

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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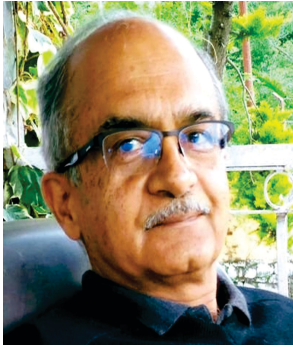
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## INDIAN MEDIA IN THE TIMES OF MODI



637



So, in just a month after the Hindenburg expose, the Value of Adani shares bought by LIC from our money has fallen from 72000 Cr to 26000 Cr, more than 3250 Cr below its purchase price. And this LIC Chairman has been given extension. For putting more public money into Adani shares?

Prashant Bhushan  
@pbhushan1

## HINDENBURG REPORT FALLOUT

# First time, value of LIC holding in Adani companies drops below purchase price

At Rs 26,862 crore, market value almost 11 per cent lower than purchase value

**SANDEEP SINGH**  
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 23

THE MARKET VALUE of state-owned Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) shareholding in Adani Group's five big companies has for the first time dipped below its purchase value.

On Thursday, the market value of LIC holding in Adani Group companies (excluding Ambuja Cements and ACC) stood at Rs 26,861.9 crore, almost 11 per cent lower than its purchase value of Rs 30,127 crore.

LIC is the largest domestic in-

stitutional shareholder in Adani Group companies and held 9.14 per cent in Adani Ports, 5.96 per cent in Adani Total Gas, 4.23 per

### LIC STAKE IN ADANI GROUP

\*Dec 2022, \*\*Jan 24, \*\*\*Feb 23

	Holding in %*	Value in Rs crore**	Value in Rs crore***
Adani Enterprise	4.23	16,601.65	6,671.98
Adani Total Gas	5.96	25,468.61	5,199.62
Adani Green Energy	1.28	3,879.84	1,038.82
Adani Transmission	3.65	11,221.8	3,051
Adani Ports	9.14	15,021.97	10,900.46
Total		72,193.87	26,861.88

**EXPLAINED**  
**E** Feeling the pinch

LIC SAID its exposure in Adani Group was less than 1 per cent of its portfolio. For a government insurer, holding public money, and listed in the stock market, its bet on the Group at a time when most mutual funds shied away, will now come under greater scrutiny.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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*April 2023*

*THE RADICAL HUMANIST*

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## **Articles and Features :**



**President  
Droupadi Murmu**

## **The President Writes**

**(President Droupadi Murmu wrote under the title "Why I am hopeful about gender justice" in Hindustan Times on International Women's Day on March 8, 2023. The expressions taken from it and reproduced below, as well represent the Humanist view on the matter.**

**- Chairman,  
Indian Renaissance Institute, (IRI) )**

Right from my childhood days, I have remained perplexed about the status of women in society.... she has a limited role, if at all, in nearly all significant decisions about the family or even herself.

... Sometimes I felt that as individuals, a majority of us recognise men and women as equal. However, at a collective level, the same people impose limits on behalf of us .... At the social level, however, old customs and traditions, like old habits, linger on.

This is the story of all women around the world. Every other human being on earth begins life with a kind of hinderance. In the 21st century, when we have achieved unimaginable all-round progress, many nations are yet to have a women as the head of state or head of the government. At the other end of the spectrum, unfortunately, there are places in the world where even today women are considered lesser human beings, where even going to school can be a question of life and death for a girl.

... In India there were times when women were decision-makers. Our scriptures and our history talk of women known for their valour, scholarship or administrative skills. Today, again, countless women are, of course, contributing to nation-building in their chosen fields. They are heading corporate firms and even serving in the armed forces. The only difference is that they have to prove their worth in two domains -- they have to excel in their careers and also in their homes. They do not complain, but all they expect from society is that it reposes confidence in them. ...

Therefore, I firmly believe that the social mindset needs to be changed. The deeply ingrained gender prejudices must be identified and purged to create a peaceful and prosperous society. Conscious efforts have been made to promote social justice and equality. But these steps have not proved adequate to ensure gender representation. In education and jobs, for example, women lag far behind men more because of social conditioning than by any design....

Not only economic progress, but climate action too would speed up if women are included in decision-making. I am sure that the world will be a better place if women are made equal stake-holders in the progress of humanity.... 🌈

## **Editorial Note :**

# **A Look Back**

**Vinod Jain**

We have just completed 75 years of India's independence. It should be interesting to take a look back at the circumstances that led up to a situation that enabled India to come out of the shackles of colonial rule.

A little over a 100 years ago in 1917 towards the close of World War I, when Russian soldiers were running away from the war, Lenin saw his chance and brought about what we know as the Russian Revolution. It was following Karl Marx's panacea to free the industrial workers from Capitalist exploitation the world over.

A large part of the world was facing imperialism/colonialism. Britain was the largest colonial power on the globe. The British used to say that the sun never sets on the British Empire. Among the others were France, Italy etc. Colonies included most of Asia and Africa.

After the First World War, three powers in Europe established themselves as Fascist powers. These were Germany (under Hitler), Italy (under Mussolini), and Spain (under Franco). In the far east was Japan ruled by a king. Twenty years after the first war ended in 1918, Germany started the second World War in 1939. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1942, the Soviet Union joined the war on the side of the Allies (Britain, France etc.). When Japan attacked the Pearl Harbour base of the U.S., America joined the war on the side of the allies. The War was over in 1945 with the defeat of the Axis Powers — Germany, Italy, Japan. These three countries embraced democracy.

European countries had fought many wars among themselves earlier. But after the second World War, which was very

devastating, leaders of France (General De Gaulle) and Germany (Conrad Adenaur) along with some others decided to develop an understanding and a system of democracy that will not lead to wars in future. The idea gradually developed into the European Economic Union. Today there are 27 European countries part of that union. Result : Europe never in its history was as peaceful and prosperous as now.

In India, in the meanwhile, there were many kinds of movements that were fighting for freedom — some peaceful and some not so peaceful. Among the peaceful was the Gandhian/Congress movement.

M. N. Roy had come to India, joined Congress, was arrested by the British police, sent to jail for some six years, was released in end 1936. As the war progressed, Roy said that it was a war with the democracies on the one side and the fascist powers on the other. He said that although Britain is ruling over India, and we want freedom, but Britain should win the war because if Britain, and the democracies, win, then India will surely become independent because by then Britain would have become so weak that it will not be able to sustain its rule in the colonies, resulting in independence of the colonies. Whereas, on the other hand, if the Axis powers, Germany etc, win then because these are powers on the rise they will subjugate India for the next one thousand years.

Therefore, Roy suggested that the people of India should whole-heartedly support the British war effort, and join the British Indian army in large numbers. Gandhi ji and the Congress did not agree. Roy left the Congress on this point of disagreement. He helped the

British war effort as much as he could.

Gandhiji on the other hand boycotted the British war effort. As a matter of fact he started the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942. The British put all the Congress leaders in jail. In six months' time the movement was finished.

Another interesting development took place. Gandhiji was asking the people (the Hindus) not to join the British Indian Army. So lesser number of Hindus joined the army than they would have if Gandhiji and the Congress had asked them to join, whereas on the other hand, Mr Jinnah was asking the Muslims to join the army in largest numbers possible. The result was that when the war ended the British Indian Army had a large contingent of both Hindus and Muslims. So when Jinnah raised the question of India's partition on the Hindu-Muslim basis, it could not have been opposed.

Partition had brought about a crore of the Hindus from Pakistan. Many were killed in the communal riots. But if our leaders had opposed partition, then Jinnah could have given a call to the Muslims in the army to respond. That could have led to a holocaust. So partition could not have been avoided.

In another development, a gentleman Mr Golwalkar from India, went to Italy around the year 1925, and met Mr Mussolini, the fascist leader of Italy. The former enquired about the fascist party from the latter. After discussion Mr Golwalkar was happy to inform Mr Mussolini that he would like to develop in India an organization on similar lines. That

organisation later on came to be called Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. Its political wing was Jan Sangh. Later it was renamed as Bhartiya Janta Party.

is not that the contributions of the Congress and of many others towards India's independence were not important, but the Independence was largely a consequence of the second World War. There was, of course, a Gandhi in India. But there were more than 50 countries that gained independence from Britain alone. There was no Gandhi there. Their independence was a consequence of the Allied Powers winning the War.

Since the Congress was a party with a mass base, power was transferred to it in divided India on 15th August 1947. A Constituent Assembly was formed (the idea was suggested earlier by M N Roy) to prepare a Constitution for India. That work was completed and adopted on 26 November 1949. The democratic Constitution came into force on the 26th January 1950.

So the large parts of the world that were oppressed by imperialism/colonialism became free from it. At least three fascist powers, Germany, Italy and Japan embraced democracy. America, a democracy, became a super-power. The communist Soviet Union, another super-power turned totalitarian — but it partly broke-up around 1990. It is still a dictatorship though not a communist one. But China which freed itself from foreign rule became a dictatorship in 1949.

Meanwhile, India continues to flourish more or less as a democracy. 🌍

## **The Radical Humanist on Website**

'The Radical Humanist' is now available at <http://www.lohiatoday.com/> on Periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

**– Mahi Pal Singh**

# The Dangers of Choosing the Path of Bigotry in India

*India is experimenting after 2014 with the same things that Pakistan tried and failed with in its opening decades.*

One party appears to have the monopoly on bigotry in India.

If you are not inclined to support the harassment and brutalisation of fellow citizens, you could vote for any number of parties. In Tamil Nadu, there are the two parties, both factions of the old DMK, while in Kerala there are various Left groups, in Karnataka former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (Secular) is perhaps the only party in India that advertises its antipathy to communalism in its name. Then you have the various groups that have splintered from the Congress but retained its surname: the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra and YSRC in Andhra Pradesh. They are separate parties but have the Congress in their name because of brand recognition but also perhaps to assure their followers their core ideology is not different from that of the mother ship. Then nationally, there is of course the Congress party.

You could vote for the PDP or the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir (assuming there is ever an election there again) or the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi or K. Chandrashekar Rao's Bharat Rashtra Samithi in Telangana. Even the communally formed parties, like the All-India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (Ittehad means unity) or Indian Muslim League do not have an agenda that is opposed to inclusive secularism.

None of these parties is perfect and many of them have a history of harassing minorities when in power and being unable to prevent their persecution. But there is only one party that

actively seeks harassment, and if you want that sort of thing, then there is only one party for you, and that of course is the BJP. No other party seeks to push exclusionary laws on citizenship, on divorce, on segregation, as the BJP has done actively, especially after 2019. No other party deliberately excludes Muslims — of the BJP's 303 Lok Sabha and 92 Rajya Sabha MPs, not one is a Muslim. Incredibly, of its more than 1,000 MLAs across India, there is not a single Muslim. This is a deliberate and calculated division of society based on religion that no other party wants to practice, even though it may be rewarding.

The BJP is in some sense resembles parties in the political landscape of Pakistan. There all parties tend to be anti-minority, even though the minority population is only around 3%. Six months after Mohammed Ali Jinnah's passing in 1948, Pakistan's constituent assembly was told that minorities would be allowed the right to practice their religion freely. They were told that the constitution's religious orientation was only to ensure that Muslims would be more devout and conforming. This did not happen of course because the assumption that they were not pious was wrong, and in any case, it is not the role of the state. But after it became clear that it was floundering, attention turned to the minorities. A series of laws excluding them from political office and then actively persecuting



**Aakar Patel**

them came starting in the late 1950s, and by the 1980s it had peaked. Even the socialist Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had participated in this out of expediency, with his second amendment that went after the Ahmadiyya community in 1974. In the last few decades, this has begun to be reversed to a limited extent. Under Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the law on fornication was returned from Shariah back to the secular penal code, which Pakistan and Bangladesh share with India. Perhaps it was realised that there was no real benefit to persecution and that the damage to the nation and the state was long term.

In Bangladesh, the constitution opens with the Bismillah verse but it also, like India's, commits itself in writing to secularism in its preamble. Further down, it says that "the principle of secularism shall be realised by the elimination" of communalism, political status in favour of any religion, abuse of religion for political purpose and discrimination or persecution. Bangladesh is as authoritarian as India is and the political Opposition and civil society are harassed in a similar fashion. It will hearten Indians to know that Bangladesh is even lower than us in the hated V-Dem liberal democracy index. On Freedom House's Freedom in the World Index too, Bangladesh is lower than India and both nations are

classified "partly free". However today, Bangladesh is the only nation of the three that has its principal minority community represented in the Cabinet, through Sadhan Chandra Majumder.

India is experimenting after 2014 with the same things that Pakistan tried and failed with in its opening decades. Though India's economic achievements of the current time lie primarily in rhetoric, it is instructive to know that Pakistan often touched 10 per cent growth in the 1960s. Gen. Auyb Khan was likened to Greek lawgivers Solon and Lycurgus by political scientist Samuel Huntington (of "clash of civilisations" fame). The point here being that economic growth, for a short period at least, can go hand in hand with exclusionary politics. But not for long. Modern states that are focused on targeting their own citizens, on constant harassment through law and policy, that encourage the raising of militias and lynch mobs, have no record of success.

This is perhaps the reason, or at least one of the reasons, that India's political parties have stayed away from this as an ideology, even if it may be electorally rewarding. All parties other than one, of course.

**Aakar Patel** is the author of *Our Hindu Rashtra and Price of the Modi Years*.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 14 March 2023. 🌈

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# Worsening Spiral of Communal Hate: State's role in rising Violence against Minorities

Ram Puniyani

Junaid and Nasir set out on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 to meet some relatives. They were subjected to brutal violence at the hands of 'cow protection' groups. These groups are operating in Haryana and nearby areas with great impunity. The tragic episode also reveals the degree of absolute impunity which these groups enjoy and part collusion with the police. On their return these two Muslim youth were stopped by the gang operating in the name of Cow protection, beaten and taken to police station. Police neither sent the injured men to hospital nor apprehend the criminals. The gang took Nasir and Junaid to a remote place, tied them to the back seats of the car and put the car on fire. The car which was used in this crime and other actions in the name of preventing Cow trafficking was earlier registered as the police vehicle!

Harsh Mander, the founder of Caravan-E-Mohabbat, trying to sooth the families of 'victims of Hate crimes', visited the area and wrote in Indian Express "I am profoundly chilled as I scan social media pages of Monu Manesar. He and members of his gang live stream as they openly brandish sophisticated firearms, sound sirens mimicking police jeeps, shoot at vehicles, and brutally thrash the men they catch."

While protests are going on against this horrific crime, two Mahapanchayats have taken place. The victims were from Rajasthan and crime was committed in Haryana. The Mahapanchayats, duly supported by RSS affiliates Bajarang Dal, VHP and another organization called Hindu Sena further came out with Hate speeches. In the first one it was said that if Rajasthan police comes to arrest Monu Manesar, the chief of the vigilante group, they will not be able to go back on their feet. In the second one on 22<sup>nd</sup> February one Aastha Maa talked on the issue of love jihad and

incited the audience not to spare those Muslims who are eying Hindu Girls.

Meanwhile three culprits have been arrested and it turns out that they were informers (Mukhbirs) of police. While the menace of Cow vigilantes has gone up in last few years, it particularly picked up after 2019. In 2015 the Haryana state passed a bill "Govansh Sanrakshan and Gosamvarshan" (Cow Progeny protection and promotion Act). In 2019 it brought an amendment that those trafficking cows will be punished. Since then many groups have sprung up who stop the vehicles carrying animals, make deals with them and in case of failures of the deals use violence. This treatment is meted out even to those transporters who have valid papers. Surely the police must be knowing this all. Muslims of Mevat region are the ones, who inherit a syncretic Islam with many Hindu rituals. Milk is one of their main business and they are victims of such regular attacks from the Monu Manesar type groups while the police is watching.

It is not too long ago when the issue of Cow beef was brought to the fore as an essential part of divisive communal politics. While we are talking of one Junaid here; there was another Junaid, a Madrassa student who was lynched while travelling in a train on the suspicion that he had beef in his Tiffin. We recall Mohammad Akhlaq and fate of Pehlu Khan. Lynching was politically-socially introduced as a peak of communal violence directed against Muslim community. One recalls that it was the murder of Akhlaq which precipitated the 'Award Wapasi' (returning national honors) trend among our foremost writers, scientists, social workers and what have you. IndianSpend reports "Muslims were the target of 51% of violence centered on

bovine issues over nearly eight years (2010 to 2017) and comprised 86% of 28 Indians killed in 63 incidents. As many of 97 per cent of these attacks were reported after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came to power in May 2014, and about half the cow-related violence — 32 of 63 cases — were from states governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) when the attacks were reported, revealed our analysis of violence recorded until June 25, 2017."

The hate spread against Muslims (and also Christians) has gone to horrific limits. In addition to those who are RSS affiliates, other Hindu Sena type of organizations have sprung up, dime a dozen. They merrily take the law in their hands, while some bigwigs keep formally saying that they should not take law in their hands. The crimes which are committed against this minority are highlighted with aplomb and many a times these crimes are live streamed on face book (Monu Manesar face book shows that) or videos are circulated as Shambhulal Regar who killed Afrazul and videotaped the killing.

Many of these culprits are honored publically. The murder accused of Kalimuddin Ansari were greeted by Jayant Sinha, the then union Minister. Processions were taken out in support of the culprits of Asifa, the eight year old, who was subjected to rape and murder in Kashmir. One also recalls the murder of IT engineer Mohsin Shaikh who was murdered in Pune and now all

the accused have been exonerated. They took out a victory march! There was also the incidence of a police officer Subodh Kumar Singh's murder. The crime of this upright police officer was that he was trying to take proper action in the case of a dead cow thrown in the field of village Syana in UP.

In a way the 'Cow-Beef' issue was flagged off by none other than our Prime Minister who in a public speech said that Maharana Pratap dedicated his life for cow protection. New issues are regularly being added to the 'Hate other'. Yesterday (26<sup>th</sup> February 2023) Vashi (New Bombay) area saw a big rally 'Hindu Jan Akrsoh Rally' (Hindu Mass resentment) shouting slogans against Muslims for Love Jihad and Land Jihad. One of the top Godi media (pro sectarianism media) anchor had presented a detailed chart of types of Jihad which have been unleashed in India! Goebbels dominates the media ecosystem of India!

As we are witnessing a downward spiral of increasing Hate, Violence and consequent polarization, the fraternity inherent in our Constitution is showing a downslide. The freedom movement saw an upward going spiral of communal amity, now is the time to revive those principles to lay the foundation of harmony, amity and peace. These surely are the prerequisites of progress of the country.

Courtesy **NewsClick**, 5 March, 2023. 🌈

## **Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist**

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**- Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist**

# Supreme Court Ruling on ECI's Appointment: A Game Changer?

Abdul Moid

In an important judgment yesterday, a five-judge bench of supreme court of India unanimously ruled that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) must be appointed by a selection committee consisting of Prime Minister, Chief justice of India and the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha. The court was hearing the matter under a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking to change the current appointment method by the executive to a panel comprising of the above said members. Besides, the court also suggested the need for a permanent secretariate and appropriation of the expenditure of Election Commission of India (ECI) from consolidated fund of India. However, the court remarked that these are policy decisions for the government to decide.

The ruling marks a watershed moment in history since it alters the current procedure for appointing CECs and ECs, over which the government had full control. The judgment as if now, fulfils the constitutional demand for parliament under article 324 (2) to regulate the procedure of appointment made by the president. It is interesting to see how the incumbent government which can comfortably float any bill through the parliament right now, responds to the supreme court ruling. As the Attorney General of India in his submission opposed judicial intervention in the appointment of CEC and ECs arguing that “Judicial intervention in these matters would be at the expense of causing violence to the delicate separation of powers between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary.”

The court fiercely advocated the need to have an independent ECI observing that “A

pliable Election Commission, an unfair and biased overseer of the foundational exercise of adult franchise, which lies at the heart of democracy, who obliges the powers that be, perhaps offers the surest gateway to acquisition and retention of power”. During the hearing the court had questioned the Center over the appointment of Arun Goel with “Lightening speed”.

So, would this ruling be a game-changer for the Election Commission of India's independence? In this article, I will attempt to answer the question as well as provide a brief constitutional and historical overview of the commission's appointment question.

## Appointment of CEC and ECs

The election commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body mandated to conduct free and fair election. ECI conducts elections for both houses of parliament, including the president and vice president of India, as well as assembly elections for states and union territories with legislatures.

Part XV of the Indian constitution (Articles 324-329) provides several safeguards for the ECI's independence, including fixed tenure, removal procedures similar to those used for supreme court judges, and so on. However, the biggest loopholes that remained since independence in the constitution and was also left during the constituent assembly debates to be resolved by the president or parliament was the appointment procedure of the CEC and ECs. So far, these appointments had been made by the president, proposed by the Prime Minister of India, making it a complete executive action. Although, the constitution under article 324-(2)(5) has vested ultimate power in the

parliament to regulate the service conditions of the electoral members of the commission.

Over the years, several bodies, including the constituent assembly, envisioned the appointment of CECs and ECs with different stakeholders. The model for appointment ordered by this judgment was suggested by Justice Tarkunde Committee long back in 1975 itself. The same was reiterated later by Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990 and Law Commission in 2015. The second Administrative Reform Commission (ARC) even recommended to include law minister and deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha in the appointment panel. In 1990, based on the Dinesh Goswami Committee, the 70th constitutional amendment bill was introduced demanding a selection committee. It failed to pass and was ultimately withdrawn in 1993 due to a lack of political will. In 1991, Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, was passed. However, it dropped the idea of a selection committee for the appointment of CEC and ECs.

Clearly, the supreme court's decision was not made in a vacuum. It has only complied with the constitutional requirement that the parliament was obligated to meet, as well as the recommendations of other bodies, including the law commission. The designation of the ECI as a quasi-judicial body is also a convincing argument for ending the executive's monopoly on the appointment of electoral commission members. As it violates the cardinal principle of separation of power especially between the executive and the judiciary.

### **The ruling: A Game Changer?**

There is no straightforward answer to this question. Nonetheless, this decision will irritate the incumbent BJP administration. This government, to which institutional autonomy is anathema, will leave no stone unturned in its efforts to circumvent the supreme court's ruling.

It can do the following to maintain its role in the appointment of election commission members:

First, the government will implement this verdict without bringing any legislative measures to alter or overturn the Supreme Court's decision. In this instance, the government has the CBI director or Lokpal appointment model with same panel members as in this case, where the government advance the names from a pool of favorable officers for the selection. So, anyone selected will do the job.

Second, as the constitution gives parliament the ultimate authority to formulate and regulate the service conditions of electoral commissioners, the government will likely introduce a bill to either reverse the decision or, more likely, alter the panel's composition in its favor. As is the case with almost all bodies, such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Central Information Commissioner (CIC), among others.

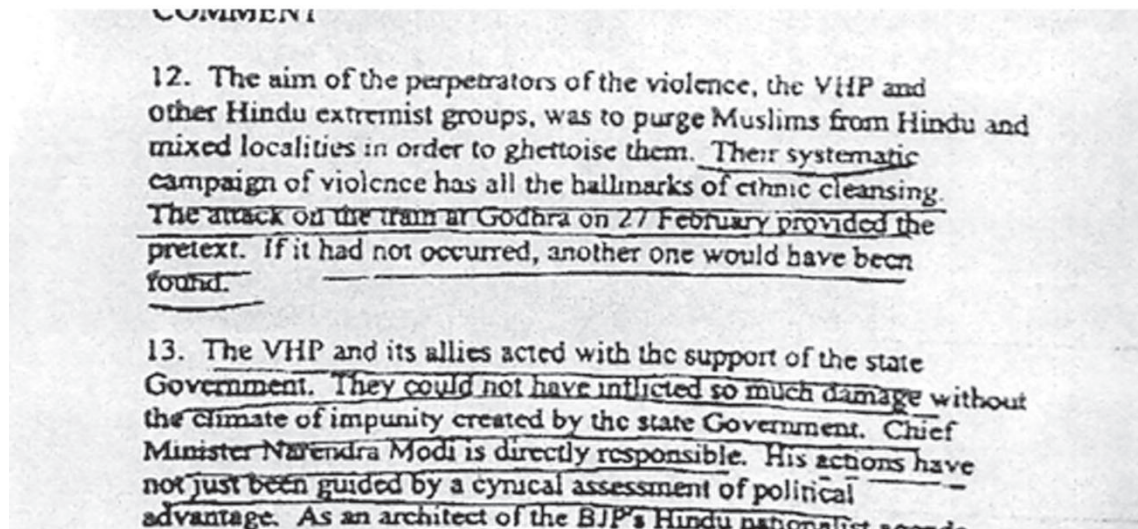
Only time will tell whether the ruling will be a game-changer for the ECI's independence, as it is an evolving matter contingent on the next move of the government. However, the Supreme Court's ruling is truly historic at this time. The SC must be prepared to thwart any future government attempts to circumvent this ruling. As, the decision has increased, not decreased, the role of the judiciary in preserving ECI's independence.

**Abdul Moid** is a PhD Scholar at Maulana Azad National Urdu University in the Department of Political Science. His area of research interest is in the field of Identity negotiation and Muslim Identity. He holds a postgraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Hyderabad and a Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in Political Science from Banaras Hindu University. Prior to his university education, Abdul Moid received his early education in the Madrasa system.

Courtesy **Countercurrents.org**,  
3.3.2023. 

# BBC Row: UK report states VHP planned Gujarat violence in advance, Godhra a “pretext”

Hartosh Singh Bal



*The Caravan* has obtained a copy of an inquiry conducted by the government of the United Kingdom into the 2002 Gujarat violence, which was cited in a recent BBC documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, titled *India: The Modi Question*. The report states that the violence was “planned, possibly in advance” by Vishva Hindu Parishad, a Hindu nationalist organisation. The report notes: “The attack on the train at Godhra on 27 February provided the pretext. If it had not occurred, another one would have been found.”

The report cites evidence for stating the violence was pre-planned: “Police contacts confirmed that rioters used computerised lists to target Muslim homes and businesses. The accuracy and detail of the lists, including businesses with minority Muslim share-holding, suggest that they were prepared in advance.”

It also indicts the Gujarat state government, stating, “Chief Minister Narendra Modi is directly responsible.” The report notes:

The VHP and its allies acted with the support

of the state Government. They could not have inflicted so much damage without the climate of impunity created by the state Government. Chief Minister Narendra Modi is directly responsible. His actions have not just been guided by a cynical assessment of political advantage. As an architect of the BJP’s Hindu nationalist agenda which it has pursued since it came to power in 1995, he is a believer in the VHP’s ideological motivation.

The report also makes observations on the scale of the violence and points to the involvement of police in the rape of Muslim women. “A conservative estimate based on information from reliable human rights contacts puts the number of deaths at 2000 ... The killing was accompanied in many areas by widespread and systemic rape of Muslim women, sometimes by police.” The reports states, “police contacts accept that implicit state Government pressure inhibited their response.”

The text of the report is being reproduced here in full, for the first time. Some names have been redacted to protect sources.

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 SUBJECT: GUJARAT POGROM

#### **SUMMARY**

1. Extent of violence much greater than reported. At least 2000 killed. Widespread and systematic rape of Muslim women. 138,000 internal refugees. Targeted destruction of all Muslim businesses in Hindu and mixed Hindu/Muslim areas.
2. Violence planned, possibly in advance, and politically motivated. Aim was to purge Muslims from Hindu areas. Led by VHP (Hindu extremist organisation), under the protection of the state Government. Reconciliation impossible while Modi remains Chief Minister.

#### **DETAIL**

3. [REDACTED] visited Ahmedabad, Gujarat on 8-10 April to assess the impact of the ongoing violence. They met

a wide range of human rights contacts, community leaders (from both communities), senior police, including the Director General (Chief Constable equivalent), politicians, journalists and business leaders. They did not meet state Government representatives.

#### **Current Situation**

4. Ahmedabad is now quiet. But sporadic violence continues in rural areas. The scare of the violence since it began on 27 February was much greater than we have reported so far. Official figures (currently 840 deaths) underestimate the death toll significantly.

They ignore missing persons (who cannot be included in death statistics for ten years). Reporting from rural areas has been patchy. A conservative estimate based on information from reliable human rights contacts puts the number of deaths at 2000. Some human rights contacts and community leaders, and reporting on other channels, suggest that the figure could be higher.

5. The killing was accompanied in many areas by widespread and systematic rape of Muslim women, sometimes by police. 138,000 people have been displaced and are living in 70 refugee camps.

#### **Over 100,000 are Muslim.**

6. Muslim businesses were systematically targeted. The burnt out wrecks of individual Muslims shops are visible in rows of untouched Hindu stores. The Additional Commissioner of Police, Ahmedabad (Deputy Chief Constable equivalent) told us that every Muslim business in Hindu and mixed areas of Ahmedabad was destroyed.

#### **The pattern of violence**

7. Gujarat has seen several outbreaks of communal violence, most recently in 1992. But most of our interlocutors,

including police, said that the pattern of violence this time was different.

The violence was led by the VHP with other Hindu extremist organisations. It was pre-planned, possibly months ago. Police contacts confirmed that rioters used computerised lists to target Muslim homes and businesses. The accuracy and detail of the lists, including businesses with minority Muslim share-holding, suggest that they were prepared in advance.

#### **State Government complicity**

8. We have already reported on the inaction of the state Government (first TUR). In addition, eyewitnesses report that five state ministers participated in the rioting on the first day. Reliable journalist and human rights contacts have also told us that BJP (Prime Minister Vajpayee's party) Chief Minister Narendra Modi met senior police officers on the evening of 27 February and ordered them not to intervene in the rioting. Police contacts deny this meeting happened.
9. But police contacts accept that implicit state Government pressure inhibited their response. Chakravati, the Director General of Police, also accepts that some police may have participated in the rioting, which eyewitnesses say was widespread. Half of the 130 people shot by police were Muslim.  
The police say they have arrested 8,000 people connected with the violence. They are unable to give the Hindu/Muslim split.
10. The Government has been slow in its response to the relief effort. The conditions in refugee camps are poor with little shelter and sanitation. The Government only began to provide food and shelter to the camps after the visit of Prime Minister Vajpayee last week. NGOs had been filling the gap. The state

Government's initial compensation offer was discriminatory: 200,000 rupees to the (Hindu) victims of the attack on the train at Godhra; 100,000 rupees to all other (mainly Muslim) victims.

They have now offered a uniform 50,000 rupees to all victims. But the state Government is unlikely to pay much compensation as it is bankrupt.

#### **Role of Media**

11. Much of the Gujarati language press has played a crucial role in fomenting the violence. It has spread no opportunity to publish poisonous rumours and propaganda which have fuelled anti-Muslim fervour.

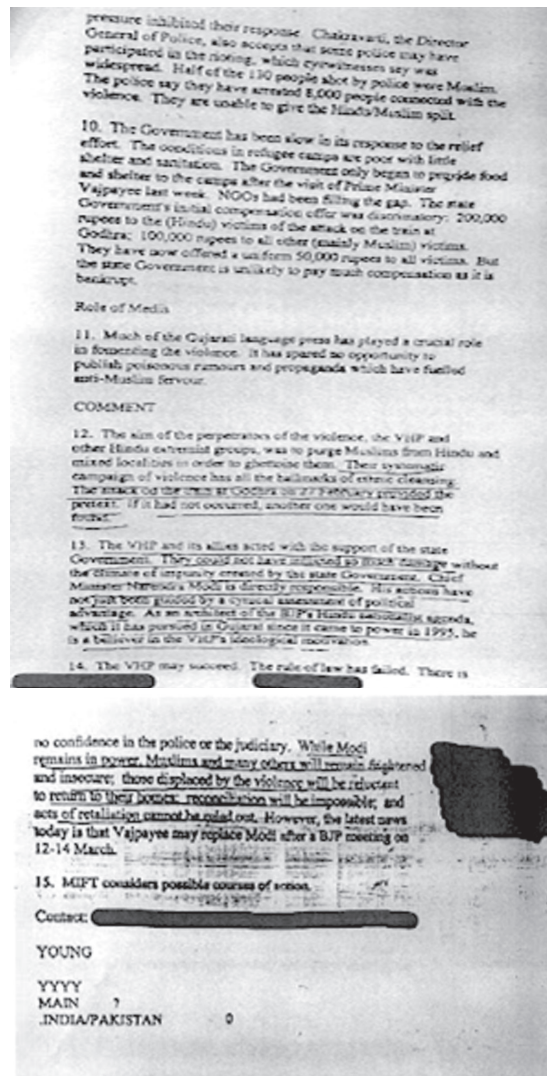
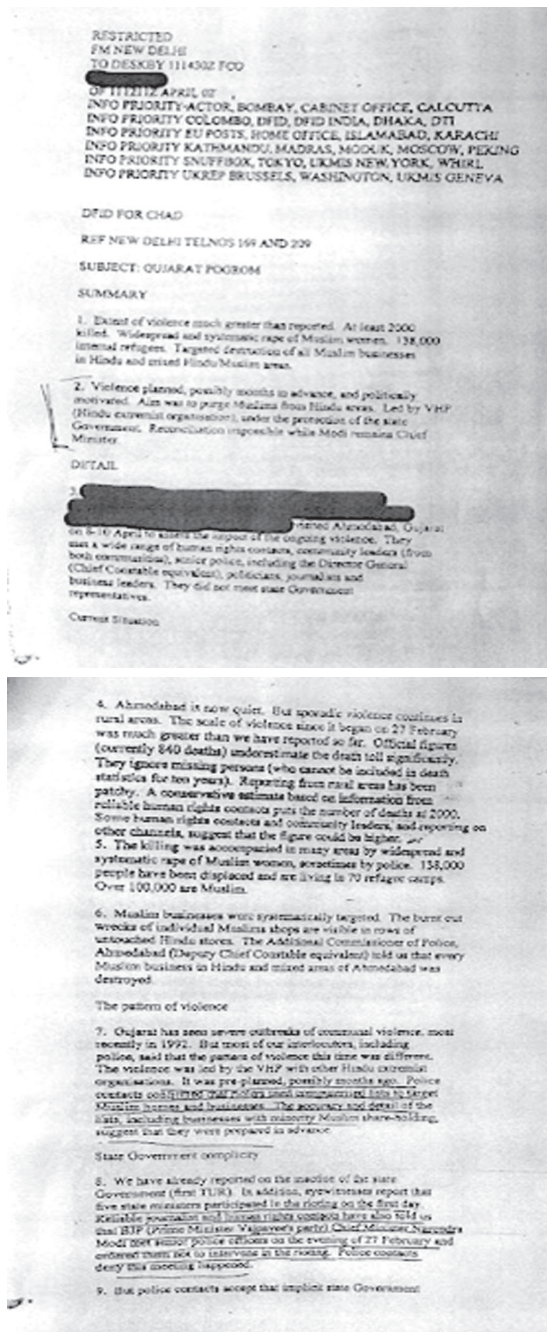
#### **COMMENT**

12. The aim of the perpetrators of the violence, the VHP and other Hindu extremist groups, was to purge Muslims from Hindu and mixed localities in order to ghettoise them. Their systematic campaign of violence has all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing.  
The attack on the train at Godhra on 27 February provided the pretext. If it had not occurred, another one would have been found.
13. The VHP and its allies acted with the support of the state Government. They could not have inflicted so much damage without the climate of impunity created by the state Government. Chief Minister Narendra Modi is directly responsible. His actions have not just been guided by a cynical assessment of political advantage. As an architect of the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda, which it has pursued in Gujarat since it came to power in 1995, he is a believer in the VHP's ideological motivation.
14. The VHP may succeed. The rule of law has failed. There is no confidence in the police or the judiciary. While Modi

remains in power, Muslims and many others will remain frightened and insecure; those displaced by the violence will be reluctant to return to their homes; reconciliation will be impossible; and acts of retaliation cannot

be ruled out. However, the latest news today is that Vajpayee may replace Modi after a BJP meeting on 12-14 March.  
15. MIFT considers possible courses of action.

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Hartosh Singh Bal is the political editor at  
The Caravan.  
Courtesy The Caravan, 23 January 2023.

# BBC Documentary and Freedom of Expression in India

**Ram Puniyani**

The survey of Income tax on BBC offices in India, which were started on 14th February (2023) were stopped after three days. While IT department called it a 'survey', many columnists and agencies like Amnesty International called it a raid. The global media linked it to the release of BBC documentary, 'India: The Modi question'. It was yet another attack on the democratic institutions in India and as Akar Patel of Amnesty International pointed out, "Indian authorities are clearly trying to harass and intimidate the BBC. Overbroad powers of the Income Tax Department are repeatedly being weaponised to silence dissent." The response of US and UK governments was very interesting. UK PM Rishi Sunak, defended Indian PM Modi. The US spokesmen, after initially dodging the issue later did state that they defend the freedom of the press, their attempt not to annoy Modi were very clear.

Documentary is in two parts. First one presents the role of Narendra Modi in Gujarat carnage and Part two deals with his anti minority policies which he pursued as the PM of India. Part one was broadcast for global audience on 17th January (2023); it was received by Indian audience also. Government was prompt enough to ban the documentary using its emergency powers. Meanwhile link of the film had been circulated by Twitter and downloaded and seen by many. Many student groups planned its screening, some succeeded and others were stopped midway by the police.

Why such an effort by the Government? The part one to begin with did accept the

BJP view that Sabarmati S 6 coach was put to fire by Muslims. The Government and BJP commented that the documentary is having "the bias, the lack of objectivity and, frankly, a continuing colonial mindset is blatantly visible". It was labeled to be part of hateful; propaganda. Though there were some new incidents in this episode the major unknown part was that British Foreign office had asked for a probe into the carnage at that time. That report is being presented in the documentary. The British report done in April 2002 makes very disturbing observations. As per this report it was a pre planned pogrom, the number of those killed were much more than officially declared and that it was a pogrom. The British diplomat, who was part of the report, is not shown in the documentary.

As per the documentary the report based on the reliable sources states that police was asked to stand down as the violence erupts. As per this documentary Haren Pandya, the then Home minister of Gujarat deposed in front of Citizen's Tribunal. As per him and also as per police officer Sanjiv Bhatt, in the meeting called in the aftermath of erupting of the violence on 27th February evening, Modi in the meeting at his home had instructed that there will be Hindu reaction to Godhra incident and police should let them vent their anger. Later Haren Pandya was murdered and Sanjiv Bhatt is undergoing life imprisonment in another case. The Jesuit priest Cedric Prakash, who requested Haren Pandya to depose in the tribunal stands to confirm that Pandya did depose

in front of tribunal.

One of the victims, who survived the mass attack, is shown in the film. He tells as to how he was witness to Ahsan Jafri making phone calls to all concerned including Narendra Modi, before the mob went into the horrific action of cutting him to pieces. It is propagated that SIT gave Modi a clean chit. The fact that Amicus Curie, Raju Ramchandran, stated that there is enough evidence in the report to prosecute; is totally ignored. Also Gen. Zamiruddin Shah did state that his army unit had to wait for three days, before local assistance was provided for them to control the violence. And it was those three days when maximum violence took place.

Part two of documentary deals with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister. Here the abrogation of Article 370, giving autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, reducing its status from a state to Union Territory and giving more free-hand to the armed forces is shown. The divisive agenda manifested in throwing up the issue of Cow/Beef, even as many a BJP leaders from North Eastern states stated that they consume beef is presented. The horrific killings, lynching of many innocents on grounds of killing, consuming or de-skinning cows came up and its adverse effect on community psychology is brought out well. It is happening at a time when Indians emerging as the leading beef exporter in global market. The ministers of Modi Cabinet garlanding the accused of the crimes related to lynching was a shocker, the Government not reprimanding these acts in a way stands to promote such acts.

It puts together the events related to National Register of Citizens (NRC), Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Jamia Milia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University

violence which are well known by now. The police entering the universities and beating up the students is horrific. Student's opposition to CAA, which is totally discriminatory, in matters of giving citizenship to the persecuted people from the neighboring countries, excluding Muslims, is a big blow to the secular fabric of our Constitution. Even in NRC, the painstaking exercise in Assam revealed that out of close to 20 lakh people not having papers of citizenship, 12 lakhs were Hindus.

CAA wanted to find a backdoor entry as citizens for the Hindus not having proper papers and to send the Muslims not having citizenship papers to detention centers. The Shaheen Bagh movement shook the country and Muslim women came forward to reclaim Muslims' place as citizens of India. The continuum between part one and part two is the divisive politics pursued by Modi, backed by Hindu nationalist organizations. Though many events in this documentary are not new, the documentary gives the salient points of Modi rule starting from Gujarat Chief Minister ship to Prime Minister of India. The UK report, later the European Union report (2012) did highlight the sectarian politics pursued by the subject of the film.

Today the Governments of UK and USA do not stand by this documentary due to strategic reasons. This documentary is a mirror to our society. Global media and institutions seeped in democratic values will get a clear picture of what is happening here under the garb religion in India, irrespective of what the Government is asserting. And last but not the least how Indian Government is curtailing the freedom of expression by all the means possible, including 'survey' by IT department.

Courtesy **Countercurrents.org**,  
22.2.2023. 

# Delhi Riots: ‘Delayed Deployment of Additional Forces Escalated Violence,’ Says Fact-Finding Panel

*The five-member committee – comprising former judges and a former Union home secretary – has alleged that the lackadaisical attitude shown by the Union home ministry and police complicity helped rioters go unchecked.*

**Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashasta**

**Security personnel walk past Bhagirathi Vihar area of the riot-affected northeast Delhi, February 26, 2020. Photo: PTI**



*This article, first published on October 10, 2022, is being republished on February 24, 2023, which is the day the violence began in northeast Delhi three years ago.*

**New Delhi:** A fact-finding committee on the February 2020 communal riots in north-east Delhi headed by former Supreme Court judge Madan B. Lokur concluded that the Union home ministry conspicuously delayed deploying additional forces in the violence-hit areas, even as the communal riots continued unabated between February 23 and 26, 2020.

The committee found that despite Delhi Police leadership receiving at least six internal alerts from the Special Branch and the Intelligence units on February 23 – the day when riots began – additional forces were deployed only on February 26. The alerts did warn that violence between the communities could escalate.

The alleged lackadaisical attitude shown by the home ministry indirectly helped the rioters go unchecked, organise better, and unleash

targeted violence for three continuous days, the committee held.

The committee’s claim was backed by Delhi Police’s own chargesheet produced in the court for the first information report (FIR)-59 that invoked the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against activists like Umar Khalid, Khalid Saifi, Ishrat Jahan, and students like Gulfisha Fatima, Safoora Zargar, Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and others.

The chargesheet states that the number of Delhi police and Central Armed Police Forces’ personnel were under 1,400 on the first three days of the violence when maximum distress calls were made from the affected areas. The deployment of forces was increased to over 4,000 only on February 26 when violence was largely contained in many parts of northeast Delhi.

Date	Deployment of Delhi Police + CAPF staff	Distress calls made to police as per NDTV Report	<p><i>“In fact, on February 24, the numbers of both civil police and paramilitary personnel were less than on February 23. It was only on February 26 when there was a perceptible rise in deployment – the day that the National Security Advisor declared the situation ‘under control’,” the report said.</i></p>
22.2.2020	405	NA	
23.2.2020	1393	700	
24.2.2020	1361	3500	
25.2.2020	1399	7500	
26.2.2020	4291	1500	
27.2.2020	4635	NA	
28.2.2020	4756	NA	
29.2.2020	4248	NA	
Source: First chargesheet in FIR 59			

In one of the most detailed reports on the 2020 Delhi riots, the five-member committee – comprising former Supreme Court judge Madan B. Lokur, former chief justice of Delhi and Madras high court A.P. Shah, former Delhi high court judge R.S. Sodhi, former Patna high court judge Anjana Prakash, and former Union home secretary G.K. Pillai – concluded that the “Union home ministry’s careless response, Delhi Police’s blatant complicity in the violence, a divisive media narrative, and Bharatiya Janata Party’s hate campaign against Muslims who had been protesting against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) for over two months are collectively responsible for Delhi’s communal riots”.

Together, these factors deliberately shaped a “Hindu-Muslim binary” that eventually led to violence, the committee held.

#### **Union home ministry’s role**

Perusing media reports and testimonies over a period of more than six months, the committee in its report said that the Union home ministry gave a false impression that the “situation was under control”, even as parts of northeast Delhi witnessed unprecedented communal violence between February 23 and 26.

The committee notes:

*“On the evening of February 24, Ajay Bhalla, the Union Home Secretary, told a TV news channel that the situation was under control with sufficient deployment of security*

*forces on the ground. Later, G. Kishan Reddy, the then Minister of State for Home, shared his view with the press that the violence in North East Delhi ‘was orchestrated’ coinciding with President Trump’s visit to India (the primary conspiracy theory that the Delhi police has sought to advance in its chargesheets).*

*He suggested that the Congress party and the anti-CAA movement should be the ones to answer for ‘who is responsible for damaging the image of India’. On the night of February 24, the Home Minister convened a meeting with Delhi Police Commissioner, Director of Intelligence Bureau, Union Home Secretary Bhalla and others to take stock of the situation in North East Delhi. While it is known that the meeting lasted more than two hours, the deliberations are not reported.”*

#### **Delhi Police’s complicity?**

The committee held that the Delhi Police was not only found to be “complicit” in the violence against Muslims, coming across as an active party in the riots, but also showed its lack of professionalism in the way it advanced the ruling BJP’s political narrative against anti-CAA protesters in its multiple chargesheets that echoed without commensurate evidence the prejudices of Hindu majoritarian forces that were at play during the riots.

Of the 758 FIRs, the committee reviewed 752 FIRs and found that “the police response”

to anti-CAA protesters, of whom a majority were Muslims, and the Hindutva activists opposed to CAA was “inconsistent” and partisan.

The committee also said that the police participated in the violence that was led by the Hindutva activists to dismantle the sites of anti-CAA protests in multiple locations of northeast Delhi. It also said that in many incidents, Delhi Police personnel were found to be targeting Muslim residents of north-east Delhi and expressing their anger against anti-CAA protests in the same fashion as the BJP leaders and their supporters who formed the rioting mob.

The report notes as an instance to illustrate its assumption:

*“In Kardampuri, on February 24, a glaring incident of police brutality against five young Muslim men was reported, resulting in the death of one of them, Faizan. As news of the violence at the Kardampuri protest site spread around the neighborhood, three of the five men – Faizan, Wasim and Rafiq – left their homes to search for their mothers, who were at the protest site. It appears that they were rounded up by the police, along with Mohammad Farhan and Kausar Ali. A video of the police assault went viral. The clip shows the men lying slumped on the street, being beaten by the policemen who order them to sing the national anthem and vande mataram, while other policemen capture this on video. The men can be heard begging for mercy, pleading that they are Indians too.”*

Faizan later died because of his injuries.

Similarly, it cites the testimonies of Jamia Millia Islamia University students and CCTV video clips to comment on the Delhi police’s partisan action. In the days preceding the riots, the committee said, “The police entered the (Jamia) campus and, for over two hours, vandalised the campus and assaulted students.”

“The police also hurled several rounds of tear gas shells inside the library and mosque situated inside the campus. About 200 students were injured. Student testimonies recorded that the police made pejorative, communal remarks like, ‘recite the *kalmia* (last words)’, and ‘go to Pakistan’, while rounding them up,” the report noted.

The report drew comparisons between how the Delhi Police responded differently to the anti-CAA protesters and the Hindutva activists and BJP leaders who whipped up hate during the riots and in the days preceding the riots when they systematically attempted to equate anti-CAA protests as ‘acts of terrorism’.

“The police response to the two groups was inconsistent. The first few days of the protests against the CAA saw police action and the use of force directed against protesters and protest sites. This ranged from the denial of permissions to organise protests, allegations of police firing, assaults and beatings, and vandalism of a university campus. Prohibitory measures such as Section 144, CrPC were repeatedly imposed to stop anti-CAA protesters from gathering. Internet shutdowns were also reported from parts of Delhi, and limits were placed on public transportation to prevent people from congregating at the protest sites,” the committee reported about how the Delhi police dealt with the anti-CAA protests.

“The Delhi Police, however, did not interfere with demonstrators or ruling party leaders in support of the CAA, even as many of these demonstrations based themselves on slogans which advocated violence,” the report said on the contrasting attitude of the Delhi police.

### **Questionable probe – process as punishment**

The committee notes that the investigations into the riots have been blatantly communal in favour of the BJP and its supporters, even as the chargesheets filed by the Delhi Police leaves

glaring loopholes in trying to establish its primary claim that the riots were a conspiracy by the anti-CAA protesters to defame India at an international stage. The claim made by the Delhi Police also happens to be the contention that the BJP leaders have advanced in the public realm.

The committee said that despite filing over 700 cases, the Delhi Police has filed chargesheets only in six cases between October 2021 and January 2022. It said that a number of factors point to the possibility that many of the charges slapped on the anti-CAA activists appear to be “fabricated”.

The report noted that “unaccounted delay by police witnesses in naming and identifying the assailants”, “belated statements by police witnesses”, possible tutoring of witnesses, failure of the police to record relevant information in the police station diaries, contradictions emerging in the Call Detail Records and CCTV footages point out that the evidence produced in the courts was “incompatible with the prosecution’s narrative”.

The report said:

*“In many cases, courts have found that the Call Detail Records (CDR) location of the accused contradicts the prosecution’s*

*claims regarding the presence of the accused at the place of the offences...In some cases where CCTV footage or videos have been submitted by the police, courts have found them unreliable as the police have presented footage where the accused is not visible. In other cases where the accused is visible in videos and CCTV footage, the footage presented does not show them carrying out violent criminal acts, or inciting violence.”*

The committee also said that invoking the UAPA in FIR 59 was unjustified as the police have failed to produce any evidence that “justifies” the use of the anti-terror law. UAPA has only helped the police to keep several accused persons incarcerated despite having failed to produce concrete evidence even after two years of the riots, the committee commented on how the process of justice has become a punishment for many anti-CAA protestors.

Moreover, the failure of the investigation agencies to probe BJP leaders like Kapil Mishra, Parvesh Verma, or Hindutva leaders like Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, Ragini Tiwari and others who publicly incited violence in their speeches establishes quite openly the biased nature of the probe.



**BJP leader Kapil Mishra addressing supporters at Jafrabad on February 23. Photo: Twitter**

*“...we find that the substratum of the prosecution case, i.e., the allegation of an overarching premeditated conspiracy, is based on grossly belated statements which are inherently unreliable in law. Other features of the investigation such as identical disclosure statements, inconsistencies between the investigations in FIR 59 and the IPC FIRs, and the non-examination of crucial witnesses only strengthen the suspicion of fabrication,” the committee said.*

### **Political narrative preceding the riots**

The committee dealt deeply with the hate campaign against Muslims in the days preceding the riots. It felt that the tensions between the communities were deliberately created in a concerted fashion. It said that some of the television news channels colluded with BJP's social media machinery to shape a toxic "Hindu-Muslim binary".

The report said:

*"The period from December 2019 to February 2020 witnessed events and developments which signaled a growing and incessant vilification of the anti-CAA protesters and, thus of the anti-CAA sentiment as a whole, by both state and non-state actors. This was amplified in the BJP's campaigning for the 2020 Assembly elections. Public hate speeches, a divisive Hindu-Muslim narrative, violence against anti-CAA protesters, and partisan institutional responses emerged as connected features of this period. Oversight institutions such as the courts and Election Commission did not intervene resolutely to prevent or halt the spread of hateful content at the heart of the polarising narrative. It can be argued that these factors facilitated the build-up of an enabling environment for violence, shaped by hate and deteriorating community relations. These patterns are a crucial link between the contestation against the CAA and the communal violence that followed."*

The report singled out four mainstream television channels – Zee News, Republic TV, India TV, Aaj Tak – which actively colluded with the BJP that sought to criminalise the peaceful anti-CAA protests across the country since it began in December 2019. The committee also said that these television channels amplified the hate speeches of saffron leaders like Kapil Mishra, Parvesh Verma and others. These speeches "involved repeated appeals to unite on the basis of Hindu identity, layered with rhetoric to protect the CAA", the report noted while pointing out the

police's failure to prevent escalating communal tensions in north-east Delhi.

"The uncanny similarity in rhetoric, messaging and even semantic style across these shows/channels is revealing. Whipping up an enraged environment, planting ungrounded fears of the anti-CAA protests, and creating vindictiveness against the Muslim community, where a forceful end to the protests may appear valid, appear to be the larger outcomes being pursued," the committee said about the television coverage during the riots and in the days leading up to the violence.

Such a one-sided media narrative devoid of facts, the committee held, makes the media channels "a party to the conflict" and "encourages an environment of vigilantism or even creates permissive conditions for high-handed state responses".

While recommending a review of the "much-abused" UAPA and a court-monitored probe by an agency outside the direct purview of the Union home ministry, the committee said, "The February violence emerged as the ultimate culmination of a larger communally divisive project that was set in motion before the eruption of violence."

"Once it broke out, while the violence was perpetrated through the mechanics of mob involvement on both sides, Muslim identity was singled out as a target to be attacked. Through the days of violence, not just individuals, but Muslim homes, businesses, and places of worship were systematically targeted. The extent of police complicity in allowing, or participating in this, adds another important layer to the nature of violence," the report said.

"It is our view that engineered hate, enabled by the complicity of state actors, culminated in violence towards cementing a firm sectarian divide. In this attempt to alter social relations, Muslim identity and agency stand noticeably diminished. This is an inevitable outcome of a politics of hate becoming embedded in the social fabric."

Courtesy **The Wire**, 24.2.2023. 

# 2020 riots changing Delhi. Muslims, Hindus leaving old neighbourhoods, moving to ghettos

*In riot-affected Seelampur and Mustafabad, people are selling their houses at low prices; property rates have peaked in single-faith areas such as Jamia Nagar.*

**Heena Fatima**

**New Delhi:** Giant iron gates have been erected on every street in North East Delhi's Karawal Nagar, Shiv Vihar and Seelampur areas. Three years after the Delhi riots killed 53 people here, the fear of unknown attackers coming from outside is still alive. But the scarred neighbourhoods are changing in other, more fundamental ways too

Hindu and Muslim residents are fleeing mixed colonies. They are selling their houses and moving to other areas of their community, looking for security.

The riots lasted for six days. Marauding mobs attacked residents, burnt shops and homes while neighbours turned

Some lost their jobs when they shifted after the violence; others abandoned theirs to return to their hometowns. Those who remained are looking for safety in the numbers of their own people.

Hindus and Muslims here had co-existed peacefully since the 1992 violence first disturbed the area. But one bout of rioting in 2020 eroded this fragile 28-year trust. The move to segregate is also ghettoising them into single-religion neighbourhoods, creating more room for suspicion and stereotypes about the unknowable other.

Manoj Kumar, 53, a mechanic, used to live in a mixed-faith area of Brahmpuri before selling his

house and moving to East Gorakh Park, a Hindu-dominated area of Shahdara located a couple of kilometres from Brahmpuri. It's a tiny flat, not an independent house, but he is relieved that all the neighbours are Hindus.

"We didn't want to sell the house, but the atmosphere in that area was getting worse by the day," Kumar said. "After the riots, Muslims from outside started coming to that area, and we were not able to trust them," he added.

Brahmpuri did not suffer during the rioting and was regarded as an island of Hindu-Muslim harmony. But it was close to some of the worst-affected areas, and fear travels well. Then last month, some posters were put up on its streets, from Gali no. 13 to Gali no. 6, urging Hindu landlords not to sell their houses to Muslim buyers.



**Gali no. 13 of Brahmpuri |**

Photo: Heena Fatima, ThePrint

The posters were signed by lawyer Pradeep Kumar, who works at Karkardooma Court. But he denied any association with them. That said, he did agree with the sentiment on the posters.

“Wherever there are more Muslims, there is an atmosphere of fear. Wherever they live, that area gets criminalised,” said Kumar. He lives in Brahmpuri as well, and has observed

time, she resigned herself to the idea. And then there’s this nagging feeling about the safety of her family should the simmering communal tension spill onto the streets again.

“The rise of hate speech has made the atmosphere tense. The 2020 riots broke out due to these speeches, and it is possible that such riots will also happen in the future,” she added.

Her building block overlooks a busy road. There are always people milling about, and stores are open till late at night, but the certainty of security has disappeared. She and her sisters no longer feel safe.

“No one is willing to talk to us in this area. So it doesn’t make sense to stay here anymore.”

### **The beginning of ghettoisation**

With each incident of Hindu-Muslim riots, Indian cities move increasingly toward segregation. Cities like Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kanpur have been affected by successive waves of riots over seven decades, and the two communities have moved further apart.

Discrimination based on religion was always prevalent. Dr Mohsin Alam Bhat, a professor at O. P. Jindal Global University who investigated rental house discrimination against Muslims in Mumbai and Delhi between 2017 and 2019, discovered that it was “neither localised nor episodic, but deeply systemic.”

He found that when they weren’t rejecting Muslim tenants outright, brokers would subtly steer them to Muslim-concentrated neighbourhoods. A broker in Malviya Nagar confirmed this to Alam and his team of researchers; he actively told Muslim house hunters that he didn’t have any units. He didn’t want the hassle. Another broker from Inderlok said he would find units for tenants “based on their names”.

French political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot, who has written extensively on the displacement



**Torn posters in Brahmpuri |**  
Photo: Heena Fatima, ThePrint

the flight of Hindu families from the neighbourhood. “Everyone wants to live in a safe place where there are no Muslims,” he added.

### **Fear, distrust loom**

The exhortation on the posters is already playing out. Property dealers and landlords are adding to the climate of fear and distrust.

Hussain’s family stays in Yamuna Vihar, a Hindu-dominated area with just four Muslim families. Her own home is the only Muslim family in the apartment block. They have been planning to buy a house in the residential complexes nearby but are hitting a roadblock.

“When we spoke to the property dealer, he said we can no longer get a house near this area. He told us that we would have to live in a Muslim locality like Vijay Park,” said 26-year-old Hussain.

At first, this seemed odd to Hussain, but over

of Muslims and the rise of ghettoisation, expands on this in his article, *In, and Out, of the Ghetto*. Some cities have witnessed so many “frequent and devastating” riots that Muslims have started to live in the same locality.

“They know that arsonists generally attack Muslims when they live in small, isolated pockets. They then form ghettos, which combine the features of enclaves and of slums,” he writes.

Jaffrelot, along with fellow political scientist Laurent Gayer, has also authored *Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation*, a book that talks about the socio-economic decline of urban Muslims due to rising communal disharmony.

This could well be the future for Hussain and her family. In *Contested Homelands: Politics of Space and Identity*, author Nazima Parveen calls the act of moving to such localities a “compulsion” for Muslims.

“The community is now forced to live in pockets where Muslims dominate. They are also not being allowed to stay in other areas,” Parveen told ThePrint.

Mohammad’s life was turned upside down hours after the riots broke out. The 43-year-old grocery shop owner had been renting a house in C Block, Janakpuri, a Hindu-dominated area, for 12 years.

“A few hours after the Delhi riots broke out, the landlord asked me to vacate his house. He said that this was a ‘Hindu area’ and that it was not right for me to live there. They told me to go to ‘my locality’ [dominated by Muslims],” recalled Mohammad. His biggest sorrow is that he is no longer in touch with any of his old Hindu friends.

It’s not always forced, though. Gayer’s research in Delhi’s Abul Fazal Enclaves shows that a majority of Muslim families choose to live here. Jaffrelot, too, acknowledged that there are enclaves born out of “Muslims’ desire not to

mix with others in order to protect their identity in a process of self-segregation”.

### **Property rates peak**

In riot-affected areas, people are selling their houses at low prices. On the other hand, property rates and rents have increased manifold in single-faith residential areas.

“Because people have started migrating, the demand has increased by 20 to 30 per cent. A room earlier available for Rs 5,000 is now rented out for Rs 10,000,” Rashid Ali, a property dealer from Mustafabad, told ThePrint.

The same trend plays out in Jamia Nagar and North East Delhi’s areas, where vacant spaces are getting filled quickly.

“I was renting a big house in Janakpuri for Rs 4,500, but here in Shaheen Bagh, I am living in two small flats by paying more than Rs 7,000 a month,” said Mohammad.

Additional floors are being built to meet the demand. New buildings are being constructed hastily in the few Muslim-majority areas in Delhi. “People are being forced to live here at high prices without basic facilities,” said Mohammad Asif, Resident Welfare Association president of Abul Fazal Enclave’s A and D blocks.


There is a lack of basic amenities in such colonies, and the fear of bulldozers also sneaks around.

For now, the only thing they can do is fortress up. Iron gates have become the norm. “Today, people have to depend on these gates for security, which the police should have ideally provided,” said Asif Mujtaba, chairman of Shaheen Bagh-based NGO Miles2Smile, which works to empower people in need and was founded in the aftermath of the North East Delhi riots.

The iron gates at the ends of the streets are growing taller. Mujtaba agrees.

“These gates represent the failure of the State.”

(Edited by **Zoya Bhatti**)

Courtesy **The Print**, 24 February, 2023. 

# Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes | Demonetisation verdict: Six years later, farce after tragedy

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*In her dissent, Justice Nagarathna asks the right question: What was the Board of the RBI doing in all this?*

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**Pratap Bhanu Mehta**

Demonetisation was a shockingly cruel policy enacted under false pretences. It did not achieve any of its stated objectives: A cashless economy, a revenue bonanza for the government, cleaning the system of illicit money, or stopping terror finance. It inflicted needless suffering and made fools of citizens, who willingly acquiesced. But the tragedy was followed by an institutional farce. The Supreme Court evaded pronouncing on the legality of the measure for six years. Now it has, as was widely expected, upheld the legality of demonetisation in a 4-to-1 decision. But even farce can sometimes have lasting institutional consequences. In this instance, it will depend on whether we heed the warnings of the dissent.

Keep in mind one larger context. Independent institutions are meant to act as checks and balances on government. But it is a pipe dream to think that our understandings of what constitutes independent action, or the powers that we ascribe to these institutions, can be drawn independently of political judgment. Sometimes people who normally worry about the power given to independent institutions because they entrench technocratic and elite power at the expense of mass legitimation, will change their positions when faced with a government they don't like. Often our views on the powers of an institution are also not straightforwardly a matter of statutory interpretation as they are judgments of comparative trust. A lot of people put up with the collegium system, for instance, not because

of its statutory underpinnings. It is that, as a matter of prudence, they trust judges a bit more. Often the formal powers of an institution are no predictor of its willingness to act independently.

In the case of central banks, this challenge is even more acute. We should not pretend that currency decisions do not have a political dimension to them. In this case, the RBI Act was not designed for an unprecedented policy measure of this kind. It was designed for what might be called technical demonetisations, not the wholesale withdrawal of currency. So the debate over whether the RBI's power to demonetise "any" series implies "every" series has to be seen in this context. Section 26 of the RBI Act also envisages that any demonetisation must formally be initiated by the RBI itself; it cannot be at the direction of the government. This power makes sense for technical demonetisations. It may be disabling in cases like hyperinflation or a national exigency which the government has to manage. The current letter of the law, in this sense, is not totally adequate for the full range of exigencies that could arise. If it is read as giving the RBI the veto in all situations, it is giving it excess power. In this case, given the way the law is framed, there is no pure legal position that can completely reconcile the important values of the RBI's powers and democratic accountability.

Demonetisation, if it is to be carried out, has to be a sovereign decision. It cannot be an RBI decision. Nor is it clear that you ought

to, in principle, deprive the sovereign of this power. It is a different matter that it should not have been exercised in this instance. Nor is it clear, as the dissent suggests, that Parliament could have been involved in a currency decision of this kind; involving Parliament *ex ante* would make the decision impossible. Secrecy was necessary to this decision. The answer to the risk of executive impunity has to be Parliament. But in this case, *post facto* political and administrative accountability matters. Parliament has manifestly failed to exercise it.

The demonetisation decision pushed the boundaries of constitutionalism to the edge. It can be argued that the legality of the policy need not be entirely judged by its success; it is not unconstitutional to take horrendous policy decisions. But this does not mean that there is no scope for fixing some administrative responsibility. The importance of **Justice BV Nagarathna's powerful dissent** is not the conclusion. It is that it tries to affix administrative responsibility and does not let officials hide behind the smokescreen of statutory interpretations. The need for fixing this responsibility is even more if you happen to think that this is a sovereign decision. Her dissent asks the right question: What was the Board of the RBI doing in all this?

It is very clear from all accounts that the RBI Board was handed a *fait accompli* that it was in no position to apply its mind to and it abdicated all responsibility. We can debate whether the Board was in a position to resist signing the demonetisation resolution. Perhaps it felt that it was giving due deference to a democratically elected sovereign. For a moment, grant this. But even then, to not put on record its concerns and objections, to not ask for evidence for the government's decision, was an astonishing dereliction of duty. The value of her dissent is greater even if you don't agree with her final position on

the legality of the notification. Her dissent points to an obvious fact. If you want accountable institutions, the formal allocation of powers is not the only issue. What matters, ultimately, is the conduct of officers. Even if they could not stop a decision they could have held the government to account and their testimony could have been part of a retrospective chain of accountability.

The majority decision is egregious in this context. It is a disturbing decision not for upholding the legality of the notification. It is a disturbing decision because it does a total cover-up job. It takes the government's claims at face value (even the dissent gives the "intentions" of the government a clean chit) it refuses to force even retrospective transparency on the chain of reasoning that led to this decision, and it converts the RBI Board's dereliction into some kind of constitutional high principle, where it miraculously co-produces the decision with government. It licenses total administrative impunity.

Justice Nagarathna is astutely pointing out that things like consultation or application of mind can't be proforma exercises where the RBI Board simply ticks off a box by signing a resolution in a few minutes. Ironically, the shoddiness of the majority judgment's reasoning enacts the very thing Justice Nagarathna is pointing out: The real threat of our democracy is professionals, who are otherwise independent, not doing their professional duty. The lesson from this episode is that independence is never in the letter of the law, it is in the character and conduct of form in the vast chain of accountability in a democracy, from judges to officials, from parliamentarians to citizens.

The writer is contributing editor, **The Indian Express**.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, January 3, 2023. 

# Resist the Unbridled Emergency Unleashed by the Modi Regime

*Editorial | ML Update | Vol. 26, No. 11-12 (14-20 Mar 2023) | CPIML*

Having narrowly retained power in Tripura, the Modi government has launched an all-out offensive against the opposition by using the lethal combination of street power, propaganda and state power that has become the hallmark of this fascist regime. After relatively peaceful elections in Tripura, the Sangh brigade has unleashed a renewed reign of post-poll terror, vendetta and violence in the state, targeting opposition parties, their voters and even the fact-finding team of Left and Congress MPs and MLAs who were on a visit to the terror-stricken state. At the same time, to blunt the oppositional edge of the TIPRA Motha, the regional party which emerged in the elections as the leading non-BJP party in the state assembly, the Modi government has apparently agreed to appoint an interlocutor to find a 'constitutional solution' to the party's demands.

In Meghalaya, the BJP had fought the elections separately after denouncing the National People's Party-led government in the state of which it was a partner as being one of the most corrupt. Elections over, the BJP, which could win only two seats, has once again joined the same NPP to be part of the government. We have not forgotten the BJP's corruption charges against Himanta Biswa Sarma when he was the number two in the Congress government led by Tarun Gogoi. After Himanta Biswa Sarma was inducted into the BJP, Amit Shah, when confronted by the media about the corruption charges against him, refused to answer the question and brazenly told the press that such questions should not be asked! Today Himanta Biswa Sarma is not just the current BJP CM of Assam and chief of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance, he is the

spearhead of the Sangh brigade's fascist offensive in the North-East.

Joining the BJP has become the most rewarding insurance scheme for every leader accused of corruption and various other crimes. In fact, several BJP leaders openly boast about their immunity from investigation by any central agency. In Karnataka, pressure had to be mounted by Lokayukta employees to ensure a raid at the office of the son of a powerful BJP MLA which yielded Rs 6 crore cash. In Madhya Pradesh, the Lokayukta is being rendered defunct as the government does not give permission to frame charges in spite of investigations yielding enough evidence. While the BJP has thus become the surest sanctuary for the corrupt, the Modi government keeps hounding out the opposition with central agencies like ED and CBI which have now been totally weaponised by the regime to serve its political agenda. Almost all opposition parties, especially those in power, are at the receiving end of this brazen Modi regime campaign of vendetta and persecution.

Ahead of the 2024 elections, the Modi regime is particularly worried about the political realignment in Bihar. In 2015 when the BJP had to contest the Assembly elections without the support of Nitish Kumar's JDU, its tally had dipped to 53 seats. The regime then managed to break the JDU-RJD alliance by raking up corruption charges against the RJD leadership and the reunited BJP-JDU-LJP combine swept the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Bihar. With the JDU again joining the RJD-Left-Congress grand alliance in 2022, the BJP is working overtime to try and break the Bihar alliance. The three-pronged strategy aims at destabilising the

government, discrediting the alliance and engineering a pro-BJP political realignment by splitting parties and roping in new allies. Old cases have been reopened to target the entire family of Lalu Prasad Yadav. Even fake videos have been shot in Patna and made viral on social media to concoct a false narrative of Bihari workers being beaten up and killed in Tamil Nadu even as the ruling alliance in Bihar befriends the ruling party in Tamil Nadu.

The government uses the ED raids to create the spectacle of an anti-corruption crusade much like the November 2016 demonetisation which was projected as a war on black money. These raids are widely propagated and often while the ED does not make any official statement as to the actual outcome of a raid, a perception of corruption is created by the media with unverified claims of assets seized by citing unnamed 'sources'. According to the government's own admission in Parliament, of the 5422 cases of money-laundering taken up by the ED till 31 March 2022, chargesheets were filed only in 992 cases and only 23 accused

have been convicted. Clearly much of the ED exercise is aimed at manipulating public perception through propaganda, intimidating and discrediting political opponents and silencing critical voices in the media. It is also instructive to note that like most institutions and agencies, the ED too is being run by a hand-picked bureaucrat. The government amended the law in November 2021 to extend the two-year fixed tenure of ED and CBI chiefs to five years and then granted a record third extension in violation of the Supreme Court order to the current ED chief Sanjay Mishra.

It is no longer sufficient to describe the vindictive and repressive reign of the Modi government as an undeclared Emergency. It is an unbridled Emergency and if the people of India and the opposition cannot rein it in, we are heading towards a brazen display of dictatorial rule. In the 1970s, India had the wherewithal to get rid of the Emergency and move on. India in the 2020s must again generate and assert that democratic popular will to stop the growing fascist demolition of parliamentary democracy. 🌈

## PAY THE PRICE

Sarcasm, satire, comedy  
Are comic forms tested  
But try them on Big Bully  
And you can be arrested  
Big Bully rules supreme  
Its rating doesn't drop  
Even bullshit is selling  
Like bull in a china shop  
Small fish and big fry  
Of Big Bully are afraid  
Taking bull by the horn  
Means facing raid upon raid  
The right way to behave  
Is neither to laugh or look  
Like all the law-abiding  
Just obey amended book



Freedom of expression  
Can cause pain or fracture  
So keep quiet, sit at home  
Preserve your basic structure  
You enjoy total freedom  
Are free to say it's nice  
But if you try to act funny  
You'll have to pay the price!  
Just be part of progress  
Follow culture of the wise  
Admire all the Holy Cows  
And forget right to criticise.

**Raju Z. Moray**

Courtesy **The Leaflet**, 25 Feb 2023.

# Is Manusmriti Back With a Bang?

Subhash Gatade

## *How to walk backwards and claim we are a world leader How to walk backwards and claim we are a world leader.*

Classical literature may contain pearls of wisdom, but time has also turned some of it into a minefield of inaccuracies. The great dramatist Shakespeare can inspire but is also hauled up for alleged anti-Semitism. Even Gautam Buddha has been scrutinised for his controversial observations about women.

In recent weeks, a debate has raged about 17th-century poet-saint Tulsidas's epic poem Ramcharitmanas and its' allegedly unfair and humiliating treatment of women and so-called lower castes. Voices to edit such books and scriptures or scrap them have grown louder. Yet, the Banaras Hindu University, a premier central university in Uttar Pradesh, has proposed something that, instead of settling the controversy, muddies the waters more.

The university's Department of Dharmashastra and Mimamsa, whose curriculum already includes studying the Manusmriti among ancient Indian scriptures, has proposed researching the "applicability" of Manusmriti in Indian society. It plans to use the funds received under the Centre's Institutes of Eminence scheme, which provides research and development grants of up to Rs 1,000 crore each to ten select public-funded institutions.

The BHU's proposal seems anachronous—and not just because it involves spending money on an esoteric subject, while public universities face a severe fund crunch forcing them to cut down even on essential expenses.

Nearly a century ago, during the first Dalit revolt of its kind in modern times, Dr BR Ambedkar, the legendary leader of the oppressed, symbolically burnt the Manusmriti in a public programme held at Mahad. On 25

December 1927, at the Mahad Satyagraha, he said in the presence of thousands of people from different parts of the Bombay province, as it was then known, that the text was a "gospel of counter-revolution".

The resolution read out during the symbolic public "cremation" of the Manusmriti, proposed by Ambedkar's associate Gangadhar Neelkanth Sahasrabuddhe, emphasised the intent of the organisers of the conference. After considering the verses of the Manusmriti, it said, the conference had formed the "firm opinion" that it "undermined the Shudra caste, thwarted their progress, and made their social, political and economic slavery permanent". The resolution said the context of the text is unworthy of a religious or sacred book. That is why participants performed the "cremation" rites of the book at the conference. The resolution even described the book as "divisive" and a "destroyer of humanity". All these facts are recorded in public intellectual Anand Teltumbde's book, *Mahad: The Making of the First Dalit Revolt*, published by Navayana in 2017.

Nearly a quarter-century later, while dedicating the Constitution to the nation, Ambedkar, who headed its drafting committee, famously declared that the Constitution had "ended the rule by Manu".

However, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) never saw eye-to-eye with a modern Constitution for India. Their leaders made their objections to modernising Indian tradition clear as their fascination for the Manusmriti.

( To be Contd....on Page - 34 )

# Ravipudi Venkatadri –an inspiring leader who shook conservative thought

Dr. Gumma Veeranna



**Ravipudi Venkatadri**

Ravipudi Venkatadri was a role model and a rare philosopher recognized for his exemplary contributions to radical Humanism and his work in the areas of rationality in the Telugu states - Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. His genius is demonstrated when he independently posited, consolidated, and defined a comprehensive framework for a coherent theory of reason and Humanism. He inspired many people with his unmatched intellect and incisive insight and dedicated his life to the radical humanist movement.

He was a handsome man; his imposing height of six feet only adds to his majestic appeal. He was, however, a modest person and almost always wore clean traditional white Indian clothes. He appears as an innocent farmer with a cigar, but this persona of a simpleton is deceptive; it belies the curiosity and an

unquenchable thirst for knowledge, the ability to organize that made him an admirable leader of the rationalist renaissance. He lambasted the propagation of superstitions and blind beliefs in Telugu Literature for millennia. He ushered in a new era of rationalism by creating conclusive, incontrovertible rationalistic, humanistic, revolutionary literature; for which he will be remembered forever.

The poet extraordinaire Tripuraneni Ramaswamy was credited with introducing atheism in the annals of Telugu literature. He heralded a pioneering path that integrated the motifs of reason, atheism, and Humanism in his writings. Venkatadri was profoundly influenced by Ramaswamy's ideas and thoughts, stood as an exemplar in that path, and reached the pinnacle of success. Venkatadri, in his childhood, was a staunch devotee of Rama. The pivotal moment of his life occurred while in tenth grade and reading "Shambhuka Vadha," a short play written by Ramaswamy. Awed by logic and moved by rationale and deep insights, his moral and ethical stance decisively moved the needle from religious thought and led him to atheism.

He attended the study camps conducted by M.N.Roy in 1946 and 1949 at Dehradun and Mussoorie, respectively. With the influence of Roy's ideology, Venkatadri became a staunch radical humanist.

He unsuccessfully contested Madras Legislative Assembly from the Ongole-Bapatla constituency during the 1946 general elections on behalf of the Radical Democratic Party.

He was a voracious reader who studied innumerable books, including Vedas, Darshanas, smritis, Puranas, Ramayana, Bharata, Bhagavatam, etc. At the same time, his deep study and understanding of modern scientific theories helped him grasp complex ideas of Science and philosophy. He began writing various analyses and articles in 1946 and continued till 2022; his prolific writing spanned 75 years and resulted in the publishing of over 100 books covering the many facets of Humanism.

Unequivocally, Venkatadri was a humanist thought leader! He has a unique ability to synthesize information from different fields, comprehend disjointed narratives, and abstract the essential laws of Science. He masterfully applies these ideas and develops fact-based proposals, suggestions, and approaches to Humanism.

He was a gifted linguist and a multi-faceted writer as well. He can narrate complex concepts lucidly. His writing encompasses critical essays, expositions, and polemics that extensively cover Vedas, Darshanas (Indian Philosophy), Smritis, Puranas, and Etihhasas. He tends to wear different hats – if we read his articles about the problems of society, we would consider him a sociologist; if we read his political writings, he will appear as a political analyst; and if we read his opinion on the arts, we see shall regard him as a connoisseur of fine art!

He was also a celebrated orator. He is reputed to deliver sublimely eloquent speeches. Some people compare his oratory to the much-vaunted Ingersoll. He articulates many complex topics in a compelling, coherent manner that even a layman can understand. The depth of his study allows him to answer many questions and provides incontrovertible evidence. In moments of heated debates, should someone act out of line or provoke him, he counters the opponent with flawless reason, commentary, and inimitable rhetoric.

Before 1977, a comprehensive and

philosophically grounded explanation of rationalism and atheism was scantily available in Telugu. The ideas at that time discerned no significant difference between the two. They were often used synonymously for all intents and purposes. Even now, a few people who call themselves atheists think of a very restrained definition of the word. They confine their activism to denying the existence of God and the religion, resist and oppose discrimination based on castes, rebuke and rebut blind beliefs and superstition, debunk the so-called miracles of babas, swamis, self-anointed gurus, and expose religious exploitation. However, there were neither texts nor experts to explain or clarify the scientific foundation necessary to explain that such parochial thinking is purposeful enough to improve the human condition. There was ambiguity and effectiveness of purpose in the atheist circles, and the rationalist movement became less potent.

In this context, Venkatadri has persevered to write and provide clarity through his books such as “What is atheism in such a context?”, “What is rationalism? What are its philosophical foundations?” and many others. At his absolute best thesis - he propounded that Humanism is the goal of rationalism and rationalism is the basis for atheism. Still, the differences in ideologies prevailed between different activist groups. Communists who advocated economic determinism and thought the class struggle was the solution to all society’s problems criticized the humanism approach. They tried to impose restrictions on Venkatadri, that he should not write or give lectures critical of Marxism. But they could neither respond nor give satisfactory answers to the retorts and challenges raised by Venkatadri – such is his conviction!

He started a monthly magazine called “Hetuvadi” in September 1982, intending to spread the rationalist and humanist movement. Venkatadri has been editing this journal uninterruptedly for the past 40 years. Venkatadri’s language, narration, sense, and

style are unique and distinctive. Clarity is the main characteristic of his writings. Peddling in ambiguity and mysticism is not his cup of tea. His pen has no sympathy while condemning wrong concepts. In such cases, he uses harsh words, but his criticism will be limited to the issue or subject area and will never resort to *ad hominem*.

He dedicated his entire life to the rational humanist movement. Any change in society presupposes a change in the ideas of the people. Mainly the change should be in their attitude - thinking, feelings, and emotions. There should be a change in people's philosophical understanding and thought processes. This is called a 'revolution in ideas.' This is the movement Venkatadri dreamt of, and he wrote over 100 books to ignite the revolution. In the past, there was no such revolutionary literature in Telugu. His literature is unprecedented, incredible, and a shining light to future generations!

The services rendered by Ravipudi Venkatadri to the rationalist and humanist

movement are unmatched and selfless. He never desired money, power, or popularity. Born on 9th February 1922 in Nagandla village of Inkollu Mandal, Ravipudi Venkatadri lived a fruitful life of 101 years and passed away on 21st January 2023. Although he is not with us physically, his progressive ideas are with us through his books.

In our country, when democracy is slowly turning to fascistic autocracy, the progressives and liberals have a great responsibility to educate people across all sections of society and fight for the principles of Humanism. Fulfilling that duty shall be a tremendous tribute to the ideal he lived for!

**Dr. Gumma Veeranna** is President, A P. Rationalist Association. He received his Ph.D degree from Potti Sriramulu Telugu University in 2016 after researching his work titled "Ravipudi Venkatadri's Works- Hetuvada Manava Vadalu." The university honored this thesis by awarding the gold medal. The credit and honor go to the rationalist humanist movement. 🌈

## Is Manusmriti Back With a Bang?

Contd. from page - (31)

In the late sixties, Maharashtra witnessed a massive movement of Dalits and other democratic sections to protest the RSS supremo's comments praising the Manusmriti in an interview with the Marathi newspaper, *Nava Kaal*.

Yet last year, Justice Pratibha Singh of the Delhi High Court spoke of the Manusmriti in glowing terms at a programme held under the auspices of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry or FICCI. She said scriptures like Manusmriti give women "a very respectable position", a remark that created a furore, earning her much criticism for promoting regressive ideas filled with "casteism and classism".

To think that academics at the Banaras Hindu University are unaware of the stormy history of this book and its disparaging comments about women and non-elite castes would be the height of incredulity. Undoubtedly, the department seems deliberately bent on delegitimising all the struggles and yearnings for change in Indian society. That desire for change has refused to die, but the university and like-minded institutions and public figures are keen to provide new legitimacy to the right-wing and regressive forces who want to package this "gospel of counter-revolution", whether people like it or not.

**The author is an independent journalist. The views are personal.**

Courtesy **Newsclick**, 12 Mar 2023. 🌈

# Brief report of Gujarat Humanist-Rationalist seminar organized on 28-29 January 2023 at Godhra city in Gujarat

Bipin Shroff



**Godhra Conference Photo**

Brief report of Gujarat Humanist- Rationalist seminar organized on 28-29 January 2023 at Godhra city in Gujarat.

The seminar was jointly organized by the Humanist- Rationalist Society of Godhra& Gujarat-Mumbai Rationalist Association. More than 125 delegates attended & participated in the seminar. They represented by & large all districts of Gujarat. There were substantial representation of women delegates in the seminar also.

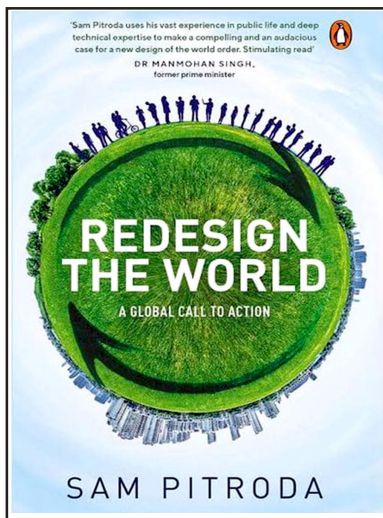
The first and for most attraction of the seminar was on line webinar on latest technological innovation namely Hyper connectivity. Well-known technocrat Sam Pitroda from Chicago (USA), webinar moderator Bipin Shroff(Parikh) from Atlanta (USA) delivered his speech online. Sam explained how hyper connectivity has the path breaking & revolutionary importance in the modern world. Sam Pitroda discussed in details how this latest digital media innovation going to radicalize the modern structure of society not



**Audience at the Godhra Conference**

only from TOP to BOTTOM but also from BOTTOM UP. Because it has tremendous potentialities to empower the man in the street. There will be an abolition of concentration of economic and political power in the hands of few in near future with the help of hyper connectivity with its large scale applications.

It connects people of seven continents without any restrictions from the nation states. It promotes knowledge based society in all walks of life. It has in -built force in widening and deepening of democratic political, economic and social order which might be however looking gloomy in present day state of affairs.



S. Pitroda with a heavy heart, explained to the learned audience of seminar that, kindly do not forget that the earth has survived it-self without Homo sapiens for billions of years. We as the probable last descended natives of the mother earth require its existence without any reservations. I know well that latest equipment of hyper connectivity like Pegasus spywares & latest surveillance system control or restrict and misused human freedom and expression. But it is not going to survive for a longer period; because of the vast diffused in built energy in HC. It has enough strengths to redesign the modern unequal world.

Delegates asked questions related to his thought provoking speech. Organizer of the seminar Dr. Sujat Vali, the President of Gujarat Mumbai Rationalist Association conived his sincerethanks to S Pitroda for rendering his valuable time (mid night in Chicago)& talent for making the event the grand success.

Following topics were discussed in two days seminar. (1) Charles Darwin's concept of evolution Speaker- Dr. Sujatvali- President Gujarat Mumbai Rationalist society & host of the seminar Godhra & Prof Surkant Shah- editor of monthly Stayanveshan सत्यानवेशन Surat. (2) Basic Tenets of Rationalism- Prof –Hemant Shah & Manishi Jani. Social Activist Both from

Ahmedabad (3) Challenges & Solution for Gujarat Rationalist movement- Dr. Jagdish Barot- Environmentalist, Canada & Dunkesh Oza- Social Activist, Gandhinagar. (4) Scientific Approach- Ramesh Savani- Retd-IGP Gujarat. Ahmedabad. (5) Rationalist Thoughts of Shahide Azam Bhgat Sing. शहीदेआजम शहीद भगत सिंह - Vikram Sur- Secretary-Humanist Youth form Palanpur College. & Sidhharth Degami, President Satya Shodak Shabha, अध्यक्ष सत्य शोधक सभा Surat (6) Paternalistic Society पितृसत्ताक समाज- as the agent of spreading Superstition & Blind faith in society- Trupti Sheth- Activist Baroda, Jagruti Thakkar- Advocate- Ahmedabad. Jagu Patel- Baroda & Dr. Shusma Aiyer Surat.

Special Attention- Delegates enjoyed with rapt attention small films related to (a) Big bang Theory, & How life begun & Evolution of Homosapiens with the help of Godhra Humanist Rationalist Society members.

Report prepared by Bipin Shroff (Parikh).

The second Article-Action plan cum workshop after the Godhra Seminar.

(1) On 11th February concerned and key people of the Godhra Seminar met at Ahmedabad. They want to prepare the action plan on the basis of Godhra's Seminar. The nature of gathering was informal, meaningful but the result orientated. The spirit rather echo of Godhra's delegates was

so strong that some 140 people registered & came there within a short notice. Here are the outcome of Ahmedabad workshop.

(2) The spoke person of this workshop was young intellectually energetic lady Jagu Patel from Baroda.

By giving her own example she narrated how she got rid of religious and superstitious rituals of her in laws family as well as of her paternal family. She explained in details the existing paternalistic social order and its fetters which encircled each and every not only macro but micro behavior of the female members of their families. To her mind, the education and economic independence are the two dynamic means for the liberation of Indian women.

(3) Manishi Jani- (The think tank of Godhra Seminar & the present workshop plus active living legend of the of 1974 Navnirman movement of Gujarat) He explained in details how the lack of the habit of scientific temper, and not asking questions make our personality timid, slave & fatalistic. The scientific approach or temper does not mean to know basic laws of physics and chemistry. It presupposes everyday decision making of us on the basis of reason and rationality then on blind faith or superstitions. It is not easy to break the viscous circle of Indian religious mode of thought. Our so called scientists are also the victims of this thought. Indian religious mode of thought is the fertile mentality of vote catching for the politicians of all political parties. It also perpetuates the existing hindu social unequal, unhuman and exploitative order based on centuries old Manu Smruti and Varna Vyavstha.

The scientific temper makes the man kind, tolerant, human and open minded. The history of the mankind is full of incidences where those who tried to challenge the existing religious beliefs were tortured & burn at stake. 21st century requires the man centre social order not vice versa. The philosophy of humanism is well geared in that direction by spreading its basic values of freedom, rationality and secular morality. My

enemies, so the enemies of total mankind are torture and terror of the man against the man. My humble submission is that spread the spirit of scientific temper to make the man human not fanatic religious man.

(4) Ramesh Savani- Retd- IGP Gujarat.

Encourage and respect Humanist-Rationalist leaders as roll model of our movement. Their magnetic personality and mode of their living will be a real source of example for the young generations. Their practiced human values in their daily life's are the only beacon of hope for others to follow. Today it is not easy for such humanists and rationalists to survive in a wide spread intolerant atmosphere supported by those who are in power. Our movement has lost its four highly valuable leaders namely Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare from Maharashtra state and Prof Kulburgi and Gauri Lankesh from Karnataka state. It is really very difficult to continue our movement in such an atmosphere. But still the torch of the human values and the scientific spirit are protected by these martyrs. They are the hopes of the mankind.

(5) Dr. Jitendra Sing Raol- There are four human factors, namely empathy/attention/affection and kindness or care. They make the man human and social. They are the stepping stones for the progress of the civilization.

(6) Kiran Trivedi- Ex-President of Gujarat Mumbai Rationalist Association and mentor of ApnaAdda Face book.-

Rationalism is a way or the method to think objectively. It is based on scientific knowledge and self-perception. Its approach is materialistic but not metaphysical. It supports enlighten self-interest (Human morality) not one's bare selfishness. Its human relations are based on secular outlook which means he considers all human being as the same. His human relations are based without any discrimination of caste, creed, color, nation and religious bias. There is no discrepancy between his thought and actions. His actions based on his rational commitments

are transparent and genuinely predictable in given situation. His life is the mission itself. He lives and die for it. This is my view of the rationalist.

(7) Utapal Yagnik- (You Tube blogger-named beyond belief from Australia –participated as the valuable enlighten comrade& well-wisher.)

Why there is no wide spread diffusion of rational thought in our Hindu society in particular and all religious dominated societies in general? Religious thoughts are transferred by the elders of the families to their offspring's from the inception or their births. They are taught to worship and follow values of religious heroes and heroines. It is very difficult to develop critical attitude in such a religious mode of thought.

(8) Prof- Hemant Kumar (Gujarat University & activist)

The man has survived his biological struggle of existence because of his rational faculties not because his religious faith or beliefs. The man is the creator of certain very important institutions like the state, market, society, religion and family. Now all these five institutions are using the man and his all potentalities to serve their interest. They have used the humans as their means to serve their own wasted interests. The man is fettered by these institutions. The faith in nation is not at the cost of man's faith in himself. Our modern civilizational crisis is not only of India but for the whole of the mankind is to restore the central place of the man in civilization. This is the new humanism in 21st century. Let us strive for the complete separation between the state and religion.

.Pratibha Thakkar- Advocate Gujarat High court. Eradication of the darkness of all types in the mankind is my mission. So there is no purpose to light a lamp in the temple. This is my base of rationalism. It is very difficult to expect large numbers of women participation in such meet. Our gender is still engaged in many serious and important liabilities at home. It does not mean that they are not rational. They do take many rational decisions in their day to day life.

(9) Bhupendra Sing Raol-

The root cause of our all types of backwardness is the age old four varna based social organization. It is supported by all our age old religious scriptures. It has killed the very spirit of change and development individually as well as socially. It has survived and promoted parasite social, political and economic institutions since time immemorial. The basic urge to revolt against non- human exploitative conditions are non-existence. Blind faith and superstitions of higher varnas like Brahmins are percolated from top to bottom lower social varnas. All men are biologically same and equal, such objective facts are not ready to believe by large numbers of Indians and particularly Hindus. The present existing political order makes tall-high promises to perpetuate this mentality with use of the state machinery.

Last not but least how can we forget the team of people like Jagu Patel, Sonu Solanki, Trusar Basia, Vivek Desai, Lankesh Chakravati, Milan Thakkar, Deval Desai and Shoeb Mishra, etc in making this event the grand success. 🌈

**On February 17, 1600, Giordano Bruno, the Italian philosopher, occultist, and mathematician, was burnt at the stake on charges of heresy and blasphemy. Many of his teachings anticipated modern science. Bruno was among the earliest astronomers and mathematicians who spoke of the multiplicity of worlds and defined the universe as infinite. Giordano Bruno was born in 1548 at Nola near Naples.**

**Sent by Venugopal Psychologist**

*Violence is not the answer to violence:*

# THE PATH OF GANDHI

*A Rationalist Appraisal of Contributions of Gandhi*

*By Koganti Radha Krishna Murty*

(Translated from Telugu by Jawaharlal Jasthi)

Continued from the previous issue....

## INTRODUCTION

By the Author

I was young in those days and had no idea of politics. The late Unnava Lakshminarayana Pantulu was one of the respected sincere social reformers among the followers of Gandhi. Instead of paying lip sympathy, he was active in eradication of untouchability. He was a Brahmin. In almost all the villages, the untouchable people live away from the main part of the village. The people in the village belong to the upper castes and do not touch anything touched by the untouchables. The practice reaches ridiculous levels in practice and revolting if you happen to see it unless you are accustomed to it.

One day the respected reformer happened to visit our own village as part of his campaign to oppose untouchability and to enlighten the people of our village. That was what he was doing with all the villages. There were some people in the village who were against untouchability practice and followed him to the dwellings of untouchables. I too followed them as a matter of curiosity. Being too young I could not claim I know what it was they wanted to do there. But there was an inner feeling that there was something wrong in the practice of separating some people as untouchables. But I was not conscious of it then. It might have encouraged me to follow them. The program was to take water and milk from the hands of the untouchables. They pulled up water from their well and offered it to all the visitors who washed their faces and hands with

that water and also drank the same. I too did the same along with them. They gave milk to all of us and we drank the same without any hesitation. The entire group spent some time with those people and then returned to the village. Majority in the village were against it and were fuming with rage.

When I went to my house, my people did not allow me to enter. I was in a mood of ecstasy for having done something special along with elders on that day. But my people were angry with me for that. They consented that I can be allowed to enter after I am purified by a Brahmin priest. I refused as I was not impure in any way. I was excommunicated. I was furious and refused to enter the house. How I spent those days I do not remember. But after some days I was called to the house. I lost my parents in my childhood and so they might have taken pity on me and overlooked it as a childish act.

My grandfather told me that the Mahatma lost his title. I could not understand what it means. He said that Gandhi killed a calf and so he is no more a Mahatma. I could not believe it. But I did not pick up any argument as I was already in disfavor.

In my student days I had an opportunity to see Gandhi in person from a distance, standing among the sea of people who came from far off places to have a look at him. Beyond that I had no idea of Gandhi at that time. After that I was

an active member of the Congress party for some time but never a prominent member. I thought of becoming a member of the State Committee later. But the local leaders discouraged me and I dropped out.

I was a student in college when M.N.Roy visited Guntur in 1937. Then I attended all the meetings addressed by him at that time. I was so impressed that I became his follower since then. I was a founding member when he established the Radical Democratic Party in 1942. Since then my life was absorbed in those activities. I contested general elections also in the name of that party and lost as expected. The contest was only symbolic as there was a big wave in favour of the Congress party. Later in 1948, M.N.Roy dissolved the party to pursue partyless politics and named the movement as New Humanism. I continued my association with the movement from the beginning. I am associated with the movement as a writer and editor of the journal.

It was a big shock for me when I heard that Gandhi was assassinated in Delhi on 30th January, 1948. A condolence meeting was arranged in our village and I was asked to preside over it. I took the opportunity to express my feelings by paying a hearty tribute to Gandhi. As I was attracted by the New Humanism of Roy I had less regard for Gandhi as a political leader. But it was not in my nature to underestimate any person or party just because I happen to differ from them. I know in the course of human evolution there was no theory which was perfect. Keeping in view the situation prevailing in the country at that time we have to estimate the good and bad of any activity. Gandhi was no doubt a popular leader and myself being active in politics, I had to acquire some knowledge of what Gandhi was saying and doing.

Under the Humanist movement we used to conduct some classes in villages to enlighten people about the political problems facing the country. That was the activity prescribed by the movement of New Humanism. A political class was arranged in the neighboring village of

Karamchedu and I was asked to explain Gandhi to the people. As it was a special occasion I felt it necessary to make a special study of Gandhi before I speak about him. By making a special study I had to agree that I was able to appreciate Gandhi and his activities better. Then I compared him to Abhimanyu who entered the Padmavyuha to fight with the stalwarts. Gandhi also took a similar challenge in demanding the British Empire to quit India. Even then, I was having a feeling that there was something impracticable in his theory and in the way he conducted the movement on various occasions.

Now, this work on Gandhi is an accident. One of my close friends Mr. Suryadevara Hanumantha Rao provoked me to write a book on Gandhi as there was no independent work on the subject in Telugu. In view of my lecture he felt that my view will help the readers to understand Gandhi and his place in the freedom movement without any bias. Having provoked me, my friend started to collect the literature on Gandhi and supplied it to me to help in my effort. I felt it my duty to ensure that I myself know what Gandhi said and did before writing the book. I made a sincere attempt to go through the literature available and also to refer to the press reports on the activities of Gandhi while he was alive. I felt really enlightened by the effort. Gandhi that looked funny in his *Hind Swarajya*, carried heavy weight when I read his autobiography. I could not understand why he gives so much importance to silly things in his search for Truth. When you dig into a mine all the stones that you come across will not be diamonds. So is the case in regard to search for Truth, I felt.

There are gems of thought in his theory like – passive resistance, individual freedom, democracy, decentralization and village self-rule. Similarly, there are other things that hold your attention but not of much worth like – nature cure, celibacy, vocation based on castes, worship and meditation etc., Just like God, the religion taught by Gandhi also is beyond our reach.


The literature that I have gone through and the other sources are listed at the end of the book as bibliography. I am thankful to all those authors and publishers as they helped me in enlightening myself. When I started work on this book I thought it would be something beyond my capacity. But the literature I was able to read gave me courage and confidence and in fact encouraged me to write the book.

Thirty years after his death, there are many

people who think that the deterioration in the situation of the country is only because the teachings of Gandhi were ignored. In that context, I felt a book on Gandhi is relevant and also needed. I leave it to the enlightened readers to determine its validity and truthfulness.

**Koganti Radhakrishna Murty**

Tenali, April 1980

*Continued in the next issue...* 

## Readers' Comments

**Raju Z Moray** practices law in Mumbai. For more than 20 years he has been a contributor of articles and poems to publications of the Lawyers Collective. An anthology of his humorous writing for 'The Lawyers' magazine was published in 2017 as 'Court Jester' and the series of 60 poems he penned during the 2020 Lockdown for 'The Leaflet' has been published in December 2020 as 'The Locked Down Lawyer'

Dear Shri Mahi Pal Singh,

Thank you very much for publishing my article 'Distortions of Truth' in the RH, March.23.

I felt very glad to see your photo paying respects at the graves of M.N. Roy and Ellen Roy in the compound of their residence in 13 Mohini road Dehradun.

Incidentally I am anxious to know the status present position of the case regarding repossession of No.13 Mohini Road. Kindly let me know.

Regards,  
**P.A.S. Prasad**

The Editor,  
The Radical Humanist,  
New Delhi.

**Sub: New BBC documentary puts Narendra Modi ....p.6, RH. March 2023**

Sir,

With reference to the above I have to submit that I was sitting on a Dharna at University of Delhi when the news about the attack on the burning of passengers returning home from Ayodhya came. It was a great shock. If Muslims returning home from Hajj would have been burnt alive in the same manner in a Muslim majority Country then all Minority population living there would have been erased. Their Book authorises them to do so. But you turned a blind eye to this.

Gujarat Riots of 2002 were triggered by Godhra incident but you are not interested in probing the reasons of the riots. You only need a new chance to lambast the Modi government of 2002. You are driven by a desire to berate Modiji because 2024 is around.

You will never talk about the misdeeds of Atalbihari who exhorted Modi to observe “Rajdharm”. Did Atalji observe Rajdharm when an Indian Airlines plane was hijacked? Did he observe his own Rajdharm when a map of Kashmir published in SPAN magazine of US embassy in Delhi showed a large part of Kashmir as part of Pakistan and the rest as disputed territory? I went to his residence at Windsor Place, New Delhi and handed over the magazine to him. I explained the map to him and requested him to raise a question about it in the Lok Sabha. He was one of the two MPs of BJP at that time. I used to spread carpets at his rallies in Ram Lila ground, Delhi when I was about 17 years old. I had a right to request him to raise a question because SPAN was published by the US embassy in Delhi. I don’t know whether he raised the question or not but the same map was published in TIME magazine in 2003. Atalji was the Prime Minister then. I went to the office of TIME on Sansad Marg and lodged a Memorandum pointing out that the map was wrong and should be rectified. TIME didn’t stop publishing it. I went to Rashtrapati Bhavan and lodged a Memorandum pointing out that the map challenged the territorial integrity of India and should be stopped immediately from circulation.

I received a reply from Rashtrapati Bhavan saying that my Memorandum had been forwarded to the Home Ministry. Advaniji, the strongman of India, was the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of India. What kind of a strong man was he who could not stop the circulation of a magazine which challenged the territorial integrity of India? The same map was used in JNU to incite students to disorderly behaviour recently by Tukde Tukde gang.

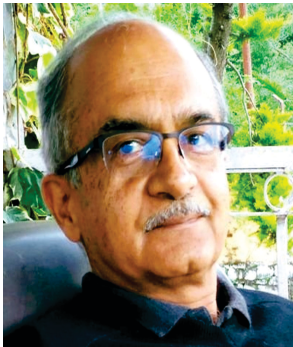
Your article on BBC documentary is malafide like the BBC documentary itself.

I am sure you won’t publish it in your Reader’s column. It may offend your readers.

Regards,  
**Amrit Lal Rawal,**  
New Delhi

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*Editor’s Reply: Mr. Amrit Lal Rawal has given his opinion on the BBC documentary on the Godhra incident and the riots that followed. In the first part of his mail, he talks about an imaginary situation about what would have happened if ... whereas the BBC documentary is about what did really happen at Godhra in 2002. However, he is free to hold his own divergent views like all other Modi bhakts. We do not subscribe to that view. We are also not here to spread the views of communalists either. However, unlike the Modi bhakts and the Modi government, which banned the BBC documentary through its gag order, we believe in the freedom of speech and the right to hold any views, and against the firm belief of Mr. Rawal that we would not publish his views in the RH, we are publishing them here without cutting a single word because we are no cowards like them who do not tolerate divergent and critical views.*



**The cost of one unit of electricity bought by Gujarat Govt from Adani Power increased from ₹2.83 in Jan 2021 to ₹8.83 per unit in Dec 2022. Modi's Gujarat model!**

Prashant Bhushan  
@pbhushan1

indianexpress.com

Home Explained Political Pulse India Cities Opinion Entertainment

Between 2021 and 2022, the average cost of electricity bought from Adani Power went up 102 per cent from Rs 3.58 per unit to Rs 7.24 per unit in 2022, data tabled as a part of the reply reveal.

Despite the increase in cost of power purchased from Adani Power, the government bought 7.5 per cent more power from the company in 2022, compared to calendar year 2021. During the two-year period, the Gujarat government increased the quantum of power bought from the company to 6,007 million units in 2022, from 5,587 million units a year earlier.

**‘Selections from  
The Radical Humanist, Volume I  
and II’ reach still larger number  
of readers worldwide.**

**As reported by [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu):**

**‘The Radical Humanist Volume I’** was your top paper last week - 1,632 Views as reported on 22.11.2022

**‘Selections from The Radical Humanist Vol. II’** was your top paper last week - 3,366 Views as reported on 14.3.2023

‘You have 442 highly engaged readers till 10.9.2022.  
A total of 1,613 people have read your papers on Academia.’

The two volumes have been read in  
**248 cities in India and 556 foreign cities.**

**A Journey from Marxism to Radical Humanism** was  
your top paper last week - 71  
Views as reported on 14.2.2023.

**Note: Along with these two volumes of ‘Selections from  
The Radical Humanist’, all the four volumes of  
‘Selected Works of M.N. Roy’ and all his major books  
are also available at [www.lohiatoday.com](http://www.lohiatoday.com).**