

COMMUNAL RIOTS IN U.P.

As pointed out above a fresh wave of communal violence started in different parts of India after the Kar Seva began on 30th October. Number of people were killed in the first wave of violence in Gujarat immediately after 30th October, 1990. According to the news paper reports on 30th and 31 October at least 34 persons were killed in Gujarat. Hindus and Muslims clashed in Juhapura, Vasna, Shahipur, Khanpur, Paldi and satellite Road in Ahmedabad. Juhapura was affected by large-scale looting, arson and stabbing. Two people were killed in the police firing itself. But according to the Chief Secretary of Gujarat Mr. Khan in all 24 people were killed. Seven towns in Gujarat Godhra, Baroda, Bhruch, Jamjodhpur, Padra, Halol and Ahmedabad were put under curfew. In Ahmedabad Army had to be called in. We will deal with riots in Gujarat which broke out after 7th December the second phase of Kar Seva later on.

The major riot broke out in Bijnor in U.P. on 30th October and violence continued unabated for three days. Unofficial sources put the death toll at more than 200 while official sources admitted very few deaths. But personal interviews with some eye witness indicated that toll was very heavy and unofficial claims were much nearer the truth. Apart from the loss of life, economic losses were also very heavy. Looting and burning of shops and other properties were quite extensive. The town was under curfew even after 10 days of the outbreak of violence. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who visited Bijnour on 10th November was visibly moved by the pathetic tales

of woes and suffering narrated to him by the victims.

DELHI RIOTS

Nex Delhi was worst affected. Muslims and Sikhs took out peace March together on Nov. 15 from Gurdwara Sisganj to old Idgah in Old Delhi. Delhi was also tense on account of exaggerated news reports about Kar Seva in Ayodhya on Oct. 30. Thus even peace march turned into bloody rioting. It is alleged that some youth were leading peace march and they raised slogans which were not very sober. The Hindus termed then as very provocative, when the peace march terminated at old Idgah, it was turned into public meeting. Muslims and Sikhs spoke. When a Sikh leader rose to speak, there was heavy brickbating from the vicinity. The news papers described it as "virtual breakdown of law and order". The Delhi police along with the presence of 10 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) failed in its task of preventing another flare-up. In the end, the police had to fire several round to send the rioters packing.

The Hindus had resorted to brickbating in retaliation to the slogans and speeches and this brickbating began, according to the eye-witnesses soon after the three BJP leaders and members of Parliament from the Capital, Mr. Madan Lal Khurana, Dr. V.K. Malhotra and Mr. Kalka Dass, Left the troubled area after a visit. The Commissioner of Police Shri Vijay Karan, however, denied any connection between the visit and the rioting. By the evening in all 6 persons were killed including the sub-inspector Bhim Singh of the CRPF who had sustained head injury. It is said that the trouble began when a resident of Qasabpura (a Muslim) went to buy some provisions in the shop in nearby Basti Harphool Singh. Some youngsters assembled there and warned the shopkeeper not to sell anything to the man as he belonged to another community. An altercation soon ensured and the man was very badly beaten up. Shortly thereafter heavy brickbating followed between the residents of Qasabpura and Basti Harphool Singh.

The residents of Qasabpura angrily alleged that the police openly sided with the Hindus during the skirmishes. Express news service reported that lending credence to this allegation was the fact that while policemen patrolled with ease Basti Harphool Singh, there was hardly a constable who risked going inside Qas-

abpura. The Delhi Communist Party of India also held the police responsible for letting the situation out of hand. Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar who visited the area blamed Pakistan infiltrators for the riots. Shri Chandra Shekhar was told by a weeping uncle that his nephew, a child, was stabbed and he died of stab wounds.

The situation was quite explosive throughout U.P. in the first week of November. On 1st Nov. riots broke out in number of places and curfew had to be clamped on no less than 30 districts. In Lucknow itself two persons died in the old city and army had to stage a flag march. The Government offices and business establishment in the state capital had to be closed down for more than four days. With the escalation of violence entire eastern U.P. came under curfew for a fortnight as well as the Bundelkhand region adjoining the Madhya Pradesh region. Bihar too was affected and two persons were killed in Patna city on Nov. 1 which was already under curfew. One person was killed when two mobs exchanged fire at Sadar Gali near Paschim Darwaza around noon. The clash occurred when a place of worship was damaged. Another unidentified body was recovered by the police from the railway tracks near Noon-Ka-Chauraha in Patna where rioting had begun on the night of October 31. Also, frequent explosions of bombs and crackers occurred near Noon-ka-Chauraha, Lodi-ka-Katra and Fasad-ki-Maidan while shops were burnt in other localities.

On 1st Nov. five persons were also killed in Hyderabad and neighbouring Ranga Reddy district in Andhra Pradesh. There were seven stabbing during a three-hour relaxation of curfew and three of the stab victims succumbed to injuries. Hyderabad was under curfew since October 29 and more than 11 people were killed in communal violence and more than 500 people were arrested in connection with specific offences and as a preventive measure in Hyderabad. Later on the figure on those arrested mounted to 1000. (We will deal with communal violence which rocked Hyderabad again after 7th December in a separate article).

RIOTING IN ALIGARH

The Country was once again rocked with communal violence from 7th December onwards during the second phase of kar seva in Ayodhya. Among other towns, Aligarh was one. Violence broke out in Aligarh on 7th December itself. The apparent cause was attack on some PAC jawans by some Muslims who were returning after the Friday prayers on 7th. The PAC jawans were stoned by these angry Muslims who were told that some PAC men had raped a Muslim widow in the town a day earlier. Also, on 7th December Gomti Express was stopped by a Hindu mob few furlongs from Aligarh station, Muslims pulled out and several of them killed. Official sources put the number of passengers killed at 4 but Muslim sources claim not less than 11 persons were butchered. It is surprising that the Station Master allowed the Express to proceed from the station though he was warned of the mob collecting just a short distance away. There was no adequate police protection either. This incident sent shock waves through Aligarh city. On the first day itself toll was 15 as different areas exploded with violence. An indefinite curfew was imposed and army staged flag marches. On 6th December violence had broken out in Sarai Sultani, Pakki Sarai and some other places and these areas were placed under curfew. But on 7th December curfew had to be extended to two additional thana areas following the Gomti Express incident.

The situation in Aligarh was highly explosive for quite some time. The incident outside the Kotwali when two PAC jawans were stoned was only a triggering one. According to Ajay Singh, Tariq Hasan and Syed Zuber Ahmad "Preparations for it had started since the first week of November, when illegal arms started flowing into the town. Inflammatory pamphlets and video cassettes added fuel to the communal cauldron, as did the speeches of Uma Bharti, BJP MP. during her stormy tour of Agra division. Many people expected riots to take place on December 6, the day the second round of kar seva was to take place in Ayodhya."

December 8, was the worst day of violence in Aligarh. Perhaps it was the blackest day in the history of the town. That night, even the district administration was unable to salvage the dead bodies of the victims. The death toll, according to reliable sources crossed 50, the second day of violence. The most shocking

incident took place at the Jogiwara locality near the Sasni Gate police chowkie, where ten members of a family were burnt alive. Their hutments were surrounded on all sides by members of the other community. What was still worse was that rumours gripped the town that number of Hindu patients were deliberately killed by Muslim doctors at the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College. The local Hindi dailies also mischievously published this news which lent it further credibility. The local Hindi press, as if assumed the role of agent provocateur.

According to Mr. Ashok Chauhan, general secretary of the district Congress Committee, and an industrialist Promod Kumar, who constituted a fact finding committee to look into the incident, "Not only was this news item totally false but it symbolised the threat which irresponsible journalism can cause to the country's unity. Many of these dailies were publishing mere rumours without as much as preliminary inquiry. Also, other propaganda machine was working at furious speed. Smita Gupta of INDEPENDENT, Bombay, writes, ".... there was virtual explosion of Hindu propaganda material. Uma Bharti's inflammatory audiotapes blared from every paan shop. Dr. J.K. Jain's equally objectionable video cassette was beamed directly into homes through a dish antenna. Pamphlets and bills were pushed into houses and even kites with provocative handbills, but were no match for the massive Hindu machinery."

Such rumours and propaganda add maximum damage. The riots spread like jungle fire in new localities across railway line and new settlements on the out-skirts, Hamdard Nagar, Jamalpur and Badam Nagar, and eventually to rural areas and other districts. All evidence shows that not only the district magistrate and S.P. totally failed to control the situation but the PAC went on killing spree. PAC, it seems, has specialised in killing Muslims. PAC has strong anti-Muslim bias which has been repeatedly proved in number of communal riots in U.P. whether it is Moradabad, Meerut, Banaras or Aligarh. Now it is in much more aggressive mood as the VHP is also directly inciting it. According to Vidya Subramaniam and Aditi Phadnis of INDEPENDENT; "The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, in a virtual call for rebellion, has despatched copies of view-cassettes on the Ayodhya violence to commandants of all Provincial Armed Constabulary battalions posted in Uttar Pradesh. The cassettes made by BJP MP J.K. Jain, are accompanied by a person-

alised appeal to the commandants to protect jawans from attacks by "Muslim infiltrations." The highly inflammatory appeal is based on a news item published on December 9 in PAN-CHANJANYA, a BJP-RSS publication. It warns that these "infiltrators", who have crossed into India in thousands from Afghanistan, are planning "bloody civil war" in the country with the help of their Muslim relatives here.

One can very well understand the effect of such incendiary propaganda on the minds of PAC which already has strong anti-Muslim bias. What is totally surprising is complete silence of the Government in view of such blatant provocation. Neither action is being taken against J.K. Jain for making such video cassettes and disturbing them uncensored nor against the leaders of the VHP for sending these cassettes alongwith equally provocative letters to the commandants of the PAC battalions in U.P. We would not get such instances of blatant provocation even during 1947 period. The letter sent to the commandants also states that the main target of these "infiltrators" is the PAC. The appeal further informs the commandants that "infiltrators" are camping in the homes of their Muslim relatives and their gameplan is to build an "electric chamber" in every home which will blow up the minute the PAC jawans enter it.

A delegation of the Aligarh Muslim University Students held a press conference in Delhi on 21 December and its president Hafiz Muhammad Usman accused the PAC of playing a partisan role and targetting Muslims for attack. "This was not a Hindu-Muslim riot", he said, "but a PAC vs Muslim riot." Usman said that in all predominantly Muslim localities like Hamdardnagar, Jampur, etc. where the PAC was patrolling, people were bayoneted by the PAC rifles, houses were burnt after being looted. The Students' Union demanded that in the wake of the PAC's partisan role in Malliana, Gond, Bijnore, Agra and Aligarh riots, the PAC should be withdrawn and replaced by the CRPF, BSF etc.

It is difficult to estimate the number of people killed in these riots in Aligarh. Official estimates are around 85. However, the AMU student's union claimed 500 dead. They claimed that over a 100 Muslims had been killed when the Gomti Express was forcibly stopped on December 8. However, this seems to be exaggerated claim. Generally it is believed not more than 11 persons were killed

in that incident.

There is socio-economic angle too to Aligarh riots. Undoubtedly the immediate cause of provocation was mandir-masjid controversy and politics of competitive communalism in the country today. Aligarh is the centre for lock manufacturing. This industry provides employment to around a lakh of people in Aligarh. There are both house-hold units as well as large scale units. The former are owned mostly by the Muslims whereas latter are controlled by the Hindus. Some studies have shown, according to a group of AMU teachers, that the large scale industrialists used to provoke communal riots to damage the small scale industrialist financially. It is evident that a communal violence had always hit the small scale financially and caused them heavy losses as almost all small scale industry have been closed for two months since the situation in the city became communally surcharged. Even if the large scale industrialists do not directly provoke riots they may help the parties involved as in the event of riots, small scale units would inevitably suffer.

RIOTS IN KANPUR

Kanpur once was considered communally peaceful area. I never had large scale communal flare-ups like Meerut, Morabad etc. However, since last year things began to change. A major communal flare up took place in Kanpur last year too. It again became victim of communal violence on 10th December in the surcharged atmosphere of U.P. There were some small incidents since 6th December, the day of second phase of kar seva. Some well meaning people and Muslim leaders warned the district administration but their pleas were ignored. Muslims also observed hartal in protest against the negligent attitude of administration but it did not stir the authorities. The daily news papers like Dainik Jagaran and Dainik Aaj also published provocative material adding to the tension.

One incident on 10th December at last sparked off the violence. Some Muslim hawkers selling clothes on Babbar Road were attacked and their clothes burnt. They came to their locality and complained about it. Some Muslims came out of their houses and went round their area shouting slogans and protesting and some of them looted Hindu shops and burnt some of them. In the

evening then some Hindus came and burnt chappal shops belonging to the Muslims. One mosque was also damaged. At night firing took place and more shops began to be looted. Curfew was imposed by the administration on 11th December. Curfew was clamped mostly in the Muslim areas.

Same day, according to Advocate Nasim Siddiqui, ex-MLA, PAC entered Muslim localities and cut off telephone lines and water connections. Most of the Muslims houses went without water. PAC also began to make arbitrary arrests. Real trouble began on the morning of 12th December. Firing shots were heard early morning and by 11 AM. Muslim-PAC confrontation began. Beconganj, Chamanganj, Kanghi Mahal and Colnelganj were chiefly affected. By 11-30, a large mob of Muslims in these localities came out of their houses and raised slogans of Allah-o-Akbar and began confronting PAC and the Police. The authorities found situation beyond their control and appealed to the Muslims to go back to their houses convincing them that their demands would be fulfilled. Their demands included: 1) withdrawal of PAC who was indulging in arbitrary arrests and 2) restoration of water, electric and telephone connections. Army was brought in and did flag march. It was welcomed by the Muslims which shows army is considered impartial by them.

On the first day of violence in Kanpur about 6 persons were killed, according to the hospital sources. However, by 12th December, i.e. their day of violence the death toll had risen to 13. In the Chamanganj area of Kanpur 4 people were killed when the police opened fire, according to Mr. Mathur, the Director General of Police. Also, two more persons were killed in Chamanganj and Anwarganj Localities in stabbing incidents. The total deaths mounted to 20 by the 14th December according to the official sources.

This includes killing of three children - two brothers and one sister aged between nine and twelve in Chamanganj and their mother too who died later in the hospital. In all 600 persons were arrested according to the district administration. There were not many incidents of large magnitude after 15th december in Kanpur.

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN AGRA

Agra too erupted this time. Agra has a large population of

Muslims and dalits (jatavs) both mostly engaged in shoe-making trade. It is not clear how the incidents began. However, it is certain that the members of the two communities clashed in Tajganj and Loha Mandi areas of Agra. The locality near Taj-Mahal was also affected badly and curfew had to be imposed in that area and Taj also had to be closed down. It is also clear that there was a serious attempt to incite violence in Agra. According to Bisheshwar Mishra the Agra riots were "electronically engineered", Writing in the Sunday Times of India of 23 December, he says, the Police seized some audio cassettes, which screamed slogans inciting both communities. The cassettes started with "Allah-o-Akbar", and then "Jai Sir Ram", followed by BACHAO, BACHAO and MARO, MARO. These were played by Maruti car stereos at full volume in the dead of the night. The unidentified cars would zip off in the darknes of night, leaving behind two panick-stricken and suspicious communities, who would then begin screaming and pelting stone at each other.

It should be remembered that Agra has been one of the most peaceful areas and it did not experience communal violence even in 1947, according to one serious citizen of the city. Prof. Ram Gopal Chauhan, former head of the Hindi Department of Agra College, these riots were imposed on us artificially. Mr. Chauhan laid the blame on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The Professor said, "they should not have taken the ASTHI KALASH (urn containing ashes of those killed in Ayodhya on 2nd Nov.) through the sensitive areas, raised provocative slogans and deviated from the route prescribed by the administration." According to Mr. Ajay Singh, Janata Dal MP from Agra, the riot was one sided and targeted poor Muslims. He very strongly felt that why Mulayam

Singh does not arrest Uma Bharti, the BJP MP who is visiting every kasba of U.P. spewing poison against Muslims?

The bulk of 22 persons killed in Agra were poor Muslims, at least eight of who were killed by the PAC on 16th December while they were doing their daily chores in their homes. According to the eyewitnesses, the PAC jawans climbed on to rooftops in the congested, Muslim localities of Dholi Khar, Tila Ajmeri Khan and Ghati Mamu Bhanja in the Mantola police station area, and aimed at and shot people **INSIDE THEIR HOUSES**. It is also alleged that the PAC men had also climbed atop the houses of the former Congress MP, Mr. Nihal Singh Jain, and the sitting BJP MLA, Mr. Hardwar Dube.

The victims included Mohammad Nasim, 40 who had just come out of the lavatory and was climbing up the stairs. Even six days after the incident, blood could still be seen on the stairs. Jamal, 18 year old boy, was shot dead while he was brushing his teeth while Babubhai, 35, was hit with a bullet when playing with his three-year old son. Munna, 22, was recently married, was shot in such a way that portions of his brain hit the wall. According to Haji Islam Qureshi, it was a Muslim area and there was no communal trouble here and yet the PAC came and shot so many people.

According to one theory some Satta Bazaris were behind these riots in U.P. They are generally traders who support BJP. According to Smita Gupta, "the satorias not only stand to make a killing if their predictions turn out right, but they also have an ideological interest in a riot. For the riot means sharpening of communal divide, which can only benefit communal parties like the BJP." According to Dharmenda Dev, Commissioner of Agra Division, "The phenomenon in communal riots, with amounts as large as rupees ten lakhs being batted on and our investigation in Agra show that the satorias played an active role in instigating the riots."

This is quite new but a bizzare phenomenon. It is said that betting on communal riots is highly profitable as riot can be easily instigated by the betters. There is nothing uncertain about it. Betting on other things like rains etc. Remains quite uncertain. This shows what selfish interests and ideological perversions can do to fellow human beings.