

Introduction

The events in Gujarat in March 2002 shocked not only India but also the world. India has seen violence between religious communities before.¹ The establishment in 1947 of India and Pakistan saw violence of unprecedented proportions. Since then, violence between religious communities (known locally as communal riots) has been a recurring phenomenon. Over the years, however, the nature of the violence has changed.

The violence in Gujarat was not violence between two communities. It was a well-planned and systematic genocidal attack on people from Muslim communities, carried out with the support of the state. Thousands of trained people from the 'Hindu' communities attacked everything that belonged to people from the Muslim communities: lives, properties, businesses. The extent of the sexual violence was also unprecedented in the history of independent India. Women were treated as property of the Muslim communities, and hence violated, assaulted, humiliated, maimed and killed.

The National Human Rights Commission observed, 'There was a comprehensive failure of the state to protect the constitutional rights of the people of Gujarat'.² And it was not an event in isolation. The violence had begun long before that date, and continues in different forms even today.

The composition of the mobs that took to the streets in Gujarat showed that a new kind of Hindu community was being forged. People traditionally oppressed by the Hindu mainstream - the lower castes (*Dalits*), the indigenous peoples (*Adivasis*), and women - were all part of the mobs. A sense of 'Hindu identity' had brought them together, but this was no natural coming together. It was the result of a well-planned strategy by Hindu fundamentalists, who have been trying to gain a foothold in Indian society since the 1920s.

Hindu fundamentalists had support from the state machinery, which they have systematically infiltrated in the last decade. They have worked to convert the vision of India from that of a secular, democratic nation to a 'Hindu *Rashtra*'.³ In this essay I will focus on the ways in which Hindu fundamentalisms, and the parties propagating them, have operated, and discuss the events in Gujarat in this light.

Along with increased control by Hindu fundamentalist groups of the culture and ethos of mainstream Hindu society, there has been a corresponding growth of other fundamentalisms, like Islamic fundamentalism. But we think it urgent to focus on Hindu fundamentalism for three reasons: firstly, it has gained state power in a democracy, so it is succeeding in dividing the electorate along religious lines, thus altering the face of Indian society. Secondly, it has cleverly managed to create an image of a majority population victimised and under attack. Thirdly, democratic power in the hands of fundamentalist groups threatens and oppresses all those it 'otherises' in a manner that sounds the death knell, not only for their citizenship rights, but also for the basic tenets of democracy itself.

The Hindu fundamentalist organisations

Hindu fundamentalism in India is, in some senses, a colonialising effort, since it attacks, through annihilation or assimilation, all existing traditions and cultures, all movements for change and progress. A brahminical male culture⁴ is being projected as *the* Hindu culture of the region. The multiple practices and beliefs of Hindu communities are being obfuscated, and uniformity imposed. The terms 'religion' and 'culture' are used interchangeably. A new definition of nationalism has been made popular - 'cultural nationalism'. All those who do not subscribe to the Hindu religion and hence culture (sic) are not Hindu, and so cannot belong to Hindustan⁵ - they are 'otherised'. The final act of assertion by the Hindu right is through a systematic takeover of state power.

The right-wing Hindu organisations function under various names in India and throughout the diaspora. There are, however, three main right-wing Hindu organisations: the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) and the *Bharatiya Janta Party* (BJP).⁶

The RSS was formed in the mid-1920s, the VHP in 1964, and the BJP emerged in the late 1970s as successor to an earlier party, the Jansangh. The BJP has now been in power as part of a coalition government for two consecutive terms of the national parliament. In the last two decades, the VHP has actively worked to help the BJP gain electoral gains by creating a 'Hindu' electorate which would back the BJP under all circumstances.

The RSS, the BJP and the VHP ... have separate constitutions, organisational structures and work patterns. It cannot be denied, however, that in terms of membership, ideology and agendas of action, there is an overlap between the three, and that the RSS has played a parenting role ... In the politics of the RSS and its Parivar (family) there (is) a division of work between the 'cultural' RSS, the 'political' BJP and the 'religious' VHP.⁷

The creation of 'Hindu' identity

One of the main tasks of the VHP has been to create a 'Hindu' religious identity. Hinduism is not codified, and has been for many years a loose combination of beliefs and practices. The VHP has, however, tried to create what Romila Thapar calls 'Syndicated Hinduism'. In her words, it is this notion of Hinduism which has been actively cultivated over the past two decades:

It has patterned itself on Islam and Christianity, in many ways, such as: its search for a historical founder (possibly Rama); ... missionaries among the Indian Diaspora, and among the Dalits and tribals; and its reference to Ayodhya as the Hindu Vatican.⁸

The Hindu identity thus created is monolithic. It also tries to nullify all contradictions and tensions within the practice of Hinduism, especially that of caste. The practice of Hinduism has inflicted all kinds of violations on people from lower castes; this violence continues today, exploding the myth of tolerant Hinduism. But through gross misrepresentation of the facts,

the right-wing organisations claim that Islam and Christianity are responsible for the caste system. As Kailash Chandra writes in the *Hindu Vishwa*, mouthpiece of the VHP:

The tribals and outcastes were very much a part of the Hindu society till the Christian missionaries came and made them break away from the rest of the Hindu society ... This task of a handful of Christian missionaries is now undertaken by the Muslims.⁹

Religions like Buddhism and Jainism, which evolved in reaction to the violence of the caste system and which have large numbers of followers in India, have also been cleverly included in the fold of Hinduism. Many *Dalits*, as part of the political struggle led by Dr. Ambedkar, renounced the Hindu religion and adopted Buddhism.¹⁰ But today they and other people are termed 'Hindu', because all philosophies that evolved in the region are now claimed for Hindu society.

Even more shocking is the way in which indigenous cultures - tribals and others - have been homogenised within the Hindu fold. Tribal cultures face a double attack in modern India. On the one hand, their lifestyles, which are dependent on natural resources, have been severely affected by the models of development adopted by the modern nation state. They have been impoverished, and forced to join the mainstream, which has no place for them.

At the same time, Hindu fundamentalists have tried to annihilate their cultures by 'civilising' them. The right-wing organisations call them *Vanvasis* (residents of the jungle) rather than *Adivasis* (original inhabitants). At a stroke, this defines them as primitive, and dispenses with their claim to be the original inhabitants, since this conflicts with the Hindu mainstream's version of history, according to which practitioners of Hinduism are not invaders who came to India centuries ago, but the original inhabitants, themselves under continuous attack from outsiders. Right-wing organisations have been working relentlessly in tribal hamlets all over the country with the primary aim of 'Hinduising' the people. Evidence of their labours can be seen in the small Hindu temples that dot tribal belts all over the countryside, and in the many *ashram shalas* (residential schools) run for tribal children, where they are brainwashed into accepting the 'Hindu way of life'.

Moreover, during the last decade, Christian organisations at work in the tribal regions have been openly under attack. These attacks serve to establish the notion that all religions other than Hinduism and its allied philosophies are 'foreign' to India, and that conversion to these religions is an attack on Hinduism, even if the act of conversion is an act of choice.

The creation of the victimised Hindu

Hindu fundamentalist organisations have consciously created an imminent and ever-present threat to the 'Hindu' identity from 'foreign' cultures and religions, namely Islam and Christianity. While Christians are constantly attacked, the bogey of Pakistan, and the memory of the bloodshed at the time of Partition, are constantly exploited in order to attack the Muslim population of India. The spurious fear of Islamic terrorism across the globe is also used by Hindu fundamentalists to create fear of attack on so-called 'tolerant' and 'non-violent' Hindus,

and a connection is insinuated between Indian Muslims and domestic terrorist activities.

Centuries-old claims of attacks on Hindu temples and people are raked up, and Hindus are chided for having allowed themselves to be violated by Muslim 'outsiders'. This constant propaganda, assisted by global politics, has resulted in Hindus starting to believe that they have indeed been terribly wronged for centuries, and that, if they do not act, they will continue to be exploited and violated by these 'outsiders'. Identity politics of this kind - which magics up a communal identity in opposition to some other fictitious but threatening identity - is a common tactic of fundamentalists of all sorts.

The result in India is a militarised population keen to train for its supposed 'self-defence'. Regular camps are held for children, young men and women, where training is given in the use of weapons. A large population of Hindus, spewing hate and ready to defend themselves, has been created: their numbers were evident in the pogrom against the Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. The distribution of tridents (three-pronged spears) under the guise of 'Hindu culture' has created large gangs of armed Hindus. The participation in the violence on the streets of Gujarat of *Dalits*, tribals and women is a painful reminder of how they in particular have been encouraged to engage in weapons training and join the 'Hindu' identity.

The use of identity politics

Dalits, tribals and women have in the past engaged in progressive movements based on shared oppression and their struggles to change the structures that give rise to these oppressions. These movements are a challenge to the right-wing fundamentalist agenda of identity politics; the right has therefore tried to assimilate these groups and decimate their movements. As Mumbai-based activist and writer Ram Puniyani says:

The right-wing organisations came up in the 1930s and their emergence has been at the time when all the movements for social equality and justice – those of women and the anti-caste struggles in particular – were at the forefront. These movements and the vision of the world that they provide have been the primary targets of the fundamentalists. Other religious minorities and groups are in fact the 'collateral damage' in this process.¹¹

In their campaign to valorise the conservative status quo, the Hindu fundamentalist organisations have made a point of organising women. They created the *Rashtriya Swayamsevika Sangh* and the *Durga Vahinis*;¹² the former is the women's counterpart of the RSS, an organisation open only to men. Its main aim is to create a sense of 'Hindu culture' amongst women, through training and consciousness-raising activities.

The *Durga Vahinis* were set up in the early 1990s to mobilise women from middle and lower income groups. The main principles this organisation instils are *seva* (service), *suraksha* (safety) and *samskara* (values). Women are considered important contributors to the creation of a Hindu nationalist culture, as nurturers, soldiers and propagators of the Hindu nationalist project. As mothers, daughters, sisters and wives, their role as defenders of the

culture, values and ethos of Hinduism is projected as their main purpose in life. The image of the goddess Durga as the slayer of all wrongs and defender of the wronged is very potent. In the Hindu fundamentalist project, the wrongdoers are identified as practitioners of Islam and Christianity, and women are mobilised as warriors, to defend the 'victimised Hindu culture and religion' against them.

There are many stories in circulation of how Hindu women were sexually violated by Muslim invaders. History has been manipulated to create a powerful propaganda tool. The myth of the virile, violent Muslim man and the victimised Hindu woman, through whose body Hindu culture and religion are attacked, is regularly invoked. Women and men have been organised through hatred for Muslim men and with feelings of vengeance against Muslim women. This was translated in Gujarat into the mass sexual abuse of women from the Muslim communities, unashamedly carried out in full public view of women and men from the Hindu communities.

With the emergence of specifically Hindu women's organisations, the broad struggle of women in general for equality and justice has been forced to the margins. Women's efforts to create positive self-defining identities have become subsumed in the traditional definitions of patriarchal control. Women have been mobilised in large numbers, but in support of the very forces that curtail their freedoms and their assertions of identity.

Taking over state power

Along with the assertion that Hinduism needs to be defended from Islam and Christianity, the Hindu fundamentalists have also, from the very beginning, identified communism as a force from which Hindu society needs to be protected. As Shivram Shankar Apte says in the *Organiser*, mouthpiece of the RSS:

The declared object of Christianity is to turn the whole world into Christendom – as that of Islam is to make it 'Pak'. Besides these two dogmatic and proselytising religions, there has arisen a third religion, communism. For all of these the major target of conquest is the vast Hindu society living in this land and scattered over the globe.¹³

The socialist vision of independent India, shared by many of the early leaders of the Congress party that came to power in 1947, was hence not supported by the Jansangh, the Hindu fundamentalist party at the time. But Congress was popular and stayed in power; the Jansangh did not have many seats in parliament and did not have support from the majority of the Hindu population. With the decline of Congress in the seventies, the Jansangh, now renamed the BJP, came to power in coalition with many other parties.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, the Hindu right-wing mobilised massively amongst Hindus. Although the organising was done by religious organisations like the VHP and involved *sadhus* and *sants*,¹⁴ it was clearly aimed at gaining political and electoral support. Congress was represented as pro-Muslim and hence anti-Hindu. This propaganda worked; many votes shifted as a result.

The global scenario after the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, when right-wing conservatism gained in popularity all over the world, helped this trend within India. The BJP did not differ much from Congress on issues of economic policy, but constantly attacked the 'secularism' practised by Congress as anti-Hindu, thus gaining a base amongst Hindus from widely different class, caste and regional backgrounds.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992¹⁵ and the inaction of the then government in the face of the violence against Muslim communities that preceded and succeeded this event, were clear indicators of the Hindu fundamentalists' growing strength and popularity. In 1993, for the first time, the BJP, along with other parties, formed the national government, if only for a few days. In subsequent elections, however, they have emerged as the major party, gaining ground not only nationally but also in many state governments.

The presence of the BJP in power has changed the political scene. The implementation of right-wing economic policies and the processes of globalisation have accelerated. At the same time, there is a visible and palpable Hinduisation of all institutions. They have control over the bureaucracy and of appointments to all key posts, in the police force, the judicial system and departments of education. There have been major controversies over history text books for schools, and about including subjects like astrology and yoga in the higher education syllabus. The mainstream media now debate - as matters of national importance - non-issues like the debate over the birthplace of Ram, the banning of cow slaughter, and so on. Secularism, a key concept in free and independent India, is under concerted attack.

A new concept of citizenship and democracy is emerging in which Hindus alone have a natural right to be citizens. All others are only tolerated, and so given secondary status which threatens even their basic citizenship rights. India, the largest democracy in the world, is almost becoming a mockery of itself. With the Hindu fundamentalists major actors in electoral politics, the religious majority that they have striven to create is becoming a permanent majority on all issues:

The VHP's conception of permanent majority goes against (the) basic principle of democracy, both in theory and in practice, and possesses fascist elements ... A permanent Hindu government ... pushes out from state decisions individuals who ... do not believe in the VHP's ideology. These groups and individuals ... would find it hard to express anti-government views for the fear of inviting the government's retaliation.¹⁶

The events in Gujarat between 27 February and 2 March 2002 show the success of this *Hindutva* project in all its dimensions. The facts summarised below are based on reports by citizens' groups, women's groups, human rights groups from Gujarat and across the country, and also by international agencies like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.¹⁷ They are also based on my own personal experience as part of a women's group, Forum Against Oppression of Women, which has visited Gujarat many times and works with victims in their struggle for survival and their fight for justice.¹⁸

Gujarat – the early incidents

On 27 February 2002, there was an attack on a train carrying Hindu *kar sevaks*¹⁹ from the demolished Babri Masjid site, where they had gone to offer their services for building a Ram temple. A compartment was set on fire just outside Godhra, a station in Gujarat, and 59 women and men perished in the blaze. The assailants were not known and the motive was not clear, but by late evening there had been statements from the Gujarat government and the Hindu right-wing organisations to the effect that this was a deliberate attack on the *kar sevaks* by local Muslims resident in the area where the attack took place. Other statements implicated Islamic terrorists from Pakistan.

What followed was a full-scale attack on people from Muslim communities across the length and breadth of the state. Thousands of armed mobs moved through towns and villages in an area hundreds of kilometres square. They were all shouting the same slogans, and were well aware of the locations of Muslim properties – residential and business – in different towns and remote villages (some carried printed lists, and some properties had been marked beforehand). They went about systematically attacking them. They also brutally killed whoever they found, they sexually assaulted and violated women and young girls and then killed them, they injured people in the most gruesome manner. All property was destroyed so badly that it could not be rebuilt.

In a matter of 72 hours, about 2000 people were killed. During those 72 hours, the administration did not act. The losses suffered by the Muslim community were estimated to be 38,000 million rupees – 1,150 hotels were burned in Ahmedabad alone, plus over 1,000 trucks, severely affecting the hotel and transport industries, which were mainly run by Muslims. About 250 mosques and *dargahs* (holy shrines) were destroyed. The state was ravaged, and its Muslim population made refugees in their own country: around 113,000 people ended up in refugee camps.²⁰

The involvement of *Dalits* in the violence, especially in Ahmedabad, was shocking, because in large urban centres like this the *Dalit* and Muslim populations have lived side by side for many years, with good will and in a spirit of solidarity for their common victimisation by upper caste and upper class Hindus.

Women were used as pawns. Rumours of Hindu women being abducted and raped were spread, and attacks were then instigated on women from the Muslim communities. Pregnant women were particularly targeted. Young girls were assaulted with cries of 'Impregnate them with Hindu children'. A great many Muslim women were violated and mutilated. Those who survived are in no position to fight their cases when the men who raped them roam around freely, taunt them openly and threaten them even until today. Their resolve to fight cannot be sustained when their humiliation and trauma were witnessed by many in their neighbourhoods – women as well as men – and no one came to their rescue.

Some women from the Hindu communities were significantly present in the mobs, encouraging the violence, cheering on the assaults, and looting property; these were women from almost all castes and classes. The desensitisation of Hindu women and the dehumanising of marginalised women by other women are major setbacks to the women's movement, which has been actively seeking justice, respect and equality for all women.

The state machinery and the government itself did not hide their pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim bias. In the 72 hours when the mobs moved freely on the streets, killing and plundering, the only response from the elected representatives of the people was that the feelings of the 'Hindus' had been hurt by the incident at Godhra.

Continuing violence

In those 72 hours, the police also did not act, saying they'd been instructed not to, and that the Muslims deserved it. After 72 hours, they began to register criminal cases against accused persons. But complaints were not recorded properly, and those that were taken were doctored so that leaders of the right-wing parties, who led the mobs in many places and were recognised by many of the survivors, were not named.

Today, case after case that comes up for hearing is dismissed for lack of proper evidence, or because the people who bravely laid charges have withdrawn their statements because of threats. The judiciary is full of sympathisers of the right-wing organisations, and the prosecutors appointed to help victims fight their cases are open supporters.

The police continue to harass people from the Muslim communities with false charges and arrests under draconian laws allegedly for the prevention of terrorism. This not only intimidates the victims of the violence, but fills them with fear of further attacks. Moreover, relief and compensation have not been on a par with the earthquake relief given by the same state the previous year. Whole populations have been left to fend for themselves with support only from their own communities, and those who responded to the crisis have themselves subsequently been targets for victimisation by the state.

The National Human Rights Commission, a constitutional body set up by the government, produced a scathing report on events in Gujarat and the Gujarat government's handling of the situation. Its recommendations were not even considered for implementation by the state or the central government. A routine commission of enquiry has been set up, but it is headed by judges of questionable repute. In each of its actions thus far, the state has implicated itself in every way as colluder in the crime.

Till today, there are some localities where people have not been able to go back because they have been threatened. They are told they have to rescind all charges to be allowed to return to their own lands and their own villages. In many villages, although people have returned, their businesses are affected: they have lost their Hindu clientele, and the Muslim

populations have nothing with which to sustain each others' businesses. Not one of their household items has been recovered from neighbouring houses, where they are seen to be in use. Some businesses, like beef shops, have been made to close completely.

People who still have their own lands are not able to farm as they used to. Some who had regular jobs have lost their jobs, with employers stating they did not want to employ Muslims, or that employing them would cause trouble, or that they had stayed away from work for so long that the employer had had to take on someone else. With any small incident, people from the Muslim communities run away to 'safer' places. Every religious festival (and there are many in the Hindu calendar) brings fear of fresh attacks.

Tension reached a height in December 2002, when, to the shock and surprise of many in India, elections for the state government in Gujarat returned the BJP to power with an increased majority.

The future

The mass scale support of the BJP by the common people of the state is extremely frightening. The people who witnessed the pogrom still support the right-wing organisations, reminding us that the Hindu fundamentalists have achieved a lot of what they set out to achieve. Mass support for hate and hysteria signal the decline of democracy, the end of visions of justice and equality. The warning signs before us are of a more conservative and regressive society, where all who are marginalised will be treated with violence. Today it may be people from the religious minority communities, but soon it could be secularists, then tribals and *Dalits* and women. The values of democracy and the rule of the law, and the culture of non-violence, are being eroded. A nightmarish world of conservatism, hierarchy and aggression is taking shape.

And this is happening in a democracy that is to a large extent functional, where people do have space - albeit shrinking - to express differing opinions and protest against injustices. This is happening in a society that has vibrant progressive movements fighting for equality, justice and rights for all sections of society.

Not allowing this to happen any more is the challenge before all of us. Hope comes from the protests against the violence in Gujarat, and the support for the victims, that came from all over the country and internationally as well. It gets strengthened by the actions of constitutional bodies like the National Human Rights Commission, that continue to abide by the law without relenting under pressure from the elected law makers.

We need to reclaim political space for real issues – economic, social and cultural violence and marginalisation, growing disparities. We need to unite with other struggles in this shrinking world, and join hands across the globe to achieve another world, where fundamentalisms of all sorts are challenged and made extinct.

Endnotes

- ¹ The major violence has been between people from the Hindu and Muslim communities, these being the religions practised by the largest populations in the country.
- ² National Human Rights Commission (31 May 2002) 'Gujarat Carnage: A Report'. The facts of the pogrom were also corroborated by many other reports from national and international independent citizens' bodies and tribunals, women's groups and human rights groups.
- ³ Literally this means 'Hindu nation'; it is the term used by most right-wing Hindu organisations to describe their vision of India.
- ⁴ The caste system in India is a key part of the matrix that delineates community affiliation. Caste may be understood as a system of defining community, a system that is maintained through social hierarchies and clear rules about who one can and cannot marry. One is born into a caste and, by extension, a community. Each sub-caste theoretically has its own profession, and thus the community is identified by the work traditionally done by its members. The groups within the caste system – *brahmins* (priests), *kshatriyas* (warriors), *vaishyas* (merchants), and *shudras* (lower castes) – are organised hierarchically descending from the *brahmins* to the *shudras*, with sub-castes within each of these groups. The lower castes are inclusive of the untouchables, or *Dalits* (literally meaning oppressed), who are also referred as *Harjans*.
- ⁵ Hindustan means 'land of the Hindus' and is one of the names for India.
- ⁶ These three names translate in English as follows: RSS, National Volunteers Corps; VHP, World Hindu Organisation; BJP, Indian People's Party. For a complete list of offshoots created by the RSS, refer to Sadanand Damodar Sapre (1997) *Param Vaibhav ke Path Par* (On the Road to Great Glory), New Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan.
- ⁷ Manjari Katju (2003) *Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman Ltd, p. 2.
- ⁸ Romila Thapar (2003) 'Some thoughts on the present situation', in K.N. Pannikar and Sukumar Muralidharan (eds) *Communalism, Civil Society and the State*, New Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, p. 157.
- ⁹ Kailash Chandra (1990) 'Soya Bharat chete' (India should wake up), *Hindu Vishwa*, January, 13-14 (as quoted in Manjari Katju, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics*, *ibid*).
- ¹⁰ Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who was himself born in a lower caste, is an icon of the anti-caste movement in India and the author of the Indian constitution.
- ¹¹ Ram Puniyani is a secular activist working for an organisation called Ekta in Mumbai. He has researched and written extensively on Hindu right-wing organisations. This is from a speech he made at a public meeting in Mumbai on 5 July 2003, 'Impact of International and National Politics: Implication for Muslims in India'.
- ¹² Durga is a feared militant goddess who carries numerous weapons; *Durga Vahini* means 'vehicle of Durga'.
- ¹³ Shivram Shankar Apte, 'Why Vishwa Hindu Parishad', *Organiser*, Diwali issue, 2 November 1964, p. 15 (Shivram Shankar Apte is the first general secretary of the VHP).
- ¹⁴ Hindu ascetics from different sects of Hinduism who form the core of present-day organised Hinduism.
- ¹⁵ The Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi controversy has been one of the major planks of the Hindu fundamentalists' propaganda. They claim that, during Moghul rule, a temple that stood at Ram's alleged birthplace was demolished and the Babri Masjid constructed. Their demand was demolition of the mosque and reconstruction of the temple. On 6 December 1992, the mosque was demolished by thousands of volunteers, while the state administration (also a BJP government) stood by and watched.
- ¹⁶ Manjari Katju, *ibid*, p. 77.
- ¹⁷ The site www.onlinevolunteers.org has its focus on the Gujarat Carnage since March 2002 and is regularly updated with all news and reports that come out. Most of the independent and other reports that have been published so far are available on this site.
- ¹⁸ The Forum put together an international feminist panel which visited Gujarat in December 2002; their report, 'Threatened Existence: a Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat', was published in December 2003, and is available on www.onlinevolunteers.com or from Forum Against Oppression of Women on inforum@vsnl.com.
- ¹⁹ *Kar sevaks* is the term used for volunteers willing to offer free services for community activities. It has been appropriated by the VHP for the volunteers that it gathers for what it calls the 'Ram Janmabhoomi' movement (*sic*). Every time there is a show of strength by the VHP and its allies, these *kar sevaks* are gathered in large numbers from all over the country and taken to the site of the agitation. Many times people join in with full knowledge of why they are going, but there are also some who go in order to make a pilgrimage to a holy site.
- ²⁰ 'Genocide Gujarat 2002', *Communalism Combat*, No. 77-8, March-April 2002.