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# THE ATTRITION OF MEMORIES: ETHICS, MORALITY AND FUTURES

by Parita Mukta

This article argues that the significant and wide-ranging work that has been carried out in India in compiling oral testimonies of survivors of the genocidal violence against religious minorities after the rise of organised fascist politics in the country, and especially after the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, has profound implications for the understanding of the experience and workings of all forms of violence, including daily violence. It takes the genocide of Muslim citizens that took place in Gujarat in 2002 as a starting point to develop the concept of *attrition of memories*. It argues that the contestation around these memories cannot be seen in isolation, and that a method and form of understanding needs to be developed that relates the significance of this event (and the experience and memories of this) to *all other memories*. It explores the relationship of the attrition of memories to the subversion of ethical principles. It emphasises the importance of oral history in safe-guarding the experience of the survivors of the genocide and in ensuring that the movement for gaining redressal and restitution is continued. It concludes that it is important to understand the ways in which the memories of fascist terror overlay the memories of ordinary, everyday violence.

## ABSTRACT

**KEY WORDS:**  
oral history,  
attrition of  
memories,  
genocide,  
ethics

The contemporary processes of globalisation have witnessed a war of attrition in the domain of felt and experienced memory. While large-scale movements of peoples across the globe (both coerced and voluntary),<sup>1</sup> developmental destruction (centred around statist values of 'progress') and genocide take place within and without the most spectacular of media theatres,<sup>2</sup> this is accompanied at the same time by an *attrition, a wearing away of lived memories*. It is as if despite the most sophisticated and committed use of the various media in

exposing and laying bare the flagrant abuse of power by brutal governments, civic authorities, and those (often) faceless murderers that are called 'people traffickers,' 'arms dealers' or even 'neighbours', there is both an overload of evidence testifying to the violence of the contemporary times that permeates all aspects of life, as well as a *lack* of knowledge of real suffering.<sup>3</sup> This is compounded by a pervasive sense of betrayal on the part of those who have been violated, as public values of justice, restitution, and defence of rights are abandoned.

In this paper, I wish to develop the concept of the 'attrition of memories' whereby there is, at the very heart of the communications revolution, a concomitant and related process that generates friction and wears out the *holding* of memories, both in the private and the public worlds. In this context, I want to analyse the task of oral testimonies in the holding and the futuring of memories, particularly memories of those individuals and groups who have faced genocidal violence. And, over and above this, I want to ask – what kind of futures can be envisioned where the history of experienced hurts has not been healed, in societies and among peoples for whom public justice has not been felt to be done?

What is the relationship between the attrition of memories and the politics of destruction? Between the erosion of ethical judgment and the politics of despair? The article will take as its substantive focus the genocide that took place against Muslim citizens in the state of Gujarat in western India in 2002, in which well over 2,000 citizens of the Muslim faith were killed, over 100,000 became 'internally displaced' (as they fled for their lives when mobs numbering in their thousands attacked villages, towns and Muslim neighbourhoods in the main cities), and a reign of terror was unleashed such that Gujarat has become known as the state in which targeted killings became legitimised by the state government headed by Chief Minister Narendra Modi. This article will also seek to theorise the link between the attrition of memories, the displaced logic of evil and the impossibility of a future in which the violence of fascist falsehoods holds supreme. It will reflect on the oral history work that I have conducted in western India for the past twenty years, on songs of hope, developmental destruction, the subversion and erosion of grief, and the spread of fascist politics.<sup>4</sup> I will seek to theorise ways in which memories of hurt and pain of particular communities are displaced and diverted through the public discourses and practices of contemporary Hindu nationalists who are intent on creating the way for a non-secular Hindu nation-state in India.

#### **'ORAL HISTORY' WORK, THE POLITICS OF HOPE AND THE TECHNOLOGY OF DESTRUCTION**

Twenty years ago, when I began to tape and collect songs of hope and resistance in India, the work that emerged out of this experience bore the indelible stamp of an optimistic feminism, a hopeful engagement with popular democracy, and a writing that was able to be lyrical in envisioning a future. All this – the oral

history work, the methods and the perspectives that informed this work, the very terms of the writing – were, however, only possible within a framework in which the overarching political state retained a brief for democratic governance, so that the intricate web of radical democracy could thus speak to, within and against this. Once the destruction of Babri Masjid had taken place in Ayodhya in 1992 (unleashing a huge wave of violence against Muslim citizens) under the very eyes and approval of LK Advani (who became President of the Bharatiya Janta Party, the BJP, in July 1993), and as the BJP came to power in 1998 (with Advani as Home Minister), the centre of government shifted substantively to incorporate at its helm well-known members who held allegiance to the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, the RSS (a highly organised, militant organisation wedded to violence against minorities). One of the major centres of fascist politics came to be Gujarat (the region of research), that became more and more known as the 'laboratory of Hindutva' (Hindu nationalism). After the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, south Gujarat in particular saw some of the worst and cruellest abominations against women and men of the Muslim faith. Walking round the ravaged and razed houses in the areas of the city of Surat, and talking to survivors, it was clear that the intentional malevolence directed against Muslim citizens had shifted something profoundly in the body politic – as well as the body social.

In terms of intellectual thought, the destruction of Babri Masjid shook secular historians, social scientists and political commentators in such a profound way that it was clear in their writings that this seismic event had forever altered the face of politics, governance, indeed the life-world – that nothing had, or could remain the same, given that there had been a clear politically-grounded movement that consciously and callously targeted religious minorities as the 'enemy'. However, while the term 'pogrom' was widely used for the events that occurred in 1992-3,<sup>5</sup> and while scholars from all disciplines were deeply concerned at core at the political scarring and devastation that took place (attested to by numerous oral testimonies),<sup>6</sup> it was and remains curious that analysis and intellectual debates focused on the relationship between the pogrom and the erosion of democratic governance *while all other scope of thinking and exploration remained untouched by this event*. Thus, intellectual work on issues such as poverty, development, sustainability and education continued to be conducted, debated and written about *as if this happened in a different realm of life, in a*

*domain separate and apart from the domain of fascist terror being unleashed.*' The relationship between this fascist terror and the way in which it fundamentally transformed the realm of living and experiencing life, particularly in the towns, cities and villages of Gujarat, has not been acknowledged. There remains a curious lag between the actual thinking and feeling of concerned scholars who implicitly recognise the way in which the radical evil of fascism pervades and permeates all domains of life – and a difficulty in capturing this inexpressible terror that has cast a shadow on all walks of life.

A striking exception to the above lag was an article by Jan Breman, an eminent social scientist who argued in the leading journal *Economic and Political Weekly*<sup>8</sup> that the ones identified as being among those who were the perpetrators of violence in the city of Surat in January 1993 (male migrant tribal labourers) were those who were the most brutalised in cultural, personal, social and political terms. Breman utilised his insights into the twilight world of marginalised labourers to make clear linkages between the brutalising conditions of tribal labourers and their imbrication within the spectacular violence inflicted against Muslim citizens in the city of Surat in 1993. In this, he was able to bring some clarity to the question: how are these horrors possible? Breman's article (and his subsequent longer exploration of these issues), while acknowledging the pogrom and the world of the terrified survivors, took a close look at both the political economy of marginal labourers, as well as the interiority of their world to show how the diminution of human worth (in a period of globalisation) turned the marginal and the impoverished into perpetrators of unspeakable crimes. Breman's work is noteworthy for offering insights not only into the ways of understanding or analysing a society in the throes of an immensely violent transformation; but also of providing a glimpse of light into the question as to why the powerless become enmeshed into a politics of hate and violence.

After witnessing the pogrom that took place in Surat 1992-3, during and after large-scale organised attacks that took place against poor Christians in the tribal belt of the Dangs in 1998<sup>9</sup> and after the Gujarat genocide of 2002<sup>10</sup> it became clear to me that it was no longer viable to keep the 'oral history' work,<sup>11</sup> particularly the testimonies of survivors of the pogrom, separate and apart from other domains of thought and analysis, and indeed that the very ground of oral history work needed to be rethought. The earlier search (in

oral history) for deeper rooted political and historical traditions which would act as resources of hope appeared almost arcane in the face of the fascist violence, and with the growth of an authoritarian nation-state the question in conducting this work irrevocably shifted to: firstly, how and in what ways (if at all) was it possible to keep alive and consolidate the processes and structures that kept individuals and communities knitted together across the religious divide; and secondly, how and in what ways was the Hindu nationalist state, and the Hindu nationalist political movement which masqueraded as a 'religious' organisation (the Vishwa Hindu Parishad) radically altering forms of life and belief in ways which foregrounded death and violence? The Vishwa Hindu Parishad appeared enormously capable of ingesting and thereby transmogrifying the major aspects of belief, expressions, and faith into channels that deepened divisions and animosity. The coming to power of an avowed Hindu nationalist party at the political centre meant that the fundamental question of resources of hope – where did these lie, and how could these be consolidated – had to relate to a completely transformed political context. The terms of oral history (any oral history work), its strengths and weaknesses, its capacities and limitations, would have to be tested against the immense power of an authoritarian state and its totalisation of violence. The critical faculty required to understand the structures of oppression; the tenacity required to expose fascist violence; and the necessity to ensure that the violated were cared for would from then on have to be measured against the might of fascist politics in casting away and subverting all vestiges of love, care and belonging (to a human community that was based on trust not hate, to a politics of inclusion.)

The question was particularly acute given that those in political power at the centre of state government utilised a technology of destruction during the genocide that took place in Gujarat in 2002 in a manner that cultivated and produced a manufactured hatred. These technologies of authoritarian destruction were manifold: the harnessing of vernacular print technology in raising anti-Muslim sentiments to a fever pitch, thus ensuring that a coherent structure of hatred was created which went beyond the card-carrying fascist cadres and incorporated 'ordinary' citizens; the distribution of electoral rolls identifying Muslim citizens as targets which led to large numbers of intentional killings; the speedy assembling of vengeful youth through mobile telephones at trouble spots, who gathered with the explicit desire to wreak violence; lethal tridents manu-

factured in factories and distributed to fascist cadres prior to the pogrom in 2002 (utilised with utter intent particularly and not only against pregnant Muslim women, the bearers of a future generation). The technologies of destruction had thus to be matched with the force of a powerful *public history*, which insistently kept the memory of the genocide, and the condition of the survivors, within the public space, so that the intentional genocidal violence would be exposed, survivor testimony would be validated and recorded, and so that the process of legal and judicial redressal would be supported. Without this strong public counter<sup>12</sup> to the technologies of destruction (including the destruction of memory), survivor testimony would remain individualised, fragmentary and fragile in an overarching authoritarian political climate.

### THE ATTRITION OF MEMORIES

The attrition of memories of hope, of conjoint living, of life, experience and memories being made and remade side by side, is one of the gravest casualties in the rise of authoritarian politics. I have been struck time and again in the oral history work that I have conducted in Gujarat, by the despair in the testimonies of women and men who have borne the brunt of fascist violence who feel deeply the betrayal of neighbours and recognisable, known people. Attempting to make sense of women narrating the violations on their bodies, as they took me around the buildings that had been gutted in Surat, and hearing a young man saying in a low, quiet voice, 'Sister, they made me put down my trouser to see if I bore a mark....' what was visibly palpable was the trauma of rupture in human relationships as neighbours and friends were identified as having stood aside and even supported the firing and gutting. The fracture in the texture of experience and memories was stark, whereby the survivors were shocked by the complicity in the violence of those who were known to them; in contrast to the venomous hatred displayed against 'these Muslims' (a group homogenised and demonised in casual, peremptory and everyday ways) by members of the dominant Hindu community

This attrition of memories of hope, and the deep schism between the various communities, has been bolstered by a number of political processes. First and foremost, there is the denial by the Hindu right of the messy ground of actual experience (at work, in neighbourhoods, in the teeming urban-scape, in associative groups) in favour of a grand narrative of vengeance and vendetta. Since this is happening at the highest of political levels, and is

supported by an attack on the whole body of critical historical scholarship,<sup>13</sup> then the very nature of writing history has become a battleground. It is impossible to write on 'memories' or 'oral history' now without being alert to this overarching political contest.

The genocide of 2002, stamped by an attrition of memories, marked such a strong rupture both in terms of governance and in the realm of felt (in)security by citizens of the minority faith, that it cannot be seen in isolation to all other lived events and happenings in society. Furthermore, in terms of memory work and scholarship around memories that is taking place now, I am arguing that the work of scholars, writers and commentators can no longer proceed without taking the genocide of 2002 centrally into account. Much more deeply, I am arguing that each and every memory, *each and every experience, each and every narrated account now has to be aware of and take cognisance of the politics of fascist terror*. Whether the latter manifests itself as presence or absence in the accounts,<sup>14</sup> it is indubitably there, has to be reckoned with, has to be taken account of. The neat compartmentalisation of subjects into discrete and separate units of academic analysis is not viable, and does not do justice to the real corrosion that has taken place at multiple levels at the level of the life world. A hard edge in analysis is required in getting at the core of what has thinned out (in real lives, in actual memories, in retold accounts) and also at what is still viable in enabling individuals and communities to live side-by-side. Without this, there is a fuzzy turning away from the harsh political landscape, an abdication of responsibility, a continuity with the holding on to safer old truths as the new realities appear at times to be too devastating to come to terms with.

At the same time, and concomitantly, there is a need to carry on the task of keeping the historical record straight, both of past epochs (which the Hindu right insisted was a record of a battle between Muslim tyrants and submissive Hindus) and the present one, in which constructed past vendettas are poured into a cauldron of contemporary hate politics against Muslim citizens. Secular historians have risen to this task with praise-worthy integrity, raising a necessary beacon of light in the darkness. There is thus, hand in hand with the attrition of memories, a war of attrition on the very terms of what history is. The growing ascendancy of spokesmen belonging to the Hindu right – both within and outside India – who are dedicated to keeping the poison of hate-filled history alive, gives an acute tension to the holding on to a critical and truthful scholarship.

The excess of violence as witnessed in Gujarat in 2002 leads also to a different kind of attrition of memories: as the atrocities mounted in intensity and scale, and as more and more reports were made available of the trauma and terror of survivors, and as survivor stories began to circulate and recirculate (of burnings, rapes and ripping open of bellies) and as the unspeakable began to be spoken and written about again and again,<sup>15</sup> not only did the *previous atrocities* (prior to the 2002 pogrom) recede in time and space, but they appeared to recede in the valence that was apportioned to them. What began to be elided and obscured here were the many and numerous brutalities perpetrated through sectarian political violence on ordinary citizens and workers from the time of independence to today. What the 2002 pogrom (conducted under the ministry of Narendra Modi, a member of the RSS) has done is to elevate the threshold of tolerance (of violence) and show not only what is possible, *but what is politically, socially and emotionally feasible*, raising the stakes of what fascist terror has made permissible.

There are now available over thirty reports that have made public the various facets of the 2002 Gujarat genocide,<sup>16</sup> ranging from the careful documenting of the violence area by area, to the experiences of very young children who witnessed the violence. The genocidal state of Gujarat would have preferred to have erased all signs of the hideous pogroms. That it was unable to do so is in large part a measure of the vibrant public activism that exists in India, centred around citizens' initiatives in documenting the violation of fundamental rights. This large project goes under the name of 'fact finding' in India (a necessary and critical investigative task to undertake under conditions when the politicians, the police and the judiciary are complicit in defending and legitimising the various structures of violence.) It is also an exercise in *testimonial witnessing*, whereby a visible public history is constructed of the atrocities and the suffering. This testimonial witnessing has been powerful in giving voice to the survivor experience, in keeping alive the demand for justice, and in *naming the names of the perpetrators of violence*. The circulation and recirculation of these reports and testimonies, the continuing public litigation, and the suborning of the processes of law to the forces of authoritarianism means that the recent past, the present *and the future that is envisaged* contains the grim and desolate experiences and emotions of peoples who are unable to bury the reminders of the memories of the genocide since no proper redressal of the

violations has been evident. The attrition of the memories of hope is thus fundamentally linked up with an authoritarian state claiming that what was done in the name of the 'Hindu majority' was just and right.

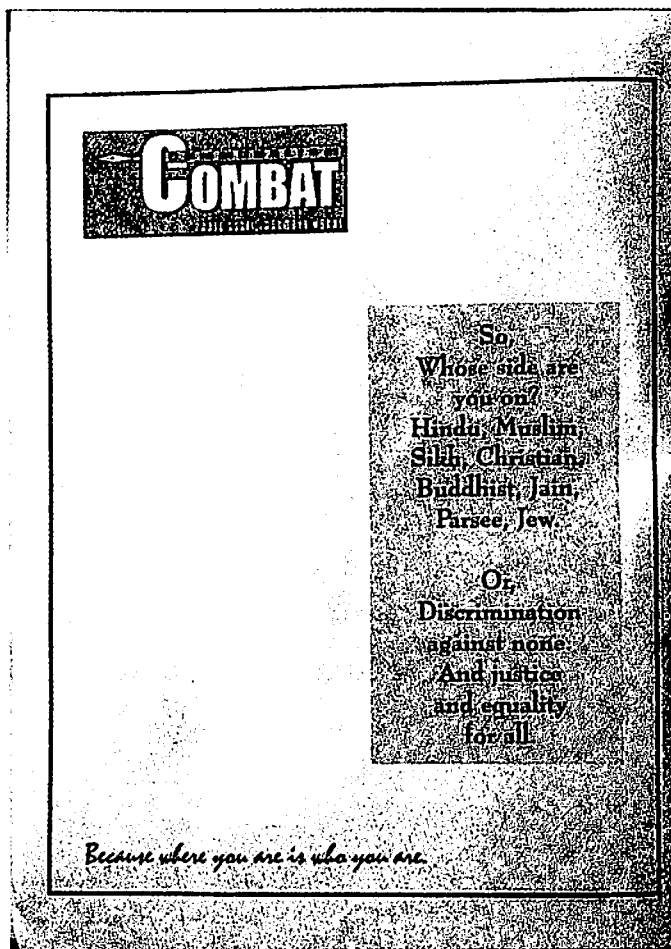
### SUBVERSION OF ETHICAL JUDGEMENTS

At the most profound of levels, the attrition of memories under fascist terror has both been subjected to, and has been at the heart of, the subversion of ethical judgement.

In a style and politics that is peculiar to fascism (the subversion of historical veracity and the shifting of the basis of ethical judgements in which spectacular violence is made legitimate and normalised), the immorality of violence is made moral and to be moral is to be violent. The space for dissent here is shrunk, and those who have felt and witnessed the full brunt of genocidal violence are left traumatised and politically uncared for. I have argued elsewhere<sup>17</sup> that the very subversion of the notion of 'tolerance' is predicated on an acceptance and normalisation of evil, where 'tolerance' means, in the morally upside-down world of the Hindu right, to 'tolerate' a resurgent, aggressive and violent Hindu masculinity.

This subversion of ethical judgment has at heart been accompanied by an acute fetishisation of violence.<sup>18</sup> It bears noting here that one of the major hate-figures for the Hindu nationalists is Mahatma Gandhi, whose total rejection of violence is anathema to them. The crucial point here is not simply that there has been a radical transformation of masculinities, but that the *absolute* rejection of notions of peace, tolerance, care, tenderness, gentleness (save that of caring for the Hindu motherland) has meant that in the discourse of the Hindu right, all those who propound, advocate and work towards a politics of tolerance, of co-operation and co-existence are subjected to ridicule and *shaming*. The politics of shaming as a tangible, and deep-rooted social, intellectual and emotional phenomenon requires serious attention.

The attrition of memories under the authoritarian fetishisation of violence has led to a clear and grave erosion of ethical judgement. From the much-publicised utterances and appearances of the Chief-Minister-cum-RSS-soldier who was taken around the streets of Gujarat garlanded and wielding a sword in his hand (a supreme example of the public theatre of fascist intimidation); to the unchecked and infamous words of leading activists of the Hindu right who have taken pride in stating that the genocide in Gujarat has shown the Muslim citizenry what 'Hindu courage' is capable of, the commu-



Back cover of *Communalism Combat*, one of the major human rights organisations dedicated to exposing violations and to promoting the politics of care.

nalisation of society has steadily gained in pace. In a radical overturning of the basis of ethical judgement, the dominant Hindu community represents itself as the oppressed one, the perpetrators of atrocities are seen to be just warriors righting past and present wrongs, those who speak out against the unspeakable crimes are deemed to be traitors (all familiar tropes in fascist logic) – and deeply, at root, there is both a denial *that these atrocities took place, in the way that they did*, and a peremptory rejection of the need for justice for the surviving communities. It is as if in living under the reign of lies and pogroms, the citizen is asked to suborn her critical faculty and accept that the overarching political aim of the Hindu right – that Muslim and Christian citizens be allowed to live within the Indian nation-state only as submissive Hinduised subjects – is a necessary condition for the political integrity of the nation-state. The displaced logic of evil has exacted a terrible toll on the lives of Muslim and Christian citizens in India: in displacing right for wrong, and elevating a radical evil, the

Hindu right has displaced the potential for making up for its present evil. Contrition is not a feeling to which it lays claim.

#### THE FUTURE AND DEFENCE OF RIGHTS

That memories and accounts of the survivors of violence are suffused with a politics of despair is a tragic truth. This can also be gauged in the accounts of those who have witnessed the violence and have seen the disillusionment that has set in as the judicial process failed to give redress. As fascist cadres were let off the hook by the courts throughout 2002-3, as the survivors faced increasing intimidation when they attempted to give evidence, and as villagers and neighbours brought violent pressure to bear on the survivors to rip up their testimonies and give up on litigation, the future contains gaping wounds and open sores.

To talk of 'healing' here is to take a leap into a polity that has not yet come. 'Resistance' is first and foremost resistance to fascist logic, the ability to hold to integrity amidst the destruction of lives, truth and hope. When structures of power – ranging from the judiciary to the legislature to the police, media, school boards and universities – are permeated by personnel willing to act on the agenda of the Hindu right, then the future appears very bleak to the victims who have survived the atrocities. When the survivors are as young as four and five (who have witnessed and bear the mark of trauma) then the imperative for ensuring that their present and future is made safe and liveable, while ensuring that the past is securely left behind (involving proper redressal of injustices), is urgent.<sup>19</sup> Without the perpetrators of the violence being held accountable for their crimes, it is difficult to evolve a future that is liveable, viable and sustainable (in the deepest of ways) for minorities.

#### MEMORY-HOLDING AND THE FUTURE

If, as I have argued, each and every memory, each and every experience, each and every narrated account now has to be aware of and take cognisance of the politics of fascist terror, then this raises very acute questions for the methodology and practice of memory work, and the writing of oral history: questions that cannot be answered in a facile way, but which require working through, systematically and meticulously. Note that I have said *be aware of and take cognisance of the politics of fascist terror*. Between the fascist erasure of the violence of atrocities, and the (other) equally debilitating impulse that links all of life experiences and memories to the single, successfully recorded blight of totalitarian rule, lies the domain of fraught struggles and real endeav-

ours to make of this one chance to be on this earth something that is liveable even within the parameters of terror and fear. This is particularly true for the survivors of atrocities and the traumatised victims for whom the question of a liveable future is incontrovertibly linked with holding the perpetrators of these crimes accountable. It is true too in a different way for the witnesses, those who have worked indefatigably to record survivor testimonies, and who have allowed the sharp pain to seep into their skins. These witnesses have held intact the memories of the survivors and ensured that those who say that they cannot remember hearing the cries of women, men and children when the Hindutva mobs went on the rampage in the neighbourhoods of cities, towns and villages of Gujarat in February 2002 (stabbing, mutilating, killing, raping) will have to be held accountable for their amnesia. For if the politics of hate and the politics of amnesia succeed in erasing the reality of the atrocities, and if the attrition of memories goes unchecked, then the politics of despair will be one major way in which fascism stamps its victory on the future. Memory work and oral history work has a

crucial role to play here, in holding, disseminating and guarding victim experience till the time political governance becomes defascised.

On a different and related plane, I am suggesting here that the dissemination and the knowledge of the 2002 Gujarat pogrom has incontrovertibly shifted the ways in which the other levels of suffering and the daily violence of life (the violence of hunger, of femicide, of land evictions and work lay-offs, of death through neglect<sup>20</sup>) are experienced, felt, talked about, remembered. The violence of fascist terror – the signs of which have been disseminated, re-disseminated and circulated in a multiplicity of ways, both by the Hindu right, and by its opponents – now overlays the less spectacular and everyday violence of life, and the related suffering. The theoretical, methodological and political challenge to memory work and oral history work is to begin the task of showing, in a careful and systematic way, the transformation that has taken place in the very perception and experience of 'ordinary' suffering in an era when political anti-minority violence has raised the level of suffering exponentially.

## NOTES

1. For a vivid pictorial depiction of this, see Sebastiao Salgado, *Migrations: Humanity in Transition*, Paris: Amazonas Images, 2000.
2. On the Rwanda genocide, see African Rights Watch, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, London, 1995.
3. For an analysis of the politics of images in the west, see Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003.
4. Parita Mukta, *Upholding the Common Life: The Community of Mumbai*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. 'Wresting Riches, Marginalising the Poor, Criminalising Dissent', *Comparative Studies of S. Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. XV, no. 2, 1995. 'Lament and Power: The Subversion and Appropriation of Grief', *Studies in History*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1997; 'The Public Face of Hindu Nationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2000, pp. 442-467; 'On the Political Culture of Authoritarianism', *Development and Deprivation in Gujarat: In Honour of Jan Breman*, edited by G. Shah et al., New Delhi: Sage 2002.
5. A major contribution to this was made by Jan Breman, 'The Anti-Muslim Pogrom in Surat', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 28, no. 16, 2003, pp. 737-41. This was particularly poignant as it came from a leading intellectual who had, as a child, witnessed the occupation of the Netherlands by the Nazis, and who has spent his life researching the question of land and the landless in India.

6. The earliest reports and testimonies come in the lead journal *Economic and Political Weekly*. See the unbearable testimonies of Aushabi, Janak, Aminabi and Rubina in Lancy Lobo and Paul D'Souza, 'Images of Violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XXVIII, no. 5, January 30, 1993, pp. 152-4. For political analysis of the growth of Hindu authoritarianism, see C. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, London: Hurst and Hamilton, 1996; and D. Ludden, *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
7. An important report was produced by the Medico Friends Circle titled *Carnage in Gujarat: A Public Health Crisis, Report of the Investigation by Medico Friends Circle*, New Delhi, May 2002, which clearly spells out what the genocide entailed for the state of public health service.
8. See 3 above, and also Jan Breman, Part III, 'Exit from Civic Society', chapter 8, 'Rural Impressions on the Urban Communal Carnage', chapter 9, 'A Muslim Pogrom in Surat', Chapter 10, 'Ghetto Formation in Ahmedabad', and Chapter 11, 'Communal Upheaval as a Resurgence of Social Darwinism', in *The Labouring Poor in India: Patterns of Exploitation, Subordination and Exclusion*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
9. Citizens Report on the Incidents in Dang District, January 1999.
10. Siddhant Vardrajan, *Gujarat: The Making of*

- a Tragedy*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2002; *Communalism Combat*, Mumbai: Sabrang Publications, issue nos 79, 81-82, 86 and 92.
11. I do not have the space here to analyse the close link between the violence espoused by the Hindu right in India, and its stated and asserted relationship to US geopolitics, in particular the war by the US against Afghanistan. The Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, who presided over the 2002 pogrom, equated 'Muslims' with 'terrorists' and said to the crowd at Wembley Conference Centre in London that what was done to Muslims in Gujarat was as necessary as the US crusade against the Taliban. *Times of India*, 19 August 2003.
  12. The documentary films that have been made on the 2002 genocide have contributed immensely in keeping the events in the international light. See for example *Hey Ram: Genocide in the Land of Gandhi*, Gopal Menon, 2003 and *Final Solution*, Rakesh Sharma, 2004.
  13. Sumit Sarkar, 'Hindutva and History', in *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002. See also the report by the Delhi Historians Group, *Communalisation of Education: The History Textbook Controversy*, New Delhi, 2001.
  14. For a fine account of this phenomenon in Italy, see Louisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turn Working Class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.



**15.** For the many and sustained reports and survivor testimonies available, see: People's Union of Civil Liberties, *At the receiving end: Women's Experience of Violence in Vadodara, Vadodra-Vadodara and Vadodara Shanti Abhiyan*, May 21, 2002; *Carnage in Gujarat: A Public Health Crisis, Report of the Investigation by Medico Friends Circle*, New Delhi, May 2002; *Citizens Report on the Incidents in Dang District*, January 1999, Delhi: Historians Group; *Communalisation of Education: The History Textbook Controversy*, New Delhi, 2001; *Damning Verdict: Report of the Justice BN Srikrishna Commission appointed for inquiry into the riots of Mumbai during December 1992-3 and the March 12, 1993 bomb blasts*, Mumbai: Sabrang Publications; *Genocide in Gujarat: Report by Sahmat Fact Finding Team to*

*Ahmedabad*, Delhi: Sahmat, March 2002; Kavita Panjabi, Krishna Bandopadhyay and Balan Gangopadhyay, *The Next Generation: In the Wake of the Genocide: A Report on the Impact of the Gujarat Pogrom on Children and the Young*, Ahmedabad, July 2002; *The Survivors Speak: How has the Gujarat Massacre Affected Minority Women? Fact Finding Report*, Women's Panel, New Delhi, April 2002; *Threatened Existence: A Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat*, Report by the International Initiative for Justice (IJI), London, December 2003; People's Union of Civil Liberties, *Violence in Vadodara: A Report*, Vadodra, Vadodara and Vadodara Shanti Abhiyan, June 26, 2002; *We Have No Order to Save You: State Complicity and Participation in Communal Violence in Gujarat*, New York: Human Rights Watch, April 2002.

**16.** See footnote 15 above.

**17.** Mukta, 2000, pp 442-466.

**18.** In one of his many vitriolic outbursts, Pravin Togadia, the International General Secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, declared at a ceremony held in Lucknow on 22 March where he presided over the initiation of fascist cadres by distributing t-shirts, that 'Hindus had now realised that they could no longer accept weakness and non-violence as virtue.' *The Hindu*, 23 March 2003.

**19.** For children's experiences and narrating of trauma, see Panjabi, Bandopadhyay and Gangopadhyay, 2002.

**20.** For an excellent discussion on lack of food entitlements and mortality, see Jean Dreze, 'Democracy and the Right to Food', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 2004, pp 1723-31.