

Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat

Though Gujarat has a history of communalism, adivasis were the last to be communalised. This paper attempts to explore the participation of adivasis in the riots that followed the Godhra carnage. It highlights the fact that the character of riots in adivasi areas was different from that in non-adivasi areas and attempts to reconstruct the developmental cycle of communalisation of adivasis from late 1980s onwards. It links this communalisation with the political economy of adivasis whose aspirations and problems are kept distorted and their attention diverted under the garb of religion and party politics.

LANCY LOBO

I Overview of Adivasis of Gujarat

The adivasis are spread in the eastern districts of the state of Gujarat and this adivasi belt ranges from southern Rajasthan in the north, Madhya Pradesh in the east and to Maharashtra in the south. The adivasis of Gujarat account for 15 per cent of the total population. They are specially spread in the districts of Sabarkantha, Panchmahal, Vadodara, Bharuch, Narmada, Surat, Navsari, Valsad and Dangs. 32 talukas of these districts have an adivasi population of over fifty per cent. The government has classified them as adivasi talukas for the sake of developmental programmes.

About a hundred years ago the adivasis of Gujarat were called the Bhils of the hills. Gujarat had two major substratum of population known as Bhils and Kolis. The Kolis (OBCs) were 20 per cent of the population. The Kolis were known as the tribals of the plains. Kolis lived in the plains while the Bhils lived in the hills. Even today Kolis in Kutch are classified as adivasis. The Kolis largely claim to be Kshatriyas have named groups in different sub-regions of Gujarat [Lobo 1995]. The Bhils too have been differentiated into numerous (29) named tribes spread along the eastern belt of hilly Gujarat. Some of the major names are Gamit, Chaudhri, Vasava, Kokna, Warli, and a few have retained the name of Bhil, eg, in Dangs, or use the suffix of Bhil like Dungri Bhil. Many of these tribes are endogamous. A few tribes like the Kotwalia, Kolgas, etc, have been given the status of 'Primitive Tribes'. Primitive Tribes are the tribes who are very backward and get more assistance from the state for their development.

Historically, the Bhils have had interaction with the Rajputs. There were small princely states of Bhils, at times consisting of one village or more. The chiefs of these states married their daughters to low ranking Rajputs, who for a variety of reasons sought women from outside their caste. One can thus speak of the Bhil-Rajput/Kshatriya continuum just as Koli-Rajput continuum. Besides, the Bhils were also employed in the militia of the Rajput kings. Even some of the names such as Dungri Garasia and Garasia Bhils suggest that the Garasia prefix belongs to the Rajputs. The state of Idar populated by adivasis for instance, was a Rajput state. Thus all along the eastern adivasi belt one observes presence of Rajputs living alongside predominantly adivasi areas. Even in south Gujarat one finds Rajput landowners called 'Mahidas', eg, Valia taluka of Bharuch district which is predominantly adivasi.

The Bhils were not unfamiliar with assertion, protest and revolts. In 1856 Bhils of Gujarat revolted against the British. The Bhils of Panchmahals led by Guru Govind rose against *veth* (free labour). In 1912 his blind challenge to British took the lives of 3000 Bhils. Gandhi's freedom struggle too found an echo among the adivasis in Bardoli, Salt March, and Quit India movement of 1942. Kisan Sabha organised a rally of ten thousand adivasis to abolish bonded labour ('hali pratha') among the Dubla tribe of south Gujarat. In 1940, 5,000 adivasis met and resolved to put an end to British rule at the Haripura Congress meeting [Patel 2001:11-12].

Interaction with other non-adivasis viz Hindu, Muslim and Parsee traders, businessmen, and money-lenders has been noted since the 19th century. Devi movement was a protest against the transfer of land from adivasis to Parsees on account

of the imposition on adivasis for the purchase of liquor from Parsee taverns [Hardiman 1996].

Two things have happened to adivasis as a result of state action in the post-Independence period. First, Bhil physical and social geography has been decimated by the linguistic division of states. Some Bhils are parcelled off to Rajasthan, some to Gujarat and others to Madhya Pradesh. In Gujarat they were 'Gujaratised'. Ignoring their own languages and dialects the adivasis had to do their schooling in the state language. They were at a disadvantage in speaking and writing in Gujarati with the mainstream non-adivasis. They could easily be identified as adivasis from the accents and pronunciation. Secondly, the adivasis were Hinduised by the state. In each of the decennial census the column for religion was increasingly filled up as Hindu. For instance, Gamits were prefixed as Hindu Gamits, Chaudhris as Hindu Chaudhris. Secondly, during admission to schools this Hindu identity was reinforced in the school records. Different Hindu sects have contributed to the Hinduisation of the adivasis. The Bhagat or the Bhakti movement and later a host of other movements quickened the process of Hinduisation. The upwardly mobile adivasis took to Hindu sects faster than the others ([Lobo 1992].

The adivasis are now stratified on account of the numerous interventions of the government, non-government agencies, missionaries and adivasi organisations. Divisions like 'Mota' (big) Chaudhris and 'Nana' (small) Chaudhris are found among the Chaudhris. There are Bhagats and non-Bhagats within a tribe. There are differences of language among them. For instance, the Vasavi Bhil language varied from one site to another though having a contiguous geographical space. There has been little

horizontal solidarity within a tribe leave alone across tribes. Some efforts particularly during socio-religious movements have been made to establish horizontal solidarity among them.

Table 1: Incidents of Violence – March to May 2002

| Date | Incident |
|------------|---|
| March 2002 | |
| 3 | Arson in rural Baroda. Chhotaudepur under curfew. |
| 4 | Mob attack on 4 people in Sanjaynagar, Warasia. Admitted at Civil hospital with burns. People shifted from Central Gujarat in Baroda Range especially from Sanjeli, Fatehpura and Randhikpur. |
| 5 | Tension in Tejgadh, Chhotaudepur following clashes between police and tribals. Night curfew in Dabhoi, Bodeli, Pavi Jetpur, Tejgadh and Chhotaudepur. Mob attack police convoy carrying Muslims from Chhotaudepur to Baroda. One constable shot, 3 injured. Tribals from Tejgadh admitted in civil hospital, victims of 'private firing'. |
| 6 | Participation of tribals in rioting reported from Tejgadh, Chhotaudepur, Jabugam, Bodeli and Dabhoi. |
| 7 | Army flag march in Chhotaudepur. Clashes between police and tribals in Panwad, Kawant taluka. By March 8 property worth Rs 8 crore was damaged in Baroda city and rural areas. 411 shops set on fire. In the city 175 houses, 47 vehicles damaged and 346 shops set afire. 13 factories and 4 hotels worth Rs 7.5 crore damaged. Largest casualty, 32 people. Flares used in tribal belt. One person killed in police firing. |
| 9 | 700 Muslim residents leave Kosamba road in Tejgadh. |
| 10 | Violence erupts in Panwad village as tribals attack shops and houses. 1 killed and 12 injured. About a dozen policemen injured. |
| 11 | Rumours of tribals surrounding Kawant. Additional police force, SRPF rush to Kawant according to Dy SP B L Parmar. Looting, 8 houses set ablaze. |
| 12 | Violence in Panwad village. 45 shops are set afire. ARCH Vahini, an NGO, says it had repeatedly requested the Collector and DSP Keshav Kumar for additional forces. Collector ordered 1 company of BSF to be sent to tribal belt. RAF withdrawn from Kawant to Baroda due to Mahashivratri. |
| 13 | Looting and arson in and around Tejgadh and Kawant. Police firing in retaliation to tribal firing. Army conducts flag march. Collector Bhagyesh Jha and DSP Keshav Kumar attacked by tribals in Kawant. |
| 14 | Tension in tribal belt of Gujarat. Police fire to disperse mobs in Kawant. 14 arrested, 1 tribal injured in firing. Violence spreads to Chhotaudepur by afternoon. Curfew in Chhotaudepur, 20 arrested. Police recover looted goods. Hindu traders get together to guard against attackers in Kawant. |
| 16 | Army flag march in Chhotaudepur. |
| 17 | 2 tribals killed in police firing in Bodeli |
| 20 | Vadodara district police arrest army jawan, Sarpanch and primary school teacher for involvement in violence in Panwad. |
| April 2002 | |
| 14 | Tension in Panwad in Kawant taluka. Police action prevented violence in Panwad. |
| 21 | Tribal attack in Chhotaudepur reported. |
| 24 | Violence continues in Chhotaudepur. |
| May 1, 02 | Stone-pelting on Muslim refugees when they go back to Panwad. |

The creamy layer among the adivasis has been caught up in a very ambivalent position. They exclude themselves from the ordinary adivasis and want to include themselves among Hindus or at least pass off as non-adivasis. This creamy layer has become highly Hinduised. This layer has also been co-opted by the government bureaucracy, contractors, forest officials, police, politicians, and other non-adivasi voluntary organisations. Having found their own upward mobility they care little for the rest of their tribe. Non-adivasi value system has crept into the adivasis such as caste hierarchy, puritanism, emulation of non-adivasi dress, entertainment, food, and individualism. Communitarian values are given a go by. Christianisation too has brought in changes, some positive and others negative.

Hold of upper castes in Gujarat politics has been hardly shaken except during Madhavsinh Solanki's chief ministership who came to power relying on the numerical dominance of his Kshatriya community, along with Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis. His announcement of further reservations undid his hold on Gujarat politics. Anti-reservation riots by upper castes undid his reign. Gujarat politics in the past relied on caste politics and now with the resurgence of Bharatiya Janata Party increasingly on religious politics.

II

Communalisation of Adivasis

Hindu-Muslim riots have taken place in tribal areas without involving the tribals. There are towns in tribal areas where Hindu and Muslim traders live such as Virpur, Bardoli, Sanjeli, Randikpur, Modasa, Khedbrahma, Lunawada, Meghraj and so on. For instance, in Virpur in 1987 riots between Hindus and Muslims have been documented by Ahmedabad Ekta (1987). Such riots have given a demonstration to adivasis as to how riots can be conducted. But communal riots involving adivasis directly is a recent phenomenon dating to 1990.

First Communal Disturbances Involving Adivasis (in 1990)

Communal conflicts were first recorded in Dediapada and Sagbara of Bharuch Districts in 1990 as a result of Hindutvisation [Lobo 1990]. Hindutvisation is slightly a different process than Hinduisation. Hindutvisation of adivasis began in late 1980s. Till then there was Hinduisation which was a natural, spontaneous process, an outcome of interaction between the adivasis and the Hindu traders, and later through the Hindu sects.

Hindutvisation of the adivasis was begun by the Sangh Parivar. This was a planned process. The Sangh Parivar surveyed, selected and targeted villages, planted its men, recruited local people and began its anti-missionary campaigns. They also built their institutions for children. With a view to speedy Hindutvisation they used Advani's 'rathyatra', 'ramshilapujan' and collection of bricks from adivasis for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The Hindutvisation process in Dediapada and Sagbara was initiated in the following manner. Events such as 'Ramshilapujan', mini 'rathyatras', Ramjyoth and 'kar seva' were spaced over a year and a half in these areas. A collection of rupees 1.25 per household was made from villages along the highway. "If you do not contribute you prove that you are from the Muslim womb!" Provocative speeches were made en route of the mini-rathyatras. Organisers of these yatras were non-tribals. In Devmogra a pilgrim centre for adivasis, a Muslim dargah was vandalised. Following the kar seva event, a Bharat Bandh call was given on October 24, 1990 and its echoes were felt in adivasi area, with trees being cut and placed as road blocks. Harassment of passers-by was also indulged in.

In November of the same year some villages were singled out and Muslim traders and shopkeepers were told to quit the village. The Muslims sent their women and children to a big village called Akkalkuva where there was a large population of Muslims. Subsequently a house or two each of Muslims in nearly 15 villages of Sagbara taluka were destroyed.

The sitting MLA of the area was a BJP man. Persons who galvanised these events were members of BSS, VHP, and RSS. BSS has been operating since six years from its headquarters in Dediapada supposedly to counter the activities of the missionaries. The complicity of the Mamlatdar and police was well-known. The fall-out of the disturbances was that the adivasis tasted that loot was rewarding, and anti-normative behaviour such as stopping the passing vehicles, breaking their windscreens was giving them a sense of power. "Ame shakti Batavi (We showed our strength)".

Atrocities on Adivasi Christians in South Gujarat 1997-1999

Then during 1997-1999 the Sangh Parivar relentlessly perpetrated atrocities on adivasi Christians of South Gujarat. A list of these atrocities, such as burning of churches, prayer halls, beating up adivasi

Christians, performing forcible purification ('shuddhikaran') ceremony and other forms of harassments, etc, are documented [Lobo 2002:182 ff]. Of the 51 instances of atrocities, 41 took place in the Dangs, nine in Surat and one in Valsad districts of south Gujarat. Of 41 atrocities in Dangs, 24 were to do with burning of churches and prayer halls, eight with beatings, and four of various kinds of harassment. Of nine instances in Surat district four had to do with burning churches, two with beatings and three with other forms of harassments. When adivasi Christians were in intense anguish there came the prime minister of India to Dangs, not to console the victims of atrocities but to score a point for the Sangh Parivar saying a national debate on conversions was the need of the hour.

In a relatively peaceful south Gujarat adivasi area these atrocities shook the people. They said, "*Baharhi loko aveene dhamal kare chhe, ame to shantithi raheta hata*" (outsiders have come and created disturbances when we were living in peace). It must be noted that these atrocities were preceded by the certain activities of Sangh Parivar in the adivasi areas.

The Parivar began by propagating Hindutva through various existing Hindu sects in the area. Swadhyay Parivar too sympathised with Sangh Parivar. Sangh Parivar established branches of the Bajrang Dal (BD) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Attempts were made to visit each village and make non-Christian adivasi members of the BD. *Deeksha* was given to persons joining the BD in which 'trishuls' (tridents) and saffron headbands were distributed. Non-Christian sarpanchs of the villages were made members of Hindutva organisations. Economically better-off persons were made members of Sangh Parivar outfits. Unemployed youth of villages were enrolled as members. Sangh Parivar published and widely distributed a calendar depicting the Hindu god Hanuman. Idols of Hindu gods and goddesses were distributed by the BD and VHP during Navaratri and Ganapati festivals. Financial help also given. Dangs alone saw construction of 41 Hindu shrines during the last three years most of which were dedicated to Hanuman. Sangh Parivar distributed anti-Christian pamphlets. It spread anti-Christian charade through newspapers. It showed open hostility against Christians after instalment of BJP government. Anti-Christian meetings were organised. Personal conflicts in the villages were converted into Hindu-Christian communal conflicts by these outfits. Provocative meetings of the Hindus were

held on the days of Christian festivals. Hindus were persuaded to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during elections [Lobo 1999].

Congress Party had a stronghold among the adivasis for decades. Under the Congress the adivasis have experienced further marginalisation. And this space was exploited by the BJP to get a foothold among adivasis. Hindutva mobilisation of the tribals in late 1980s through modes and means explained earlier and the atrocities on adivasi Christians helped BJP wrest a few seats in adivasi areas of south Gujarat in the elections of 1997.

The Hindutvavadis succeeded in forging unity between the ujaliat and pachhat categories in Gujarat particularly co-opting the upwardly mobile adivasi stratum. Besides, the Sangh Parivar recruited four educated unemployed youth from each village. They were given training and an honorarium of rupees 250 per month. Their jobs involved collecting information about their own village and passing it to the Sangh Parivar centres. Generally 20 villages constituted a centre. Information collected included, names of opinion makers in the village, leaders, Christians and non-Christian adivasis, movements of the missionary in the village, factions and quarrels in the village and so on. For instance, the Dang district being small was divided into four centres: Subir in the north, Ahwa in the south, Waghai in the east and Narkadi in the west. Each centre was headed by leaders known for their notoriety in the area.

Post-Godhra Riots

The post-Godhra riots had an echo in the adivasi belt of north eastern Gujarat. A chronology of events (February 27-May 5, 2002) is gathered from the headlines from the *Times of India* and *Indian Express* in tribal areas. It shows that it took a few days for things to flare up in tribal areas. It shows that the rioting limited itself to arson and loot and not so much rapes, murders or burning people alive as in other parts of Gujarat. In non-tribal areas both aspects of a community, viz, production and reproduction were made the target of attack while in tribal areas only the former, ie, economic interests. Devy referring to Baroda district tribals concludes, "the tribals were made to fight a proxy war on behalf of the banias" (2002:41). But then Hindutva has also contributed to create a mind-set that Muslims are dispensable. The tribal in many ways feels closer to Hindus today than to Muslims.

After its successful experiment in cre-

ating a divide between tribals and Christians in parts of south Gujarat, the saffron brigade was engaged in doing the same with the adivasis and Muslims in the adivasi belt of Vadodara, Panchmahals, Dahod and Sabarkantha for political gains. These areas of the state, which had until recently remained devoid of any major communal tension suddenly seem to have been caught in an inferno. Adivasis moved around with bows and arrows and bill hooks ('dharias') on the streets. People went on a looting spree of houses, shops and vehicles moving in the area. They went screaming in large numbers to loot a premise and then set it on fire. Having accomplished this mission they would disappear in the surrounding forests or fields. Trees were cut and placed as road blocks on the road. The intention in most cases seemed to have been that of looting. One could see a nefarious design behind this unusual phenomenon of tribals attacking the minority community members in this part of the state. That a free hand was given to the armed tribal mobs indulging in arson and looting in the very presence of the police lends credence to the belief that the present saffron dispensation in Gujarat had launched a well planned operation.

Violence erupted in the areas along the north-eastern border of the state Sabarkantha, Panchmahals, Dahod and Chhotaudepur a full week after the Godhra Carnage. The mob struck at Kawant, Panwad, and adjoining villages and moved on to Chhotaudepur and so on. There seemed to have been a well planned strategy engineered by some tribal groups for attacking villages. They moved from one village to another seemingly in a systematic manner and then gathered in towns for arson and loot.

The adivasis were incited by outsiders. It is said that liquor was freely distributed among the adivasis and in an inebriated and receptive state of mind they were warned of an impending attack by Muslims to avenge the attack on their fellow religionists. The miscreants also highlighted the adverse economic prospects they would face once the Muslims returned. These briefings point to a well planned strategy. The economic factors which have been the root of violence in the recent riots. This led to a spree of looting and rioting in the tribal belt. According to activist Devy (2002) "tribals are socially vulnerable and while they would not be bothered much by Hinduism and Islam, liquor would play a role in inciting them to violence." In the tribal areas of Panchmahal and Sabarkantha, there has been a history of economic exploita-

tion between Bohra Muslim traders and tribal people. This has been exploited by the Hindutva brigade, who gave it a communal colour. In many places tribal people had been instigated to loot. The Bhil people in this area are extremely poor. This district has suffered drought conditions.

The politicians and Hindutvavadis with the complicity of government bureaucracy carried out the entire operation of using adivasis to loot and arson. Though there was criminality among the Rathwas they had not dared to come into conflict outside their tribe. In each village the political leadership, including the sarpanch rests on the shoulders of relatively young people who are co-opted by politicians and easily controlled by them. For instance, loot and arson against Muslims were experimented at village level and when they tasted success the adivasis were encouraged to come to town centres like Kawant, Panwad and so on in large numbers. The Muslims were being projected as exploiters of adivasis. Secondly, the adivasis were given assurances that the BJP government would see to it that no harm would ever visit them.

The complicity of the police and taluka officials is apparent from the report filed by Rajesh Mishra (2002) of the Arch Vahini, Mangrol with reference to Kawant, Panvad and Chhotaudepur areas. No amount of appeals for police protection made by Muslims and leading NGOs would move the authorities. Either the police were far outnumbered or they preferred to look the other way. Now the adivasis have become initiated to launch out into public space for crime with certain confidence.

The Sangh Parivar has systematically worked among the exploited tribes and

mobilised them for participating in communal riots in an overarching manner. But at local levels many other contributory factors have played their part in adding fuel to the fire, such as factions, conflicts, economic rivalry, property clashes, litigations, private revenge and so on. There again the Sangh Parivar has cleverly used such factors to their advantage. The post-Godhra riots seem to indicate a pattern in pitting the local groups against the Muslim – the Vaghri caste in Viramgam, the Wankar caste (dalit) in Gontipur (Ahmedabad), and the adivasis in the adivasi belt. The Muslims were projected as the demons responsible for their woes. The end result of this strategy has been the near elimination of the Muslims in certain areas and imprisonment of Vaghri, Dalits and adivasis caught in the act of rioting.

Vernacular Media Reporting of Riots in Adivasi Areas

A content analysis of two vernacular dailies is undertaken for March and April 2002. Looking at the reported figures for a period of two months after the Godhra incident, it was found that *Gujarat Today* (a daily published by Muslims) had covered the riot incidents extensively compared to *Gujarat Samachar* (Hindutva-biased daily). *Gujarat Samachar* reported just half of the total number of the incidents *Gujarat Today* had reported. (CCD, 2002).

Gujarat Samachar reported just about half the total number of incidents reported by *Gujarat Today* as is shown in Table 2a. One can possibly place greater credence on the victims's version in *Gujarat Today* than on *Gujarat Samachar*

III Rehabilitation of Muslims in Adivasi Areas

Relief camps have emerged as the only shelter for the thousands who escaped death. However, the journey both to and out of the camps was very difficult for the riot affected people. In rural Gujarat many people fled their homes and hid in the hills and jungles for days without food or water before being rescued by the police. Muslim charities, pooling contribution from within the community had set up these camps. Neither the government nor non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had taken such an initiative. The morsels of relief that the government handed out were also delayed. The collector's offices started supplying provisions to the camp one week after the violence began.

Muslim charities, which always managed to mobilise resources during riots, were finding it difficult to do so this time as even the middle class Muslims were destroyed economically. The refugees themselves worried about when they could get back to their normal lives. Many lost their breadwinners, homes, and they have lost all their belongings. The traders among them have lost their shops, and vehicles, and the farmers among them worried about the land that is ready for being grabbed in the villages. In many places the refugees/victims were told that they would not be allowed to come back to their houses unless they shave off their beards, discontinue the 'azaan' and promise that they will not insist on the religious customs that the Hindus find annoying. In some places it was made clear to the refugees that if they wished to go back they would have to forswear any trade that would hurt the interests of the Hindu competitors. In some places obscene slogans had been scribbled on the walls of idgahs, dargahs and masjids which escaped demolition.

In the district of Sabarkantha one of the worst riot-hit rural districts the refugees from 12 talukas amounted to 2,257. The Aman Welfare Trust run by the Memon Muslims in Idar town of Sabarkantha has conducted a survey of the riot affected villages in and around the Idar taluka. It carries a list of affected households by villages, specifying if house or shop or both have been destroyed, and estimates of the damages. It also specifies the government compensation provided for house/shop or both. Table 3 gives the total figures.

Three hundred and twenty five households were severely affected in 91 villages in and around Idar taluka. Of these 91

Table 2a: Damages as Reported by Gujarat Today and Gujarat Samachar

| Damages to | Gujarat Today | Gujarat Samachar |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Vehicles | 20 | 5 |
| Residence | 282 | 77 |
| Income generating premises | 236 | 59 |
| Hindu religious places | 1 | 2 |
| Muslim religious places | 44 | 7 |

Table 2b: Number of Deaths, Injured and Missing

| | Gujarat Today | Gujarat Samachar |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Deaths | 41 | 51 |
| Injured | 78 | 115 |
| Missing | 6 | 1 |
| No of affected villages | 168 | 73 |

Table 3: Distribution of Total Loss and Compensation Given to the Memon Muslims of Idar Taluka (in Rupees)

| Total Villages | Households | No | Losses | | No | Government help | | | |
|----------------|------------|-----|-------------|-------|--------------|-----------------|----------|----|----------|
| | | | Houses | Shops | | Houses | No Shops | | |
| 91 | 325 | 281 | 2,75,29,750 | 216 | 13,05,01,126 | 127 | 7,90,850 | 31 | 2,62,500 |

Source: Aman Welfare Trust, July 25, 2002.

villages 56 are from the Idar taluka alone. The 281 houses suffered a loss of 2.75 crore of rupees while the 216 shops lost 13 crore, amounting to a total of 16 crores. However the government help received till July 25, 2002 was a mere eight lakhs for 127 houses and 26 lakhs for 31 shops. This works out to be a paltry 0.6 percent of the total estimated damages suffered by the victims. Even if the figures are bloated by the victims one can imagine the pittance they have received from the government even after five months to put their lives together.

There is ghettoisation of Muslims taking place after the riots. It is reported that the Memons have bought around four hundred acres of land near the talukas of Idar and Himmatnagar where they intend building their residences. They intend continuing their shops in their original sites. Therefore they will have one foot for business purpose in one location and another for residential purposes in a ghettoised locality. This is a strategy to safeguard lives disregarding loss of property and income generating means. This is one way of negotiating anxiety or insecurity in future riots regarding families viz. women and children.

This ghettoisation, one must note, had taken place in urban areas of Gujarat. Ahmedabad is a clear case of polarised or ghettoised Hindus and Muslims. For instance, the old city on one side of Sabarmati river has predominantly Muslim population and on the other side Hindu population. Some well-to-do Muslims had ventured into Hindu areas but in the last few riots they had to distress-sell their houses and look for Muslim pockets. Thus beyond the Hindu areas one finds again a Muslim ghetto eg. in Juhapura, Vasna etc. Ghettoisation that had taken place in the urban areas is now taking place in some rural areas too. Muslims have little chance to act otherwise as many of them are not welcome to their original villages. Newspapers have consistently reported that the known victimisers of Muslims in the villages have put pressure on them to withdraw the FIRs filed against them as a pre-condition for their return. Many Muslim homes, shops and other properties have been taken over by anti-social elements.

But the scenario in Baroda district is slightly different. There is no sign of ghettoisation among the predominantly Bohra Muslims of Panwad, Kawant and Chhotaudepur. Most of them have reverted to their houses-cum-shops. Tribals are frequenting these shops as if nothing has happened. The Bohra body language still

shows the scars of recent trauma. They claim that the adivasis are not to be blamed but it is the work of politicians and Hindutvavadis. In fact the adivasis vouch that Bohra Muslim traders were more kind and lenient to them than the Baniya traders. However, one must question how Bohras have been allowed to return and not other Muslims in some other parts of tribal areas. What kind of negotiations have taken place between Sangh Parivar and Bohras? Bohras claim that they are different from the other Muslims. But this difference is not always seen and respected by others be they Muslims nor Hindus. For instance, in the 1992 post-Babri Masjid riots in Surat Bohras were singularly made the target of attack. It puts the Bohras in a peculiar situation. They want to exclude themselves from Muslims, while Hindu extremists want to include them. After the Surat riots the Muslims gave a dig at Bohras, "Now you see are you different from us"?

There has been relative silence and a kind of helplessness faced by the secularists, opposition party (Congress), non-Hindutva organisations, Gandhians and other NGOs in the face of the recent riots. Many have questioned the existence of civil society in Gujarat. Why has Gujarat succumbed to fascism so easily? More enquiry needs to be undertaken in this domain.

Impact of Riots on Adivasis

The impact of these riots on the adivasis has been very damaging. Few adivasis have been killed and many have been booked as criminals and sent to jail. They have developed a kind of disregard for the state machinery. The newspapers have carried headlines of their activities during riots. Hence some of them are even enjoying a false sense of importance. Their thirst for violence and revenge has been ignited. Their emotive attachment to Hindutva has willy-nilly increased and the adivasi identity has taken a beating. The adivasis have lost to some extent the sympathies and paternalistic benevolence of the Muslims. Serious fears have been expressed that by elimination of the Muslim traders and money lenders the adivasis may have to face greater exploitation at the hands of the Hindu traders. On the reverse, the adivasis have experienced what a riot can bring them: loot, goodies, and a sense of false power. They have tasted blood in the recent riots. Will they spare the Hindu traders once they have finished off with the Muslim ones? And they actually did not. After looting the Bohra Muslims of Kawant they began gathering on the hills

with the intention of looting the Hindu traders (see chronology of events as on March 14). But then police were called and a prompt response and firing by the police dispersed the adivasi mobs.

Another impact of recent riots in tribal areas is that the political nexus that was forged among dalits, adivasis, Muslims and Kshatriyas has suffered adversely. The ability of adivasis to protest against wrongs and assert themselves at the right targets has been numbed. The Sangh parivar has also taken this as a long term strategy to ruin the chances of the Congress Party. During Madhavsinh Solanki's time the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim) theory was successful in bringing the party to power. These bonds between Muslims on the one hand, and Harijans and Adivasis on the other, have been blown to bits in these riots. Muslim victims simply could not understand how Harijans and adivasis could indulge in such mindless violence against them. Many Muslims who have stood by the side of Dalits during riots and other atrocities now feel let down and alienated.

Hindutva has been thrust down the throats of adivasis and it appears that many have swallowed it. The Ramshilapujan incident mentioned earlier when Rs 1.25 per brick was paid and letting Hindu shrines be built on tribal areas, and 'shuddhikaran' are examples. One may mention here the discourse between missionary turned anthropologist Verrier Elwin and the Gandhian A V Thakkar (popularly known as Thakkarbapa) with reference to adivasi assimilation and integration into the mainstream [Guha 1996:2380 ff]. Thakkar was in favour of assimilation. The Hindutva brigade has appropriated that agenda and attempted to realise Thakkar's vision for the adivasis in its own way. Communalisation of tribals is one of the fall-outs of this trajectory. One needs also to question if religion be it Hindu, Christian, or Islam could resolve the problem of adivasis?

Five years ago I was boarding a bus from Kawant to Surat. The non-adivasis were entering the bus from the door and the adivasis from side windows with their bundles of fuel and clothes. This was the unwritten law in Kawant. It struck me hard how non-adivasis be they Muslim or Hindu traders, who come to adivasi areas for business and trade, treat the adivasis with disgust and contempt. The bus conductor's behaviour towards the adivasis was as if they were some beings closer to animals. No wonder Hindutvavadis prefer to call adivasis as *vanvasis* (those who live in the jungle perhaps thereby implying that they are *junglies*).

IV Conclusion

Verrier Elwin had suggested in his autobiography a tribal bias in developmental activities,

That we recognise and honour their way of doing things, not because it is old and picturesque but because it is theirs, and they have as much right to their own culture and religion as anyone else in India. It means that we must talk their language, and not only the language that is expressed in words but the deeper language of the heart. It means that we will not make the tribes ashamed of their past or force a sudden break with it, but that we will help to build upon it and grow by a natural process of evolution" [Elwin 1964: 245].

Not only has this bias failed to creep into developmental activities but adivasis have lost their life supporting system to non-adivasis. Adivasis in Gujarat have lost lands to non-adivasis due to dams. Most of Gujarat's major dams – Madhuban, Ukai, Sardar Sarovar, Karzan are in adivasi areas. One senior adivasi leader said, "with the growing industrialisation non-adivasis are moving into occupy adivasi land. In the last decade, in just two blocks of Surat district 40,000 acres of land have changed hands" [Setu 1999:11]. Most of the forest cover of Gujarat is in adivasi areas. Deforestation, due to forest-based industries, mining and agro-industries is depriving these communities of the means of livelihood and also cash income. Industries in the adivasi areas at best generate skilled employment for which the adivasis do not qualify. Nearly 60,000 adivasis migrate to Baroda in search of employment between October and March [Devy 2002:39]. Perhaps more than this number migrate to Surat from adjoining tribal areas. Tribal areas have become cheap labour colonies for the non-tribals of the plains and cities.

Thus the problems of adivasis are related to 'Jal' (water), 'jungle' (forests) and 'jameen' (land). The transfer of their resources to non-tribal areas is the question. Religion is not their problem. Instead of addressing issues of political economy the Sangh Parivar and BJP whose social base is among upper castes and middle classes divert the attention of adivasis to misguided targets like Muslims and Christians. Commenting on the recent riot Ahmed (2002: 1873) notes, "Extensive mobilisation of tribals for the sake of violence against Muslim lives and properties is yet another new feature which distinguishes the present one from the 1969 case."

Hitler's consolidation of power was marked by breaking the Weimar Consti-

tution bit by bit. In India too we see BJP's consolidation of power by attacking and breaking the Constitution and wanting to change it. Extremist Hindutva leaders can utter things against the Constitution, Supreme court, Presidency, Election Commission and minorities and get away with it. They are not challenged. How and who is going to stop them from doing so?

The politics of Gujarat have been long controlled by Patidars, Banias and Brahmins called the upper castes, or 'ujaliats', who are less than 20 per cent of the total population. The rest consists of backward 'pachhat' viz, dalits, and adivasis, Muslims and others. The former have never allowed the latter to enjoy the fruits of political power except symbolically. They have not only blocked the reservation benefits but also conducted anti-reservation stirs against the dalits and adivasis. In 1985 for the first time the backward castes under KHAM were mobilised and enjoyed political power for a short period but got dislodged under the tactical pressures strategically exerted by the upper castes [Patel 2001]. The BJP (an upper caste party) with its religious card began taking under its wings the 'pachhat'. They have succeeded in directing the anger of the lower social stratum away from a dysfunctional state machinery to Muslims and Christians in the last ten years. The communalisation provoked by Hindutva in adivasi areas has a fascistic orientation.

Coming elections are crucial. BJP is desperate as they have lost power in most states where elections were held. The BJP's central leadership is putting everything it has in Gujarat for the coming elections. Narendra Modi is using every vile trick up his sleeve to ensure BJP's success. He has appointed 'sahayaks' (helpers) to local level government bureaucracy actually to mobilise people for BJP in the next elections. Thousands of local 'gram mitras' (friends of village) have been appointed by the Modi government at the cost of state to mobilise villagers for BJP. The Sangh Parivar is recruiting educated unemployed youths at village level especially in tribal areas to gather information about the village.

Shankersinh Vaghela, the newly appointed pradesh Congress president (an ex-RSS man) is perhaps the best answer to the challenges posed by BJP, Modi and his cohorts. But then Congress has kept the tribals in poverty for forty years and lately BJP (Hindutva) has introduced hatred among them. One cannot but agree with Devy (2002:47) that poverty and hatred are a deadly mixture directed towards perceived enemies, the Muslims and Christians. Can the Congress win back the

vote bank of adivasis? Can it undo to some extent the damage done to the relationship between adivasis and Muslims? Shankersinh being a Kshatriya may perhaps take advantage of the Bhil-Kshatriya continuum.

Address for correspondence:
ccd@wilnetonline.net

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