



COMMUNALISM:

Illustrated Primer

Ram Puniyani

Communalism: Illustrated Primer

Revised

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Preface

The rise in communal violence in recent times poses a serious challenge to the democratic and secular values of Indian society. The events in Gujarat in 2002 have shaken the conscience of all the citizens of the country who have faith in the Indian Constitution. How is it that people can take to the streets to kill their own neighbours ? How is it that women who have nothing at all to do with a particular incident – like the burning of the train at Godhra – can be ‘punished’ by being raped? How is it that an innocent child in the womb of a mother is slaughtered as an act of ‘revenge’ for a particular act with which it has nothing to do? How do people come to believe falsehoods about other communities?

The core of communal politics is guided by the agenda of those sections of society that are opposed to democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Communal politics rides on the vehicle of hate propaganda. By creating an external enemy it is able to generate a hysteria which grips the masses and gets manifested in violence. The issues it selects have nothing to do with the real problems of the average sections of society, but are issues with pure emotional appeal, and are in a way decoys hiding the real social issues. Mass hysteria is generated by the systematic spread of hatred against weaker sections. Such hatred is in turn made part of mass social common sense. This common sense has nothing to do with the truth, but controls the minds and social behaviour of large sections of society.

Gujarat today witnesses such a mass consciousness in its most naked form. The construction of the ‘other’ is more or less complete, and the ghettoisation and consequent change in the behaviour of the weaker sections further aggravates this social common sense. The motivated political formations controlled by cultural organizations keep doing this all the time in society.

We need to understand the phenomenon of communal violence in a deeper sense to protect our democracy and pluralism. Already communal propaganda has vitiated the social atmosphere all over the country and it is time that we unravel the truth behind the ‘social common sense’ – it is time that we understand the real intent of communal politics, the one masquerading as religion-based politics. This book is an attempt to understand this phenomenon.

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- Ram Puniyani

EKTA, Committee for Communal Amity, Mumbai



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DEMOLITION OF BABRI MASJID

On 6 December 1992 the Babri Masjid was demolished. This was a major blow to the secular fabric of the country. It brought to the fore the deep communalization of society and the realization that communalism is now *the* major problem confronting our society. Though it is such a recent phenomenon, it has already has been mythified due to the prevalent propaganda.

Myth

Though the demolition of the Masjid was horrible, we know that it was not a mosque, it was a *disputed* structure, and you see Ram Lalla had entered the structure as he (Lord Ram) was deprived of his abode.



Fact

Let us see the sequence of events before we make our judgment 22-23 December 1949. In 1949 the local district magistrate reported to the state government, 'few Hindus entered Babri Masjid at site and installed Ram and Sita idols' (Akhtar, *Ek Thi Babri Masjid*). The government proclaimed the premises to be a disputed site and locked the gates. The local district magistrate, K.K.Nayyar, a Sangh sympathiser who later became a Jan Sangh MP, refused to get the idols removed despite the appeal by the government; even the appeal of Prime Minister Nehru was ignored. The premises remained locked till 1986.



Myth



The Hindus were deprived of their place of worship and it was a spontaneous Hindu reaction to take over the place of worship from the pseudo-secular state and the bigoted Muslims.

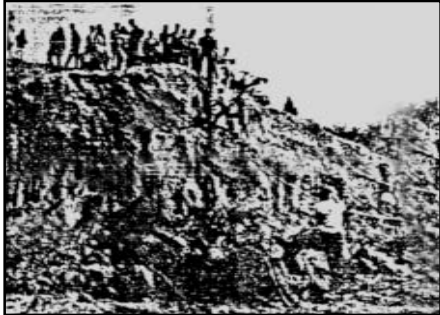
Fact



Beginning from 1981 there was a heavy communalisation of the social space. Initially in response to the conversion of Dalits in Meenakshipuram the communal forces became very aggressive. Anti-Dalit riots had taken place in Gujarat, particularly in Ahmedabad.

And since that time the communal forces were looking for any provocation to actively spread communal hatred in society. The incident which gave a boost to communal politics was the Shah Bano case. In this the government of Rajiv Gandhi got the Muslim Women's Protection Bill passed by Parliament to sidetrack the Supreme Court's judgment





➡ **REHERSALS 5th December 1992**
Kar Sevaks doing rehearsals in Ayodhya

➡ Kar Sevaks mobilised by BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal with their "Kar Seva" instruments



➡ **6th December 1992**
Kar Sevaks climbing the dome



On stage were present Advani, Joshi, Uma Bharati and Sadhavi Rithambhara. Uma Bharati and Sadhavi Rithambhara were constantly prodding the Kar Sevaks *Ek Dhakka Aur Do, Babri Masjid Tod do* (Give one more push and demolish the Babri mosque)

6th Dec. 1992, 5.30 pm M.M. Joshi & Uma Bharati celebrating demolation

Babri Mosque flattened. Markshift temple erected. Idols installed in the markshift arrangement. ➡





on grant of maintenance to divorced Muslim women. Muslim communal elements, supported by the government, ensured the scrapping of the Shah Bano judgment. To 'balance' the appeasement of Muslim communal politics, the government played the Hindu communal card and the Babri Masjid locks were opened at the instance of Hindu communal forces. In 1986 anti-OBC riots took place again in Gujarat.

The Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented by the V.P. Singh government in 1990. In response to this the VHP galvanized itself into action on the hysterical cry of 'Save Hinduism', and organized a series of campaigns like 'Ekatmata Yagnas', etc. The VHP revived the Ayodhya campaign on a higher pitch, resolving to build a magnificent Ram temple at Ayodhya. It undertook massive efforts to bring different Hindu religious leaders together on this issue. From here the BJP took over the Ram Janmabhumi campaign and Advani started his Rath Yatra from Somnath to consolidate the Hindu elite behind the BJP's politics. The RC intensified its campaign/mobilization through *shilanyas*, construction of platform for Singh *dwar*, etc. and a call for *kar seva* on 6 December was given. Intense mobilization of mainly elite Hindus began. This led to *kar seva* and the demolition of the mosque on 6 December 1992.



Myth

The demolition was a spontaneous act of Hindus whose feelings have been ignored by the pseudo-secular rulers. Some people also say that demolition was a mystery and that it was not due to the RSS combine.



Fact

The demolition was not spontaneous. During the nationwide campaign for the temple, Mr. Advani stated, '*Kar seva* will be done with bricks and shovels.' Another BJP stalwart Murli

Manohar Joshi said, 'Demolish the masjid; nature of *kar seva* will be determined by *sants* and not by courts. Demolition is a prerequisite for temple-building.' Vinay Katiyar, Bajrang Dal chief, went on to say, 'The masjid will be demolished and the debris will be thrown in the river Sarayu.' Ashok Singhal of VHP was not to be left behind. His resolve was: 'Decision of *sants* will prevail over decision of legal courts' (the *sants* had already given the call for demolition of the masjid) (Based on Newspaper reports and Mukhopadhyay, 1994).



Kar Seva will be performed with bricks and shovels

Mother and Son

Mother?

Yes, Son.

Mother: who said, 'Industries are the temples of modern India'?

Son: Jawaharlal Nehru.

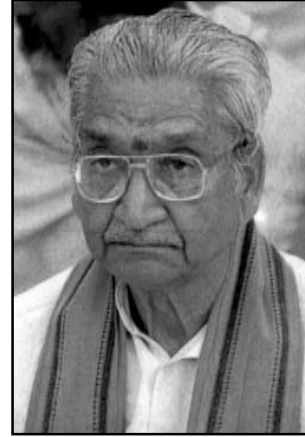
Mother: who said 'Temples are modern industries of India'?

Son: L. K. Advani



At this point of time the BJP government in UP promised to the courts and the National Integration Council that it would protect the mosque.

There was a countrywide mobilisation by different wings of the RSS combine. *Kar Sevaks* arrived in large numbers from 24 November 1992 onwards. All necessary assistance was provided by the state, including electricity and water. The rehearsal of the demolition was done by 450 specially trained volunteers. Nearly 20000 *kar sevikas* took the responsibility for cooking. Thick ropes, steel hooks, etc. were arranged. On the day of the demolition only trained volunteers were allowed near the mosque; RSS volunteers ensured that others were prevented from coming nearby to avoid injury and unnecessary crowding.



On the stage *bhajans* were sung by sadhus. Advani and Joshi were on the on the dais. Uma Bharati and Ritambhara were exhorting the *kar sevaks* by shouting slogans like *Ek dhakka aur do, Babri Masjid tod do* (Give one more push, break the Babri mosque) and *Yeh to kewal jhanki hai, Kashi-Mathura Baki Hai* (This is the just the beginning, next is the the turn of Kashi and Mathura). With demolition of the third dome jubilation began. One section of *kar sevaks* beat up journalists and broke their equipment. The returning *kar sevaks* burnt and destroyed the property of Muslims.

As the demolition was going on, Kalyan Singh (UP chief minister) was advised by Advani not to resign till the demolition was complete. Kalyan Singh accordingly resigned as soon as the mosque destruction was complete; his government was simultaneously dismissed by the central government. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, and Home



Minister Shankarrao Chavan could have intervened when the demolition was going on and when the post-demolition makeshift temple was being built, but they preferred to do nothing. *Kar sevaks* made the makeshift temple and installed the idols. BJP leadership was initially apologetic ('We are sorry to the nation', A.B. Vajpayee) and later aggressive. Asserting, 'It was the will of God,' they later threatened: 'If the sentiments of majority community are not respected, this is what happens.'

(This Chapter is based on the two books quoted earlier, India Today and Frontline issues of from the second half of December 1992, and press clippings from the Times of India in November and December 1992.)

Jamil Akhtar, Ek Thi Babri Masjid, Lucknow, Media Research Centre, 1997.

N. Mukhopadhyay, Demolition. India at the Crossroads, HarperCollins India, Delhi 1994, pp. 346-7.



Sangh Parivars' response to Babri Demolition

7th Dec. 1992

One Week Later

A month later



"We are sorry
to the nation

It was the
will of God

If the sentiments of
majority community
are not respected,
this is what happens

Bakar Ali used to make wooden footwear in Ayodhya, this footwear was used by devotees visiting the temples. Bakar Ali was thankful to Ram, and felt that Allah was also happy that his follower was able to make his living and pray in Ayodhya. One day his shop was burnt with all the footwear — What will happen to the temple goers...Hey Ram...

- *Kuberdatta*