

The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism

Communalism – Its Causes And Consequences¹

Inquilabi Communist Sangathana

Introduction

Since the past 15 years, all over India, an increasing trend towards communal frenzy and rioting has been witnessed. The lives lost go into thousands and even those mildly affected, have been left with a lasting impact. One may say that the destruction brought about by some of the natural disasters like floods and draughts has been even more devastating. But the issue that strikes one most is that the communal frenzy has no basis whatsoever in nature's whims. It is entirely rooted in human society.

Consistently every year there have been more than 150 clashes killing hundreds and making thousands homeless, jobless and rootless.

Table - I

Number of Communal Incidents & Persons Killed Between 1971 and 1980

(From Business Standard August 10, 1981)

Year	No. of Incidents	Killed			Police	Total	% of Muslims Killed in total
		Hindus	Muslims	Others			
1971	321	38	65	-	-	103	63.11
1972	240	21	45	3	1	70	64.29
1973	242	26	45	1	-	72	62.50
1974	248	26	61	-	-	87	70.11
1975	205	11	22	-	-	33	66.67
1976	169	20	19	-	-	39	48.72
1977	188	12	24	-	-	36	66.67
1978	230	52	57	-	-	110	51.82
1979	304	80	150	28	3	261	57.47
1980	427	87	278	1	9	375	74.13

¹ Adopted by the founding conference of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, 1984. There are some evident lack of editorial corrections in the text. We have let the text remain virtually as it was, but inserted notes where necessary, except for essential editorial work where the meaning was not otherwise clear. It will be clear to the reader that the document had two purposes. It was intended to initiate discussions within the left. The founding Conference of the ICS adopted a resolution on political-organisational tasks, which emphasised that extreme forms of communalism were growing, and that fighting this in a proletarian form was becoming a crucial task. This was still a period when the Left parliamentary parties hoped for tactical co-ordination with the BJP to bring down the Congress Government, while at the same time banking on the "Secularism" of the Congress. At the same time, the resolution was brought out as a pamphlet and taken to large numbers of people as a text that would serve the purposes of political education.

The table shows that in the post 1977 period the impact of communalism has increased tremendously. As compared to 36 deaths in communal violence in 1977, there were 375 deaths in 1980. This trend has continued unabated in the post 1980 period. In the year 1983 more than 400 communal incidents have been reported. In 1984, in Maharashtra itself, about 300 people have lost their lives.

The following part of this document is an attempt at analysing these riots. An endeavour can be made to understand the dynamics of the communal situation by using some pre-existing concepts, but it is ridiculous to thrive on more abstract generalisation. One has to base one's analysis in a concrete context. As such, in the next part we have attempted to analyse the recent communal riots which erupted in Bhivandi/Thane/Bombay in May, 1984.

Bhivandi Riots

On 18th May, 1984, the city of Bombay was shaken by tremors of communal riots. Bhivandi, a textile town just 40 Kilometres away from Bombay was the arena of the actual drama. In Bhivandi, on 18th itself there were mass stabbings, looting and burning of huts. Bombay which had not witnessed communal riots since independence was for the first time a victim of these riots. The Bombay city was soon engulfed in communal tension culminating into riots in various places like Kherwadi (Bandra), Byculla, Nal Bazar, Pydhoni, Govadi, Nagpada, Jogeshwari, etc.

After 10 days, when the riots were ultimately brought under control, official figures spoke of about 300 dead and 1800 injured in and around Bombay. The non-official figures which are more reliable give the figures of at least 1000 dead and 4000 injured. 60,000 people were homeless by the time the riots ended and about 50,000 workers were jobless in Bhivandi itself. Needless to say that the major chunk of casualties has been borne by the Muslim community.

Events that led to Bhivandi Riots

What caused these riots? Were they spontaneous or preplanned? Did economic factors play a major role or political factors? It becomes necessary to go into the chronology of events to come to grips with the answers to these questions.

In November / December, 1983 Viswa Hindu Parishad, a rabid Hindu communal organisation performed Ekamata Yagna. A rathayatra (chariot march) was taken out all over India. Hindu revivalism and generation of anti-Muslim feelings was its object. It had impact throughout the country.

In January, 1984 Hindu Mahasangh was formed at Bombay with Bal Thackeray of Shiv Sena as the President and Vikram Savarkar as the Vice President. At this time posters were put up all over Bombay. The poster was divided into two parts. On one side a Hindu family was shown: parents and two children with the captions 'Hum do hamare do' (we two our two). On the other side a Muslim family was shown – husband, four wives and 25 children with the caption hum panch hamare pacchis (We five our twenty five). In addition, it was written that the time to act had come, otherwise Muslims would soon overtake Hindus in numbers. Immediate action from the authorities against this totally communal propaganda was necessary. The response of authorities was a grinning tolerance.

In April, the Maharashtra festival Shiv Jayanti is celebrated. Since the riots in 1970 at Bhivandi, the Shiv Jayanti procession in Bhivandi had been banned. After 14 years of banning, in 1984, the State authorities allowed a Shiv Jayanti procession in Bhivandi. Bal Thackeray, Vikram Savarkar etc. participated. The procession proceeded through many Muslim localities raising slogans like 'Ek Dhakka Aur Do, Masjid Ko Tod Do !' At the meeting, Savarkar recommended uniform civil code. The reason given being that otherwise the Muslims will soon become a majority in India, a totally false reason.² The

² Historically, the Uniform Civil Code has been demanded for different reasons by different forces. When feminists in the past talked of a Uniform Civil Code, what they had in mind was a set of gender just laws. Hindu communalists had originally opposed any reform of Hindu personal laws. Having failed there, to whatever limited extent, they have been demanding a Uniform Civil Code, by which they mean the imposition of Hindu laws on all non-Hindus. There are various attitudes towards the UCC now, within the feminist/women's rights movement, particularly as a result of the rise of extreme Hindu communalism. For one view which rejects the Uniform Civil Code altogether, see Flavia Agnes, *Law and Gender Inequality*, New Delhi, 1999. See also Nivedita Menon, 'Women and Citizenship', in Partha Chatterjee ed., *Wages of Freedom*, 1998. For arguments rejecting these views in favour of continuing to fight for gender just laws which have to cut across "community" boundaries, see, Kumkum

interesting part is that no Shiv Jayanti procession was taken out in Bombay or Pune but only in Bhivandi, a town of 4 lakhs with 60% Muslims. There was no justification for the authorities to allow this procession, especially when communal feelings were already being spread by people like Thackeray. For the procession, Patit Pawan people from Pune had come³. At the early, Thackeray called upon the Hindus to take swords in their hand to defend Hindu religion.

On 21st April, Bal Thackeray made his famous speech at Chowpatty in the gathering of Hindu Mahasangh. He admits to having called Muslims as "landeys" and also having said that if a stop is not put, Muslims would become a majority. He said that Muslims were spreading like a cancer and the only solution to this was an operation. It is disputed whether he made any derogatory remarks about Prophet Mohammed, but even if one believes Thackeray on face value, the other remarks itself are sufficient to lead to a strong protest from the Muslims.

What followed was a garlanding of Thackeray's photograph by Congress (I) MLA Khan at Parbhani on May 11. From that day it took about 7 days for the situation to be thoroughly stirred up. In Bhivandi, the Muslim league set up Muslim Sena. On 16th May, 1984 the Parel area of Bombay was forcibly made to close its shutters by Shiv Sena and on 17th and 18th shops all over Bombay were made to close down.

Simultaneously, on 17th communalism struck at Bhivandi in its most loathsome colour. On 17th May, 1984 at Ghunghatnagar, Bhivandi some Muslim boys insisted on hoisting a green flag near a Hindu locality which caused a fight to break out. This fight was soon settled at Commissioner Ramachandran's intervention. At night, some Muslims gathered at Nizampur school compound at Bhivandi to decide on a course of action as a response to Bal Thackeray's communal utterances. After much debate, the moderates prevailed and the meeting decided to send a delegation to Thackeray to confirm the Akber-e-Alom report.

But between mid night and dawn of 17-18th May 1984 simultaneous and systematic attacks occurred on Muslim bastis. Rasulabad, Azmi Nagar, Gadha Nagar, Nai Basti and Shanti Nagar were all looted and burnt. A large number of people died. All the localities had predominantly Muslim population. The attacks were by mobs carrying weapons even like rifles and shouting anti-Muslim slogans. The simultaneous attacks at all the places, the co-ordination of the attacks and the type of arms used belie any theory of spontaneity. Within no time about 50,000 people had lost their belongings and were dishoused. Police when present behaved like dumb spectators. Even after these attacks no call was given to bring the army in. At Nai basti, which housed 1500 families a peculiar phenomenon took place. This slum has a majority Muslim population but a number of Hindu families also stay there. Hindus and Muslims joined hands to fight against outside aggression. They were jointly able to resist the attack for sometime, ultimately falling victims to the aggressors. This phenomenon of Hindu-Muslims fighting jointly against outside aggressors was to repeat itself many times in the next few days at Bhivandi as well as Bombay in places like Mazgaon, Baingarwadi, Govandi, etc.

On 18th morning, a large crowd gathered near Ansaribaug, Bhivandi. Here a factory owner had given shelter to various people who were expecting an onslaught. When Ansari contacted Ramachandran, Police Commissioner, he received a lukewarm response. Ansari repeatedly requested for police protection which was refused. On 19th morning the crowd attacked Ansaribaug in one of the worst carnages to have taken place since independence. 27 persons -- men/women/children -- were stabbed and burnt to death. When the Chief minister received the reports this carnage, he had the audacity to doubt the veracity of this report by taking a totally communal stand. He said that the dead bodies lying at Ansari Baug seemed to have been of people killed elsewhere and brought to Ansaribaug, thereby implying that Hindus killed elsewhere were brought to Ansaribaug, to make it appear as if Muslims had been killed.

The riots as well as the sporadic violence and murder continued for 10 days and by the time the Army was called in major damage had already occurred. More than 800 people killed, about 1 lakh homeless and 50,000 without jobs. Many people returned to their villages and about 50,000 rotted in the so-called relief camps. The Government relief was either swallowed up by the middlemen or else food

Sangari, 'Politics of Diversity', *E&PW*, 23/30 Dec. 1995, and Soma Marik, 'State, Gender, Community: The Construction of Hostile Identities – Historical Roots of Contemporary Politics', *Jadavpur University Journal of History*, vol. XIX, 2001-2002, Kolkata, March 2002.

³ This is a reference to a Pune based Hindu communalist organisation.

and other necessities were sold in black market by the Government. As is always with all the riot stricken people, government made false promises of providing housing etc. but not much is likely to be provided.

Meanwhile in Bombay City, rioting, arson and looting had started on 19th May. Stabbings and looting took place at Kherwadi (Bandra), Byculla, Nal Bazar, Pydhoni, Govandi, Nagpada etc, all Muslim areas, Stabbing cases were reported. The situation, continued to worsen over the next days and many hutment colonies were set on fire.

Ultimately, army was brought in after a few days and rioting came to an end. By this time the death toll in Bombay was about 100, in Thana about 50, in Kalyan 10 and Bhyander 10.

In Bombay city the builders used the communal tension to their own advantage. Hutment colonies at Chunabhatti, Bhoiwada, Dharavi, Sion, Ghatkopar, Saki Naka and Baingarwadi (Trombay) were set ablaze. The hutment dwellers were not allowed to return. The attacks in all those places were systematic, well armed and co-ordinated. The builders of Bombay always greedy about vacant place engineered the burning of these hutment colonies under the pretext of communal riots. Immediately after the huts were razed to ground, the builders occupied the land with the help of the Police.

After the situation returned back to normal, the State Government half awoke from its state of hibernation and threatened to file some vague cases against Bal Thackeray for spreading communal hatred. It is obvious that these cases are not going to lead anywhere.

Bhivandi is a textile town with power loom sector as the major industry. In fact this unorganised sector produces more cloth than the entire textile industry at Bombay. During the textile strike, the power loom industry got a major boom giving rise to intense competition. Many Muslims are also power loom owners and as such the competition could be easily given a communal turn.

These riots in Bombay have clearly exposed the communal role played by organizations like Shiv Sena, Hindu Mahasabha, Patit Pawan, RSS, Hindu Mahasangh etc. But what is interesting is the role of Police and of the Congress (I) ruled state government.

The role of the Police

From all the reports received from everywhere the police personnel when not actively helping the Shiv Sainiks were playing the role of passive bystanders.

In Cheetah Camp at Trombay which is a very large slum housing Muslims, Hindus as well as Christians, police played an extremely communal and hideous role. The residents of Cheetah Camp feared some outside attack. The Hindu, Muslims as well as the Christians joined hands to ward off any such attack. Unfortunately the "outside attack" came not from any "anti social elements" but the so called guardian of law, namely Police. On 27th May, personnel from Trombay Police Station entered Cheetah Camp with army and killed at least 15 persons. At the time of shooting the police were heard to shout "Shiv Sena se takker lena hai, sala himmat hai to hamse baat kar"(you want to fight the Shiv Sena, if you have the guts talk with us). The Commissioner was forced to admit about excesses of his department. But even after all this no judicial enquiry was ordered but merely a departmental enquiry has been promised to be instituted which as usual will end in a damp squib.

In Cheetah Camp, Govandi and other areas, the police clearly told Muslims that 'vargi main hum police hai laikin vardi ke niche Shiv Sainik' (in uniform we are police, but beneath it, Shiv Sainiks).

Our discussion with people in Bhivandi exposed the universal partiality of police everywhere. In each affected area, the people told almost identical stories. The attacks came from the people – local as well as outsiders brought in trucks – who were well armed. Almost each one carried a sword or dagger. When the people from hutments (mainly Muslims) tried to organise to resist their attempts to destroy their houses, to their astonishment they found that those goons were accompanied by either police or SRP personnel who shot at them. Seeing their comrades falling due to police firing, the Muslims were forced to run away to a safer place leaving their property and relatives and friends at the mercy of goons who had field day in killing and destroying.

In Bhivandi, another incidence that we came to know was of a hutment basti at the base of the hill. The Shiv Sainiks and other goons were throwing fire-balls, stones, etc. on the basti but the hutment dwellers, mainly Muslims, were fighting them and were successful in preventing total destruction. Then came a police van carrying several policemen. Hutment dwellers thought they will be saved now. The police got down and to their amazement, instead of shooting at goondas at the hilltop the hutment dwellers were fired at from a close range. Three died. In no time, their resistance was crushed and those

who survived, had to run away. When we visited that place, even some of the trees were also found totally burnt in the carnage.

The clearest indicator of the communalist methods of police is their way of filing crime bulletins during riots. When Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited Bombay during the riots, at the time of Press Conference, she was shown the entire bulletin issued by the Office of none other than the Police Commissioner. This bulletin gave details of communal disturbances in different parts of the city during the previous day. The Muslims were repeatedly identified while the Hindus were not so identified. While giving details of the persons arrested, the bulletin gave full names of the persons belonging to the Muslim faith while in case of persons arrested from Hindu faith their names were withheld. Similarly, while releasing the information about the injured and the killed persons the Hindus were identified by their names and 'community' while the others were not.

In fact in the Chowpatty speech on 21st April delivered by Bal Thackeray, he had given a call to the Bombay Police to act like the Punjab Police by supporting the local people. The Bombay Police have obviously taken this advice seriously.

The Role of the Government

The ruling party which proclaims secular ideals when it is suitable, has shown through its conduct in the recent riots that it has stopped giving even lip service to secularism.

a) Vasantdada Patil⁴ has refused to have a judicial probe into the recent riots, which caused according to unofficial figures, loss of life amounting to at least thousand, - most of them Muslims. As the Madon Commission report of the 1970 Bhivandi riots manifests, these judicial probes do not have much practical value. But one must not lose sight of the fact that at times those reports do bring out correct facts and sincere analysis. By refusing to hold a probe, the Congress (I) government has shied away from exposing the true facts which would definitely have proved his ministry guilty to a large extent.

b) In January 1984, both Thackeray and Savarkar gave their consent for publishing blatantly communal posters and delivered inflammatory speeches. The 'Secular' Cong (I) government could have immediately put both of them behind bars and prosecuted them. Not even an eyebrow was raised by the government is altogether another story.

c) On 21st April, 1984 Thackeray made an extremely communal speech. Not only no action was taken against Thackeray, but also Vasantdada subsequently gave press statements believing in Thackeray's subsequently concocted - "I am innocent" version - this too, without listening to the recorded speech.

d) On 3rd May, 1984 Shiv Jayanti procession was allowed at Bhivandi, lifting a ban of 14 years. The government gave its consent knowing fully well that communalism had started raising its ugly head. Does not this speak volumes for the secularism of Cong (I)?

e) At the Shiv Jayanti procession, Thackeray and various other leaders made blatantly communal speeches.

f) Having an extremely efficient intelligence network under him - Vasantdada must have known that mob violence was being planned. He was probably waiting for an order from the High Command.

g) After the carnage at Ansari Baug, Vasantdada raised communal doubts about the veracity of the reports.

h) When Shiv Sena organised bandhs in Bombay on 15th, 16th and 17th of May, no action was taken against any person.

i) Vasantdada blamed the Urdu Press for inciting riots while totally forgiving Thackeray & Co.

j) When informed about the biased police reports, and even after giving proof of it, Indira Gandhi merely shrugged her shoulders and said "we will have to look into it". No police officer has even been reprimanded for this conduct.

k) The Imam of Juma Masjid was refused entry into riot-affected areas while Thackeray was allowed to freely move about.

l) No action until now has been even initiated against Thackeray.⁵

⁴ Congress(I) Chief Minister of Maharashtra at that time.

⁵ One and a half to two months after the riots.

m) Within a month of the riots, Vasantdada joined hands with Thackeray for the Vice-Chairman's election in Legislative Council. As his part of the deal, Sarpotdar, a leading Shiv Sainik who had been put behind bars for communal activities was immediately released.

All the facts lead to a single irresistible conclusion. Dada ministry actively aided the Hindu communalist forces and is as much responsible for the riots as any one who has taken physical part in them. It really defies logic that even after knowing these facts, some genuine secularists adopt an ostrich like attitude chanting the mantra, "Cong(I) is Secular".⁶

Baroda 1981-82

Baroda is fast becoming the industrial capital of Gujarat. The city having population nearing 9 lakhs is divided on the following lines:

Muslims – 15%, Marathas – 35%, Gujarati Hindus – 52%. Muslims and Marathas are generally very poor. In fact, 85% of the Muslims in Baroda live below the poverty line.

Due to prohibition, the business of illicit liquor is thriving in Baroda. The per day turnover in illicit brew in Baroda itself is about Rs.1 lakh. The police and the politicians are the protectors of these liquor dens. In fact the police is estimated to receive approximately Rs.60 lakhs per year for protection of these brew kings.

The illicit liquor business is mainly carried on by Bhois and Kahars amongst the Hindus and also by the Muslims. There is an acute competition between these sections. The recent riots were mainly caused by their links with and patronage by rival factions of the ruling Cong.(I). Kahar and Bhoi bootleggers-gamblers are patronised by Ashok Bhogilal (Vice President of Baroda City Cong (I) and Madhavsingh Solanky (the Chief Minister of Gujarat) while their Muslim counterparts have patronage of the Finance Minister, Sanat Mehta of Cong.(I). The Marathas have recently been engaging more and more in bootlegging giving a stiff competition to Muslims.

In October, when riots erupted, the Muslims were mercilessly butchered by the Police. As such Muslims asked for transfer of certain police officers. The government sought to transfer Jaspal Singh, the Commissioner of Baroda. This started another spate of riots with BJP now taking the lead in support of Jaspal Singh.

The communal tension lasted for more than a year causing 33 lives to be lost, 336 persons were injured and property worth Rs.1 crore was destroyed.

Godhra-Riots 1980-81

Godhra is a growing town having population of 85,000. Out of this 35,000 are Muslims (20,000 Ghanchis, 5,000 Syeds and 10,000 Bhoras). Ghanchi are the poorest among these. They are either agriculturalist or engaged in operation of Lorries. They are also found to be having large families unlike the Bhoras.

Immediately after the partition, a large number of Sindhis migrated from Pakistan and settled down in Godhra. There are about 8,000 Sindhis at present in Godhra. Traditionally Sindhis have been petty traders. This Hindus have always been having a monopoly in Grain trade. This monopoly has now been broken and Sindhis who are considered to be of low social status by the other Hindus established their own monopoly on the grain trade. Furthermore, housing due to pressure of population has been a major problem in Godhra.

In 1948, when Sindhis migrated from Pakistan they brought with them fresh memories of the communal riots in Pakistan during partition. Their anger and insecurity was immediately translated into frenzy and in 1948 itself Godhra was struck by communal riots. Since then regularly communal riots have been taking place in Godhra.

The Hindu communal organisations who are hurt by the grain monopoly of Sindhis have managed to create a communal rift between Sindhis and Muslims. In October 1980, five Sindhis were burnt alive by Muslims and the riots continued upto August 1981.

⁶ This would be the first time the ICS would identify the soft Hindutva lie adopted by the Congress(I). The mainstream left would, by contrast, consistently play this down.

Jamshedpur – 1979

Another instance of recent communal violence is the Jamshedpur riots of April 1979. The city is a fast growing industrial town with massive influx of migrant labourers. The population of the city, which was 5,000 in 1911, grew to 3,00,000 in 1961 and to about 8,00,000 in 1979.

The central city area is occupied mainly by white collared employees of Tatas and other business concerns. The poor workers, migrants, traders and businessmen mainly settle in the outlying area of the city. This area was at one time the province of Adivasis. 'Mango' is one such outlying area. Major Muslim bastis are also lying here. Due to the rapid increase in population immense pressure on land was generated. Mango itself registered the highest increase, namely 1000 per cent in the years 1971-79. About 10% of the businessmen staying in Mango are Muslims. There has been major cut throat competition over land in Mango and many disputes and even killings have taken place on account of land.

In 1964, when riots took place in Jamshedpur, about 4000 Muslims fled to Pakistan, and the cause of riots in 1979 was also that a major onslaught on Muslims would drive them away from the precious land.

The riots were engineered by RSS with hyperactive help from Bihar Military Police and the State Police forces. The Adivasis who are landless labourers have over the years been driven out of the township. The majority of the contract labourers in the city were also Adivasis. As such their anger was directed towards the land grabbers and the RSS cunningly misguided the wrath of the Adivasis against the Muslims. Adivasis were hence the major participants in these riots.

From the examination of these and various other riots, one can clearly identify some of the salient features of the recent riots, taking place in India.

Certain Salient Features:

1. Between 1950 and 1964 less number of communal disturbances were experienced. From 1964 onwards, the incidents of communal violence are taking place at an accelerated pace;
2. The communal riots during 1950s appear to be more the result of sudden outburst of groups. From 1964 onwards, the communal riots are observed to be more planfully engineered.
3. The loss of life during communal riots in 1950s was much less. The total lives lost during that decade were 316. The loss of life in communal riots since 1964 grows in magnitude. In 1969, itself, three times more lives were lost in three big riots alone, than the total in the decade of 1950s;
4. In every riot, larger number of Muslims are losing their lives. Similarly, the loss of property suffered by Muslims far outweighs destruction of property owned by the Hindus;
5. The communal riots are more visible in urban areas. Though with their increased incidents in recent years, they have begun spreading in rural areas;
6. Communal riots are not restricted only between Hindus and Muslims. There is an increased trend of rioting between Sikhs and Hindus, Hindus and Christians, Hindus and Buddhists, etc.;
7. The communal riots in the recent years have been more prolonged. The communal clashes which began in Baroda in 1981 lasted for more than a year. Even in Bombay, again after one month the riots erupted;
8. Communal organisations of both Muslims as well as Hindus have been growing both in numbers as well as in strength;
9. There is a difference between the strata of people who generate communal hatred and those who participate in communal riots. Mainly the middle classes and the upper classes have been observed to propagate actively and in an organised way, communal hatred but the participants in the riots are mainly people from the lower classes.

Causes

A superficial analysis of the riots leads one to the irresistible conclusion that in most of riots the "triggering" or "sparking off" incidents have been trivial. It may be the bursting of crackers near a Mosque or using the word 'Palayan' (absconded) for prophet Mohammed in a Standard VIII text book as it was in 1982 riots in Malegaon, Maharashtra. The 'immediate cause' of the riots have even been the focusing of

loudspeakers from a Hindu temple towards a mosque as in the recent Kanyakumari riots or a dispute between the Hindus and Muslims over a small piece of land as in Bihar Sharif in 1981.

But it would be a grave error to impatiently conclude from this, that the communal riots are collisions between fanatics over trivial religious issues. For ultimately these riots are only the products of a sustained, seething and continuous discontent within people. Riots are only its sharpest forms but communalism exists to a large extent even in normal times. For in our society a person from his birth is subjected in a conscious or unconscious manner to a daily recipe of hatred towards "the other community". This onslaught of ideology may be through apparently harmless jokes, through textbooks, through media or even through speeches of the politicians.

All this is in spite of the fact that all religions preach tolerance while communalism is its exact opposite namely intolerance. Even the Vedas say 'Vasudheva Kutumbkam' i.e. the whole world is a family. But then why this dichotomy? This double standard? Is communalism a necessary ingredient of religion? We do not think so. We feel that communalism is not only not 'for religion' but definitely against religion.

Many people confuse religious beliefs with communalism. They believe that whenever and wherever more than one religion exists, invariably, communal conflict takes place. This is a false view. One finds in the history of civilisation, various religions coexisting peacefully for centuries. Even in India the same trend is witnessed. No doubt during Aurangzeb's rule as well as in the 14th century, there are reports of communal riots.⁷ But one does not find any generalised trend of communal riots. For instance, even Shivaji's fight against Aurangzeb was not a Hindu Muslim fight but a fight against expanding Central Authority. In fact, Shivaji had a number of Muslims in his Sena and even his first in command was a Muslim.

No person can deny another person a right to have faith in a particular religion whether it be Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It is only when this religious belief takes a political form and content that one has to begin thinking. It is our strong belief that communalism has to be seen as a structural phenomenon of our present Indian Society and also as a strategy of the ruling classes to divide the masses for gaining maximum advantages and of the vested interests to reap purely economic benefits.

It is becoming very obvious that political factors have played a significant role in all communal riots. But politics does not operate in a vacuum; it requires a congenial socio-economic atmosphere for having a free play. What are these socio-economic atmosphere for having a free play? What are these socio-economic factors which lead to communal riots?

Communalism as a generalised phenomenon comes on the scene only since the second half of the nineteenth century. Due to certain historical reasons Hindus (a section of them) became exposed to British education 50 years prior to the Muslims. Certain reformist movements began within Hindu society and even nationalist feeling asserted itself first through the Hindu educated middle class. The Muslim middle class which became educated about 50 years later on, identified nationalism with Hinduism and therefore a section of them asserted separate Muslim Nationalism. Second, they to a large extent depended on the British Administration. As such the Muslims to a large extent remained outside the mainstream of nationalist struggle and even when they entered the mainstream struggle i.e. in the second half of the first quarter of the twentieth century, they entered with a specific Muslim ideology and propagated that ideology.

Furthermore, the leadership of the nationalist movement itself took an entirely communal stand at times. Gandhi himself used concepts like Ram Rajya to mobilise masses. Muslims were unable to identify with these concepts and felt alienated by them. At the same time Muslims as well as the Hindu Communalist forces utilized the discontent amongst the masses to generate communal frenzy.

The British rulers utilized the communal germs for their own use by having policies which whipped up communal frenzy and used the same for generating communal feelings to partition and divide India on an artificial basis. The policies like preserved constituencies were deliberately planned by the Britishers to whip up communal frenzy.

At the time of partition, the communal feelings converted themselves into the worst communal riots in the history of India. The main victims of these riots were in the States of Gujarat, Punjab, Delhi, U.P. Bengal and Kashmir.

⁷ More accurately, such reports could be termed inter-religious clashes. There has to be a clear notion of community before such a clash becomes a communal riot.

It is beyond the scope of this document to deeply analyse the nature, causes and consequences of communalism during the British period and as such we are now proceeding to the post independence period.

For some years after independence, the communal frenzy was avoided but in the 60's especially since 1964 it started again. In 1969, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Bhivandi and Saurashtra suffered from communal riots. After that Aligarh, Meerat, Moradabad, Lucknow, Jamshedpur, Baroda, Biharsharif, Hyderabad again Baroda and now Bhivandi.

At certain places, the riots have started due to non-communal issues e.g. in Baroda in 1981 the riots began due to the competition between one of the bootleggers who was a Muslim and another Hindu, both supported by different sections of the Congress (I). At other places the riots have begun on purely communal issues e.g. Meerut in 1978. Here, the riots spread as dispute between Hindus and Muslims about a piece of land. The Muslim said it was the grave of a seer and the Hindu claim it was a temple.

But most of the places where riots have taken place are towns which are commercially and industrially developing. Also, these towns are having significant Muslim population.

Table - II

Riot Prone Town	Muslim Population
Hyderabad	38.1%
Biharsharif	35.8%
Ahmedabad	14.6%
Vadodara (Baroda)	11.9%
Malegaon	67.5%
Meerut	36.7%
Aligarh	33.3%
Aurangabad	35.1%

All these towns satisfy the test of being commercially and industrially developing. For instance, Baroda is becoming a very large industrial centre, Ahmedabad and Bhivandi are large textile centres, Jamshedpur is a steel industry centre, Moradabad has a large brassware industry, etc.

Invariably, in all these growth centres, there is some sort of economic competition and clash of interests between Hindus and Muslims. This is so because, traditionally Muslims and Hindus have been involved in distinct occupations for their livelihood. Owing to the dynamics of growth, the occupation pattern of Hindus and Muslims is undergoing a change thereby on many occasions bringing them into conflict with each other.

A. The Upward Mobility of Muslims

Immediately after the partition, a large number of Muslims migrated to Pakistan. Those who stayed over in India were either the Zamindars, who would have lost all their property if they had migrated and a section of artisan class. The educated middle class as a whole migrated to Pakistan as they would have much better career opportunities there owing to lack of competition. This trend continued for about 15 years after independence. For 15 years after independence, the Muslims who were getting educated, chose to migrate to Pakistan for better opportunities. Even the other Muslims and aspirations, to a certain extent, to migrate to Pakistan "sometime in future". This created a "middle-class vacuum" amongst the Muslims in India.

The artisan and craftsman were parasites of the landed aristocracy. The uneven and combined development which occurred in India – namely abolition of Zamindari coupled with lack of adequate industrial expansion, made the Muslim artisans and craftsmen fall in the laps of middleman and traders – invariably Hindus. Thus a clear economic stratification took place on communal lines. The Muslim artisans and craftsmen working for the Hindu middlemen and traders.

Since the mid-sixties the situation has undergone a drastic change. We may conveniently adopt Imtiaz Ahmed's analysis :

"the Muslims then realised that they had to swim or sink in this country and they decided to swim. Growing opportunities as a result of economic development of the preceding decade and the expansion

of market for handicraft goods abroad afforded opportunities for them to come up economically. Gradually, through generating savings out of increased wages flowing from the expanded quantum of work then available, at least a section of the Muslim artisans and craftsmen were able to work themselves into small entrepreneurs and began competing with Hindu traders and craftsmen. Over the years some amongst them have been able to work themselves into businessmen of substance and are either running their own small manufacturing workshops where they employ Muslim Craftsmen and workers, or engage as exporters of goods to foreign countries.”

This has naturally given a chance for communalists to have a free play.

B. Pressure On Land

In all the developing and growing towns, pressure on land is very great. As the town grows, more and more migrant labourers arrive and settle down in the outskirts of the town. Land prices go up and the real estate business thrives. Land which was earlier useless, becomes commercially viable thereby attracting vested interests who become interested in throwing out “unauthorised” occupants of land. What better method than communalism to throw these occupants out? Also, the newly rich Muslim class has been entering into real estate business to a large extent. After exhausting all the Muslim populated localities, they are now dealing in real estate occupied by non-Muslims. This again provides a fertile ground for communal forces to play on. In places like Aligarh and Moradabad, this has been one of the major reasons for riots. Even in the present Bombay riots, the land factor played an important role.

C. Integration of the Community

One of the reasons for the recent communal riots is quite baffling. Contrary to the normally held view, that communal riots occur due to the fissiparous or disintegrating tendencies, one finds that on many occasions the riots are because of reasons quite opposite. The economically backward, politically subdued and culturally inner looking Muslims of the 1950's have started asserting their existence. The earlier aloofness from the mainstream is fast disappearing. As a section of Muslims is economically finding its bearings, it is trying to a certain extent politically assert itself causing a threat to a section of the Hindus, thereby leading to conflict of interests and riots. This aspect is evident, if one looks at the history of Jamat-e-Islami (Hind) a Muslim communal organisation. It was founded in 1948. For a number of years, it propagated that Muslims should withdraw from the political activities in India – that they should boycott all elections etc. This was based on the theory that a true Muslim society could exist only where the government is in the hands of the Muslims and as Hindus were in majority in India, such a state of affairs could not exist. Since 1970s, the Jamat had to change its position because the now economically assertive Muslim population is demanding proper political representation. As such Jamat could not make much head way with its worn out theories. Since 1970s Jamat has started taking part in elections on the ground that it is the best way to forge contact with people.

D. Intermediate Castes

The competition between a growing and declining strata found its expression in communal riots through the engineering of communal frenzy amongst the masses. India is a developing capitalist country. Full-scale capitalist development, with complete death of artisans, moneylenders, etc., has not taken place. Nor has the concentration and centralisation of capital been sharp or large enough. Precapitalist relations still persist giving rise to an uneven and combined development of the society as a whole. At many places, sections of population, who were earlier economically and politically dominant are losing their stronghold while others are gaining in strength. Clashes occur between these rising and declining strata.

The caste structure in India more or less matched class structure. But the changing dynamics of the society has provided certain sections of what are known as backward castes to have upward mobility in economic sphere, since last about 20years. These backward castes fall in the intermediate level of the caste structure. These intermediate castes (like Yadavs in UP and Marathas in Maharashtra/Gujarat) are vying for political and cultural upwardness along with the economic upward mobility. These castes need to a great extent social and cultural identity. The aspiration is to reach the highest stage within the caste system and therefore the need to identify culturally with this highest stage. This identification crises only

by aggressively distinguishing themselves from the other sections of the same as well as other religions. Logically this gives rise to intense casteist and communalist feelings. These feelings coupled with the economic and political assertiveness are bound to give rise to caste and communal riots.

E. Common Ideology

The ruling classes in any country, requires a mixture of repression and consent, for maintaining their hold and for growth. Sheer repression, except in extreme conditions, is neither sufficient nor congenial for a long-term interest of the ruling classes. They must have the backing of the masses. Upto 1960s the so-called "Congress Socialism" was the common ideology which sought to bind the majority of the masses to the ruling class. But once the initial economic boom was over, and the conditions of the masses started worsening and the faith in the government started declining, this ideology lost all its meaning. Since 1960s there is no such common ideology though an attempt was made through slogans like Garibi Hatao, etc. This lack of ideology has led to a hiatus between the ruling class and the masses threatening the ruling classes with a complete loss of legitimacy. Communalism is one such ideology which can be a nation wide ideology binding majority of the people, diverting their attention from the real issues and securing the interests of the ruling classes. This is the reason why even the ruling party is coming out more and more openly with its communal bias.

F. Crisis of Identity

The common trend is that communal riots do not take place when strong movements of the toiling sections are taking place. During the textile strike, the communal aspect in Bombay was minimal and the influence of Shiv Sena was at an all time low. The issue is that of plural identity. Each person is always searching for an identity within the society. Depending on the circumstances, the person will assert a particular type of identity. Ultimately, one or the other of plural identities of the people steps out at different times. It may be caste identity, religious identity, national identity or class identity. It is in the interest of the ruling classes to let all other identities except the class identity have a free play. In times of acute class struggle the class identity of the person prevails submerging all other identities. The person starts identifying totally with the class and it least matters to that person, whether the other subjects in the class belong to different caste, religions or regional groups. When class struggle is at its decline, the other identities push for recognition. What is being suggested is that "humans are social animals". For a person to have human existence it is necessary that he/she interacts with other persons and further identifies himself / herself as a part of a "larger whole", thus believing and acting in furtherance of this "larger whole". This is because the person believes that his/her own best interests are tied together with interests of this larger whole. Ideally, this "large whole" is the entire society but this ideal situation is impossible to occur in any society which is not communist or totally primitive. In a capitalist society ridden with various inequalities this larger whole may sometime take the shape of religion or caste or region or class.

During a declining class struggle period, the needs and frustrations of the society still exist. The frustrating experiences which people might have had during the phase of acute class struggle gives a 'false consciousness' to the masses that class identity is not the major identity and that not much can be achieved by it. This makes them look out for other identities but also to find enemies other than the class enemies for the cause of their frustrations. This then leads to caste riots, regional chauvinism, communal riots or war hysteria, but totally blurs the class consciousness and divides the class as a class. This is precisely what the ruling classes desire and hence the generation of such feelings by the ruling classes themselves. (One may hasten to add that this consciousness is not totally false in the sense caste exploitation goes on in a massive manner and also there is a marked discrimination against Muslims).

The rising unemployment, escalating prices and pressure on land caused by the inability of the ruling classes to control economic stagnation of the society are the major causes giving rise to the frustrations of the people and one of the ways these frustrations are given vent to is through communal frenzy.

Secularism of the State

Our state which is supposed to be wedded to secularism is in fact the largest propagator and tolerator of communal feelings.

In 1976, the word 'secularism' was added to the preamble of the Constitution. Since its inception, the constitution gives equal status to all religions. This is sufficient for many people to come to the conclusion that the state is in fact secular.

The notion popularised by the Congress in the pre-independence days through Jawaharlal Nehru that secularism means 'respect for all religions' is widely accepted. But one is willing to accept (even after decades of horrifying experience of communalism in India) that this concept has opened the ground for permitting all types of militant processions, yagnas, yatras, demonstrations and public speeches in the name of 'respecting religion'. Our 'Secularism' has provisions even for personal laws and customary laws where marriage, sex relations, inheritance and other vital areas of the lives of citizens are domain of religion. And in the name of 'cultural ethos, spiritual climate', 'moral values' even the state sponsored mass media end up perpetrating the religious chauvinism of upper caste Hindus.

By secularism, what should actually mean is that the state deals only with the relations between men/women and not with the relations between men/women on the one hand and God on the other hand. It should in fact mean not tolerance for all religions but that religion is a personal affair of individuals. By secularism what is meant is that the state allows and in fact protects the rights of persons to have whatever religious belief they want to have in personal life but at the same time prohibits any public exhibition of these beliefs.

The so-called secular character of our state is quite apparent from the walls of our parliament house. The walls of this 'temple of democracy and secularism' have engraved on them quotations from Vedas and Upanishads. One issue is why quotations from Hindu texts and not from Islamic, Sikh or Christian texts? But the major issue is why quotations from any religious text, at all?

Ultimately, the state serves the interests of ruling classes and the ruling classes utilize all the factors which are necessary to adopt the relations between the people other own use. Religion is one such factor and it is so used by the ruling classes. It is in their own interests to generate support for themselves and to divide the toiling masses. Religious fanaticism is used precisely for this purpose even by the big industrial bourgeoisie. Therefore the Indian state deals not only with the relations between human beings but also with the relations between human and God.

Role of the Cong (I)

C.P.I. and C.P.M. who have otherwise quite radical and secular stance (at least as far as Hindu Communalism is concerned) -- believe that Indira Gandhi is God's gift to humanity, that Cong (I) is secular and even the state is secular⁸.

As we have seen, this 'Secularism' of Cong(I) was boundlessly meted out upon the masses during the current Bombay/ Bhivandi riots. It is an open secret that Cong(I) consciously built up Bhindranwale and made full attempts to convert the Akali demands into Sikh-Hindu communal agitation. She played a similar role in Assam. The current Baroda riots were in fact started because of a faction fight between Cong(I) leaders. Immediately after visiting Bombay during the 1984 riots she appeased the Hindus by making a public statement that she would not do anything to detrimentally affect the interests of the majority community. In fact immediately after the Bombay riots during the election of deputy chairman of the legislative council, the Cong(I) Chief Minister met Mr. Bal Thackeray and both joined hands to defeat the opposition candidate.

Congress has traditionally relied upon the minority community's and scheduled caste's block votes for its support. But over the years these sections, for obvious reasons, have been unhappy with the Congress. Thus, the steady base has eroded forcing the Cong (I) to reach for other allies. This it is trying to do by enlisting block support from upward moving middle castes and the upper castes. A question may be asked as to if Cong (I) is a communal organisation. Why is it not trying to make India in to a Hindu State? Why in 1976 the word "Secularism" was for the first time brought into the Constitution? Why does Cong (I) oppose the scrapping of Muslim Personal Law? Why does Indira give lip sympathy to Secularism? The answer to this is multifaceted. Cong (I)and Indira Gandhi should be seen as the representatives of the ruling classes. No ruling class will cling to any belief or follow any practice which is harmful to its class interest. The ruling class adopts a particular belief or practice only till such time as it meets its class requirements. Per se no class interest of the ruling class is served by communal politics.

⁸ That is, secular in the Marxist sense.

By itself, communal politics does not increase the surplus value. Ruling class as a whole is as much aware as the Marxists that religious fanaticism (Hindu or Muslim) is in itself diversionary. Communalism is useful only when it allows the ruling class to achieve certain non-communal and non-religious ends' (This of course is not to deny certain autonomy to the communal forces independently of the economic interests). As long as she relied heavily on Muslim votes, Mrs. Gandhi kept some distance from communal forces. Today the ruling classes need a dominant ideology to have the full backing of the masses. Communal ideology is the most suited for this purpose. Also keeping the toiling masses continuously divided is a must for the ruling classes. What could be better than communal ideology ? Also Indira Gandhi, as the Prime Minister of the largest "democracy" in India, as the "most popular leader all over the world" and as the leader of the non-aligned movement cannot afford to be openly communal. But the most important aspect is that India is a parliamentary democracy, which means that the rule of the majority is supposed to prevail. The majority being Hindus there is no need for any special discrimination against the Muslims. As a matter of course they are discriminated. This is the reason why even during the British period, Muslim and Hindu communalism came out in different forms. The Hindus, being the majority appeared extremely rationalist by propagating the one nation-rule of majority, etc. while at the same time being extremely communal, they could afford to because they knew they were in the majority and rule of majority to them meant rule of Hindus. While Muslim Communalist could not wear the garb of nationalism because for him nationalism and democracy in a combined nation implied rule of Hindus. So he had to talk of separate and reserved Muslim seats if not separate Muslim State.

One more important fact of the lip service of Cong (I) is that the Central Government has identified about 140 communally sensitive areas all over India and the state governments have been asked to set up special cells for communal intelligence as also to make comprehensive arrangements for the maintenance of law and order in those areas. The state governments have been advised to be extremely choosy about the posting of the officers at all levels in these areas. The identification of these areas by the government is a fairly comprehensive one and if the governments take steps to effectively implement the scheme, much harm can be prevented and many lives can be saved. The fact that even the Cong(I) state government has chosen to refrain from even thinking about this scheme, let alone effectively implement it, speaks volumes for their secular approach. It may be mentioned in the passing that even the Marxist state governments have not taken any genuine initiative to curb communal violence.

Lastly, why does Indira make such a big show of going to various religious places when she is supposed to be secular? On what basis, for instance, a few months back, she did the opening ceremony of Bharat Mata Mandir in Haridwar built by the Viswa Hindu Parishad ?

Communal Organisations

One opposes communal organisations not because they serve the interests of people belonging to one religion only, but because they do not even do that. One will whole heartedly support persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who though active within the confines of one religion only, spread humanistic values and fought for reforms against anything found degrading in the religion (like Sati, etc.) But the communal organisations of our country are against any reforms within the religions and oppose any 'humanisation' of religion. How many communal organisations have taken up the cause against dowry? All Hindu communal organisations demand the abolition of Muslim Personal Law but this is done because according to them otherwise the Muslim practising polygamy will outnumber the Hindus. One will definitely support any organisation which opposes polygamy on the ground that it is exploitative towards women. Not one communal organisation does this.

There are a number of Hindu communal organisations operating in India. Organisations like RSS, Shiv Sena, Viswa Hindu Parishad, Maratha Mahasangh, Hindu Mahasangh, Patit Pawan to name a few. All these organisations call for converting India into a 'Hindu Rashtra'. They all talk of granting only second-class citizenship to religious minorities. They also give a call for uniform civil code (one of course supports uniform civil code which gives equal rights to women but not on the absurd ground of threats from minorities). All these organisations are against democracy of any nature whatsoever. What is more, all of them propagate highly casteist views. They all believe that the rigid caste system should be maintained. Not one communalist organisation even gives lip service in support of dalits even after major caste carnages. They are also against equality of women. It is therefore very clear whom these organisations represent. Another thing is that all of them work in close collaboration with each other.

Amongst the Muslim communalist organisations, the Jamat-e-Islami earlier was against any political participation of Muslims in India. But since 1970s they have changed their position. They believe that a genuine Muslim society can be formed only when the government is in the hands of the Muslims. They believe in solidarity of Muslims on the basis of Islam to support Pakistan in case of any conflict between India and Pakistan. The Muslim League from the beginning participated in the elections and gave major stress to gaining concessions for the Muslims in India. Again, all these Muslim communal organisations are against any reforms within their religion, against democracy and believe that for Islam a true victory can be only if the government is in the hands of Muslims.⁹

There is a fast upward trend of religious revivalism in India and the membership as well as the activities of all the communal organisations is growing rapidly. All these organisations are avowed communal organisations but still allowed free play in the society. They play havoc with the feelings and lives of people and ultimately who suffers? In all the riots the major sufferers are Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, women and working class.

There is nothing much to choose between the Hindu Communalism and Muslim Communalism. Both have to be opposed and vehemently. But in India, Hindu communalism is the major threat. This is so because due to sheer population Hindu communalism has the strength to achieve political power in India, which strength the Muslim communalism does not have.

Myth of and related to Communalism

Communalism, after all, is the experience of the feeling that people who belong to a particular religion form a homogeneous community having certain common needs, aspirations and culture and further that the survival and growth of this community depends on its forcible domination over other religious communities because the interests of the communities are mutually exclusive. Hindus feel that the Muslims form a separate community and if the Hindus have to develop it has to be by totally dominating over the Muslim community. Similarly, the Muslims feel that unless they exert pressure, the Hindus will just bulldoze them.

a) Homogenous Community

The first myth is that Hindus form a homogenous community with all its members having identical political, economic and cultural trends and interests. This, as we all know, is false. Amongst Hindus one may find workers, capitalists, landowners, etc., all of whose interests are not only distinct but even antagonistic. Similarly in Muslims. The political power aspired by different sections of Hindus is different. The Hindu religion also does not have common cultural or even religious identity. The culture of Hindus varies from place to place and from caste to caste. The gods are also numerous and different Hindus follow different gods. Similarly in Muslims, one has Shias and Sunnis and even the Shia and Sunnis have further divisions. Their cultural and religious practices also differ from place to place. It is therefore, totally incorrect to say that either the Hindus or the Muslims form a homogeneous community.

b) The interests of Muslims and Hindus are not identical

Since Hindu and Muslim do not form distinct homogeneous communities the question of non-identical interests does not arise. Even so, the workers of the Muslim “community” have more in common with the workers of the Hindu “community” than with Hindu or Muslim capitalists. The interests of capitalists are bound with other capitalists whether they are Hindus or Muslims.

c) The interests of Hindus and Muslims are mutually exclusive

It is widely believed that the interests of Hindus and Muslims are contradictory and mutually exclusive and so they cannot survive together. First of all Hindus and Muslims have survived together for centuries. Second, why do interests become exclusive or even distinct merely because of religion? What is so fundamental about the relation between human beings and god which makes human’s relation with

⁹ The analysis is weak, in not making any distinction between soft and hard communalism, and in a concession to national chauvinism, in language at least.

other humans antagonistic? Why should one person's personal belief in a particular god be antagonistic to another god, or is supposed to be?¹⁰ Every person, even a child, has some belief and opinion different from all others. If merely difference in belief is the criterion then by this logic all persons are antagonistic towards others and so human beings cannot survive in a society. This, to say the least, is absurd. In any case, in the present society the antagonistic relations are between one class and another and not between one religious opinion and another. The antagonism is between the workers and the capitalist, between agricultural labourers and big farmers, even between dalits and caste Hindus. A Hindu worker's interests are contradictory to that of a Hindu capitalist and not that of a Muslim worker. The interests of all workers are tied together whether they are Hindu or Muslim against the interests of capitalists whether Hindu or Muslim.

Parenthetically, we must observe, that though objectively different communities on religious lines do not exist, subjectively they do. What is being suggested is that the Hindus and the Muslims do feel that they form separate and antagonistic communities. The communalists aggravate these feelings, but the germ of this subjective factor is not in some fanatical propaganda, but in the socio-economic circumstances. Communalism, therefore, has to be fought simultaneously at both the levels – i.e. ideologically and also by fighting for socio-economic change. The two have to go hand in hand.

d) If Pakistan can be a Muslim State why India cannot be a Hindu State

It is true that the partition of undivided India occurred on the basis of religious lines. But this partition was totally artificial. It was a crackdown on a nation having at least some homogeneity. It is also true that Pakistan today calls itself an Islamic State but one cannot forget the movements in Pakistan as also in Iran against religious oppression.

The point however, is that State concerns itself with the relations of human beings with human beings and not with the relation between human beings and god. Why should it therefore not be a secular state but a Hindu State? If one takes the logic of the communalists further, why should not the State call itself and also be not only Hindu or Muslim but also Male, Brahmin, white skinned, etc.?

e) When Pakistan wins in a cricket match, Muslims in Bombay light crackers

First of all this is not a widespread phenomenon. Only a few Muslims here and there light crackers which is made to look as if all the Muslims are for Pakistan against India. The partition was totally artificial which caused a number of people on both sides to break living links with their point of origin, people had to leave their relations, property etc. In the "other country" which normally has caused some ties to remain. This may in some persons lead to a moral affiliation to "the other country" but it is an entirely understandable phenomenon which cannot be reduced to a 'Hindu Muslim' thing. What is important is that in spite of riots, in spite of much damage being suffered by them the Muslims in India remain in India. Even when the riot affected persons are migrant Muslims, they usually return not to Pakistan but to the state from where they migrated may be U.P., Bihar, or any other state. It is but natural that they want to remain in India and not go to Pakistan or anywhere else. They know it as well as any one else that in the first instance their interests are tied to the interests of people of India. Apart from this one cannot forget the role of Hindu communalism in alienating the Muslim population. As more and more communal riots take place and as more and more Muslims lose their lives and property they are bound to feel alien in their own country. This is especially so when the state increasingly comes out openly in favour of Hindu communalism. In such an event, due to historical reasons the Muslims in India are bound to seek an identity for themselves through Pakistan.

f) Muslims want to make the entire India Muslim

In 1981, a few hundred Hindus in Tamilnadu especially in Meenakshipuram converted in to Muslim religion. The press, in a most communal manner splashed this across the nation on front pages. Hindu revivalists made a big hue and cry about this small incident claiming that Hinduism was in danger.

Meenakshipuram is not the whole of India. 100 conversions there, cannot have even a rambling effect on Hindus. Even Buddhist, Jain and Sikh religions arose to a large extent as a protest against

¹⁰ This sentence has been slightly edited, because the text seemed corrupt and made no sense.

upper caste Hindu practice. The people in Meenakshipuram converted themselves so as to find a way out of totally exploitative and dehumanising caste system. The communalist Hindus (led by Mr. M.G. Ramachandran) said that gulf money was the root of these conversions. In spite of various investigations no trace of gulf money could be found. In the districts where conversion took place extremely rigid caste system is prevailing. The lower caste persons are not even allowed to have tea in an upper caste owned tea shop. One may contrast this with the fact that the Muslim-owned shops are open to the dalits. In fact, the investigations revealed that it was not the poorest of the people but the newly educated section who had made certain economic advancement who converted. This was so because despite economic development, they were not given social equality. Those who converted were fully aware that they would be losing concessions like free educations, reserved government jobs etc. In spite of this they chose to convert which settles once and for all the reasons of their conversions. This was even admitted by the Swamiji of Pejavar Mutt, a caste Hindu, who observed "More than monetary help, the harijans were demanding status in society". In fact, in many ways converts have achieved social amelioration (though not economic) through their conversions. It was found that Islamic community's attitude towards the converts underwent a radical change (i.e. born Muslims were willing to allow their daughters to marry converts, etc.). Also to some extent there is an acceptance by the wider society. At times, the "threat to convert" issued as a lever for snatching concessions from the caste Hindus as well as from the government. Till 1933, the Ezhavas in Kerala were not allowed to enter temples. In 1993, they decided to renounce Hinduism. The caste Hindus on coming to know this, immediately granted to the Ezhavas the right to enter the temples. Even after the recent conversions in Meenakshipuram, certain areas where there existed a threat to conversions, speedy supply of water, house sites, etc. was made by the Government.

The answer to conversions, if one wants to question them at all, is in the Hindu religion itself and not in the operations of some Muslim fanatics. If Hindus want to put an end to conversions, caste exploitation has to stop. If Viswa Hindu Parishad wants to propagate sharply casteist views and practices, and at the same time wants to stop conversions it is next to impossible. Muslims are the largest minority in India. Furthermore, Muslims form an international population. One cannot also forget the brutal reality of partition, and also the past history of India. Otherwise, what is the rationale behind the communal Hindus not saying anything about lakhs of dalits embracing Buddhims, merely because Buddhism has arisen out of Hinduism? Or because the Constitution of India says that Hindus will include Buddhists? Is it that the Hindus cannot envisage Muslims ruling India because of the past history? Or because of their belief that Buddhism is a branch of Hinduism? The same also goes for the elder brotherly treatment of Hindus towards the Sikhs. In spite of the current happenings in Punjab one does not find even amongst the rabid communalist Hindus, a generalised anti-Sikh feeling. They also talk of the 'healing touch' and not of throwing out Sikhs from India.

Also, one cannot forget the fact that a large number of Muslims have been brought into the Hindu fold in recent years. In January 1982, about 3,000 Muslims in Suhara Village in Byavar District of Rajasthan were converted overnight by the Viswa Hindu Parishad. This is not a solitary instance. At various other places in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the Viswa Hindu Parishad has converted a number of Muslims. These converts are directly fitted into the caste system and given the status of Rajputs. The Viswa Hindu Parishad which has given a call for banning all conversions justifies the conversion into the Hindu fold by claiming that it is neither conversion nor reconversion but purification. This process is called 'Paravartan'. The Parishad also makes it a point not to publicise these conversions.

g) Muslims are becoming economically stronger at the expense of Hindus

This is to say the least, ridiculous. It may be true that in some places Muslims are increasingly competing with Hindus. But this is not a generalised trend. When one talks about upward mobility of Muslims, one is not crazy enough to believe that they are a generalised threat to Hindu economic interests. At least as yet communal riots have not percolated every part of our geography. They are mainly urban phenomena and so when we talked about upward mobility of Muslims it was in this context, it is ridiculous to say that at a macro level the Muslims are or can pose a threat to the economic interests of the Hindus.

Educationally, Muslims are much more backward than Hindus (in a wider sense). Even employment wise Muslims do not even represent their population proportion. It is difficult to get jobs in Hindu dominated employment market.

h) If the Present Trend Continues Muslims will Outnumber Hindus

It is commonly argued by communalists that the Muslims, owing to their personal law are allowed to practice polygamy which will ultimately result in their outnumbering Hindus.

First of all it is difficult to have any waves of alarm run through one's body merely because of the fantastic suggestion that Muslims might outnumber Hindus in future. There is no logic in opposing a Muslim dominated India. But in any case we must deal a deathblow to this myth on the communalists own ground.

Polygamy has to be opposed, not because it enables Muslims to produce more children, but because it is against Muslim women. The point however is that even through polygamy the Muslims cannot outnumber Hindus in India.

In a recent pamphlet published by the Viswa Hindu Parishad, it is mentioned that by the year 2000 A.D. Muslims will outnumber the Hindus. In support of this argument, the following table is given:

Table - III

Year	Total Population	Muslim Population	% of total
1951	36.1 crores	3.5 crores	9.8%
1961	43.4 crores	4.7 crores	10.8%
1971	54.8 crores	6.1 crores	11.2%
1981	65.0 crores	8.5 crores	13.0%

Even if one does not doubt the genuineness of these figures, what is meant is that by the year 2000 AD the Muslim population in India will be around 14%. By the year 2000, when Muslim population is supposed to be more than 50% according to the Viswa Hindu Parishad, will in actual reality be only around 14%. It requires kindergarten arithmetic to know that 14% does not constitute majority. But fanatics have nothing to do with logic.¹¹

Another interesting aspect is that total marital fertility of Muslims is not as high as it is made put. Following figures shows that the total fertility rate amongst Muslim is coming down, and that it is only marginally higher than that of the Hindus.

Table- IV: Total Marital Fertility Rate

	1972		1978	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
HINDU	6.1	5.8	5.4	4.5
MUSLIM	7.6	6.8	6.1	5.4
CHRISTIAN	6.3	5.8	5.4	4.8
SIKHS	-	-	5.8	5.4
ALL RELIGIONS	6.1	6.0	5.6	4.7

What more can one say but that a depraved mind is a Devil's workshop.

As mentioned above, there is an increasing trend towards communal riots all over India. The statewise break up of communal riots in 1981 and 1982 is as under :

Table - V

	1981	1982
Gujarat	84	55
Bihar	64	39

¹¹ Now that 2000 has come and gone, the VHP and its ilk have begun suggesting that 2020/2025 will be the danger date.

Maharashtra	60	28
Uttar Pradesh	45	31
West Bengal	33	27
Karnataka	47	17
Madhya Pradesh	26	19
Andhra Pradesh	27	38
Assam	17	10
Jammu & Kashmir	2	3

This incidentally, also gives go by to the theory that Muslims are riot prone. Jammu and Kashmir having a majority of Muslim population has the least number of communal riots. Srinagar having 85% of Muslim population has virtually no riots while other towns having much less Muslim population have many more riots.¹²

The conclusions one arrives at from the above analysis are quite obvious. One may very well use the words of Asgar Ali Engineer, "Communalism in India, ever since the struggle for Independence from British rule began, has been the art of realising secular ends through religious means, by the elites of both the communities".

We strongly believe that the fight against communalism cannot wait till the D-Day of the revolution. Nor should we wait till the riots occur, for propagating genuine secularism. It has to begin now in every sphere of influence.

We must therefore demand,

- (1) Stop any public demonstration of religious expressions;
- (2) Stop all state aid to religious institutions;
- (3) Immediate scanning of existing curriculum in schools and colleges and deletion of any communal references;
- (4) No day other than a national importance should be a holiday. Holidays on festivals such as Diwali, Id, X-mass etc. Should be declared restricted.

(Communalism according to us is becoming one of the most complex and central issues facing the Indian left. We don't claim to have arrived at the ultimate and precise analysis of this problem. This document should be treated as an initial contribution for a debate which is ongoing and which to a large extent will determine our practice).

¹² It required consistent violation of democracy in Kashmir before the Kashmiris finally turned to violent struggles. Even then, it was only after systematic efforts by **both** India and Pakistan that the Muslim communalists, rather than the secular nationalists like the JKLF, became the dominant force. Finally, even now, it is the state machinery, not the terrorist groups, who are responsible for the greater part of communal violences and generally the murders in Kashmir.