

**May 13, 2002. New York Times. Somini Sengupta.  
Hindu Nationalists Are Enrolling, and Enlisting, India's Poor**

MANDOLI, India — Just beyond the bustle of this nation's capital, in a sprawling compound of grassy fields and peepal trees, is a microcosm of some of India's most destitute: children from pockets of poor, indigenous communities scattered far in the hinterlands.

There is the illiterate farmer's son from the hill tribes of Assam in the northeast. There is the teenager with the bright probing eyes from Jharkhand, one of the poorest corners of the country. There is a boy, orphaned since the age of 5, who is housed, fed and schooled here just outside New Delhi, the capital, free of charge.

The nearly 300 boys here at the Sewa Dham school, most of them from what are called the tribal belts of central and northeastern India, hew to a rigorous daily schedule from 5 in the morning until 10 at night. They learn Hindu chants in the ancient language, Sanskrit. They are taught to give up their meat-eating ways and to become vegetarians. They are regaled with tales of brave Hindu warriors and saints and quizzed on the ravages of the Muslim emperor, Babur.

Patriotic to some, frightening to others, this school represents a central project of the increasingly militant and powerful Hindu right in this country. It is substantially bankrolled by Indians in the United States and run by a charity affiliated with the oldest and most prominent of the Hindu nationalist groups, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or the National Voluntary Service, known as the R.S.S.

The Hindu nationalist movement, once banned and reviled for its connections to the man who killed Gandhi, is ascendant once again. Founded in 1925 by men who made no secret of their admiration for German and Italian fascists, the National Voluntary Service is the movement's parent organization.

The Hindu nationalist network's political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party, leads the coalition government in New Delhi. The prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was once a full-time worker for the voluntary service.

Education is a centerpiece of the Hindu revivalist campaign, which is natural, considering its cause: to build a Hindu nation out of what is officially a secular country with rights accorded to religious minorities.

Its backers praise their efforts as a lift for the society's most downtrodden. But critics describe schools like this one as madrasas of the Hindu right: they pluck the youngest and most impressionable minds and offer a basket of goods to those who otherwise have nothing. While there is no evidence that these schools prepare young boys to take up arms for a holy war, as some madrasas do in Islamic nations, certainly, schools like this one can train foot soldiers for the Hindu nationalist crusade.

"They really look at their work as groundwork that will pay off in centuries," said Christophe Jaffrelot, a Paris University professor whose book "The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India" (Columbia University Press, 1996) is widely regarded as the authoritative study of these groups.

"The R.S.S. is itself an educational movement," he said. "They want to shape and reshape the mind. That's why they want to attract really young people."

The school is part of a network of social service organizations that cater to indigenous people and "dalits," or those on the lowest rungs of the Hindu caste ladder — the very people organizations like the voluntary service has been losing to Christian missionaries for decades. Across remote villages, it dispatches so-called barefoot doctors armed with first-aid kits and drugs to combat dysentery. It sets up orphanages for the abandoned and hostels for children who must travel long distances to go to school.

Vidya Bharati, an educational charity that is a part of the Hindu nationalist family, now runs 20,000 low-cost private schools serving 2.4 million children across the country. The charity's schools have mushroomed recently, with over 1,000 new schools added every year in the last decade.

Perhaps most notably, with a sympathetic government, Hindu nationalist groups have mounted an ambitious effort to revise the national educational curriculum, replacing history textbooks that it finds unsatisfactory with a canon of its own. Citizens' groups have gone to court to block the introduction of the new curriculum, and the matter now rests with the Indian Supreme Court. Courses in astrology and "Vedic mathematics," ostensibly based on the ancient Hindu Vedic texts, are now taught at the university level.

The Hindu nationalists' larger mission is summed up this way in a required textbook for book 12th grade students at Sewa Dham. "Unfortunately, in the religious land of India, there is no provision for religious or cultural education," it reads in Hindi, the medium of instruction at most of these schools. "That is part of the reason behind the current chaos in the nation. Today, revolutionary changes are being talked about in the Indian educational system. Religion, culture and nationalism are to be given prominence."

The schools are run by committed foot soldiers of the voluntary service who bring to their work nothing short of the missionary's zeal. Indeed, it was to fight the Christian missionaries in the tribal belt that Rajinder Singh Negi, an upper-caste Hindu from the northeastern province of Uttaranchal and an energetic, affable teacher at Sewa Dham, chose his vocation. "Teachers control the mind," he said simply.

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Portraits of Hindu heroes hang on the walls of the school complex. There is the 18th-century king, Shivaji, revered for having beat back Muslim rulers in Maharashtra. There is Keshav Baliram Hegdewar, the founder of the voluntary service, his picture frequently garlanded with a string of fresh marigolds. There is a panoply of ancient Hindu saints and scholars credited with a host of scientific achievements.

"Which proves," Mr. Negi, pointed out, "that Indian culture was far more advanced than Western culture."

The Hindu right's version of Indian history is far from conventional. It holds that world civilization emerged from India. Aryans were not foreigners from the West, the view widely held by ancient historians, but India's native people. Muslims were invaders who quashed Hindu traditions.

According to a "cultural knowledge" textbook produced by the group's education wing, Lord Ram, the blue-skinned warrior-king of Hindu lore, lived 886,000 years ago, a conclusion based on "ancient texts and astrology." Ram is described as "the source of inspiration for Indian culture." The Hindu golden era, they believe, dates back to the time of the Indus Valley civilization of the third millennium B.C.

But it is not only the ancient past that concerns them. A quiz written for eighth graders tests their knowledge of the continuing campaign to build a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, the mythical birthplace of Ram, where Hindu militants razed a 16th-century mosque in 1992. Students are grilled on everything from the date on which the temple reconstruction movement began to the names of those killed by the police.

The cultural knowledge textbook also includes a pitch to buy Indian goods and avoid foreign products. Indian soap (Neem brand, for instance) is endorsed; foreign soap (Palmolive) is to be boycotted. The same goes for soda, ice cream, milk powder, jeans, cosmetics, biscuits and more.

In addition to such cultural knowledge, the boys are taught the standard Indian curriculum as well as yoga and exercises. Television is restricted, and on a recent afternoon, having just taken exams, dozens of boys huddled around a television set watching a body-building competition. Judging from the grades posted in the principal's office, Sewa Dham's students do well on state exams.

The principal's office also displays a map labeled "worldwide patronage." There are congratulatory missives from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America — the expatriate branch of the World Hindu Council — as well as from the Arya Samaj of Bergen County and the Hindu Society of Ottawa. On one recent day a check for \$2,340 arrived from a Hindu temple in the Catskills. Another \$3,500 came from Australia.

Donations of this size can go a long way here. The Sewa Dham school has an annual budget of 5.4 million rupees, or \$113,000; about half comes from overseas, school officials said. Suresh Joshi, the national coordinator for the education wing of the voluntary service, said that all told, it spent about 50 million rupees, \$1.04 million, a year on its charitable projects, most of it focused on tribal peoples and dalits. The voluntary service is active in 30,000 villages nationwide, Mr. Joshi said.

The group believes that all indigenous people, many of whom practice animism, are really Hindus, whether or not they realize it. Exposure to Hindu culture and history, the group hopes, will persuade those people to return to the fold.

"We believe all the tribals in India, they are originally Hindu only," Mr. Joshi said. "Slowly they will feel like this. Then they will say themselves, 'We are also Hindus.'"

The common Hindi word for the indigenous people "adivasi," or people of the soil, is shunned by the Hindu right, for it suggests that they predate Hindu civilization. The voluntary service prefers to call them "vanvasi," or people of the forest.

Focus on the indigenous people seems to have paid off in at least one corner of Gujarat. There, only a couple of years ago, Hindu nationalists clashed with indigenous people over conversions to Christianity. During the recent Hindu-Muslim violence in that state, some tribal groups went on a rampage against Muslims.

Voluntary service recruiters select the best and brightest to enroll in schools like this one, with the goal that they will return to their communities armed with an education as well as a message.

In one Sewa Dham textbook, a section entitled "Our Goal" reads: "To develop a national educational system that can develop a generation of youth who are full of Hindu pride and patriotism."

Bisoran Wari, an indigenous boy from the hills of Assam, was chosen early. A volunteer from the group persuaded his parents to send him to a school near his home when he was 8. Three years later, after he had shown promise, he was brought here to Sewa Dham. "My parents are farmers, they can only write their names," the boy said.

His version of the group's history is, naturally, rosy. Its founder, Dr. Hegdewar — the students call him "guruji" out of respect — gathered young people together and taught them how to "serve society," Bisoran said. He would like to do that as well, he said.

Now 18, having just taken his state graduation exams, he plans to study politics at a state-run college near his parents' home and, eventually, become a lawyer. "Lawyers work for justice," he explained.

Then, if the voluntary service takes him for its rigorous training program to become one of its full-time workers, he said, he would consider joining.

**June 3, 2002. Washington Post. Rama Lakshmi.  
Rapes Go Unpunished In Indian Mob Attacks. Muslim Women Say Claims Are Ignored**

KALOL, India -- Sultana Feroz Sheikh sat motionless, staring at the mud floor in a dark, windowless room.

Three months ago, as religious riots engulfed the western Indian state of Gujarat, Sheikh saw her husband and several relatives burned alive. Then, she said, she was brutally raped by three men as her 4-year-old son wailed nearby.

Sheikh wants to see the criminals brought to justice. But Gujarat police are routinely refusing to file charges against individuals accused of rape during the violence in late February and early March, because they say mob violence cannot be broken down into specific crimes.

"It is difficult to determine who in the mob pelted stones, who raped and who killed," said police inspector Ramanbhai Patil. Though the riot on March 1 that claimed the lives of Sheikh's loved ones and resulted in her rape engulfed the entire village of Kalol, she said Patil has arrested only four men in connection with the day's events.

The violence then spread throughout Gujarat, where nearly 1,000 people, most of them Muslims, have been killed in Hindu-Muslim clashes since Feb. 27. That was the day Muslims launched a firebomb attack on a train carrying Hindu activists, killing 60. Countless cases of arson, looting, murder and rape have been jumbled together in what are known as first-information reports, or FIRs. Police have filed "general FIRs," simply blaming riots on Hindu tola, or mobs, and refusing to register individual complaints.

Arrests increased markedly after the Indian government appointed K.P.S. Gill -- known as the "super cop" of Punjab state for his work there in the 1990s -- to assist with law enforcement in Gujarat. Police have arrested about 3,200 suspects in more than 300 cases of attacks against Muslims in Gujarat. The suspects have been charged with murder, rioting and arson. But advocacy groups say arrests for rape are still rare.

"The police FIR said that a Hindu mob attacked a Muslim mob," said Sheikh, who is Muslim. "I am not a 'mob,' I am a woman who was gang-raped by three men. How can I hope for justice, when they don't even register my complaint properly?"

Farah Naqvi, an independent journalist who is part of Citizen's Initiative, a fact-finding team that recorded testimony of sexual violence in Gujarat, called it "a piracy of silence."

"Cases have been filed against the nameless and the faceless," Naqvi said. "When you register them as mobs, it gives you a basis and an excuse for inaction. A single, collective FIR cannot take care of all the individual losses, as the time, loss and place varies. And it is especially true for rape."

There are no reliable estimates of how many women -- Hindu or Muslim -- have been raped in the Gujarat violence. According to the Citizen's Initiative report, however, almost every relief shelter in the state houses people who are victims of or witnesses to rape, molestation or other types of sexual assault.

Part of the difficulty in gauging the problem, said Sejal Dand, an aid worker, is that "many women were raped and then killed or burned."

Dand said fear of the police, who have been widely accused of standing idle as violence peaked, discouraged women and witnesses from reporting crimes for days. When the victims and witnesses finally did file reports, police often asked them to omit the names of influential men, Dand said.

In addition, in India's conservative and inward-looking Muslim minority of 130 million, even talking about rape is a matter of deep shame and stigma.

In the village of Fatehpura, aid workers reported, a Hindu mob dragged 30 young women into full public view, sexually assaulted them and forced them to run naked. Yet the Muslims of Fatehpura refuse to go to the police or even reveal the names of the women, fearing no man would marry them, the aid workers said.

"There is a lot of denial on the issue of rape of Muslim women in Gujarat," Dand said. Even after citizens groups published reports with women's testimonies, many officials were dismissive. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said in Parliament that reports of sexual violence were "exaggerated," and the country's law minister said only two FIRs have been filed for rape in Gujarat so far.

Sheikh hasn't filed one, because the police wouldn't let her, she said.

Her ordeal began on the morning of Feb. 28, a day after the attack on the train, she said, when she heard hundreds of angry Hindus marching toward the Muslim quarters of her home village of Delol, shouting, "We will

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burn you!" She and her husband grabbed their son and fled to some wheat fields, where they hid with a group of other panic-stricken Muslims. Their homes went up in flames.

The Muslims retreated in a milk van the next morning to the nearest town, Kalol. There, another Hindu mob surrounded them.

"One by one, they pulled out the men from the van and burned them. My husband was burned alive in front of my own eyes as I screamed and pleaded with them," Sheikh said, tears welling in her eyes.

Sheikh said she managed to jump out with her son, then ran toward a nearby river. Eight men wielding swords chased after her.

"One of them grabbed my hair from behind and pulled me; another snatched my son away," she said. They threw her down and hit her, and three raped her. "They were ruthless," she whispered.

Sheikh ran and hid for days before going to a relief shelter in Kalol. Ten days after the rape, she summoned the courage to go to the police to file a report.

"To my surprise, the police said I cannot file an FIR," Sheikh said. "They said an FIR already existed for that day's events."

Police officials investigating the Kalol violence said they could not register two reports for the same incident. Because a general FIR had already been filed, they said, the most they could do was attach a statement to it.

Patil said Sheikh's case was weak anyway, because she did not undergo a medical examination until more than 10 days after the alleged rape.

Citizen's Initiative recommends that special courts be set up to hear women's cases and that their testimony be treated as the basis for legal action if FIRs are not filed. And the requirement of medical evidence should be dropped, the group says, because so many women hid for days before going to the police.

Trauma counseling, according to the group's report, is the most urgent need.

For a number of emotionally scarred women now languishing in shelters, consisting of tents in the scorching heat, simply returning to their homes could provide the first healing touch. But homecoming is fraught with risks, too.

Bilkees Rasoolbhai Yaqub, 19, was one of many women gang-raped outside the village of Randikpura. She is the single witness to many killings and rapes in Randikpura and has named three men in her police report. Now Yaqub's Hindu neighbors say they will not allow the Muslims to return to the village until she withdraws the names of the accused in her police report.

The villagers say her statements are baseless; the police say Yaqub's story contains inconsistencies and her medical report was negative.

But, asked an anguished Yaqub, "Why would I lie about my rape? Which woman would invite social stigma upon herself?"

### **July 27, 2002. New York Times. Celia W. Dugger.**

#### **Religious Riots Loom Over Indian Politics**

AHMEDABAD, India — Here in the adopted hometown of Mohandas K. Gandhi, the great apostle of nonviolence, Hindu mobs committed acts of unspeakable savagery against Muslims this spring.

Mothers were skewered on swords as their children watched. Young women were stripped and raped in broad daylight, then doused with kerosene and set on fire. A pregnant woman's belly was slit open, her fetus raised skyward on the tip of a sword and then tossed onto one of the fires that blazed across the city.

The violence raged for days and persisted for more than two months, claiming almost 1,000 lives. It was driven by hatred and sparked by a terrible crime: a Muslim mob stoned a train car loaded with activists from the World Hindu Council on Feb. 27, then set it on fire, killing 59 people, mostly women and children.

The carnage that followed here in the western state of Gujarat has become a festering political sore because of widespread allegations that the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Hindu nationalist party that leads India and Gujarat, and the World Hindu Council were complicit in the attacks on Muslims. The party and the council — both part of the same Hindu nationalist family — deny the charges.

But official statistics provided in June by the Police Department, now under new administration, show that the state of Gujarat — the only major one in India governed solely by the Bharatiya Janata Party — failed to take even elementary steps to halt the horrific momentum of violence.

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The day after the train attack, for example, police officers here in Ahmedabad did not arrest a single person from among the tens of thousands who rampaged through Muslim enclaves, raping and looting as well as burning alive 124 Muslims.

Police officials and survivors said in interviews that workers and officials of the party and the council were complicit in the attacks and, in some cases, instigated the mobs.

"This was not a riot," one senior police official said angrily. "It was a state-sponsored pogrom."

Party officials who lead the national government, while publicly condemning the attacks, resisted opposition calls for a forceful assertion of the central government's authority to halt the violence as it dragged on for more than two months.

Fathoming what happened here in the first major outbreak of Hindu-Muslim violence in almost a decade is critical for India. The specter of such violence has shadowed the country since its birth.

India, a secular democracy, and Pakistan, an Islamic nation, were hacked apart when they won independence from Britain in 1947. The furies of religious hatred were unleashed, and about a million people died.

The use of religion for political gain is an enduring theme in both India and Pakistan and a wellspring of violence that vexes the subcontinent even today.

Senior national leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party, including Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, have maintained that India's tolerant Hindu ethos has helped guarantee religious freedom for India's billion-strong population, which includes 820 million Hindus and 130 million Muslims.

Until the violence in Gujarat, the party, which has led the national government since 1998, had proudly pointed to the absence of Hindu-Muslim violence during its years in power as evidence of its secular credentials.

But many influential Indians are once again questioning whether the party can be trusted to ensure that Hindus and Muslims live together in peace and to resist the temptation of exploiting religious divisions to reap Hindu votes.

Gujarat, a state of 51 million people, has over the past decade become the country's laboratory for Hindu nationalism. That ideology has long depicted Muslim and Christian Indians as converts to foreign religions who must accept the primacy of Hindu culture. Gandhi's assassin was an extreme adherent of this view — and for decades, the Hindu nationalist movement was a political pariah as a result.

In the recent carnage in Gujarat, most of those killed were Muslims. Among the survivors, 100,000 became refugees in their own country. More than 20,000 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed, along with 360 Muslim places of worship.

The events have inspired an anguished outpouring from many Indian intellectuals.

"Gujarat disowned Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi long ago," Ashis Nandy, one of India's leading social thinkers wrote in *Seminar*, a monthly magazine that addresses domestic and international problems in India. "The state's political soul has been won over by his killers."

In an interview in June, the state's chief minister, Narendra Modi, offered no consolation to the state's Muslims and expressed satisfaction with his government's performance. His only regret, he said, was that he did not handle the news media better.

"We have 18,600 villages," he said in his office, where a photograph of Gandhi hung on the wall. "Ninety-eight percent of Gujarat was peaceful. Is it not a credit for the administration, the government?"

Mr. Modi was a longtime party organizer and pracharak, or preacher, from the source of the Hindu nationalist movement, the Association of National Volunteers. He was handpicked less than a year ago by the Bharatiya Janata Party's high command to turn around its fading fortunes in the state.

[Mr. Modi dissolved the state assembly on July 19 to bring on elections. In the usual practice, he resigned and was named caretaker chief minister while he led the party's political campaign.]

At the national level, too, hard-liners in the party appear to be on the upswing. Lal Krishna Advani, India's home minister, who represents Gujarat in Parliament, was elevated recently to be India's deputy prime minister and is expected to succeed the aging Mr. Vajpayee as the coalition's standard-bearer.

In the late 1980's, Mr. Advani led a movement to build a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, on the site of a 16th-century mosque said to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram. That movement was critical to the party's rise to power and culminated in the mosque's demolition by Hindu zealots in 1992, igniting the last major spasm of Hindu-Muslim violence, which left more than 1,100 people dead, most of them Muslims.

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Mr. Advani said he regretted the mosque's destruction, just as he has decried the violence in Gujarat. Still, he stood by Mr. Modi, and at a recent news conference, said that Mr. Modi's government had generally performed well.

Others disagree. The National Human Rights Commission, headed by a retired chief justice of the Supreme Court, concluded that the state's efforts were "a comprehensive failure."

The commission released a confidential report on June 12 that named officials from the Bharatiya Janata Party who have been accused by survivors and witnesses of instigating the violence. It noted that many politically connected people were yet to be arrested.

"These are grave matters indeed," the commission wrote, "that must not be allowed to be forgiven or forgotten."

### **An Attack and a Vengeful Mob**

The train that pulled into Godhra station at 7:43 a.m. on Feb. 27 was packed with more than 1,500 volunteers of the World Hindu Council, who were returning from Ayodhya, where they had agitated once again for construction of a temple on the site of the demolished mosque.

Roused by religious fervor, hundreds of devotees poured out of the train at Godhra station, which is in the middle of a densely packed Muslim slum. A Muslim vendor was ordered to say "Hail Ram" and refused. The Hindu activists yanked his beard and beat him, said a state police investigator.

As the train pulled out, an angry Muslim crowd pelted it with stones. No one seems certain why, but the mob's fury focused on coach S6. Stones crashed through the windows. A flaming rag soared inside, landing on a synthetic leather seat that caught fire. Police investigators say that as many as 16 gallons of gasoline were poured onto the floor. Fifty-nine people were killed.

Fury over the atrocity came fast. Within hours, a Muslim driver was pulled from his rickshaw and killed with a cricket bat. Hindu mobs burned down shops in the city and threw stones at a mosque.

The World Hindu Council called a general strike for the following day, Feb. 28, to protest the killings. Senior police officials say the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's endorsement of the strike made violence virtually inevitable.

Mashiha Qureshi, an 11-year-old Muslim girl, and her family fled to the safety of Juhapura, the city's largest Muslim ghetto. The family's house and five businesses were gutted by fire. She is now afraid to live among Hindus.

"Somebody might catch me, kill me, throw me under a train," she said. "There are good people. There are bad people. Some save you, some kill you. But how do you know which is which?"

The chief minister, Mr. Modi, said he gave clear instructions that the police were to deal with any violence firmly.

But in a country where authorities routinely round up suspects to head off Hindu-Muslim violence, the Ahmedabad police did not make a single preventive arrest the day of the train attack, city police officials said.

P. C. Pande, who was city police commissioner at the time, and C. K. Chakravarthi, who heads the state police, refused repeated requests for interviews.

Other senior police officials — sickened by what happened, but unwilling to be quoted by name — contradicted Mr. Modi. One official said the chief minister directed that the police "should not come down harshly on the Hindus tomorrow."

As a result, they said, no clear orders were given.

Two large massacres took place on Feb. 28 in Ahmedabad, a gritty city of 3.5 million people, as the police stood by or, according to some witnesses, aided the mobs.

Thirty-nine people were killed at the Gulbarg Society, a walled compound that was home to Muslim families in the midst of a largely Hindu neighborhood.

The mob started gathering in the morning. By early afternoon, more than 10,000 Hindu men assembled, many armed with stones, iron rods, tridents, swords and homemade bombs, screaming: "Beat them! Burn them! Cut them!"

Muslim women and children in the neighborhood had gathered in the home of Ehsan Jafri, a Muslim and a former member of Parliament from the Congress Party. They believed he could protect them.

Through the day, witnesses said, Mr. Jafri made increasingly frantic calls to the city police commissioner and other powerful people, among them Amarsingh Chaudhary, who was the state Congress Party president and a former chief minister of Gujarat.

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Mr. Chaudhary said he, in turn, called the heads of the city and state police forces. The third and last time Mr. Jafri called, he wept, begging: "Kindly help me. They will kill me. My society is burning."

The police arrived in numbers only large enough to take on the mob at about 4 or 5 p.m. — too late to save the women and children, who burned to death with Mr. Jafri, survivors said.

The next day, the smell of roasted flesh still hung heavy in the ruins of the residential complex. K. G. Erda, a senior police inspector, was standing outside, watching as people carried on with their looting.

He said the few officers who had been there the day before had stayed in the traffic intersections, only firing at the mob when it stoned the police. He and other officers had called for reinforcements, he said, but none came. In fact, he said, 10 policemen, including two high-ranking officers, were called away.

"What can two or three policemen do when confronted by 20,000 people?" Mr. Erda asked.

The second massacre of Muslims unfolded in a poor area called Naroda Patia, where 11-year-old Mashiha and her family lived.

Many survivors accuse leaders of Hindu nationalist groups, among them Bipin Panchal, known to many as Bipin Bhai, of leading the mob.

A man in the World Hindu Council's front office confirmed that Mr. Panchal was a council worker. Days after the atrocity, Mr. Panchal said his shop had been damaged by fire and looted. The Muslims had attacked, he claimed, and he had only defended himself.

"They live here in India and pray for Pakistan," he said contemptuously. "They only deserve one treatment. They should pack their bags and board the train to Pakistan. There should be no Muslims here."

He denied even belonging to the World Hindu Council.

Mr. Panchal has since been charged with being a leader of the mob and is said to have absconded. However, an official at the Naroda police station said the police knew where he was but had been instructed not to arrest him.

On the day these two massacres took place, Feb. 28, no one was arrested for participating in the violence. The next day, 55 people were killed, but only 93 arrests were made.

State officials would later point to the large number of Hindus arrested to prove the police were vigilant. Here in the city the police have arrested more than 3,500 people — but those arrests came belatedly, after the carnage had already gotten out of control.

Asked about the failure to make arrests early on, Mr. Modi, the chief minister, asserted that the police had fired into the mobs to halt the violence.

Yet in the three days after the train attack — when Muslims were overwhelmingly the victims of violence — the police killed more Muslims than Hindus, 22 to 14, in what was ostensibly an effort to stop attacks on Muslims.

An alliance of nonprofit groups, Citizen's Initiative, surveyed almost 2,800 Muslim families. But Mr. Modi dismissed the charges. "Not a single complaint has been registered like this," he insisted. Instead of rooting out those who may have been complicit, Mr. Modi used his authority to penalize officers who enforced the law, senior police officials say. They cite what they describe as punitive transfers of four police superintendents in March.

Mr. Modi called the transfers a "purely administrative decision." But several officials confirmed that Mr. Chakravarthi, who heads the state police, wrote a letter protesting the transfers and commending the men for their handling of the violence.

The transferred police officials told dramatic stories of confronting mobs.

One officer, Himanshu Bhatt, recalled arriving at a Muslim village surrounded by a Hindu mob of 15,000 that was brandishing swords and scythes. Already, 14 Muslims had been killed. Mr. Bhatt immediately gave the order to fire. A deputy headman from a neighboring Hindu village was killed, and the mob ran away.

Mr. Bhatt said he took great pride that all the Muslim inhabitants were home cooking dinner by the next evening.

Rahul Sharma, another officer, described rescuing 400 children, ages 6 to 14, at an Islamic school that was surrounded by a mob of 8,000 armed with swords, pipes and soda bottle bombs.

"We fired tear gas, but the wind was against us and it blew back on us," he said. "So we fired three rounds of musket fire. Four or five were injured. The entire crowd vanished."

"I don't think any other job would have allowed me to save so many lives," he said. "That is a bank balance for a lifetime."

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As the violence in Gujarat continued into April, the political and civic outcry across the country rose, as did pressure on the central government. Mr. Modi's role became an issue, with even some of the Bharatiya Janata Party's own allies calling for his dismissal. After a bruising debate in Parliament, the central government finally dispatched a senior retired police officer, K. P. S. Gill, to advise Mr. Modi.

Mr. Gill arrived on May 3 and within days, the city's three top police officials were replaced. K. R. Kaushik, the new police commissioner, said he immediately issued orders for the police to arrest anyone gathering in a mob. By the evening of the next day, May 11, he said, the violence was under control.

Unapologetic, Separate, Hopeful

Today, there is no more apt symbol of the divide between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad than the road separating Juhapura, the Muslim ghetto where so many sought refuge during the carnage, from neighboring Hindu areas.

The Hindu houses back up to barbed wire fences and high brick walls topped with jagged shards of glass. The windows in virtually every house on both sides were shattered in the rock throwing that accompanied the violence.

It is as though the Muslims of Juhapura and the Hindus in adjacent neighborhoods live in separate nations. They refer to the road that divides them as a border. It has the appearance of a war zone that has come under heavy shelling.

But as desolate as the road looks today, it ends on a green field, called Unity Ground, where Hindus and Muslims used to play cricket together.

Days after her husband, the former Muslim parliamentarian, was burned alive by a mob, Zakia Jafri, 65, still clung to the idea of an India where Hindus and Muslims lived in peace. For years, she and her husband resisted their children's entreaties to leave their majority-Hindu neighborhood. Mrs. Jafri, haggard and grief-stricken, vowed to go home to their burned-out apartment and start over.

"That is my husband's memory and dream," she said. "I will not abandon it."

But the lack of remorse among many Hindus has slowed the healing among Muslims. Mrs. Jafri said recently that none of her Hindu neighbors ever came to her to express sorrow that they could not save her husband. She asked, "How can I go back to such a place?"

### **August 7, 2002. The Hindu (India). Robert M. Hathaway. Charity... or terrorism?**

It is probably advisable for the American Government to hold an official inquiry into fund-raising in the U.S. by groups implicated in the Gujarat violence.

TERRORISM COMES in many guises. An armed assault against Parliament House in New Delhi. A suicide bomber detonating high explosives in a crowded bazaar. Political assassination. Angry young men flying commercial aircraft into the World Trade Center. And, yes, hate-consumed mobs butchering innocent women and children.

The people of India need no instruction from foreigners regarding the moral issues raised by this spring's communal violence in Gujarat. Except for an embittered but fortunately minuscule minority, Indians of all religions and beliefs reacted with horror and disgust to the great human tragedy that unfolded in their country earlier this year.

All those who admire Indian culture and accomplishments, who celebrate the extraordinary progress India has achieved in its still brief national existence, understand that the tragedy of Gujarat strikes at the very essence of India's being and promise. The assassination earlier this year of Abdul Gani Lone, who opposed Indian rule in Kashmir but who in his final years had come to the realization that violence and extremism offer Kashmiris no way out in their struggle with New Delhi, represented another blow to the ideals of tolerance and moderation, another triumph for the forces of hatred and sectarian-based violence. In this sense, the tragedies of Gujarat and of Kashmir are inextricably linked.

Kashmir was certainly not the cause of Gujarat. Sadly, the seeds of Godhra and Ahmedabad and Baroda spring from still more ancient soils. But the continued violence in Kashmir makes the hatred recently seen in Gujarat more likely, and in a perverted sense, more "respectable", or at least acceptable. Perhaps, it does not go too far to assert that until the Kashmir sore is at last healed, the poison that produced Gujarat will make other Gujarats increasingly likely.

Some Indians, of course, say that the tragic events in Gujarat are a domestic Indian affair, and that the United States and the rest of the world have no business intruding into a purely internal Indian matter. This is a self-serving falsehood. Important American interests, including the global war against terrorism, can be directly impacted by what the U.S. says — and fails to say — about Gujarat.

At this particular moment in history, the U.S. cannot allow the impression to take hold that Americans somehow value a Muslim life less than the life of a person of another religion. Sadly, there are those in the Islamic world who



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assert that the present conflict is a war directed not against terrorism, but against Islam. That the U.S. does not care about Muslims. That Washington seeks to hijack the tragedies of 9/11 to carry out long-held plans to repress the Islamic world. These are detestable lies, but many in the Muslim world are prepared to believe them. So leaving aside the moral issue, it is essential that India's friends in the U.S. speak out to condemn the injustice and hatred so prominently displayed in Gujarat, and to lend support to those Indians, of all religious beliefs, who are working to strengthen the forces of secularism, tolerance and multiculturalism.

Some have asked what impact the recent events in Gujarat will have — should have — on the new and healthier relationship that the U.S. is developing with India. No one needs to be reminded of the tortured history of U.S.-India relations over the years, or the difficulty the two nations have had in working collaboratively with one another, even on those issues where our purposes and interests ran along parallel tracks.

Over the past half dozen or so years — and notwithstanding the temporary if traumatic jolt to the relationship administered by India's 1998 nuclear tests and the subsequent imposition of U.S. sanctions — Washington and New Delhi have begun to construct a qualitatively better relationship, so much so that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has come to describe the two countries as "natural allies", a phrase increasingly used by Americans as well.

Following the trauma Americans experienced on September 11, India was one of the first countries in the world to step forward with a pledge of unconditional and unambivalent support for the U.S. in its quest to bring to justice those responsible for the terror attacks in New York and Washington. The administration of George W. Bush, already keen to upgrade relations with Delhi, took notice. Prior to the February 27 Godhra attack that touched off the bloodshed in Gujarat, this new and more sanguine relationship between the U.S. and India was widely viewed by Americans as in the national interest. It remains so today; Gujarat has not changed this calculation.

And yet, it is neither possible nor practical simply to pretend that Gujarat did not happen. The violence in Gujarat, and the steps the Indian Government might take in coming months in response to those events, could have a significant impact on American views of India, and hence, on political and public support in the U.S. for a close and collaborative U.S.-India partnership.

Credible reports have recently suggested that substantial sums of money are sent from Indians resident in the U.S., and from American citizens of Indian origin, to groups and organisations in Gujarat and elsewhere in India that are directly linked to the violence in Gujarat. I do not know if these accounts are true. But respected Indian journalists have uncovered disturbing linkages. If these reports prove accurate, then it is possible that such financial transactions violate U.S. anti-terrorism statutes.

Alternatively, issues of fraud may be at issue. Responsible sources report that some U.S. residents make financial contributions to overseas religious groups in the belief that these funds are to be used for religious or humanitarian purposes, when in fact the monies so raised are used to promote religious bigotry.

In either event, it is probably advisable for the American Government to hold an official inquiry into fund-raising in the U.S. by groups implicated in the Gujarat violence, to ensure that U.S. laws are not being violated. Legitimate organisations need not fear such an investigation, which would serve to clear their names and reassure potential donors about the legitimacy of their fund-raising activities.

Nor would such an inquiry be new or unusual. The U.S. has acted in the past to regulate or even to ban fund-raising activities by groups advocating violence and ethnic or religious intolerance in other countries, as well as activities where fraud may be an issue. Since September 11, both the Bush administration and other Governments have shut down a number of groups whose ostensible purposes were to collect funds for Muslim charities, but which actually served to finance terrorist networks.

The Gujarat violence, Lone's assassination, and most recently, the designation of L.K. Advani as Deputy Prime Minister and most likely successor to Mr. Vajpayee have all raised new concerns about India's future among India's friends in the U.S. An official U.S. investigation into Gujarat-related fund-raising, voluntarily facilitated by the Government of India, would go far towards easing those concerns and further strengthening the new partnership between our two peoples.

(The writer is Director, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C.)

### **August 17, 2002. Times of India (India).**

#### **UK group probes Hindu groups' terror links**

LONDON: Britain's Charity Commission has launched a preliminary investigation into allegations that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, UK and Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) here are linked to terrorist activities.

While general secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, UK, Kishore Rupralia was not available for comment despite repeated efforts, chief of Sewa International, an independent charity linked to HSS said that they had not received any letter from the Charity Commission till Saturday morning.

A spokesman of the Charity Commission said that the Commission had contacted the trustees of VHP, UK and HSS to provide more details of their operations.

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Several London-based Muslim organisations had recently demanded banning VHP and HSS, the UK counterpart of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and probe into their accounts, alleging that they were responsible for attacks on Muslims in Gujarat.

Lord Adam Patel resigned as the patron of Sewa International, a charity linked to HSS, last week alleging that Sewa International was a front for military activity, "which incites racial hatred, is both outrageous and offending," a charge denied by the organisation.

C B Patel, patron of Sewa International, welcomed the probe saying "if anybody can prove that it is being used for terrorists activities, I am prepared to resign straightaway."

Denying the allegations of Lord Adam Patel, Shantibhai Mistry, Sewa International chairman, said on Saturday "I am somewhat surprised and dismayed at Lord Adams doubts and concerns about the work of Sewa International UK."

As regards the Charity Commission's decision, he said: "We have not received any letters until this morning."

### **September 12, 2002. The Milli Gazette (India). Angana Chatterji. Indian diaspora funding Hindu extremism**

"In the United States, where substantial funds are raised for Hindu extremist agendas, the U.S. Government must act to ensure that organizations that broker terror should not continue to enjoy their non-profit status within the USA."

It is now no secret that the Sangh Parivar, the collective name given to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bajrang Dal and other Hindu extremist organizations, is exploiting religion (Hindutva) to foment communal violence in India. To this end they are organizing the ultra-right, non-secular and undemocratic forces in India. What is less known is how these forces of injustice and bigotry are funded, especially by the Indian-Hindu communities living abroad.

These [terrorist and extremist Indian-Hindu] organizations receive substantial contributions from Hindus in the United States and elsewhere. The Indian magazine, "Outlook," in its July 22, 2002, issue published an article by A. K. Sen, titled, 'Deflections to the Right'. The piece highlighted a component of the chain of funding that sustains Hindu extremism. The article states that the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) is one of the more conspicuous charity organizations that raises funds in the United States to support the RSS battalions in India. IDRF lists Sewa International as its counterpart in India. Sewa International and the various organizations it oversees receive over two-thirds of the IDRF funding. Incidentally, Sewa International, in its mission to transform India, states on its website in a section on 'Experiments and Results' with 'Social Harmony' that social consolidation can be achieved through social cohesion. Among other things, the website quotes Manya H. V. Sehadarji, Sarkaryawah of the RSS, as saying: "The ultimate object of all these endeavours is Hindu Sangathan-consolidation and strengthening of the Hindu society."

Hindu extremism, like other xenophobic movements, functions through carefully fashioned exclusionary principles whereby all non-Hindus and dissenting Hindus, identified as Hindu traitors, become second-class citizens. In addition, justification of caste inequities, subordination of Dalits ('lower' caste communities), women, adivasis (tribal) and other minorities, and the consolidation of a cohesive middle-class base are critical to its momentum.

In the United States, where substantial funds are raised for Hindu extremist agendas, the U.S. Government must act to ensure that organizations that broker terror should not continue to enjoy their non-profit status within the USA. It is interesting that in 1999, the VHP failed to gain recognition at the United Nations as 'a cultural organization' because of its philosophical underpinnings. However, the VHP of America is an independent charity registered in the United States in the 1970s, where it has, and continues to, receive funds from a variety of individuals and organizations.

Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Americans of Indian descent must examine the politics of hate encouraged by extremist Hindu organizations in the name of charity and social work. Indians, one of the most financially successful groups in the United States, must take seriously their moral obligation to ensure that their dollars are not funding malice and scrutinize the organizations that are on the receiving end in India. The issue is not whether these organizations are undertaking charitable work, but whether they are doing so to promote separatist and non-secular ideals. Param Vaibhav Ke Path Par (On The Road To Great Glory), written by Sadanand Damodar Sapre, and published in 1997 by Suruchi Prakashan, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, the central publication house of the RSS, lists the 40-plus organizations maintained by the RSS in India for its multivariate programs.

In addition, the VHP and other Parivar outfits aim at the communalization of education through the 'Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram' and 'Ekal Vidyalas' (schools). One strategy is to Hinduize adivasi communities, exploit divisions among the marginalized and indoctrinate the youth, in order to both turn them against one another and use them as foot soldiers in the larger cause of religious nationalism. Such inculcation has had serious repercussions in Gujarat, India, this year where tribals were manipulated into attacking Muslims during the carnage in February and March 2002.

While Hindu fundamentalists do not have a monopoly on religious intolerance in India, their actions are holding the country hostage. Well-organized, widespread and acting in the name of [Hinduism] the majority religion in India,

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Hindu extremism is positioned to silence diversity through force and terror, the rhetoric of Hindu supremacy and the positioning of minority groups as depraved enemies who must be punished.

Indians at home and abroad must oppose the deep infiltration of the Hindutva brigade into the press, as well as other institutions -- political, military, bureaucratic, civic, business, educational and law and order -- of India. Such infiltration is creating a nation where religious fundamentalists violate the Constitution of India and the state tolerates such violation. While the present BJP regime at the center has overt and close links to organizations within the Sangh Parivar, citizens are assured that secularism and democracy are sacred and secure. The reality is different. The Indian government's handling of communal violence and sanctioning of communal discourse is clear to the observers and threatens to jeopardize India's capacity to function as a nation.

The VHP, in its meeting with Muslim leaders in New Delhi on July 15, 2002, stated that if Muslims agreed to resettle Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir, Muslims in Gujarat would be rehabilitated. The Hindus must understand that issues connected to the democratization of Pakistan, ethical resolutions to Kashmir, or gender reforms within Islam are separate from India's commitment to upholding the rights of minorities or to reforms within Hinduism.

Hindu extremism against Muslims and other minorities in India collapses distinctions that must be made to honour human rights in India. Also, Hindutva's discourse of history posits Hindus and Hinduism as being under siege and preposterously asserts the idea of India as a Hindu Nation. Such revisionist history strategically and hideously poses that a vengeful justice can be found for the crimes of history committed by non-Hindu rulers. Retribution is sought by attacking contemporary Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others in India.

Hinduism is critical to the fabric of India, as are all the other cultures and religions that inhabit it and frame the imagination of the Indian nations. It will require considerable effort on the part of progressive Indians to conceive a secular nation where religion is indeed separate from the integrity of the state and where pluralism guarantees rights and respect to the religious and non-religious alike. Every Hindu, and every citizen, must denounce that to be Indian is to be Hindu, challenge assertions that a secular Constitution is anti-Hindu and refute the call for a Hindu Nation in India as anti-national.

Patriotism and nationalism demand that all social, political and religious groups work for an India free of disenfranchisement, institutionalized violence, corruption and rampant inequities. The Indians cannot permit India's secular and democratic fabric to be irreparably compromised.

Angana Chatterji is a professor of social and cultural anthropology at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

### **September 16, 2002. Silicon India.**

#### **Fanatic Hindu groups spread tentacles in U.S. universities**

NEW DELHI: Hindu hardline groups are active in at least 40 U.S. universities operating under different names and are busy spreading "communal feelings" in the Indian community, says a sociologist from New York.

Aditi Desai, a former lecturer at Delhi University, has studied Hindu-Muslim relations closely. Based in New York, Desai is a consultant for the U.N. and is an active worker on issues relating to civil society, gender and environment.

Desai was in the capital as part of a 13-member "Sadbhavna" (amity) delegation that toured Gujarat after sectarian violence rocked the western state claiming at least 1,000 lives, mainly of Muslims.

"These cells with strong leanings to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal are teaching young minds to hate. Communal feelings are spreading among the NRI community in the U.S. You can almost feel it in the air," Desai said

"Funds for these organisations are also coming in substantial amounts from all across the world.

"After the Gujarat earthquake last year, Indians in the U.S. regardless of caste and creed contributed generously to support the reconstruction process. But this time finances have not been forthcoming for victims of the communal violence.

"In one city in the U.S. where 1,400 families of Indian origin reside, only \$700 was raised. It shows communal divisions have sprouted in the U.S. too."

The Gujarat violence was blamed mainly on the VHP and Bajrang Dal, both of which are closely linked to the Bharatiya Janata Party, which rules Gujarat. Along with the RSS, India's most influential Hindu group, all these groups are collectively known as the "Sangh Parivar".

On her experiences in Gujarat, Desai said: "What we saw was thousand times worse than what we had imagined. It was total horror and a quantum leap from what communal violence we had seen in the country before.

"The people in the relief camps comprising mainly Muslims are totally helpless and despondent even to protest. Not surprisingly we found no feeling or expression of vengeance or anger on the part of the Muslims.

"Their backs are broken - something the VHP promised to do. I already see the beginning of a Bosnia here.

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"What was more alarming was the language of terror - it was a total debasement of humanity. This language could not have been taught in a day. Even the pattern of violence was the same everywhere. Much preparation had gone into it. It could not have been spontaneous.

"Hindus who helped Muslim victims, the administration, the press - everyone was intimidated. And even now, there is no food and livelihood for the people in the relief camps. Not one guilty person has been caught."

Desai added: "But there is a larger task at hand now. India is in a state of siege. People abroad think groups like VHP has the support of 80 percent Hindus in India, whereas its support base it is not more than 20 percent. That has to be exposed."

### **December 13, 2003. Times of India (India). 'Gujarat pogrom being rewritten'**

LONDON: Gujarat remains an "ongoing genocidal project" largely funded by the saffron pound through a growing network of increasingly innocent-sounding, small, UK-based Hindutva organisations, a new report has warned the British government.

The report, written and researched by nine women jurists and academics across six countries, was launched here on Saturday just days after Britain's charities watchdog threw up its hands in despair at being denied Indian visas to "investigate the activities of the Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh and Sewa International".

HSS and Sewa have always denied allegations of misusing charitable donations to fund communal violence in India.

Amrit Wilson, spokesman for South Asia Solidarity, a British anti-communalism group, told Times News Network that the new 240-page report would be sent to British foreign secretary Jack Straw next week.

The report has, what is claimed to be hundreds of cases of first-hand evidence and testimony.

Wilson said: "Stopping the British funding of the Gujarat violence is important, but it is all a political decision and the UK government has to decide whether it wants to make it".

Observers acknowledged the new report, launched under the banner of a name India already knows, the International Initiative for Gujarat (IIJ), would certainly pile the pressure on the British government

But some critics said the report said nothing that had not already been discussed threadbare.

The study, *Threatened Existence*, claims that Gujarat remains a violent, deeply-divided and communally-charged state even 18 months after India's worst outbreak of religious violence.

"The genocidal project continues in different and frightening forms with long-term consequences on the lives of all members of the Muslim community particularly women," it alleges.

And in what's described as the first attempt to collate the "centrality" and extent of "sexual violence" against minority community women, the report alleges that it continues till today and is part of the "agenda of Hindutva... and a strategy".

The IIJ is a team of women that includes French-Algerian feminist and gay rights campaigner in Muslim countries, Anissa Hélié; German historian Gabriela Mischkowski, American law professor Rhonda Copelon, British Israeli sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis, Sri Lankan human rights activist Sunila Abeysekara and Mumbai-based gender justice campaigner Vahida Nainar.