raided his room in Sitarampuram locality of Ongole town in the morning of February 15 and snatched him away. The same night police attacked on his parent's home in Vetapalem and searched it thoroughly. His parents were terrorised. His library was ransacked and a lot of books, papers and the Minutes Book of RWA were taken away. The police themselves locked the room and took away the key.

Arresting and foisting such allegation against a person who has been in active public life with a responsible position in a literary organisation is nothing but a travesty of truth and a pretext to scuttle revolutionary voices.

Similarly, freedom of expression is the duty of writers. The entire literary tradition is marked by questioning the authority if it was unjust. As Shelly said "poets are the unacknowledged legislators."

Immediately after Rivera was arrested under the POTA, PUCL, APCLC, AILRC, Human Rights Forum, writers like Jwalamukhi, Siva Reddy, devipriya, Yakoob, Nikhileshwar, Gaddar, and literary organisations like Praja Rachayitala Samakhya, Sahiti Sravanti, Aksharam have condemned this arrest and implication under the POTA.

We appeal to you to support in whatever way you think fit to our movement for not only getting the POTA against Rivera withdrawn but also repeal of the cruel Act altogether and not to misuse it until the final repeal.

Pinaka Pani, Secretary Varavara Rao, Executive Member
Viplava Rachayitala Sangham(Virasam)

Foreword

Through the 1990's the AILRC has, at various times, taken up programs to combat the rising forces of Hindu fascism. Following in this sequence, the AILRC had decided in 2001 to take steps to attempt to reorganize and rejuvenate the revolutionary and progressive forces against the fascist forces. As a part of this task, a seminar and mass mobilization in the form of a rally, public meeting and cultural programs were conducted in November 2001 at Surat in Gujarat, with the theme of Opposing the Cultural Onslaught of Saffronisation. This initiative taken in the fascists' stronghold state helped to some extent in rallying forces willing to take on the Sangh Parivar. Of course such limited steps could not be expected to prove strong enough to generate the forces needed to stop the genocidal pogroms of the fascist hordes from end February 2002.

AILRC constituents and many of the forces who participated in the November 2001 seminar tried to do their bit in their respective areas. Efforts however remained dispersed and were far short of the force needed to halt the communal juggernaut. The 20th-21st December 2002 Mumbai seminar, organized by AILRC on "The Rise of Hindutva Fascist Forces – How to stop them?" was intended to follow up on earlier attempts,

and to evolve a more practical programme to tackle the fascists. This seminar drew significant response and revealed a wide cross section of society ready to stand firm in the anti-fascist battle. Papers were presented on various aspects of the problem and prospective solutions proffered. Most pointed towards the need to unite a wide, coalition of fighting forces into a militant front against the fascist forces. All the written papers submitted at the seminar are here published in this volume of 'Spring Thunder'. AILRC expects that they will prove worthy as weapons in the war on fascism.

The Mumbai seminar, coming in the immediate aftermath of the Gujarat electoral victory under the leadership of the fascist Modi, had also attempted to forecast the probable course of the Sangh Parivar. True to prediction, they have intensified their now patented brand of doublespeak and aggressive mobilization, with an eye grabbing the seizing the Assemblies facing election as well as the following Lok Sabha. While BJP leaders hold high the Gujarat Model, Dharm Sansads keep warm the fires at Ayodhya and Togadias roam the land in a frenzy of trishul dikshas. While these multi-level operations are pulling the fascists closer to their immediate targets of the seats of power at Jaipur and Bhopal, they are no less effective in pushing forward towards their more sinister long-term goals of the total fascisation of Indian society and state. The political spectrum is swinging further to the right. Despite the lessons of Vaghela's 'soft' Hindutva in Gujarat, we have

Congress entering into a round of competitive communalism. Digvijay Singh, in particular, is out to show that he can be better at Hindutva than the Sangh Parivar. CPM's Bhattacharya on the other hand plays the communal card with his programme of 'reforming' madarssas.

The tragedies and comedies of the political actors are however only finally the reflections of what the class they represent wants from them. And in this respect the signals from the ruling comprador big bourgeoisie are loud and clear. Post Gujarat election, their premier representative organization, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), has been bending over backwards to forcefully align with Narendra Modi. In the period following the Gujarat genocide we heard some murmurs of protest from a Bajaj and a Godrej. While these too may have been linked to the voices of dissent coming from Europe, they soon evaporated before the victorious Modi. Today the CII has not only tendered apology at Modi's court but is also engaged in a major exercise in showcasing Gujarat as a model for secure and profitable investment. Holding the bloodstained hands of the butcher Modi, they are presenting various Visions for the economy – all subordinate to the all encompassing vision of the repressive fascist state. This suits the interests of imperialist globalisation.

The signals are also clear from the Emperor at Washington. Following up on their deafening silence and latent support during the Gujarat genocide, the US

imperialists are now making all preparations to 'settle contradictions' with Pakistan and install the fascists at Delhi as their policemen for the region. Considering their need for a reliable and 'strong' regime, which would, if necessary, even counter China, the US would be ready to cater to all the requirements of the Indian expansionist dream. Having recently tasted the blood of the Iraqi people, the American man-eater now has his eyes on our sub-continent. All dissent and resistance is to be suppressed, all revolutionary and liberation struggles are to be crushed. The Hindu fascists, with their impeccable credentials of long-standing service to the US imperialist lords are the prime option to play role of South Asian viceroy to Emperor Bush.

However all is necessarily not dark. Bush and his cohorts are giving rise to resistance of a rising order around the globe. The rise of the Hindutva fascists too is not without its opposition. From the streets and slums, fields and factories, come assorted stories of individuals, groups and organizations standing up and fighting the fascists. Cultural activists and organizations in many parts of the country and also in Gujarat are playing their role in the frontlines of this struggle. The need of the hour is the unity of all this diverse forces into a single anti-fascist front. We hope that this issue of 'Spring Thunder' will play a meaningful role in contributing towards fulfilling this need.



Rise of Hindutva Fascist Forces – How to combat them ? A Perspective

The planned genocide of Muslims in Gujarat, starting in March this year marks a watershed in the development of fascist Hindutva forces in India. Their victory in the present assembly elections in Gujarat shows further consolidation of their position. Ten years ago, on the 6th of December, 1992, when the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was destroyed in a similarly planned operation, secular and democratic forces throughout the country reacted strongly to this attack by the Hindutva forces and the complicity of the PVN led Congress Govt at the centre. The destruction of the Babri Masjid had marked a turning point in the rise of the Hindutva forces and politics in the country, their tally in Lok Sabha went up and finally in 1998 they managed to form a coalition govt at the centre under BJP leadership. The demolition of the Babri Masjid itself was the culmination of the growth of Hindutva politics in the 1980s starting from their Goebellisian utilisation of the conversion of 100 Dalits in Meenakshipuram (TN) to Islam.

It was to lead the people away from the Mandal Commission issue, they brought in the Babri masjid issue and achieved their end in demolishing the Babri Masjid. It was through Pokhran bomb experiment and Kargil war they raised anti Pak Euphoria and built National chauvinism among the people. Next they attacked Christian institutions and staged raping of Nun's to support their pseudo swadeshi slogan. After 9/11 again they reverted back to anti Pak and anti Muslim agenda. In all through these they continued their Hindutva agenda. In fact, Congress and BJP used anti Pak propaganda and war against Pakistan in 65, 71 and in recent Kargil war for their vote bank, which had played its role of heinous communalisation, when it comes to war with Pakistan or Self determination struggle of Kashmiris even CPI and CPM speak the same language.

Faced with a serious crisis for which the earlier slogan of Garibi hatao could no longer be given, Indira Gandhi and after her, Rajiv Gandhi played the Hindu card (Operation Blue star in Punjab, the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and other places in which thousands of people lost their lives, the opening of the lock on the Babri Masjid to allow Hindus to worship the Ram Lalla). But soon the Hindutva agenda was taken over much more effectively by the BJP and its allied organisations. The BJP quickly shed its newly acquired cloak of Gandhian Socialism and rose in its saffron robes. The Ramjanmabhoomi campaign (Silanyas campaign etc) helped it raise its seats in the Lok sabha from 2 in 1984 to 88 in 1989. Then, in opposition to the announcement of reservations in jobs for OBCs, came Advani's Toyota Rath Yatra,

with mass frenzy and hate-mongering, leaving in its trail a string of riots in 10 states and over 1000 dead. In state after state the majority of those killed and felled by police bullets were Muslims. This was another confirmation of the pro-Hindu nature of the Indian State. The stridency of the Sangh Parivar's anti-minority propaganda kept increasing with several campaigns, culminating in the destruction of the mosque.

In these 10 years the Hindutva forces have further grown and consolidated their position forming several state govt's and have become the leading partner in a coalition of servile parties at the centre. As its corruption and internal dog-fighting have got exposed, as its pro-imperialist policies started having their impact leading to open opposition from people and leading to the BJP's loss of power in several states, the stridency of its Hindutva propaganda has increased. While professing to blow hot and cold on its commitment to building the Ram Temple on the same spot in Ayodhya, in fact the BJP, VHP and their allied groups are together systematically pursuing their Hindutva agenda. The entire spectrum of parliamentary politics in the country has shifted further to the right. The Congress in Gujarat campaigns on a platform of being the "real" hindu party; the leader of Dalit- BSP politics in UP, Mayawati, triumphant at becoming the CM, campaigns for the BJP in Gujarat and frees Advani, Uma Bharati, Murli Manohar Joshi from the Babri masjid demolition case; the one time socialist George Fernandes justifies the rape of Muslim women and campaigns for the BJP in Gujarat oblivious of the fact that he is the leader of another party ! Jayalalitha passes the

anti-conversion bill in spite of widespread opposition and wins accolades from the Sangh Parivar. The shift of politics further to the right is manifest not only in the politics in these elections but also in the anti-Pak war jingoism that has been orchestrated (with the active participation of all parliamentary parties) and maintained at a high pitch esp since the Pokhran blasts in May 1998, through the Kargill war and the year long aggressive mobilisation of the army along the entire Indo-Pak border. Their so-called nationalism only means being anti-Pakistani, and hence anti-Muslim. The anti-minority campaign has intensified after the US led global war against terrorism was launched and in the aftermath of 9/11, it has become a hate campaign, the result of which is that being a Muslim is being equated with being an ISI agent and a terrorist. During the British period the rulers had used communalism and communal policies to divide the masses and weaken their anti-imperialist struggle. In the present period communalism has taken a new form, the concrete form of Hindutva fascism promoted by the ruling classes. This Hindu fascism is a menace and enemy of the rights of minorities, of the democratic aspirations of the vast masses of India, of secular values and of the smaller neighbouring states which it seeks to dominate. The tentacles of this octopus have taken into their fold the country's education system, historical research, culture and the mass media.

If we have to fight this fascist force and defeat it we have to understand the essential nature of communalism and fascism in India.

Communalism in Contemporary India

While there is general consensus that communalism is about politics and the use of religion for political ends, and that communalism is a modern phenomenon which emerged during colonial rule, there are differences regarding the understanding of the phenomenon, whether it is in the main an ideology, what its relation to religion is and its underlying causes, esp economic factors. None of these, by themselves can give an all round understanding of communalism. A comprehensive understanding Randhir Singh wrote, “even as it grasps communalism’s specific aspects of autonomous reality and its certain irreducible basis in religion, seeks to explore the entire ensemble of its social interconnections – above all with economy but also with history and politics, ideology and culture...”

We have to recognise that the specific form communalism has taken in contemporary times is rooted in the long history of Indian society, its massive feudal-colonial inheritance which weighs it down due to the partial, distorted development of capitalism in Indian society and the path of development chosen by the ruling classes. The Indian big bourgeoisie, neither during the freedom struggle, nor after power was transferred in 1947 fought feudalism thoroughly. Instead it allied with feudal forces, and kept its links with obscurantist forces. The development of India has been uneven, in the narrow interests of a very small section of the people, leaving vast sections of the people in stagnant, inhuman conditions and deep insecurities with no vision for a better future, and this provides the social, ideological and mate-

rial basis for the continuous reproduction of all sorts of fundamentalism, obscurantism and communalism.

But most important of all, in the contemporary context, communalism must be seen in the crisis of Indian society and the reaction of the ruling classes to the crisis. The path of development chosen by the big bourgeois, landlord ruling sections in 1947, and pursued since, irrespective of the professed ideological and subjective inclinations of individual leaders, was not an independent (capitalist) development, not a development based on the thorough elimination of the feudal stranglehold (which would have liberated the poverty stricken peasants and developed the home market), but a dependent path of development that looked to the West and the Soviet Union to provide both finance and technology for its development. This dependence has grown over the years, what began as 'help' for heavy industry has now become the need for technology for the most ordinary consumer items. It is a debt based, export oriented growth model on a very narrow basis, which instead of improving the living conditions of the majority has only widened the gulf between the rich and propertied and the labouring masses. It is, in a sense, what R S Rao characterised as the "Brahminical path of development", the path chosen by a Brahminical industrial elite which never participates in any material production or generation of knowledge in the sphere of material production...., whose origins are in moneylending, participating only in circulation rather than generation (of wealth)...".

The socio-economic and political crisis generated by this path of development reached its flashpoint in the late sixties, but the Congress under Indira Gandhi sought to overcome it with a combination of measures including agricultural development based on imported technology (green revolution), populist slogans of Garibi Hatao and ruthless authoritarianism (the Emergency).

But the economic crisis only intensified leading to the IMF loan with its conditionalities in 1981. Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP), New Economic Policy followed by privatisation, liberalisation and now globalisation have further intensified the economic and political crisis in India. The total foreign debt of India reached the enormous figure of \$100 billion in 2001, up from \$20 billion in 1980. In the two years between 1998 and 2000 alone, 7 lakh factory jobs across the country have been lost. Employment in the organised sector has shrunk with the closure of factories and mills and the retrenchment of large number of workers and employees, so that whereas in 1980s, of the total workforce, 10 % were in the organised sector, in the 1990s it is only 7 % of the total. Employment in the organised sector is now growing at the fantastic pace of 0.1 % per annum. Unemployment, the crisis of the debt ridden peasantry, inflation, reduction in expenditure on social welfare have further intensified the economic and political crisis. People's discontent is manifest, their agitations have grown. For the ruling classes the older bases of power and hegemony weakened, the stability of their rule was seriously affected (the era of coalition politics was inaugurated,) hence they have increasingly turned to communalism , in

particular, Hindu communalism, to secure their continued political and ideological domination.

Faced with a crisis of legitimacy the Indian ruling classes have sought to rally the majority of the people behind them in the name of Hindutva, they have sought to divert and suppress the democratic aspirations of the lower castes and classes with an integrationist model of Hindutva. Since the Congress was unable to play this role effectively the BJP was supported and promoted. With the organisational discipline of the RSS to back it, and multiple organisations like the Bajrang Dal, Adivasi Seva Sangh etc, floated to rally different sections of the Hindus, the BJP has played this role aggressively. Hence in Gujarat we have the contradictory phenomenon of dalits and Adivasis rallying behind the BJP and becoming the foot soldiers of the Hindutva forces in the recent genocide. They have created an enemy in the Other – the minorities esp Muslims and Christians. Communalism has taken the concrete form of Hindu fascism which seeks to rally the caste Hindus, dalits and tribals under the hegemony of an exploitative, corrupt ruling elite. Hindu communalism is the main form in which the ruling classes are exercising their hegemony today. It is violently denying the minority communities, esp. Muslims, not only access to resources and power, but their very rights as equal citizens. At the same time it is suppressing opposition from all other sections of the people in the name of threat to unity and security of the nation. On the other hand it is exploiting an opportune situation of the conflict between the American imperialism and all the Islamic Countries. Whether it

is Afghanistan, Iraq or Palestine. In the interest of Globalisation for oil and minerals for American Imperialism and indigenous technology and skills in handicrafts and trades of Muslims in the country. BJP's attack on Muslims helps it saffronisation economy as parts and parcel of Globalisation.

Fascism of the Hindutva Forces

Many political forces and commentators are drawing parallels with Mussolini and Hitler's fascism of the 1930s. It is instructive to look back at how the essence of fascism was understood in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Fascism emerged in the 1920s in Western Europe first in the midst of a severe crisis faced by the imperialist system. It was the political offensive of the bourgeoisie against people in the context of instability and crisis. "The fascist system is a system of direct dictatorship, ideologically masked by the "national idea" and representation of the "professions" (in reality, representation of the various groups of the ruling classes). It is a system that resorts to a peculiar form of social demagogery (anti-Semitism, occasional sorties against usurer's capital and gestures of impatience with the parliamentary "talking-shop") in order to utilise the discontent of the petit-bourgeois, the intellectual and other strata of society; and to corruption through the building up of a compact and well-paid hierarchy of Fascist units, a party apparatus and a bureaucracy. At the same time fascism strives to penetrate the working class by recruiting the most backward strata of the workers to its ranks, by playing upon their discontent, by taking advantage of the inaction of Social-Democracy...."

We can see that all the essential features of fascism as outlined above are manifest in full measure in the Hindutva forces whether they be the RSS, BJP, BJS or the Shiv Sena. The Hindutva forces have mobilised the same classes and sections, though in the Indian context it needs to be mentioned specifically that apart from the middle class they also have wide support among the upper caste upper middle classes and trading communities. The propaganda, methods of organisation and the tactics employed by them are in essence fascist, which in some matters are surpassing the original.

The Hindutva forces revel in demagogic that is promoting a brand of Nationalism, in which being Indian means being a Hindu and their concept of the Indian State itself is also an avowedly Hindu State. (Advani's semantic jugglery notwithstanding). During the partition of India in 1947 this had been the underlying assumption, but what the BJP has done is gone one step further and given a purely Hindu identity to India and her culture in spite of the fact that it consists of innumerable interconnected streams often complementary, often in contradiction to one another. Their nationalism has nothing anti-imperialist about it, and is therefore far from being genuinely patriotic. Instead it is a means to dominate neighbouring countries. There are tendencies of sub-imperialists treatment with neighbouring countries which is seen today in assisting the Nepal ruling classes in suppressing Nepal's revolutionary people's movement. Their nationalism is the denial of the existence of multiple nationalities in India and portrayal of the aspirations of the struggling nationalities as a threat to the

“unity and integration” of India. (This aspect is shared by many other ruling class parties). Thus the religious minorities are completely excluded from this category of nationalism and become the Other – who can remain only if they completely assimilate themselves into Hinduism or are to be exterminated if they try to retain their separate cultural and religious identity. The Sarsangchalak of the RSS, M.S.Golwalkar said as much without mincing words in 1938, “the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu nation, i.e. they must give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-old tradition, but must also cultivate , the positive attitude of love and devotion instead, in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, for less any preferential rights, not even citizen’s rights.” From this it has been one step to identify the Muslims as the enemy within and then portray the whole history of the Indian sub-continent from this view. Thus the demolition of the Babri Masjid, 400 years old is justified as righting a wrong from history, the smashing of the tomb of a Gujarat sufi poet or famous Muslim ghazal singer as cleansing the adulteration of the pure Hindu culture. Their campaigns to take control of a number of dargahs and mosques in various parts of the country is being achieved by whipping up a mass frenzy with demagogic propaganda and mobilisation. Their propaganda is extremely patriarchal , the history they publicise

is full of Hindu women being raped by Muslim invaders, and they have developed notions of perverse sexuality concerning Muslim women and their fertility which they have widely propagated through pamphlets etc and used it to justify the mass rapes and killings of Muslim women. They have been successful in this mass mobilisation, and this mass movement that they have been able to create around the slogan of Hindu Rashtra, it is a slogan based on absolute lies, distortions of facts and filled with feelings of hate and revenge.

The second most important aspect of their fascism is the creation of a trained, disciplined force imbued with the ideology of Hindu hegemony and revenge against the Muslims and Christians. The RSS itself, the parent body, provides the indoctrinated core of cadres trained in the hundreds of shakhas across the cities, towns and even bigger villages. It has also trained youth who have gone on to join the bureaucracy and the police force thus ensuring their influence, and in cases even control over the state apparatus. Its off-shoots, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini and the ABVP have created militant groups trained them in the use of traditional weapons and modern firearms. They have set up workshops to manufacture these weapons over the years ensuring a steady supply of spears, knives etc.. These are the private, para-military forces that are attracting youth fed up of empty talk, the force on which the power and mobilisation of the Hindutva forces is based. All their major campaigns have also been planned on the basis of these private trained forces. As a former RSS pracharak and participant in the demolition of the

Babri Masjid frankly spoke before the camera in the film, Men on the Tree, "micro-level planning " went into the operation: karsevaks went to Ayodhya in groups of five, each group had a leader, each group was given precise tasks on that fateful day.- The entire assault on the Babri masjid was executed with precision by these forces, a special batch of which had been trained by a retired Brigadier. Now with the BJP Govt at the centre, this training is also getting state funding.

On the basis of these storm troopers and vigilante groups they have been able to spread fear and terror. Any bandh called by the VHP or BJP or even the Shiv Sena is bound to succeed, since people are afraid of these storm troopers. While mobs aroused by demagogic propaganda can indulge in looting at best, it is these trained groups that actually did the systematic attacking, raping and burning or earlier, the burning of the missionary Staines and his two sons. The cruelty and sadism displayed by these forces is unsurpassed since the time of partition. It is perilous to underestimate the significance of these trained private troops in the spread of the hindutva forces. They have to be beaten down in the streets if their force has to be weakened. The political cadre of the BJP and ABVP are another set of propaganda cadres who change their tactics depending on circumstances and configuration of forces. None of these organisations are restricted to the parliamentary system and electoral politics. A major part of their activity is carried out outside the framework of elections and also of the law. Any idea that they can be combated through elections or through legal methods alone will inevitably fail.

These groups have been receiving liberal funding from Big business in India and a section of the NRIs who are rich and conservative. That Advani's Rath Yatra was funded by big business houses was an open secret. The silence of almost all the big business houses and their federations during the recent carnage in Gujarat in spite of widespread economic destruction and loss is telling. They only came forward to issue a statement saying enough now and rallying behind Narendra Modi. The higher the pitch of their demagogic on Hindu Rashtra and swadeshi the more the US is confident of having its strategic interests in South Asia served through the BJP and it allows these satraps the occasional riot to keep their political machine well oiled and functioning. Undoubtedly the US imperialists and India's compradorial big business have promoted the Hindutva forces. They have been well rewarded, the BJP has opened out the Indian economy to TNCs faster in the past three years than ever before.

The fight against the Hindu fascist forces

Though the Hindu fascist forces have gone on the rampage and consolidated their position to some extent, opposition to them is also growing. The anti-people, repressive, anti-minority, anti-Dalit, patriarchal policies of the Hindutva forces is creating opposition to them and their rule. The interests of Indian people make them oppose fascism. But as long as the present exploitative ruling classes backed by imperialism remain in control of the politics and economy of our country fascism cannot be defeated. Only a thoroughgoing democratic revolution can ensure the defeat of fascism in our country. But this will be a protracted

process with a long term program.

The immediate task before us is the unity of all forces opposed to Hindutva politics on a common minimum program. As the BJP led Governments at the state and central levels implement policies that affect the basic interests of the people, as they trample underfoot the basic rights of the masses and bring ruthless repression on their attempts to agitate to protect their interests, as they intimidate and suppress the minorities and Dalits opposition to them is growing. Democratic and secular forces, progressive intellectuals and students have been consistently exposing and opposing them at every step. We have to unite all these forces to jointly oppose the Hindu fascist onslaught and halt its advance.

Already in the aftermath of the carnage in Gujarat there have been protests in many parts of the country. In Gujarat itself there are innumerable incidents of ordinary people putting life and property at stake to save the lives of people of the other community. There are reports of villages and localities preventing the riots. Secular and democratic opinion in various parts of the country has been getting organised to oppose the atrocities and attacks of the Hindutva forces,, and educative campaigns have been organised in the face of opposition by the Sangh parivar. Even progressive NRIs have had to struggle with supporters of the Sangh Parivar in the US to express their opinion against the Hindutva brigade's rampage and ideology. There are growing instances of mass mobilisation against the Hindutva forces too - One lakh Dalits and Muslims marched unitedly in Delhi on May

2, calling for the criminal Modi to be punished and a ban on Bajrang dal etc, in spite of efforts of the Central Govt to disrupt the rally. The bandh called by revolutionary forces unitedly in Bihar and Jharkhand in May this year against the POTA, which was essentially brought by Central Government to suppress minorities and all the people's struggles branding them as terrorist's movements, was a success. A massive workers' march in Mumbai on March 14 originally planned to oppose changes in the labour law turned into a call against the attempts of Hindutva forces to build the temple in Ayodhya. On May 26th massive rally against globalisation where 25000 people attended, Gujarat massacre was also condemned in the rally. In spite of the tension after the Akshardham incident progressive political and trade union forces successfully organised a rally in Ahmedabad on Sept 28th, calling for the removal of Narendra Modi and prosecution of the guilty. There have been many other smaller programs. If we have to go ahead from here and strengthen the anti-Hindu fascism movement the following points need to be taken into account.

Since the Hindutva forces have given their politics the character of a mass movement they cannot be combated effectively without mass mobilisation and mass resistance. This has become one very important task before all revolutionary, democratic and secular organisations and individuals - to rally ordinary masses, arouse their democratic and human sentiments against these forces of reaction. In cases when there has been systematic mass mobilisation they have been able to thwart or at least the retard the Hindutva forces. The progressive youth and social

organisations in Karnataka took up as a challenge the decision of the Bajrang Dal to capture the dargah of the locally revered Baba Budangiri. They form a front and campaigned widely, and this culminated in a massive demonstration which effectively put a stop to the Bajrang Dal's campaign then. The Sahmat sponsored mass rally at Ayodhya also effectively exposed the lies about local support that the Hindutva forces had been trotting out.

It is imperative that we forge unity with organisations of religious minorities. The essential issue is defence of the basic rights of the religious minorities. What are being called riots are in fact pogroms. When their very survival in various parts of the country is at stake, when they are being denied all relief and help, when they are facing systematic discrimination in all spheres - from education, to language, employment and credit - it is imperative that defence of minority rights and opposition to all discrimination and attacks against them should be taken up. We cannot just give a call for peace, it has to be defence of the democratic rights of the oppressed minorities. Hence the need of the hour is the broadest possible unity including both secular forces, and organisations of religious minorities against the Hindutva forces.

Thirdly, we must be clear that the main strategy to oppose these forces cannot be alliance with one or the other major party of the same ruling classes. The experience of the past 20 years and these present Gujarat elections has proved that we cannot depend on the Congress to fight communalism, esp Hindu fascism. The Congress gets its sustenance from the same ruling

classes, has itself played the communal card and harbours the same fascist tendencies. It is the education and mobilisation of the vast sections of the toiling people and middle classes that our energies should be garnered towards. Wherever the masses have been organised on a democratic basis they have been able to hold the Hindutva forces at bay. This is evident in Jharkhand where the revolutionaries have successfully organised the tribals inspite of the BJP being the ruling party , in Telengana which has had the longest revolutionary struggle of the peasantry in recent times, among the tribals of Bastar division, and in the plains of Bihar where the peasantry have countered and fought the BJP-landlord backed private senas. This is also evident in Ahmedabad itself and other parts of Gujarat among workers who were mobilised within their trade unions to oppose communalism systematically. It is the failing of democratic and revolutionary forces that too little has been done on this front and it is a weakness that needs be remedied without delay.

We have much to do on the ideological front to counter if the masses have to be aroused against these forces. Propaganda among the masses means also exposing the class basis of the Hindutva forces and their ideology of varnashrama dharma that talks of unifying with the lower castes , esp Dalits but only in so far as they accept their subordinate status without in any way challenging the hegemony of the upper castes. The essentially anti-dalit character of the Hindutva forces needs sharp exposure. We need to expose their false patriotism and nationalism. Infact in strict Varnashrama Dharma only Brahmins are Hindus or only

Brahminical way of life is Hindutva all other castes and women are denied of education and major toiling masses are treated as untouchables, so inherently Hindutva is against dalits and other oppressed castes. Added to it today most of the Muslims and Christians are none but the converts of Dalits and these oppressed castes because of the Hindutva suppression and violence. Though it looks like opposing the minority religions Hindutva is also oppressing majority toiling masses i.e. Dalits and oppressed caste. The mass rape of Adivasis in Orrisa, the killing of Dalits in Jajjar and various instances expose their anti Adivasi and anti Dalit philosophy.

This brings up the question of the means of resisting and countering these forces. The Sangh Parivar believes in communal faith which preaches in its vested interest rejecting not only all Democratic institutions (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary) but also it has scant respect for norms of civil society and democratic rights and values. Hence if we decide that our forms of struggle must be restricted within the bounds of the existing institutions and structures given to us (interpreted by the rulers as they choose to) then we are giving up the battle before we have even begun. Without building up defence teams no resistance can be organised, the attacks of the Hindutva forces cannot be stopped. In Western Europe in the 1930s, the question of means and ends did not enter the debate among anti-fascist forces. Workers and intellectuals, democrats and communists participated in everything from mass demonstrations to street fights with the fascists, they even the set up of the International Brigade which fought in the Spanish Civil

War against fascist Franco's troops. Lessons from history can be instructive in countering this fascist menace. Mass resistance is the main strength of the anti-Hindutva struggle, but the forms of struggle can vary, and need to encompass the struggle from the ideological plane upto the physical plane.

The call of the hour is to build up mass resistance to Hindutva forces. But to achieve this the masses have to be organised against the anti-people policies being imposed by the BJP led Governments. Privatisation, liberalisation has been playing havoc with the lives of working people. The pro-MNC policies of the Govt have ruined the lives of the peasants forcing them into heavy debts leading to suicides. They are promoting obscurantism leading to increasing atrocities on dalits and women. Education and research is going into the hands of bigots. Disinvestment is already exposed for what it is turning out to be – the sale of thousands of crores of public assets, created by the energy and skills of the people, at throwaway prices to private business and speculators. All this and more is generating opposition to the rule of the Hindutva forces and other ruling class parties. Class interests are forcing people to oppose the fascist forces. It is for us to find ways to forge an organic link between the fight against globalisation and the fight against Hindutva fascist forces.

Aavhaan Natya Manch

On the behalf of A.I.L.R.C.

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Impact and Responses of the Muslim community to the Rise of the Hindutva Fascist Forces in India

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Revolutionary Greetings !

Dear Comrades,

Thanks for the invitation. The theme of the seminar, "How to Stop the Rising Hindutva Fascist Forces" is most timely conceived and we must pay serious attention to this problematic for it poses the single most challenge to the logic of pluralism, diversity, democracy, basic rights of the people, minorities, other marginalized sections of society and finally the existence of the nation itself. Given the lack of theoretical (as well as in the realm of praxis) clarity on the origin, nature and dimensions of communal fascism (I prefer this term to any other term to denote Hindutva), I am sure I will be benefited from your deliberation on this subject matter. There are many including left activists who still doubt whether the phenomenon of Hindutva can be equated with the notion of fascism or whether this fascism represent nazism? Serious attempts have been made to deny the equivalence of Hindutava with Fascism in terms of (its) Semitic v/s non-Semitic origin. There are many within the liberal and mainstream left who believe that Hindutva does, in some ways, represent a form of cultural nationalism. For me, the

Hindutva brand of Fascism is more dangerous than the Nazi brand for the simple reason that unlike the latter it successfully conceals its fascist character, retains its invisible forms, combines the element of moderation and flexibility in its strategy, having organic links with society through its hundreds and thousands of educational, cultural and social institutions and does not rely solely on the state power for its existence and expansion. Hence mere dislodging it from state power will not be a sufficient condition to put an end to this phenomenon unless and until we challenge their hegemony and legitimacy at the political, social and cultural level. Unlike Nazism, it is not characterized by uni-dimensionality but is multi-faceted and having a janus shape. No wonder the mainstream left continues the problematic the danger of RSS in terms of struggle between communalism v/s secularism instead of Fascism v/s Democracy. The goal of Hindutva is to usher into the institutionalization of the notion of Hindu Rashtra, characterized by the *unfettered* rule of capital over labour and the re-establishment of Brahmanical hegemony to legitimize that rule and violence committed against the rising voice of oppressed people. The anti-minority plank, particularly the Muslim minority, is one of the important political and ideological strategies to secure this goal. It is within this framework that I am going to situate my viewpoint on the topic assigned to me.

I have been asked to speak on the impact and responses of Communal Fascism on the minority communities here. Though all religious minorities are today under attack from Hindutva brigade, I have confined myself to Muslims only for the following reasons:

- a) Muslims are not only the largest religious minority group but also constitute the second largest Muslim population in the world. Unlike other religious minority groups, they are geographically dispersed.
- b) Muslims had been the ruling elite of this country for several hundred years and this factor has important bearings.

- c) Of all the religious minorities, the Sangh Parivar considers Muslims as *settler colonizers* in this country.
- d) The factor of partition and the subsequent construction of nationalism has serious implications for Muslims.
- e) Communal riots broadly refer to Hindu- Muslims conflict.
- f) The anti- Muslim plank is the most specific political strategy in the hands of the Sangh Parivar to unite the Hindu rank and file and to usher in Hindu Rashtra. Hindutva consciously projects the image of a “Hindu” India being besieged, and under threat, externally by “Islamic” Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and internally by Indian Muslims. By highlighting the terrorism in J&K, politics of ISI and Bangladeshi refugees, the Hindutva brigade creates a Hindu mindset which suspects Muslims as a source and a threat to the unity and integrity of ‘Hindu’ India.
- g) No other religious community in independent India has been subject to systematic brutal persecution and discrimination like the Muslim community.
- h) Minority communalism broadly refers to Muslim communalism.
 - i) The conception of a monolithic, communal, unified, singular and cohesive community is peculiar to Muslims only.

It is indeed a complex issue especially to locate the Muslims responses to the Hindutva phenomenon. Scanning of the existing literature on this subject matter including the responses of Muslim newspapers, political leaders and social and religious activists to the recent Gujrat carnage, does not help much in articulating and locating the impact and responses of the Muslim community in its diverse form. One gets a generalized monolithic response : a sense of dejection, alienation, apathy, inferiority complex, resignation, withdrawal, fear-psychosis, insecurity, existential dilemma and total loss of faith in the state machinery and

secularism. This response cuts through regional and class variations within the Muslim groups. Though this feeling is widely prevalent cutting across the Muslim community/groups, yet to construct a single monolithic response of the Muslim community to Hindutva fascism will be a problematic, a far from reality as it is premised on the denial of diversity within the Muslim community or at best will be getting trapped in the communalism framework. The construction of the monolithic image of Muslim communities is sustained not only by its religious groups/ representatives/leaders/spokespersons/institutions/organizations, its very narrow upper caste political elite, the mainstream political parties—national or regional, left, right or centre—but also the larger political discourses within the “minority framework” that lends legitimacy to unified collective perception of the community. I am not questioning here the need for the protection of religious and cultural rights of minority groups but merely questioning the efficacy of constructing polemics within minority framework against Hindutva. I will return to this theme latter.

Like any social groups or communities, Muslims in India are also regionally, socially, culturally and economically diverse groups. Hence there is a need to locate and identify the *differential impact on and responses* of Muslim groups to communal fascism. Such an exercise is a difficult one as the onslaught of the Hindutva brigade takes place in the name of religious identity of the person which, in turn, helps in consolidating the unitary, community based response. Nevertheless, one can identify differential impact and responses of Muslim groups vis-a-vis the Hindutva brigade. The responses also depend on how the Muslim communities have conceived/understood/ internalized the Hindutva phenomenon. It seems to me that the community hardly sees the logic of fascism being applicable to Hindutva, or even if some self-styled leaders of the community use the terminology they do not use it in its class term or its implication for the nation as a whole but essentially to denote its tendency of aggressive-

ness, brutality, violence against the minorities, particularly the Muslims. Hence the Muslims' response to Hindutva is essentially (or projected) colored by the latter's threat - real or imaginary- to its faith, culture, religious identity, symbols and heritage. Hence its response is community- specific, divorced from the national context, often lamenting the state of affairs and demanding for the protection from the state and political parties but refusing to be actively participant in the nation-wide democratic struggle/ campaign against Hindutva-feudal-fascist forces. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that the wider participation of the Muslim masses in the struggle for wider democratization of the state and society will be counterproductive as it will also undermine the hegemony of upper class/caste Muslim elite groups (in terms of its control and management over the community resources and share in the state resources)—whether conservative or liberal progressive— who have vested interests in sustaining the monolithic image of the community and thereby projecting themselves as the legitimate representatives of the community to bargain with the state on that basis.

Let us turn our attention to the differential impact and responses of Muslim communities to Hindutva. First, it does not require any statistics to demonstrate that the worst sufferers of the communal riots or pogroms are the weaker section of the Muslim community. The elite, because of their access to state power or linkage with the state system, somehow manages to escape. However, with the growing communalization of society and the state machinery since mid 80's even the elites are finding it difficult now to escape the brunt of communal frenzy/ riots/ pogroms as the events in Mumbai and more recently in Gujrat have demonstrated. This explains their active participation in demonstrations or other modes of protest against communalism. They are now becoming a part of the larger process of ghettoization or clustering together as the threat perception increases. They now stress on living and integrating with the community but not as

equal but treating the community's numerical strength as a shield to protect themselves in the event of communal riots.

Since the demolition of the Babri mosque followed by intensification of communal riots, a few trends operating among Muslims are quite visible.

First is the greater assertion of traditional religious identity among Muslims cutting across class, caste and regional variations. Yesterdays Muslims with a secular outlook are now increasingly found exhibiting their religious identity, whether in terms of attending the mosque, observing Ramdan fast or any other rituals. This trend is very visible at least among lower and middle class Muslims.

Second, there is a growing emphasis that Muslims should consciously *withdraw* themselves from the political process and pay attention to the economic and educational development of the community. This view is more prevalent among the upper middle class Muslims. Their argument is that Muslim intervention in state politics has historically proved counterproductive as it has given the rise of militant Hindutva, hence they should pay more attention to economics, i.e, building community schools, colleges, hospitals, professional institutions and other resources. In other words, *Muslim should become like Jews*. The import of this sentence is that once the community build strong economic assets they will be able to influence the decision making process of the state. This viewpoint among a well to-do Muslim section is not out of the present national context. It has emerged out of the thinking that given the resource crunch of the state and its gradual withdrawal from the social sector under the 'globalization project' along with the communalization of the state sector, Muslims hardly hope to get anything from shrinking state resources. Since the cost of intervention in the political process is very high without any significant gains it is better to be indifferent to large political discourse and concentrate on economics and education so as to improve its bargaining capacity in the market

economy. This has been reflected at least in the low Muslim turnout in times of voting. This section of the Muslim population is getting mentally prepared to live with the reality of a Fascist Hindu state provided it gives them security and stable conditions to pursue their economic activities. The absence of any real political alternative vis-a-vis Hindutva has also contributed to a sense of resignation among a large number of Muslims. Many Muslims believe that there is a very thin margin between the Congress and the BJP brand of politics. However, such a perception is highly dangerous as it amounts to directly playing into the hands of Hindutva brigade. Because, by terrorizing the minorities, particularly the Muslims, the RSS goons want them to withdraw from the political process so that they should not claim any share in state power and resources, must live in the space allotted by the RSS and, more importantly, they should not play any role or have any say in the construction of nation. Moreover, even if they build the economic and educational assets, the security of this asset is not guaranteed in the absence of a thoroughgoing democratization of Indian society and state. In fact if one looks at the historical pattern of communal riots one finds that the most intensive riots have occurred only in those places where the economic prosperity of Muslims was quite visible. Further, the withdrawal from the political process runs contrary to the interests of lower middle and working class Muslims whose social condition demands the massive intervention of the state to uplift them.

Third, there is a communalist response to the rise of Hindutva, the votaries of which belong to the dominant religious-political formations like Jamat-e-Islami, Milli Council, Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamait-e-Ulema Hind, All India Babri Masjid Committee and a section of the Muslim political elite like Syed Shabuddin, Jafyarab Jeelani, Syed Bhukari of Jama Masjid and others. They are increasingly toying with the idea of having an independent Muslim political formation at an all India level. The rational behind this articulation is that given the increasing frag-

mentation of social and political constituency that has resulted in the era of coalition-politics, such a formation will play a decisive role in the formation of government and thereby would increase the bargaining positions of Muslims vis-a- vis the state authorities. However, so far, despite various meetings, such a formulation has not been given an institutional shape, probably because of the fear that such an initiative might be counterproductive and will further strengthen and consolidate the fascist forces. However, one example of this trend can be seen in the creation of the All India Muslim Forum by Nehal Ahmad in U.P. So far it has contested the local municipal elections in Lucknow with modest gains and unsuccessfully tried to enter into alliance with the S.P in U.P at the state level. It has also participated in a joint rally with CPI (ML) Liberation. However, the party remains at the fringe and without any national significance. In addition, their communalist demands include reservations for Muslims in government jobs, and proportional representation in the legislature and executive branch of the state.

Fourth is the very minor trend reflected in the urge for social and educational reform within the Muslim community. The demand for social reform came in the background of the Shah Bano case and the demolition of the Babri Mosque. In recent years, reform of Muslim Personal Law, especially the provision of Triple Talaaq, has been the focus of their reforming agenda. It is being pushed by a very tiny liberal-progressive section of the community whose typical representatives are Asghar Ali Engineer, Syeda Hameed, Syed Hamid and Seema Mustafa. However, the offensive of Hindutva makes the task difficult for liberal forces within the minority community to push the agenda of democratization within the community.

Fifth is the collapse of the so called secular political leadership within the Muslim community in the immediate aftermath of the demolition of the mosque. As a result, it is religious-political organizations like Jamait Ulema Hind and the Muslim Per-

sonal Law Board that are filling the political space, asserting their claim to represent Indian Muslims and trying to negotiate with the government on behalf of Indian Muslims. In fact, given the increasing social, political and economic marginalization of the community and faced with the project of Hindutva offensive, the process of consolidating minority communalism has certainly been intensified.

Sixth is what I would call the conservative interpretation of the events. Many Muslims believe that demolition of the Babri Mosque and communal holocausts are the reflection of the weakness of their Islamic faith. As a result many have turned inwards and are paying great attention to religious prescription.

The last is the militant Islamic response that is at the fringe of the Muslim community. The regional location of Islamic militancy is an interesting dimension. It originated not from the centre of the Muslim community (i.e. North India) but from the periphery of the Muslim community (i.e. South and North Eastern India). Thus, al-Umma in Assam, ISS (Islamik Sevak Sangh, now operating as People's Democratic Party) in Kerela and al-Umma in Tamil Nadu are representative of militant Islam and are directly linked to the rise of Hindutva and its attack on the lives, property and symbols of the Muslim community. The announcement of the formation of Adam Sena by Bukhari in Delhi never took any root. Neither have the North Indian Muslims supported the cause of Islamic Jihad in Kashmir. I must make it clear that the Islamic militancy in J&K has nothing to do with the rise of Hindutva (rather it is other way round) and it has different historical roots. The point here is that peripheral identity needs to demonstrate its commitment through militancy while identity at centre does not require anything to prove its commitment as it is historically acknowledged. I must concede here that democracy in India has thwarted to a great extent the development of militant form of Islamic response on a wider scale.

So far so good. But the moot question is that has the community developed any strategy to fight communal fascism? What strategy do they have? Will the community be a part of the wider democratization movement in general? If yes, then how? What are the obstacles? What is the pattern of relationship between the major political parties and the Muslim communities? Who within the community wants the democratization of community, state and society? With which social forces should Muslims align? Is the minority framework an appropriate conceptualization to fight the communal fascism? What is the role of the Muslim community in fighting communal fascism? Are Muslim communities becoming a part of wider democratic movement against fascism? If not, then why? These are some of the fundamental questions that are being debated within the Muslim communities and intelligentsia at large.

Today the Indian Muslim communities are standing at the cross-roads. The dilemma and predicament they are facing is that they desire to live in a democratic and secular state but without democratizing and secularizing themselves. Perhaps the votaries of multiculturalism will find no dilemma, as every community has a right to live with its collective religious and cultural right within a secular nation-state. However, in the absence of wider democratization of identity (that results in making the religious identity a personal matter), the plank of multiculturalism will be hijacked by the communalist leadership — whether minority or majority — to legitimize their political discourses, to maintain their hegemony and to silence the democratic opposition within the community. Further, given the internal, dialectical linkage between minority communalism and majoritarian communalism (i.e. fascism), it is indeed problematic to fight communal fascism without fighting the internal minority communalism. For the sustenance of the communal, collective and monolithic image of the Muslim communities has been *one* of the many potential factors contributing to the rise of communal fascism. In the political strat-

egy, historically (ranging from Nehru to CPI (ML) Liberation) there has been a tendency to fight majoritarian communalism first as it poses a greater danger to nation and society while ignoring minority communalism. In fact this strategy even entails support of minority communalism in the fight against communal fascism. However, the historical trajectory of the development of communal fascism in this country has proved the futility of such a political strategy. Hence my contention is that the struggle against communal fascism on a national scale must combine with the struggle for democratization within minority communities. We have seen how the indifference towards minority communalism was used by the Hindutva brigade as a case of psuedo secularism for wider mobilization at a particular historical juncture. I must make it clear here that the germ of communal fascism also lies in the Nehruvian brand of secularism and its attendant politics. Hence one needs to go beyond the Nehruvian framework to fight communal fascism. For want of space I am not elaborating this point further.

The above argument and the charge of 'ignoring minority (read Muslim) communalism' might be misconstrued as endorsing the Hindutva charge of 'minority appeasement'. But there is much difference between the two. While the former has a specific class location, the same cannot be said about the latter. But is it possible to combine the struggle against communal fascism on a national scale and minority communalism/ fundamentalism simultaneously and that too in a Gujarat-like situation? While the abnormal situation does make the task of democratization of minority communities or raising voice against minority communalism difficult what makes the left, including the revolutionary left and liberal forces, refrain from pursuing this matter in normal times? For me, it appears that the tendency within the left (including the revolutionary left) of tolerating minority communalism has to do with its theorization on minority communalism where it is *broadly* considered as a product of majoritarian com-

munalism and is *denied* its independent existence. It is generally understood that minority communalism is a reflection of a 'perceived (real or imaginary) identity crisis', sustained by mass illiteracy and poverty and its class content is ignored. In fact there has hardly been any serious attempt to understand the persistence of minority communalism from a *class perspective* in post-independent India. Hence the prescription is that with the demise of communal fascism and with the development of economy and literacy within Muslims, minority communalism will be *automatically* weakened, if not eliminated. However, to deny autonomy to minority communalism is to ignore its *historicity*. Second, the struggle against communal fascism has also an element of championing minority rights and bringing minorities (read Muslims) within their fold for electoral purposes, without making them realize the danger that communal fascism poses to the nation and without having any critical look at the communal tendency operating within the minority. In fact what is interesting is that while it has been demonstrated how both communalisms feed each other and grow together, no concrete initiative has been taken to unleash the democratic forces within the minority community. Hence for the eventual fight against communal fascism there is a need to combine the both the aspects in the long term perspective.

Second is the renewed emphasis on the coalition of Muslims, Dalits and OBC Hindus as a powerful bulwark against the onslaught of communal fascism. Intellectuals, liberal and left political activists have expressed their surprise and are aghast to see the participation of Dalits and STs and a section of OBCs in the pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat. Such a political formulation is based on the identification of Hindu upper castes as votaries of communal fascism and Muslim, Dalits and OBCS as natural democratic and secular constituency and has been conceived from purely electoral arithmetic. However, the point here is that any political mobilization on the criteria of caste and community can-

not be a negation of or antithetical to religion-based political mobilization because both are premised on backward and inward looking ideology. As a result, the Mandalite plank of social justice in the 80s, though it halted the march of communal fascism temporarily, finally collapsed in the 90s paving the way for Hindutva forces to capture state power. The erstwhile champions of social justice, whether they be the BSP, a section of JD or others, are today happily enjoying power in the company of the Hindutva brigade and legitimising their politics. To identify the likes of Laloo and Mulayam as champions of democracy and secularism is to ignore their fascist outlook. Such a political formulation is dangerous in the sense that it ignores the capacity of communalism as an ideology to influence the member of any caste or community to draw them in their fold to achieve their fascist agenda backed by the forces of globalization, particularly American imperialism. It is not without reason that the BJP has got the largest number of SC and STs among the Members of Parliament and various state assemblies. In fact, religion cuts across caste and community and has greater appeal than any other idiom. Hence only the unity of the working class, irrespective of caste or community affiliation, guided by the forward looking ideology of equality, democracy, freedom, ideal of secularism and socialism can be the powerful deterrent against the march of communal fascism. The unity of the working class is not possible merely on the issue of economics but needs to utilize creatively the marginalized identities of society, which will be qualitatively different from the communalist utilization of identities.

Third, the very nature of dominant national political discourse and politics—conducted by mainstream political parties (whether-national or regional—left, right, centre-left, centre-right or revolutionary left) has kept Muslims apart, confined them to minoritism, and never encouraged them to participate in the national political discourses. Their political participation is merely confined to casting their votes at the time of elections. The rela-

tionship of Muslims with the political formations is characterized by the principle of votes in exchange for security. The search for security is the dominant consideration for Muslims in their alignments with social-political forces. This explains the shifting pattern of voting behaviour of Muslims ranging from the Congress, to mainstream left to regional parties like BSP, SP, RJD and others. No wonder a section of Muslims is willing to go with Hindutva brigade provided they provide security. And in fact a section of Muslims did vote for Shiv Shaniks in Mumbai. I am yet to see any wider Muslim participation against the agenda of globalization or any national issue called and organized by Left political forces including the revolutionary left. Nor have I seen any emphasis on devising a suitable strategy within left political parties to mobilize the Muslim section of society for their radical socio-economic and political programme. In this regard CPI (ML) Liberation in Bihar has launched the Inquilabi Muslim Conference (IMC) to initiate mass contact with Muslims and to unleash the democratic forces within the community from within. However, IMC is still in the embryonic stage and nothing can be said about its failure or success at this stage. Given the fact that almost 60% of the Muslim community constitutes the artisan class, their mobilization and participation is not only crucial to fight globalization and communal fascism but also to save them from playing into the hands of Muslim communalists.

Finally, will the minority framework a vintage point to combat the menace of communal fascism? The dominant response of Muslim communities to Hindutva have occurred within this framework and taken the form of legal battle, demanding the implementation of constitutional articles pertaining to minorities, seeking larger support in the name of violation of human rights and appealing/ reminding the state authorities of their constitutional obligation to protect minorities. In a nutshell, the response is one of *bargain* within the existing situation and not to fight the communal fascism on the principles of Equality, De-

mocracy, Freedom and Citizenship. It does not see the danger of fascism at the national level and tends to localize/ confine its implication to the community itself. And hence, in the process, it isolates itself from the national political discourse. My submission here is that the Muslim community has to assert their national identity while fighting communal fascism. The point here is that Muslims and all other marginalized groups must assert that they, like any other dominant social group, have a legitimate right to represent the nation. They will have to assert that Democracy, Secularism, Equality and other ideals are needed for construction of a healthy nation, that communal fascism is a danger to the nation itself, only then a viable political alternative to communal fascism becomes possible. For minorities to fight communal fascism, they must combine the national perspective with minority rights divorced of its communal plank and must become an integral part of the larger democratic struggle in society.



Onslaught of Fascist Hindutva on Dalits: Impact and Resistance

Anand Teltumbade

(A paper presented in the AILRC Seminar on the Onslaught of Fascist Hindutva at Mumbai on December 22, 2002)

The fascist Hindutva sweep in Gujarat election portends the end of India of our dream. Curtains appear already drawn at least in the short term on the aspirations of the working class to better its future. The process of making India a Hindu Rashtra, whatever it means, has already begun. Gujarat has emboldened the Hindutva forces; they are going berserk vomiting their communal venom all over. While some have declared their resolve to bring about Hindu Rashtra within two years, some have gone further in pronouncing India to be already a Hindu Rashtra. The characteristic double speak of the Sangh Pariwar notwithstanding, the communal majoritarianism shall be increasingly relied upon in the forthcoming elections. The polarization of people on communal lines shall be increasingly engineered whatever be the cost. Gujarat, as a symbolic strategy to win elections is bound to be repeated until the fascist forces have complete sway over this land. The greatest gain of Gujarat is total submergence of the parliamentary opposition; delusion of its strategic distinction and incapacitation of its ideological identity. Gujarat exposed elections as the instrument of exercising ratio-

nal choice of people against politically powerful criminals. It showed that the rationale of people can itself be communally colored and people could be transformed into an irrational mob in support of crime. Gujarat shattered many fond illusions, illusions of parliamentary democracy, its capacity to offer an alternative through mainstream politics. In Gujarat, it just bore 'soft' Hindutva in response to the established hard variety. The game has completely exposed the ruling class connivance at the ideological level across the political parties. For over a decade on the issue of Globalisation-ordained reforms this connivance could well be seen by people in the ambivalent but indistinct stands of all the political parties. This connivance is seen far more clearly on the issue of Hindutva. Globalisation and Hindutva are not unconnected; they beget each other, they sustain each other. They constitute an ideology of the ruling class. Its effective counter therefore can never come through ruling class contrivance; it can only be constructed through the ideology of the working class. Dalits are the most important constituents of this class. They are historically placed in an antagonistic contradiction to the ruling class that mostly comes from the upper castes. Dalits are the worst impacted people from the onslaught of the two-headed monster of Hindutva and globalization. Sadly, they are unaware of this fact. Hindutva's villainous character is exposed in relation to the religious minorities today. Its assimilative overtures towards the dalits appear unthreatening to them. None can however hide its basic fascist character and associated revivalist plan. It may be important in the context to recall the basic motive force behind Hindutva and the direct linkages between its genesis and the emancipatory zeal of the dalits. This paper seeks to do that. In the last Hindutva experiment in Gujarat, the dalits and tribals were used as the foot soldiers of Hindutva brigade in a large number. Many people lamented this unfortunate development but there have been hardly any attempt to understand the causal linkages behind it. Dalits under the shadow of Hindutva is a symptom;

there is no use lamenting symptoms. The cause of this drift can be found as much in the peculiarities of the contending politics vis-à-vis the dalits as in the caste ridden civil society that conditions it. While the Hindutva forces are found to strategically co-opt the dalits, the left has effectively denied them space. It is still wont to conduct ostrich like with Brahmanical chanting of the received wisdoms, while the reality passes them by. The paper therefore briefly deals with the evolutionary aspect of the Hindutva-dalit relationship in Gujarat. It also attempts to delineate the impact Hindutva on the dalits and the need to resist it. Lastly, while taking stock of the pathetic state of resistance to Hindutva in the dalit movement it derives the strategic directions in which this resistance can be organized.

The Fascist Context

Maharashtra is the the Punya Bhoomi of Hindutva! It is a great paradox that the land which is fondly called as Phuley-Ambedkar's Maharashtra is also a birthplace of the Indian Fascism. Indian fascism is a product of an evil integration of Hindu majoritarian communalism and the fascist programme imported directly from Italy and Germany. The famous Hindu Mahasabhaite BS Munje, an associate of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and a mentor of the RSS founder KS Hedgewar had visited Italy to study fascism and had a personal audience with Mussolini on March 19, 1931 in Palazzo Venzia, the headquarters of the Fascist government. Munje was very much impressed by the Mussolini's fascist organization as he himself writes. He is on record stating that "every aspiring and growing Nation needs such (fascist) organisations." On his return Moonje started to work for the foundation of his military school and for the militant reorganisation of Hindu society

in Maharashtra.

The Italian researcher of Indian politics, Marzia Casolari has done pioneer work in tracing the fraternal links between RSS founders on the one hand and Fascism and Nazism on the other. VD Savarkar, a father figure of aggressive Hindutva, was admittedly

inspired by Italian Fascist Giuseppe Mazzini in founding his secret society in 1904 called Abhinav Bharat which as could be seen is just an Indianisation of Mazzini's Young Italy. He also had great liking for Hitler's Nazism and fascism of Mussolini. He had chided Nehru for opposing Fascism and Nazism in India and openly endorsed them before and during the World War II. MS Golwalkar, RSS supremo after Hedgewar, is too well known to be a Hitler-fan to require elaboration. He often eulogized the Hitlerite model of racial cleansing and even adopted it as his own. He unhesitatingly wanted to model his Hindu Rashtra on Hitler's totalitarian and fascist pattern. His book 'We or our Nationhood Defined' is replete with idealization of the Nazi cultural nationalism (the phrase being used lately to describe the strategy of communal programs by the BJP) of Hitler. Savarkar had supported Hitler's anti-Jewish pogroms and on October 14, 1938 had suggested a solution for the Muslim problem in India when he said: "A Nation is formed by a majority living therein. What did the Jews do in Germany? They being in minority were driven out from Germany". The Sangh Pariwar's slogan 'one nation, one culture, one religion, one language', resonates the Nazi slogan "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer" (one people, one state, one leader). After independence, the RSS spread its tentacles through a host of mass organizations and created a Sangh Pariwar that variously followed the fascist dictums in its virulent anti-communism, organized terror against 'internal enemies' (minorities in India in place of Jews in Germany), rumour-mongering and whipping up a mass frenzy. The fascism of Sangh Pariwar is also manifest in its revivalism (revival of Vedic glory like fascist revival of the ancient traditions of the race - of imperial Rome, of 'Aryan pride'), absolute statism, expansionist foreign policy (Akhand Bharat that includes not only Afghanistan, Pakistan and entire south Asia but also the far fetched lands like Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia etc. in the far East!!), etc. As the Nazi slogan provided motiva-

tion for the most inhuman forms of destruction, the Hindutva slogan has already succeeded in symbolically incapacitating Indian state when it demolished Babri Masjid and enacted an unprecedented carnage of Muslims in Gujarat. As in the Fascist Germany, the Sangh Pariwar has effectively created 'we-ness' identity based on Hindu tradition and rituals and in corollary created 'the other' apparently comprising Muslims, Christians, Communists and those who are in apparent disagreement with them like

Ambedkarite

Dalits.

Generally, the origin of Hindutva is traced to Savarkar, who had coined the word and provided its definition but at a conceptual level it goes back to Lokmanya Tilak, who not only saw the potential of religious ideology in political mobilization for the first time but effectuated it by starting public celebrations of Ganeshotsava and Shivaji Jayanti, latter as a protector of cows and Brahmins. The basic reason for it was to win back celebration-loving masses of lower castes that had drifted to observe Islamic festivals like Muharram etc. under the Sufi- influence. Tilak had also propounded the intellectually juvenile "Aryan theory of Race" that claimed a white racial stock for upper caste Indians and accepted Vedas as their core literature. Essentially Tilak thus represented the contemporary Chitpawan struggle to revive the lost glory of Brahmanism that had nothing for the lower castes other than their assigned caste rung. The motive force behind the entire Chitpawan struggle against the British, the militancy of which misled many to class it as revolutionary, was provided by the intense desire to win back their lost kingdom called Peshawai, infamous for its degenerate casteist and reactionary character. The humiliation and oppression of the dalits in Peshawai had reached legendary heights. Dalits were not allowed to use public roads before 9 AM and after 3 PM lest their elongated shadows during these hours should pollute any Brahmin walking the road. They were required to tie a pot at their neck to contain their spit and a sweepstick to their behind for erasing their pol-

luting footprints. When we talk of Hindutva in relation to the dalits this revivalist context can never be ignored!

Ideology of Hindutva

The ideology of Hindutva is based on Brahmanical Hinduism and notwithstanding the camouflage, the entire Sangh Pariwar comprising around 180 frontal organizations are engaged in its propagation. These organizations provide continuum of opinions, apparently conflicting, at times even contradictory, and act as a test bed to check peoples' reaction to new ideas. Thus, they become a good source to get a clue as to what cooks in the Pariwar. One of the active organizations in the Sangh Pariwar- Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) had proposed Guru Sabha for ruling the country. Their five point plan for the Hindu Rashtra provides clue as to what is the Sangh Pariwar vision for the country. These five points are: 1. bringing about a Brahmanical social order, 2. Majority (poor) should not have voting rights, 3. Reservation shall only be for the elites, 4. Minorities become second class citizens, and 5. Supreme Court shall be a servant of the Guru Sabha. The goal of the Sangh Pariwar is to form a Hindu Rashtra which may not necessarily be a religious state as likes of Adwani assure us but it will certainly be the state reflecting the essence of Brahmanism in the garb of modernity with imposition of the pre-modern social hierarchies on all sections of society. They have clear-sighted aim to establish Hitler's Aryan rule in India and impose Manu Code.

As one researcher concluded, the Hindutva project has three essential characteristics:

1. It is hegemonic: The Sangh Pariwar imposes its values by force on others. This imposition has manifested in many form such as checkmating the growth and practice of other religions, saffronization of education, insistence that all people should observe Hindu Dharma, its traditions and rituals, etc.
2. It is homogenizing: It aims at national consensus based on a homogenized Hindu identity. The diverse, creative and critical

impulses in the Indian traditions are negated. The multi-religious and plural cultural identities and their traditions are not recognized as part of Indian tradition, but promote only one identity-the Hindu identity.

3. It follows the pedagogy of recapturing and releasing the power of symbols and deities that catch the attention of the people. This attempts to show an illusion of solidarity and takes the persons into uncertainty and disorderly situation. The selection and use of these symbols, events and actors are also associated with pedagogic violence.

These characteristics are of course integral with fascism. The characterization of Sangh Pariwar as Fascist is not of recent origins. Even Nehru in 1947 had written about the RSS that it was "a private army which was proceeding on the strictest Nazi lines" As a matter of fact, Hindutva could be potentially worse than the familiar variety of Fascism in Italy, Germany and Spain. Unlike these countries, it has well established caste ridden and hierarchy- structured social base and a well proven oppressive ideology at its service. Those who hesitate to characterize Hindutva as fascism are essentially misled by certain differences on account of India's different socio-political context. In the semi-feudal, semi-colonial society of ours fascism also represents the most aggressively anti-poor, anti-dalit and patriarchal sections of landlords and kulaks. It is the intense class hatred of these sections that finds the most ominous expression, *inter alia*, in the onslaughts of the BJP-sponsored Ranvir Sena in Bihar, and in the central and various state governments' elaborate arrangements to crush the revolutionary representatives of the rural poor. Although one can thus note the real agenda of Hindutva, an ordinary person is normally confused by the double speak issued to people from various organizations of the Sangh Pariwar. For instance, writing on the purpose of VHP, Pandya says, "The birth of Vishwa Hindu Parishad is for the unity and integrity of the country and the moral regeneration of Hindu society, its survival

with self respect and uplift of Harijans, Girijans and other weaker sections." One Maharashtrian Hindutvawadi explains Hindutva as a casteless concept. He emphasizes, "In fact the removal of caste consciousness and caste identities is the *raison d'être* of Hindutva. Since Hindutva incorporates the well-being of every single Hindu the question of any special consideration of any particular caste does not arise." One has to carefully note that the thrust of the 'castelessness' of the Hindutva even as per its apologists is not on dalit -Brahmin intermarriages to annihilate castes but on 'special consideration' that the dalits have received in ~~and~~ the ~~espoused in~~ Indian ~~and based in~~ Constitution.

Dalits as Hindutva's Foot Soldiers

The role of dalits as foot soldiers of Hindutva in Gujarat is lamented by many commentators and has saddened the secularists' camp. But there is hardly any attempt to understand the reasons behind them. In 1981 there were caste riots in Gujarat as a part of the anti-reservation movements of the very forces that constitute the core of Hindutva today. In response to the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslims) strategy of Congress which paid it rich dividend during 1970s. These Brahmin-Bania-Patel-Patidar castes thought of exploiting reservation issue to consolidate the high caste votes. The issue of admission to the post graduate (PG) courses in the medical college of some two students belonging to high caste had sparked of the anti-reservation row and culminated into the state wide riots against the dalits. These two students had such a poor academic record that even if they were considered among the scheduled castes, they would not get admission into any medical college. However, they had bought them seats in the then capitation medical colleges in Manipal, Karnataka. Their performance at the degree level also was not any good as to get them PG admission, reservations or no reservation. The case was thus based on entirely undeserving facts. It rather illustrated the contrary point how academically undeserving but high caste rich students could hold the system to

ransom. But no one cared to go into them and rhetoric against the reservation for dalits was blown up to such a degree that it exploded into one of the worst riots in the state. These caste riots would not compare well with the Muslim genocide carried out in Gujarat this year in terms of intensity but they were perhaps more widely spread than even the latter. 18 out of total 19 districts of Gujarat were affected. Complicity of police, a common feature of such riots was to be clearly seen and was also reported. Dalits did not have any organization of any significance and had to face mob fury with spontaneous unity. At many places they fought literal battles but in balance got very bad beating. No non-Dalit organization came out to help them during or after the riots. No newspaper ever carried any commentary condemning the riots or the high caste rioters. Few if at all had bothered to visit the riot torn areas and none produced the fact finding reports. Dalits were left to fend for themselves, materially, physically and emotionally. There was a discussion organized in IIM, Ahmedabad on this issue while the riots were still on. Excepting for one professor who was a well known Marxist-activist in the campus, not a single person from the hall full faculty members and students expressed any anger against the rioters or anguish for their victims. On the contrary, they enthusiastically spoke against the reservations, how they marred the merit and so on. To the dalit students present there, who had consciously decided not to participate in the discussions on this emotional issue, it was so disgusting that many of them felt ashamed of the place which they considered till then as their greatest pride. It was indeed a mind shattering experience. Much of the discussion ran the stereotype of merit the shallowness of which in that den of meritorious merely confirmed the inveterate prejudice of all against the

d a l i t s .

In 1985, just four years later, again the caste riots broke out on the same issue of reservations. This time the reservations however did not pertain to the dalits but to the OBCs in accordance to

the recommendations Mandal Commission. Paradoxically, the OBCs to whom these reservations were meant appeared unenthusiastic about them but the dalits who stood to gain nothing came out on streets in their full support. The OBCs comprised motley of castes that constituted a social continuum, one end of which reflected dalit-like deprivation while the other end represented the enviable power. The empowerment of these castes during the post independence period through half-heartedly implemented land reforms and subsequent green revolution brought them in contradiction with the dalit labour that on the other hand was becoming variously assertive about their human rights. These OBCs empowered in economic terms took advantage of their fluid middle position in social hierarchy and consolidated themselves as a political block. With their economic and political empowerment they could easily assume a higher rung for themselves in caste ladder and emphasized it by wielding the baton of Brahmanism vis-à-vis the dalits. These castes therefore would not risk their hard earned social stature and compromise their caste dignity by openly supporting or associating with reservations that were so heavily identified with 'inferior' dalits. Resultantly, in the riots ostensibly against the reservations for the OBCs the dalits again received beatings, probably by the OBCs themselves. Dalits in Gujarat are known for their poorest level of political consciousness. While the Ambedkarian movement has variously catalyzed the consciousness of human rights among the dalits elsewhere, Gujarati dalits chose to be under their upper caste patronage as 'Harijans', the Gandhian epithet which the dalits have violently rejected all over the country. They were however awakened to the harsh reality by the caste riots in 1981. It was for the first time that the dalits in Gujarat, majority of whom had not heard of Ambedkar till then, came out most enthusiastically to celebrate the birth anniversary of Ambedkar all over the State. The spontaneous awakening however could not be sustained in

absence of organization. Dalit Panthers stands to be the only bright spot in organizational history of dalits in Gujarat but it also failed to hold on in face of various odds. How far could dalits bear the beatings of the powerful in such a situation? By 1986 the ruling castes-class that had battered the dalits twice in the span of four years realized its mistake in the electoral arithmetic and with the emerging strategy of 'Hindutva' extended a hand of friendship to the dalits. It spelt an acceptable proposition as it promised an end to enmity between the dalits and the powerful high caste and also meant a kind of absorption into the high caste fold, thus meeting their latent aspirations of sanskritisation. Besides, the Hindutva forces had prepared the grounds by buying off some dalits in leadership position with allurement of money and promise of power. The transformation manifested in a massive participation of dalits in the Jagannath Yatra that took place the very next year, i.e., 1986. This process went on and when in 1990 Advani's Toyota Yatra passed through Gujarat, it was enthusiastically peopled by the dalits everywhere. Thereafter, dalit participation became an integral feature of every Hindutva demonstration, including the Babri Masjid demolition. This process of transformation of dalits into the foot soldiers of Hindutva throws up issues that need introspection by the people who lament this phenomenon: Knowing that the dalits are the most resourceless and historically oppressed people, why is it that even in times of crisis they find themselves utterly isolated without any assistance from every corner? Why has the so called progressive section of the society always kept quite when the dalits face open oppression from the powerful high castes people? Why there is no outcry of civil liberty activists when inhuman atrocities are committed on the dalits and when the state machinery plays a role of accomplice? Why there are no fact finding reports on these incidents? Why the atrocities on the dalits do not nibble at the conscience of the progressive analysts? Knowing that they are vulnerable, what proactive steps these people have

taken for preventing them to fall prey to allurements of reactionary people? Why do the dalit affairs have to belong to the dalits alone? The sufferings and oppression of the dalits are as though taken for granted! Do these attitudes not reflect the age old caste prejudice against the dalits- the accusations any progressive would hate

In the wake of shameful genocide that was carried out in Gujarat by the Sangh Pariwar with the active support from the state, an equally ghastly incident took place in Jajjar district of Haryana in which five hapless dalit youth were lynched to death by the VHP mob in broad day light in front of a police station. But it passed without any significant attention. There were no fact findings except for one by a CPM team. The other was by a Dalit Human Rights Team. There were no demonstrations, no seminars. It reduced to be just a usual dalit affair. Why does the caste violence not attract the same sensitivity as the communal violence, I often wonder? the reasons are not very far to seek. If you take a stand in the communal strife on the side of the minority, you are called secular. But there is no respectable term to describe the one taking cudgel for the dalits in caste strife. One taking sides of the oppressed castes could only be a dalit is the unstated equation that operates in the society. Next they could be denigrated as casteist. The non-dalits openly taking a pro-dalit stand therefore still remain countable on fingers. This apartheid in praxis is the gift of leftism that considered castes as virtual and only class as real. This Brahmanic folly had annoyed Ambedkar and outcaste entire Ambedkarian movement as casteist. It has already cost this country a probable lost revolution and received in return a sterile future. There is never an appreciation of the fact that the resource-less dalits always face double disability: they are the poorest of the poor and additionally suffer from disability of the society that is incapable of treating them as equals. They bear the brunt twice and have to carry double burden in any situation. They get beaten

in caste riots by the caste Hindus and in the communal riots by other minorities as Hindus. As workers, they pay membership fees to their trade union but also subscribe to their caste associations as the former hardly took up issues that concerned them. This dual obligation always characterized the dalit existence. Howsoever a dalit person tries to submerge his identity while working for larger goals, the society repeatedly slaps it back in his face. Even in the left circles he is not rid of it; the corroding identity still lingers around him nibbling at his comradeship. The dalits can never escape this psychological torment, wherever he goes. Even the 'revolution' starts appearing irrelevant to him because it also becomes merely an article of faith that all his woes would vanish once it happens. This was the precise question that Ambedkar had posed- what is there in the communist programme that assures a dalit that he would be rid of caste discrimination? The validity of the question has never diminished a wee bit but instead of attempting to answer the same through concrete practice (not through the theory alone), the question itself tends to be ignored as invalid.

Impact of Hindutva on the Dalits

With the establishment of the fascist character of Hindutva it almost follows that its impact on the subaltern sections like the dalits has to be negative. However, this directional statement does not communicate how and to what extent it is going to impact the lives of dalits.

1. Demolition of Dalit Social Agenda

The Hindu Rashtra campaign successfully took the social agenda of dalits comprising untouchability, poverty, inequality and discrimination away from the problems of Dalits. Along with it, the concepts of rights and dignity enshrined in the Constitution are being sought to be replaced by the notion of obligations inherent in Brahmanism. They do not relate even remotely with the inhuman condition that the dalits live in or express an iota of remorse for their social oppression that they themselves

caused. Their sole ploy is to include them within their 'us'. This 'us' however is a political homogeneity and does not anyway relate with the socio-economic evils the dalits suffer from. To the extent gullible dalit masses fall prey to the allurement of instant Brahmanisation of Hindutva the social agenda of dalits gets eclipsed.

As seen above, despite the propaganda of falsehood and surfeit of double speak, Sangh Pariwar has nowhere indicated how it would achieve eradication of untouchability, inequality and discrimination. It firstly tends to deny the existence of these evils as though they were the mis-propaganda of the pseudo-secularists. As for castes, their ambivalence could not manage to adequately hide their support to the institution of Varnashramdharma as a 'scientific' institution of division of labour and their agenda of its revivalism. In the myriad of voices issued from hundreds of outfits of Sangh Pariwar one does not find a trace of apology. On the contrary, there is a full throated advocacy of the system externalizing the blame for its evils to 'them'. None other than the Shankaracharya helps us see the fangs of the current proselytizing Hindutva. While providing the solution to the problem of placing the newly convert Hindus, the Shankaracharya of Govardhan Peeth in Puri had stated that 'low-cost' temples should be built for the Dalits and Tribals who convert from Christianity and Islam. He advocated that they should not enter the existing Hindu temples and they should not also marry other Hindus. How true Ambedkar sounds when he says that Hinduism cannot exist without castes!

2. Subjugation of Dalit Identity

Although originally a movement of revivalist Brahmins, which is potentially antithetical to the dalit interests, Hindutva could never enact its agenda by ignoring the dalits and tribals who numbered approximately one-fourth of the total population of the country. It is neither feasible from the electoral logic of securing political power nor from the fascist imperative of creat-

ing mass hysteria by launching street battles. With this realization the shrewd Sangh Pariwar had commenced working among the tribals and successfully Hinduised their tribal identity. The efficacy of this transformation is only realized in the recent Gujarat experiment. Later, they launched skillful co-optation programme for the dalits.

The co-optation process started from the systematic inclusion of the greatest dalit icon -Babasaheb Ambedkar into the Sangh Pariwar icons. They made him Pratah Smaraniya and variously propagated as though he was a staunch Hindutvawadi. They started celebrating his birth anniversaries, organizing festivals and seminars; publishing books with systematic vision of saffronizing him. Although, they chose the day of his death anniversary for their infamous demolition of the Babri Masjid, they have been celebrating the demolition day with the images of Ram and Ambedkar placed alongside. For gullible dalit masses reared on symbolism by the degenerate post-Ambedkar dalit leadership, the cooptation of Ambedkar meant change in attitude of the Brahmin camp. If Ambedkar symbolized concern for dalits, Sangh Pariwar did not lack in resources in making exhibitionist demonstration of this concern. It helped certain eager dalit elites to cross over to the resource rich Sangh Pariwar. Although, dalit masses did not follow these opportunist dalit elites it certainly helped in softening the anti-dalit image of the Sangh Pariwar and at the same time blurring the dalit identity. It was relatively easier to win over the non-Ambedkarite dalits because they had not changed their Hindu identity yet. This was accomplished through the communal campaign carried out during the Rathayatras, mass mobilizations on Mandir issue, and later enacting riots. Hindutva campaign admittedly does not recognize dalit- Adivasi identities and as a part of the same programme imposes the Brahminical culture and value systems on them. They have carried out conscious programmes for this acculturation. The process was also variously incentivized by associating ma-

terial benefits to the poor dalit masses. For example, the All Hindu Kamandal project is today promoted to woo the Dalits to join Bajrang Dal shakhas for arms training on salaries of Rs.5, 000 to 10,000 per month. In the Adivasi belt, every hamlet has a couple of youth activists on the role of the Sangh Pariwar who gets Rs. 1,500 to 4,000 per month. Barring the staunch Ambedkarite mass, therefore one finds the majority of dalit people falling prey to this allurement. The very success of the Gujarat laboratory is largely attributed to the fact that Sangh Pariwar could successfully demolish the dalit identity and implant the Hindutva identity among the dalits.

3. Suppression of Culture

Culture is the most potent weapon in the hands of fascism to subjugate masses. Fascism constructs this culture as a blend of the old traditions, norms and values of the ruling class (caste/race) that were getting eclipsed by the progressive culture and the artifacts of modernity required for their luxurious living as the majoritarian or national culture and imposes it on all 'others'. This totalitarian and fascist plan comes out clear in Golwalkar's words: "There are only two courses open to the foreign elements (sic), either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities' problem. That is the only logical and correct solution. ——From this stand point, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should

be, no other course for them to adopt." Over the last decade the Hindutva forces have severally demonstrated what Golwalkar means by a culture of the Hindus.

As a matter of fact there is nothing like Hindu culture. As all historians know, Hindu is an amorphous identity (Hindu means black in Persian) for the people living beyond the river Sindhu given by the ancient Arabs. What Golwalkar and his cohorts mean by the Hindu culture is a culture of Brahmins that may be extendible to the upper castes, but can never be assumed as the culture of the lower labouring castes under Shudras and much so of the dalits and tribals who were admittedly beyond their varna framework. Despite the Brahmanic hegemony for several centuries, these people have preserved their distinct gods, traditions, norms, values, language etc. – in fact every element of culture. To assume this distinction away is to deny their existence. To hegemonize their culture is forcible submergence of their identity; suppression of their aspiration, subjugation of their spirit and imposition of slavery.

The subjugation of dalit culture is happening in every possible way under the influence of Hindutva. The powerful medium of TV has become a major instrument. Apart from the news channels, the TV beams either the programmes made abroad with a tinge of imperialist culture or Indian soap operas with outright religious and reactionary contents. None of the themes running through these soap operas have even a remotest connection with real problems of people. With their characteristic ubiquity they have overtaken the earlier medium of cinema that fantasized life within a limited time and space for a limited number of people. The impact of TV is indeed devastating. Some sociologists have pointed out that the mythological serials of Ramayana and Mahabharat have significantly contributed in building the Hindutva wave of the Sangh Pariwar. Over the time, exclusive channels have come to dish out anachronistic spiritual stuff in support of Hindutva. TV has become a main medium to propa-

gate consumerist culture through advertisements and even through the serials that portray life of ultra rich and their relationships. The print media also is visibly transformed in its form as well as contents. Newspapers have adopted a tabloid form of the western papers that are known to dish out shallow stuff. In contents, the degeneration is much worse. A significant part of it carries the lighter stuff like cinema gossip, life style concerns of the uppies; astrology and spiritual columns. Even the news being reported has the cultural bias.

At the civil society level, there is a renewed zeal in promotion of religious melas like Kumbh Melas, Vaishno Devis, Santoshi Matas, etc. and the old and the newly invented festivals. Some of them are being planted to divert people from the secular engagements. For example, for some years now there has been visible spate of public Satyanarayan Pujas performed on the republic day in Mumbai. There have of course been rath yatras and kar sevas that galvanize vast masses of gullible people and intoxicate them with Hindutva. The Sangh Pariwar had recognized early the efficacy of education in establishing its cultural hegemony. They have been running thousands of schools that have been silently acculturating people to their creed. Their Vanvasi schools in the tribal areas well exemplified the cultural conversion in the recent Gujarat experiment. Now, having had the reigns of power in their hands, they have been emboldened to saffronize entire school syllabi.

4. Dalit as Cannon Fodder of the Hindutva

Hindutva's core rests on the upper caste /class rich farmers; the industrialist and multiple segments of middle classes that constitute bureaucrats, professionals, traders, etc. latched on to the big capital. These are not the people who could themselves execute socio-economic and political agenda of dominance. Fascism enforces its writ through physical force which typically requires its foot soldiers from the lower strata. In the name of "Hindu Unity" the dalits and tribals are being brainwashed and made to

perform this role. Whether, it is Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 or the various riots that resulted in its wake or the recent Gujarat communal carnage, Sangh Pariwar agenda was invariably carried out through its foot soldiers who came from the dalits, tribals and other lower Shudra castes.

Many commentators lamented significant participation of dalits and tribals in the state-supported pogrom of Muslims in Gujarat. It surprised many because not in the very distant past, the dalits were brutally battered by these very upper caste/class people in the reservations riots there. Suddenly, the rising Hindutva forces realized their folly and started befriending the dalits under the larger alliance of all Hindus. The peculiar state of Gujarati dalits, characterized by the long history of being under the Gandhian patronage, absence of Ambedkarian movement except for a brief spell of Dalit Panthers, frustration that befell through its collapse, increasing crisis on account of job losses, absence of organizational strength and strong ambiance of religious organizations impelled the dalits to accept the Sanskritisation overtures and get onto the bandwagon of Hindutva. Their settings that brought them in competition with the similarly placed Muslims in eking out their livelihood helped them moreover to fall prey to the venomous logic of the Hindutva forces that Muslims were 'the other'. They were used by the Hindutva forces in large numbers to carry out the pogrom of Muslims in Gujarat and naturally suffered disproportionately in terms of lives as well as property. They hardly realized that they were used as the cannon fodder in the Hindutva project.

5. Specter of slavery

It is a tactical need of Hindutva that the dalits are included in their 'us' against 'the other' in Muslims and Christians. However, it is inconceivable that the contradictions between the dalits and the upper caste/ class Hindus that constitute the core of Hindutva can be glossed over merely through the emotional slogans of Hindu unity. The need of polarization into the 'us' and

'they' is prompted by the process of gaining political power within the prevailing political framework. Once, this objective is accomplished, the agenda could shift to the next higher level to enforce strict hierarchical social structure, not quite strictly one hopes as based on birth as ordained in the varnashram dharma but one that is externally based on secular considerations but which internally corresponds to the age old caste lines. The simple dictum that is passed in the name of globalization that only the select few should have access to the higher education, as the Ambani- Birla framework for the reforms in education proposed, will effectively exclude all the dalits from the realm of higher education and ensure confirmation to Manu's dictum without actually prescribing so.

6. Increasing Atrocities

With increasing revivalist fervor, the contradictions between the dalits and the non-dalits are bound to increase. The atrocities are but the manifestation of these contradictions, the recent statistics expectedly shows galloping rise in all types of atrocities on the dalits during the decade of 90s that could be identified with the rising onslaught of Hindutva as compared to those during the previous decade. The recent Jajjhar incident of gruesome killing of five Dalit men in Haryana by a VHP-led mob is a chilling comment on the plight of all marginalized groups in India today, faced with the horror of Hindutva terror. The killing was publicly celebrated by VHP as Ravan Dahan and none other than its chief- Giriraj Kishor justified it saying that the cow was more valuable than the lives of those dalits. The incident is a brutal reminder that it is not just Muslims or Christians alone who are threatened with the rapid rise of fascist Hindutva. Since Hindutva is the ideology of contemporary Indian fascism, the modern form of ancient Brahminism, all historical victims of the Brahminical religion and the caste order are seen as legitimate targets. One of the propellants of Hindutva in reality is the deep-seated fear of the grow-

ing empowerment of the Dalits, tribals and backward castes, victims of upper caste rule for centuries. As in the still-continuing violence in Gujarat, Hindutva groups have used Dalits and tribals to target Muslims, while at the same time, as the Haryana killings show, they have not hesitated from slaying them in cold blood, indicating to them to them the place that they must accept, on pain of death, in the ideal Hindu dispensation.

State of Resistance

Unfortunately there is no resistance to this fascist onslaught to be seen from the dalits. For many years now, the real issues of peoples' lives have been taboo in the dalit politics that has been getting propelled by the emotional outburst of its self seeking leaders. Whereas, this virtualization of the dalit issues has fragmented the dalit movement into innumerable outfits, it also has given rise to a phenomenon known as BSP that enthroned a dalit lady in one of the casteist and conservative states of India. The numerous outfits literally operate as petty shops dealing in dalit interests in the political super bazaar of India. BSP relatively distinguished itself in terms of its vision (it had certainly a longer term vision than most others), organization structure (BSP has essentially emulated the organization model of the RSS), acute pragmatism indistinguishable from crass opportunism (it has elevated opportunism to an ideological level in the name of promoting dalit interests), and novelty of discourse (it talked of pitting all dalits, tribals, religious minorities, and backward castes against the upper castes comprising Brahman, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas). It created a lot of hope among the dalits. But eventually inevitable happened; this phenomenon too betrayed the rising dalit hope by coming in full support of Hindutva. Mayawati's shameful canvassing in Gujarat in support of murderous Modi was the last straw on the back of the hopeful dalit camel.

Some progressive groups among dalits strove to work among dalits in the wake of Gujarat carnage but they could not even scratch the Hindutva imprint on the minds of dalits. Despite var-

ied efforts of this kind and condemnation that flowed through media, there has not been any awakening among Gujarati dalits as the landslide victory of Hindutva in the recent state election revealed. Even the Jajjar incident could not shake the dalit organizations beyond the religious conversions that were organized by one newly created outfit under the leadership of Udit Raj. It remains almost the sole outfit that took a firm anti-Hindutva stand during the Gujarat carnage. Ostensibly, Udit Raj has followed the low risk, high return model of Kanshiram so far. He distinguished himself in two respects, one, his emphasis on Buddhism as the path shown by Babasaheb Ambedkar and two, his relatively radical stand on the contemporary issues. Although, he has taken the inevitable step of launching a political party – Swaraj Party (sic) recently, and set himself to plunge into the whirlpool of electoral politics, it must be said to his credit that he stood alone in articulating resistance to Hindutva.

While this apathetic attitude of dalit movement is a reality, it would be wrong to single it out on that count. As a matter of fact there is almost no resistance to Hindutva in the country from any corner. The activity of resistance is only confined to certain progressive intellectuals and the leftist organizations. But even they could not articulate their resistance creatively enough to appeal to the masses of common people. This disturbing apathy perhaps characterizes the current phase of the history. The forces of imperialist globalization have successfully pushed people into their shells to be autonomous individuals who are too engrossed to get over the crisis of living to imagine the possibility of their long term salvation. The cultural onslaught of globalization moreover has been systematically disorienting their minds from such possibilities and miring them into incessant consumption. It is interesting to note that the spread of globalization is associated with the rise of religious fundamentalism, rightist and fascist movements all over. Even the rise of Hindutva can well be correlated with the process of liberalization initiated after the second-com-

ing of Indira Gandhi through her successor -Rajiv Gandhi to the formal adoption and implementation of these policies after 1991. This strong correlation cannot be ignored when one is confronted with the horrific reality of the absolute fascist rule.

In Conclusion

In absence of any movement on ground to resist Hindutva, only certain directions for future can be indicated:

1. Hindutva is a mass movement and can only be effectively countered by a similar political mass movement. The masses for this movement can be mobilized from the working strata of the dalits, tribals, and the religious minorities like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs etc. and particularly their womenfolk who have potential contradiction of some kind or the other with Hindutva. After the assaults on Christians in Chhota Udepur and Panchmahal districts in Gujarat last year and a full-fledged carnage of Muslims carried out there early this year, dialogues have been started among the people from these strata for coming together but there is not much of progress so far. Though this unity of all the oppressed masses may sound lofty, axiomatic and therefore somewhat clichéd, there is no other alternative than trying the hitherto unachieved. The difficulties are immense but by no means insurmountable. If the problem is approached with creativity, ingenuity and with mutual empathy the difficulties shall be certainly overcome. In face of impending calamity the people do come out with such novel approaches.

2. Hindutva is not a religious movement. It is essentially a political movement and can therefore be effectively resisted by only a mass political movement. Some people, both Hindus as well as Muslims, tend to diagnose the religious mispropaganda being responsible for rousing communal passions in people. Consequently, their prescription leads to launching a movement to spread correct teachings and tenets of the respective religions. Unfortunately, this is wrong. Because, religion is an anachronistic institution that is incapable of confirming to modern rationality. Con-

trary to popular belief, nothing sane can come out of religious discourse; it can only apply to and reinforce the baser things. The religious conversions of dalits that have taken place in protest of Hindutva may therefore be said to be misdirected. The experience of the great conversion movement of Dr. Ambedkar may corroborate that even the relatively most rational religion like Buddhism has failed to radicalize the converts or bring any significant change into their lives. There is a similar attempt to detach the majority Shudra castes from Hindutva fold through imparting them a new religious identity in Maharashtra. Although started with noble aim, one apprehends that it might miss wood for trees. Unless it articulates concrete anti-Hindutva/ anti-globalization political agenda out of this mass mobilization its success will remain doubtful.

3. Hindutva is a fascist movement. As Dimitrov pointed out, "Fascism acts in the interests of extreme imperialists but presents itself to the masses in the guise of a wronged nation and appeals to outraged "national sentiments". Fascism relies on falsehood because truth will never favour it. The masses need to be educated on these characteristic so that they can guard themselves against the fascist propaganda of the Sangh Pariwar. The core of Hindu fascism rests on the upper caste /class rich farmers; the industrialist, and multiple segments of middle classes comprising bureaucrats, professionals, traders, etc. latched on to the big capital. It is in service of the imperialists through its policies of globalization. While on one side they kept people in state of confusion with their Swadeshi rhetoric, on the other side they have accelerated the globalization process to the benefit of imperialists. It therefore follows that the movement against Hindutva shall have to be based on the unity of the lower classes /castes potentially in contradiction with not only the Hindutva but also the imperialist forces.

4. Hindutva and globalization are complementary and mutually sustaining. Neoliberalism that provides the philosophical base

for imperialist globalization has given rise to fundamentalist and fascist forces world over through atomization of individual and autonomizing its enterprise in the 'market' sans any moral precepts. It is not incidental that the rise of Hindutva (even including the Congress variety followed after the second coming of Indira Gandhi through Narasimharao) has been closely correlated to the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization followed by the government. The BJP with two-MP strength in the Parliament in 1984 gets catapulted to power with 182 MPs in 1999 during this precise period. Without globalization Hindutva cannot survive in its aggressive form. Therefore the resistance to Hindutva must necessarily target the forces of globalization also as its enemy.

5. Hindutva is the ideology of the ruling class and therefore it is futile to expect any alternative out of the mainstream politics. Fascism always uses the prevailing parliamentary democratic framework to secure power and once it is done scraps it. Even during its use fascism does not follow the parliamentary democratic norms to mobilize votes. It relies on fighting on street to create mass frenzy. Rath Yatras, Mandir movement and communal riots are but the examples of it. Bereft with the ideological weaponry, the conventional parliamentary parties can never match the aggressive strategies of fascism and rather get dragged along its trail. Therefore, the effective counter to fascism can never be articulated through conventional parliamentary medium. The mass movement against fascism has to proactively oppose fascism on street. These street battles may orient and shape up parliamentary processes but the latter cannot be relied as primary counter.

6. While Hindutva could be resisted by people coming on streets, its ally- imperialism brings in state in its support. The resistance to Hindutva has to necessarily take into account this composite force. It will necessitate a viable defensive strategy to the military offensive of imperialism. Exact methods to create this defensive apparatus will depend on the state of mass organization,

gravity of situation and available resources. 7. The root cause for Hindutva lies in the weakness of leftism in this country. The leftist forces have consistently refused to learn through their failure through history. Despite the eight decades of self criticism they are yet to come to terms with reality of this land that lies in and around caste. Their doctrinaire approach has variously reflected essence of Brahmanism, which is antithetical to the cause they intend to espouse. In the semi feudal, semi colonial country, the contradictions between peasantry and land owning gentry are distorted by fault lines of caste. Its manifest form is always dalits vs. all others as the pattern of atrocities on dalits reveal. It is imperative for the leftist forces therefore to have a conscious programme to combat caste integrated within the agenda of class struggle. Rather the class struggle in India must necessarily embed caste struggle. They have to come clearly in support of dalits against all upper castes without any vacillations. That alone can win them dalit confidence. And that alone shall decide the fate of the anti-Hindutva struggle.



Fascist Onslaught- Impact on Culture and Resistance

Sanjay Pawar

Revolutionary greetings to you all!

I am truly grateful to you all and the organisers of this seminar for inviting an artiste like me to participate in a discussion on a socio-political subject.

I do not fully recall all the details of how I was attracted towards new progressive ideas of change during the days when I was being taught 'artistic' art inside within the clasroom surrounded by the natural greenery of the J.J. School of Arts. But today, when I look back at this journey I consider myself to be fortunate.

Fortunate because had I not been acquainted with these ideas, perhaps I would still have imagined that the land, plants, trees, rivers and streams of this country were just a part of the landscape. But with these ideas, I learnt many things about this land and questions regarding issues like exploitation-drought and the agitational movements trying to find solutions to them. These ideas also helped me to understand that beauty lies not only in the anatomical structure of man's body, but more in his way of

thinking... And it made me particularly sad to see that for the purpose of 'figure drawing' a woman nearly as old as my grandmother had to undress and sit in front of us like a dead corpse for rupees twenty per day. And it made me feel as if me and my colleagues were like some rajas or maharajas, feudal lords who for their sexual pleasure play with the body and minds of exploited people -- all in the name of art.

During this time I read poems by Narayan Surve and Namdev Dhasal. The Panther movement was surging ahead. I was born in Mumbai's Parel which till 1970 was the stronghold of the 'Laal Bawata' (Red Flag) and where later the Congress created the Shiv Sena, to try and completely wipe out all traces of their influence. My personal loss is that when the red flag was flying high in all its glory, I was too young to understand the reasons behind this triumphant display. And today when I am able to comprehend the significance of the colours of the flags that are flying, I find saffron flags in place of laal bawata.

As per the theory of colour, saffron and red fall in one category, namely 'warm'. But, in social theory what a contrast! After so many years I have come to the conclusion that our artist friends connected with different art-forms, attach little or no importance to 'social processes' compared to the importance they attach to 'art'.

For them an adivasi woman is just a human object in a landscape, an actor in a play, a character in a film; their exploitation is the subject of a story. For them art is not a medium for agitating the audience, but a ladder to earn fame and money.

Today we are faced with the problema of communalism & religious fanaticism. These are created more through the medium of art than through politics. Art is such a medium that it can also be described as culture and social behaviour.

Using this medium, many new festivals (utsavs) are organised which help to strengthen higher caste traditions and customs. Our national natya utsavs or film festivals are always inaugurated with ceremonial lighting of deeps (lights) and shehnai wadan (music). Never, not even as an exception, is it done with the beating of drums, wearing garlands of flowers around the neck and on the head, putting ones hands around the waist, shaking ones legs in a line and bending your head. These adivasi and dalit art forms are labelled as 'folk art' or prefixed with the adjective ethnic and sold on international platforms as a commodity. Yet, they can never be part of the inauguration of our cultural programmes!

Even today cultural programmes in Maharashtra conclude with the recital of Dnyaneshwar's Pasaydan. Dnyaneshwar is Maharashtra's Brahmin saint whom the brahmins themselves had boycotted. Today the brahmins who sing Pasaydan remain totally silent about that boycott, they do not even think about it. On the contrary they have isolated Dnyaneshwar from the Warkari sect and more or less made him an "Ishwar" (God).

It is small things like these that weave together the fabric of communalism and religious fanaticism. One of my Muslim friends from Pune was staying in a brahmin majority area, and his five year old son used to play only with the five year old son of a brahmin neighbour. On 6th December 92 that small boy told this small boy 'From tomorrow you don't come to my house... we have broken your masjid now there will be a mandir there'. The people who teach hatred to innocent children at this tender age are the same parents who after graduation work for banks or government offices and these are the same people who had distributed sweets in their offices on 6th December.

Creating art among or from these people is a very difficult and painful thing. These are the very people who glare at Muslims because they kill cows, but flock to hear Zakir Hussain's tabla recitals. Then, while enjoying the taal they remain oblivious of the fact that the tabla is made from animal skin. These are the same people who are always talking angrily that Muslims have four wives, and marry four times, yet during their own marriages they play Bismilla Khan's shehnai music. These are the same people who used to think that bread was a medium for conversion but today they accept the same 'bread & butter', and have adopted rituals like birthdays, honeymoons and anniversaries as a part of their own culture. Those are the same people who have reached upto Coke & Pepsi from the sacred waters of Ganga. What I mean to say is that, this community, though appearing to be confused on the face of it, is in their heart of hearts beginning to conform.

On the one hand they welcome the new economic policy and globalisation because it is a welfare programme for the higher castes... on the other hand as an answer to consequences of globalisation such as job insecurity, the wiping out of small businesses, as well as to secure themselves against the socio-political mafia, they are promoting spiritualism through babas and sadhvvis. In order to kick out allopathy they are proposing ayurved and homeopathy and with it they are propagating Hindutva. They are promoting Vedas and Upanishads and to some extent the chaturvarna system. These are the same people who are turn the science of information and technology into a medium to propagate religious books which promote reactionary religious thoughts and discriminatory ideas.

These are the same people who have abused everyone from Galileo to Socrates, who called them mad, and even gave them

poison. They are the same people who at one time were Aryans, Nazis and are now represented by the imperialist countries.

The popcorn that is sold in packed polythene bags has more value for them than the labourer who sweats in the corn fields. Likewise they have no feelings for a farmer who loses his land because the creation of water lands & water parks, which are built for their week-end entertainment, is more important.

They have destroyed the lives of fishermen who travelled by ferry boats by bringing hovercrafts or bundi launches. They have deprived poor fishermen of their livelihood by bringing in trawlers.

These are the same people who while forcing lakhs of mill workers into near starvation, and bringing in pub culture and disco culture, are also giving donations for building a temple in Ayodhya. Taking advantage of democracy they are installing fascists like Modi and Togadia in the seats of power. These are the very people who do not allow mehfils of Ghulam Ali to take place and do not allow the making of films like 'Water' and 'Fire'.

If one observes the situation carefully, one will be able to understand their strategy. The very people who talk about Ramayana and Mahabharata are the most deceitful people in the world. The community who honours Hitler as their ideal, believes that the caste and class in which they are born is the most superior and they take it for granted that others too will honour their superiority.

On one hand these people are religious fundamentalists. On the other they are power hungry. Power politics is such a thing that like Goebbles they keep on explaining certain things to the people. Even when parties with high ideological principles come to power, they equate naxalites with terrorists and label all

people's movements as anti-national. People raising issues concerning the environment and forest, water and land are termed anti-development. The local market, which is oppressed by the caste system, is declared 'global', almost through an ordinance, in order to propagate the new economic policies. And to implement these too, a ban on some creative art becomes justified. Indeed it is done very subtly under the pretext of law and order.

Art is beyond place and time. We have to see how we can transform it into a new people's movement. The art which comes forth from seven notes and seven colours takes us closer to humanism. But today Safdar Hashmi has to become a martyr whereas Nathuram goes to America. There is a ban on 'Water' and 'Fire', while women's bodies and figures are openly sold in the market through music CDs.

Street plays are cut off from issue based drama and only those political plays which are 'acceptable' are treated as art.

Therefore I would like to suggest that we should take advantage of science and technology and establish our control over the media. Today no medium should be untouchable for us. We should see it only as a medium and consider its impact only. Let us imagine that we have to fire water fountains from cannons instead of fireballs. That we have to sow seeds, not drop bombs, from airplanes. Because today it is the Modis and Togadias who are controlling this medium.

We should do street plays and also use established theatre. We should make feature films just as we make documentaries. We will have to turn literature too into a human document. We will have to free art from religious influence and bring art into an open environment.

We will have to bring indigenous dalit and adivasi art onto centrestage and establish deliberate theatre in place of mere entertainment. Only progressive thought and the ideas of social change can develop art and create a humane environment.

Although there is darkness all around.

But piercing this darkness

Amar Sheikhs voice, Sahir's poetry

The pain and emotion in Balraj's eyes, K.A. Abbas' story
The disquieting dialogues of Hangal, the thoughts of Monto & Chughtai

The words of people like Pablo and Castro,
The roaring call of the countless agitating masses.

Gives us the hope

'That dawn will surely come'

"Woh subah kabhi to ayegi".



“Interference of Hindutvawaadis in school education”

Dr. Razia Patel

It is well understood that education helps to shape the new generation and to build the future of our society and country. Therefore, the ruling classes all over the world give prime attention to hijacking the education system, and shaping and controlling its nature in order to breed a new generation favourable to their class rule.

In India, ever since it assumed power, the BJP appears to have attempted to do this in a sustained manner. These days one frequently encounters the party's controversial proposals and decisions in the field of education.

The most controversial issue has been the introduction of 'Saraswati Vandana', which occurred during BJP rule. "Saraswati Vandana is a symbol of Indian culture. If any one opposes it we will not recognise him|her as son|daughter of the soil," Sudarshan, RSS Sarsanghachalak had warned at that time. In India how many societies, castes & communities, how many original inhabitants worship Saraswati as their goddess? Saraswati is recognised as a deity by Brahmins, or at best, the Savarna castes. While making this statement, although Sudarshan quite clearly had Muslim community and Christians in mind, it is a

fact that there is no Saraswati tradition in other Indian communities. What is Sudarshan going to do about them? This question stares us in the face. Assuming that they also are clearly proved not to be the sons of the soil, then what punishment is Sudarshan going to give them?

One more controversial issue of the BJP era is the removal of the chapter on Marxism from the Central Board of Higher and Secondary Education's 12th Std. text book of political science. When central minister Jaswant Singh was confronted with this question he replied that Marxism was now dead and outdated.

In all the BJP ruled states they have begun to change the syllabus and based on that started to change the text books. The following extracts are taken from the text books approved by BJP governments in M.P. and U.P.

“Delhi’s ‘Kutub Minar’ was built by Samudra Gupta, its real name is ‘Vishnu Stamb.’”

“Indians created the institution of caste for the protection of their religion and society.”

“In India, Indian culture was created by the Aryans. They were the creators of Vedas.”

“Until now, women were living within the four walls in the joint family system. They are now venturing out of their houses. Due to women’s freedom tensions are being created in the family and because of the notion of women’s freedom many families are breaking. Women have received many rights by law hence families are disintegrating.”

After effecting changes in the text books this party has proceeded on to announce the inclusion of Astrology etc. in the university curriculum.

On 7th August and 8th April 1984 in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi a conference of 'Dharm Sansad' was held. In this conference a Code of Conduct for Hindus was announced. Given below are some of the points of this Code related to education.

"Create an environment such as to make religious education and Sanskrit compulsory in schools."

"Sanskrit should become language of daily transaction, people should therefore be encouraged to speak in Sanskrit."

"Ten day long study classes in Sanskrit should be organised in villages and cities."

"Give dignity to Sanskrit so as to achieve national language status."

When one looks at these points and compares them with the emphasis on Sanskrit in the agenda of NCERT it becomes clearly that the Sangh Parivar has successfully pushed forward its agenda. Actually in Oct. 2000 in the State Education Minister's Conference there was pandemonium on the issue of Saraswati Vandana. But this was not the only issue that aroused opposition. The reference in the "subject matter" to the Vedas, Upanishads and Sanskrit education also kicked up a storm of protest. Because of this conference, it became clear that the ultimate goal of the Hindutvavaadis is spreading education about swadeshi Hindu religion. Soon after, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad declared that it will open 700 Vedic schools along the Gurukul pattern.

In the State Education Minister's conference, the Education Ministers of W. Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka opposed the BJP's hidden agenda. Even then, this agenda was pushed forward and the NCERT draft on education is the best symbol of this. Notwith-

standing the fierce opposition in the State Education Minister's conference this agenda has now come to the fore.

In November 2000, the National Council of Educational Research and Training has prepared a draft for school education. In the 'Foreword' itself the document says that 'Our education system should be based on India's philosophical foundations and its cultural and social traditions.' Which traditions and foundations are they talking about? The draft is silent about the system of exploitation and the caste system. While stressing in the draft that education should be 'swadeshi', and emphasising the nobility of Indian traditions, elsewhere they are propagating that freedom, equality, fraternity, justice, secularism and democracy are all foreign values.

In presenting the background to the draft, they start from Gandhiji's promises, but then slowly turn towards the Chandogya Upanishads, showering praise on the ancient Indian education system. Ironically, the glaring example of Eklavya is a part of this 'ancient tradition' too. In the Foreword it is also said that, 'the tradition of religious education develops body, mind and soul. It also teaches social duties (Chaturvarna) and would advance national prosperity.' Quoting the British it further says that in the 19th century, the Indian education system was so complete that transcending caste-religious divisions it spread to all small villages. This is so totally false that one has to ask - - can there be a bigger lie than this?

Since Gandhiji has been quoted, let us read Gandhiji's ownviews on education. 'The education system should be equal for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. I am being asked why I did not emphasise religious education. My answer is, I want to teach children a practical-ethical religion and that means self-reliance and aatmaauddhar (progress the Soul)." Despite quoting Gandhiji, it is clear that the BJP is trying to push its own

agenda through this draft. It is also quite evident that they are promoting Vedic religious traditions.

The draft expresses grief over the fact that people are getting detached from traditions due to the modern education system. Going one step ahead, while venerating ancient traditions, it says that ancient society was self sufficient, which is clearly nothing but a justification and glorification of the chaturvarna system. In this entire draft, nowhere is the idea clearly presented that one of the challenges facing society is the fight against a discriminatory caste based system and establishment of social equality. While stating that Western education has had some adverse effects it says that it has created differences and inequalities in our society. What sort of differences and inequalities? The draft present some strange exmaples -- the rural-urban divide, or that between rich-poor, educated-uneducated, etc.

While praising the nobility of the caste-based division of labour (Balutedari) which has forced generation after generation to continue in fixed professions, it says that the western education has destroyed this useful joint family system.

The draft presents some even stranger sociological conclusions -- the disintegrating family system, single parents, unmarried couples living together, all these are other adverse effects of western education.

While outlining its philosophy of education the draft says that 'mediocrity and ordinariness' should not be allowed to exist. This is extremely dangerous, because barring the few who make it to the merit lists, all other children will fall into this category. Does that mean they should be discarded?

On the women's question the draft is full of self-praise. It says, 'Unlike the west our women received the right to vote without having had to agitate.' As if this right has been given

by them! Without stopping there, they have gone on to add in a patronising tone, 'even then we will provide education about male-female equality.' There is not even a single reference to Sati. While on the one hand they have talked about male-female equality, on the other, at the commencement of the 'Year of Women's Empowerment' the central government's Women and Child Welfare Department organised a 'Women's Empowerment Jattha', under the leadership of Mridula Sinha of the BJP women's front (who is also the president of the Social Welfare Board). There she made statements like "the dowry system is a part of Indian culture", "women are not adjusting with their in-laws and this is the reason for family violence", "there is no need to give equal property rights to women", etc. If responsible people like her speak in this manner, then what male-female equality will they teach?

The issue of priority in education for deprived sections is included in the draft in the subtle and clever manner that has become a trademark of the Sangh. There is reference only to S.C., S.T. and other backward sections. However, the Education Policy of 1986 emphatically states that among those sections which have remained educationally backward, the Muslim community is the largest. Therefore, it emphasises the need to make efforts to bring the community into the educational mainstream. But, there is no mention of the Muslim community in the list of the deprived sections in the draft. Not only that, while making repeated references to education in the context of social unity, society has been defined as 'multilingual' and 'multicultural', though the word 'multireligious' is conveniently avoided.

'Education of the gifted and talented' is also stressed and there should be special provisions for them. These children will be chosen not only by IQ, but also by EQ, and not only that by

SQ also i.e. Intelligence Quotient, Emotional Quotient and Spiritual Quotient respectively. What is this SQ? Aren't only Brahmin children proficient in it?

The draft says that while children know Newton, it is indeed very sad that they do not know Aryabhata. And, in the list of educational thinkers Dayanand Saraswati, Arvind, Vivekanand and then Gandhi figure. There is no mention of the architect of the Wardha Plan -- Zakir Hussain.

The document lays down the aim of the educational syllabus as being the imparting knowledge of the development of Indian society and India's contributions to the world to the new generation so as to inculcate a pride in their Indianess. The question is who will really judge the contributions made by India? Will it be the rest of the world or will we have to proclaim them ourselves? Besides, it says that one should be conservative and dynamic.

There is also no mention of the need to develop the tendency to remove the flaws in society through introspection. Likewise, the need for the advancement of values such as liberalism and secularism is not asserted. Instead, there is insistence on remaining conservative.

In the value education there is a brief mention of democracy and secularism and a detailed mention of education about religion. The term 'religious education' is cleverly replaced by education about religion, but the aim is very clear.

A special policy has been enacted with regard to Sanskrit and a lot of space has been utilised to glorify it. Further scope is provided to make it optional subject, together with the recommendation to teach, Vedic Mathematics, Yoga, Home Science and Ayurveda. In all, the draft appears to suggest that there is no contribution of any sort made by other social communities

towards India's culture and development. The aim is to establish single religion centred society.

President of the Indian Education Planning and Training Congress, J.S. Rajput has said that he has taken the approval of all state governments for this draft. If it is so then it is a matter of grave concern. What is the stand of the government of Maharashtra? This should be made clear.

There aren't enough values in the draft to nourish the cause of building a strong India strong, an integrated India. Being an Indian citizen, I find this worrisome. For that matter any Indian citizen will feel likewise. Therefore it is necessary for us to speak out against it.

These are some of the issues that come to mind while reading the NCERT draft. However over and above that, it is also evident that there is a growing fundamentalist influence in the field of education. Often this comes across when one gets an opportunity to talk to teachers in the universities. Once while talking to me, some professors said that Akbar was not a liberal king, that he was sectarian and had a number of wives. In this respect, they said, he was like all other Muslim kings. The fact that during those times there were many Hindu kings who had a number of wives was conveniently forgotten. They could not provide any other examples of Akbar's sectarianism. The most important conclusion I have drawn from this dialogue is that Akbar is normally an impediment when trying to prove that the Muslim community is basically sectarian and fundamentalist. Therefore, he is sought to be painted as a villain. One should note that Emperor Akbar and Empress Razia Sultan are unwanted by both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists who are uncomfortable with them. In fact it is quite amusing that Aurangzeb comes in handy to both types of fundamentalists.

It is clear that fundamentalists are trying to take control of the entire education system and textbooks. None of the fundamentalists, whatever their hue, are an exception to this. On the contrary it is well known that we have a long history of tradition bound leaders of different communities seeking to enter the educational decision making process.

It is a contradiction that on the one hand we talk about national integration and on the other give permission to open schools in the name of religion and then keep some of the citizens out of the purview of those schools.

Our textbooks fail to reflect the simple and straightforward manner in which Indian cultural integration, especially in a Hindu-Muslim context, existed and continues to exist. Or if at all it does this, it does so in an extremely artificial way.

It is also contradictory to say that equality is one of our educational principles, even while reflecting traditional inequalities in our textbooks. Therefore, today the question before the movement is not only one of demanding the right to education, but also issues regarding the content, method and type of education being imparted to our students have become extremely important today.

There are a couple of other issues that we should also pay attention to. For one the Sanskrit that is being promoted by the Hindutvawaadis is the same language which was used by the upper castes and ruling elements in the past. On the other hand, at its Agra Conference the RSS expressed its opposition to subjects like Information Technology. This means that they are promoting the return of the rule of the Manusmriti in an insidious manner. The Sangh Parivar also sings the praises of the glorious past. But whose glorious past is this? Is it of the dalits and the backward castes? Clearly not. It is praise for Vedic edu-

cation. The culture they are talking about is not an integrated Indian culture, but only the cultural traditions of the Brahmins.

Many members and supporters of the RSS are being appointed to the ICHR and NCERT committees. One such person is K. G. Rastogi whose autobiography "Aap Beeti" clearly accepts that the author has committed certain criminal acts against the Muslim community. And for this he has been honoured with the post of President of the committee!

Prime Minister Vajpayee has appointed a committee of industrialists to advise him on education. This contains the likes of Tata and Birla, whose ideology is to make profit on education. Consequently they have recommended speedy privatisation of education.

A Supreme Court bench has recently given a judgement on the NCERT syllabus which is favourable to BJP. As a result all social activists working for a secular, integrated and reality based education are confused and disappointed. Here, we should understand that while the judiciary has its own role, people's movements too have to play their role. There is a definite importance for people's movement. We should bring the facts before the people and organise them and build a people's movement for reality based and useful education.



All India League For Revolutionary Culture

Seminar Report

Mumbai December 20-21, 2002

Imperialism has now emerged as monopoly finance capital and seeks to exploit labour, resources and markets of the backward countries. Culturally this monopoly tendency of international finance capital, is manifested in a form of dictatorship, in India's case in forms like the BJP's cultural nationalism. Without being economic determinists, we can say that imperialism's monopolistic culture is a reflection of the manner in which international finance capital cannot tolerate small capital, especially in the way in which it refuses to tolerate other religions. It wants there to be one market, one culture and one religion. This monopoly is meant to perpetuate exploitation of the backward nations by the imperialist system under the leadership of America. Religion is being used to divert the attention of the masses from exploitation, and to win support for the most reactionary sections of the ruling classes to come to power and further the imperialist project. This was the emphasis placed by revolutionary poet Varavara Rao during his concluding presentation on a perspective towards combating the rising wave of Hindu fundamentalism at the seminar organised by All India League For Revolutionary Culture (AILRC) on 20-21 Decem-

We will have to bring indigenous dalit and adivasi art onto centrestage and establish deliberate theatre in place of mere entertainment. Only progressive thought and the ideas of social change can develop art and create a humane environment.

Although there is darkness all around.

But piercing this darkness

Amar Sheikhs voice, Sahir's poetry

The pain and emotion in Balraj's eyes, K.A. Abbas' story
The disquieting dialogues of Hangal, the thoughts of Monto & Chughtai

The words of people like Pablo and Castro,
The roaring call of the countless agitating masses.

Gives us the hope

'That dawn will surely come'

"Woh subah kabhi to ayegi".

ber 2002 in Mumbai. Earlier he had drawn on the experiences of the radical student movement in AP which had confronted the student activists of the ABVP in many bitter, and sometimes bloody battles, to show that both direct confrontation and the establishment of a broad united front were necessary in the battle against the communal fascists.

Earlier during the inaugural session, special invitee M.H. Jowher of the 'Society for Development of Rational Thinking', Ahmedabad said that the barbaric fascism of the radical Hindutvawaadis is more dangerous even than Hitler's fascism of Germany, and it has plunged the whole country and Indian culture into danger. He felt that there was an urgent need to understand the mindset of the Muslim community and for the secular forces to devise means to win their confidence and win their support for a joint struggle against the BJP led forces.

Delivering the inaugural address, Professor Ghanshyam Shah of the JNU said that the overwhelming victory of the BJP in Gujarat is due to the absence of any coherent alternative before the people despite the lack of support for the policies of the BJP led government in the state over the last five years. However he felt that the pockets of opposition could grow in the future and it was a challenge for the secular forces, the left and the trade unions to channelise the discontent among the people.

During his brief comments as part of this session, former Chief of Naval Staff, Vishnu Bhagwat called the communal forces the commission agents of imperialism. He further asserted that these forces, which are at the beck and call of imperialism, could be defeated mainly by mobilisation of the broad masses of people in the country.

Robert of the Aavhaan Natya Manch, one of the host organisations, then presented the theme paper on behalf of the

ing had its roots in the socio-economic and political crisis that the country, and in fact the entire world is confronting. It could only be combated by integrating the struggle of the minorities and secular forces against communalism with the struggle of the oppressed masses against the socio-economic oppression that has increased manifold a result of the present crisis.

Chairperson of the reception committee, playwright and film-maker Sagar Sarhadi, who presided over the session, concluded by saying that since British times till today man has been used by political leaders and seems to have lost the capacity to think and understand. Humanity has become inactive. Communalism can be defeated only by breaking this inactiveness.

In the afternoon session, Rohit Prajapati of PUCL Vadodara, Ms. Teesta Setalvad of Communalism Combat, addressed the seminar and focused on the widespread brutality that had rocked Gujarat for nearly three months between March and May 2002. They reported on the planned and conscious nature of the attacks on the Muslims and the open collusion by the state, as well as discussing the falsehoods being propagated by the government with regard to what actually happened at Godhra. Ms. Setalvad also spoke about the efforts of the Citizen's Tribunal which had conducted extensive investigations into the incidents and had recently released its report, indicting Narendra Modi and some of his key aides and government officers for the carnage. Rohit Prajapati also reported the efforts made by different groups in the city of Vadodara to restore communal peace and amity.

The evening session witnessed a series of cultural performances by different troupes and organisations from Mumbai and other parts of the country.

On the second day a number of papers were presented on different aspects of the rising Hindutva wave and the possibili-

ties of combating it. Some of the speakers included former Professor of the Department of English Bangalore University, Prof. Babaiah, Prof. Anwar Alam, JNU, Dr Anand Teltumbde, writer and activist from Mumbai, Hiren Gandhi, Darshan Sanskritik Manch, Ahmedabad, playwright Sanjay Pawar and Dr. Razia Patel Pune. These papers (many of which have been printed along with this report) explained how globalisation is disastrous to democracy, backward classes, workers and farmers, making it explicit that globalisation and saffronisation are the two wheels of the same chariot. It is required to be fought politically by organised resistance and by building a united front.

The presence of many active anti imperialist and anti fascist organisations from different parts of the country with hundreds of their activists and intellectuals made it amply clear that there is a growing awareness of the need to come together and build a strong united movement both at the intellectual level and in the streets against the imperialist and fascist onslaught cutting across ideological boundaries and barriers.

The cultural activists of Aavhan Natya manch, Jan Sangharsh Natya Manch, Vidrohi Sanskritik Chalwal, Uthav Sahitya Manch, Krantikari Sanskritik Sanghatna, and others performed different cultural programmes during the two day programme.

The following resolutions were passed: Opposing the fascist statements being made by VHP's Pravin Togadia; Condemning the RSS attempts to forcibly instal a Duttamurthy idol at Baba Budangiri shrine in Karnataka and supporting the united struggle by secular forces there; Demanding the release of Anand Patwardhan's award winning film 'War and Peace' without any cuts; and Opposing the fascist Anti-Conversion Act passed by the Tamil Nadu government.



“Communalism can be defeated only through anti imperialist struggles”

Sohan Sharma speaks to VarVar Rao

Sohan Sharma : Can literature change the society? What is the roll of literature in social revolution? To what extent are the writers of today able to fulfill this role?

VarVar Rao : Only literature can not change the society. The fundamental force of social change is the concious proletariat. Literature lends cultural support in changing of the society, that is why Mao had expressed the need of soldiers with pen along with armed ground forces. Premchand used to call himself pen-soldier. Pen- Soldiers can definitely play their roll in the revolution. Literature should be loken to the people who will change history. Taking part in their sorrows and happiness, their class struggle, being a part of their day to day problems this roll can be achived.

When I speak of class struggle, It has two stages. One is the basic stage. This is the main struggle and literature and culture is the part of the super structure. The base determines the struggle but super structure also has its impact. Only by integrating with the struggling masses creative liturature and culture can be evolved and cultural co-operation can be extended

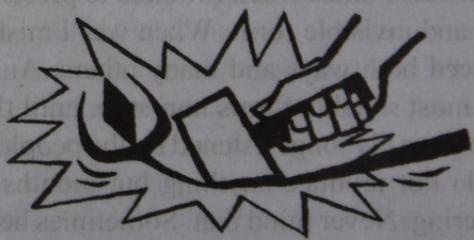
to the struggle for social change.

In the struggle area of Andhra, Bihar and Dandakaranya writers are significantly contributing towards pen-soldiers role. Moreover the revolutionary activists themselves have become writers and cultural performers. As Gramsci had talked about "organic intellectual" writers and intellectuals are emerging from the basic struggling sections.

Sohan Sharma: How would you define the relationship between globalisation and communalism?

Vara Vara Rao: Globalisation's economic domination and saffronisation of nationalism ultimately are co-related. The mode of development initiated by the Brahminical-non productive sections is reflected in the ruinous state of our country. They are drawing us towards dalal-slavery. The theory of depending on foreign capital for the development of our country, namely dalal-slavery, originated in 1947. Even before that in 1944 J.R.D. Tata, Ghanshydas Birla, Kartarhai Lalbhai, Sir Shriram, dalals of the British had drawn up a plan for the economic development of India, which later on came to be known as the Bombay Plan or the Tata-Birla plan. This was the beginning of the plan where big industry was provided 50% expenditure whereas in a country where 80% of the population depends on agriculture only 10% expenditure was allocated for agriculture. After that in 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru floated the support of foreign capital. The new economic policy of 91-92, globalisation and liberalisation is the extension of take off theory, the consequence of which is that we have become the slaves of the foreign capital our governments of these dalal capitalists are misleading the people by rhetoric of development. BJP-alliance government is doing the same. Multinationals are extended open invitation to exploit the country. Tata-Birla were seen as the makers of new India,

Gandhiji proclaiming Birla as a trustee and 'Dharm Karta'. These all are sides of new economic policy and globalisation. On the other hand Hindutva's religious extremism is aggressively promoted. Negating other religions Vivekananda had gone to Chicago to establish the superiority of Hindu religion. Our rulers removed the chapter on Marxism from the textbooks and put ten pages on Hedgewar and one and a half on Gandhiji. The history is re-defined by Hindutvawadis..... What is religion. For them the security of religion means security of private property. The word 'Dharm'(religion) has assumed class character from the origin itself. The BJP definition of the doctrine of absolute unity (Advait wad) is 'only one religion, only one nation and only one language'. This theory of oneness is the other side of the monopoly capitalism of globalisation. Communalism can be fought only by fighting against the imperialist who are the operators of globalisation. Therefore, Communalism can be defeated only through anti imperialist struggles.



ON POETRY

Nazim Hikmet

Sectarianism in art is our greatest enemy, especially in the question of form. Those who exclude poetry in rhyme and measure are as narrow-minded as those who believe that there can be no poetry without rhyme and measure. Poetry can be written both ways... I wasn't less sectarian when I was young. After writing poetry in classical folk measure and rhyme, I sought for novelty in form and began to write in my own way, in a kind of free measure. At its roots was the folk measures of poetry, and even aruz(prosody written according to the rules of classical Turkish poetry, Translator's note.) sometimes. It was the same for rhyme and language. But I attempted to suggest that this was the only way for writing poetry. I didn't write any love poems for a long time. I didn't even use the word 'heart' in my poetry, because it was the symbol of feeling, not of the mind. There were times when I was after the most colourful and harmonious poems. I thought that it would be more enjoyable, better understood and more effective if I said what I wanted to say to the people in that way. There were also times when I wanted to present my song in its most basic and invisible form. When was I mistaken? In my opinion, we need both ways and many others. An artist has to search for the most suitable forms non-stop, until the end of his life, in order to have his songs listened by the people. Sometimes these efforts do not produce anything but months' long headaches and suffering. Never mind that. Sometimes he is mistaken. Let it be. An artist who doesn't suffer from headaches, nervous-breakdown, who is not mistaken, would not advance.

Now I use all forms. I write in both folk measure and in rhyme. I also write poetry in the simplest possible form, in everyday language, without a measure or rhyme. I write about love, peace, revolution, life, death, joy, sorrow, hope and desperation; I want my poetry to cover everything human. I want my reader to find the expression of all their feeling in my, or our, poetry. Let them read our poetry when they want something for May Day, or something for their platonic love.

A poet talking about himself or not, talking to one person or to the millions.... this doesn't explain anything about his philosophical or political views. There are poets who don't talk about themselves but talk to millions, but who are also the representatives of mystic, subjective, idealist, or even religious philosophy. On the other hand, there are many poets who talk about only themselves, but who are materialist, even dialectalist. And their poems have been embraced by the masses.

I want to write poems which talk about myself, poems which talk to singal person and to millions. I want to write poems which talk about an apple, about the upturned soil, about the psychology of someone returning from a dungeon, about the fight of the masses for a better future, about the sorrows of love. I want to write poems both on fear of death and on fearlessness towards death.

Since I became a poet what I have been expecting from art is that it should serve people and call them for a better future. that it should be the voice for people's suffering, their anger, hope, joy and longing. This is what has not changed in my understanding of art. The rest of it has changed, is changing and will change constantly in order to be able to express the unchanged in the most touching, talented, useful, beautiful and perfect way.

(Nazim Hikmet talking about his understanding of art, compiled by Ekber Babayev, 14/11/1965, based on hikmet's own writings and his dictations to Babayev.)

poem

Now I use all tools. I write in poor, big, monotonous
days. I also write poetry in the simplest possible form, in
days, I am not a member of rhyme. I write short, brief
poetry, revolution, life, death, joy, sorrow, love and desperation
I want my poetry to cover a great variety of emotions. I want
my expression to be clear, exciting in all, to all people. I
have read our poetry upon the most sorrowful for May Day to
sorrows for great悲痛 love.

Nazim Hikmet

THAT WALL

THAT WALL...

THAT WALL...

**they shoot our
people in front
of THAT
WALL.**

**Every single foot
of THAT WALL has
its epic
as long as THAT WALL.**

**THAT WALL : They pluck
the male organs
of those who die in
front of THAT WALL
to make youth serums
for the straw-like
skeletons**

of
syphilitic
millionaires.

To the millionaires,
buried in the flesh
of whores
its like a radio concert
to listen

To the death
sentences
executed
in front
of THAT
WALL...

There is a mobilisation
more widespread,
more deadly,
more accursed
than in 1914... 1939.
the sixth fleet;
nuclear devices;

The C.I.A.
Imperialist generals;
the second International;
diplomats with gun-

bombardier secretary
white gloves;
politicosquelets who
gut and fertilise the
soil to 'salvage'
to belief in
the horizons
flower
and with their
work on
pavilions
the scienists who
sell death rays

They are the mobilisers
mobilising number the
TANT to TANT
WALL
the WALL to
IMPERIALISM

**powder scented
white gloves;
philosophers who
dig and fertilise the
soil of 'religion'
to pick up
its poisonous
flower**

**And write their
work on
banknotes.
The scientists who
sell death rays,**

**They are all mobilised:
mobilised under the
banner of THAT
WALL.
The WALL OF
IMPERIALISM>**



SPRING THUNDER

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Seminar Report

Nazim Hikmat



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RUPEES FIFTEEN