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Ten Years of the Modi Regime: Blatant Pursuit of Corporate Hindutva

The last ten years in power of the Narendra Modi-led and RSS-controlled BJP-NDA central government from 2014 to 2024 have seen the blatant pursuit of corporate Hindutva with a vengeance. Never in the last 77 years of independent India has there been a more anti-people, pro-corporate, communal, casteist, and authoritarian regime.

While the BJP-led central government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the first communal regime to stay in power for six years from 1998 to 2004, the BJP by itself was nowhere close to a majority in the Lok Sabha; it had won 182 seats in the Lok Sabha in the 1999 general elections, 90 less than a clear majority, and thus had to heavily depend upon the support of several NDA partners, many of whom did not subscribe to the BJP-RSS communal ideology. That is precisely why it was forced to tread a careful path.

By contrast, in the Modi-led regime of 2014 and 2019, the BJP on its own had a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, with 282 and 303 seats, respectively, out of the total 543. It was this clear majority that made it go berserk, more so in its second term, as we shall see.

The BJP suffered reverses in the Lok Sabha elections of 2024 when its seat tally was cut down to 240, which was 32 less than a clear majority. It managed to stay in power with the support of 52 MPs of the NDA parties, especially the TDP with 16 and the JD(U)

with 12. However, six months after that reverse, its inexorable drive towards Hindutva and Manuvad continues unabated.

HINDUTVA

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its Sangh Parivar are the main fountainheads of communalism and are the backbone of the BJP in India today. The Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS represented majority communalism in the pre-independence period. Now the Hindu Mahasabha has gone into oblivion, but the RSS has become stronger than ever.

Various Muslim fundamentalist outfits like the Jamaat-e-Islami, SIMI, SIO, Muslim League, MIM, PFI, Pakistan-backed terrorist organizations; and Sikh fundamentalist outfits like the various Khalistani groups represent minority communalism.

Majority and minority communalism feed on each other and help each other to grow. While all forms of communalism are dangerous, majority communalism is by far the greater danger since it masquerades as nationalism, and by the sheer force of numbers, it has shown the capacity to wrest state power in the country and many of the states.

Communalism in India today is most clearly represented by the term 'Hindutva'. The term 'Hindutva' took birth with the appearance of the Hindu Mahasabha leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's book titled *Hindutva* in 1923. According to a biography of the founder of the RSS, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, published by the RSS, 'Savarkar's inspiring and brilliant exposition of the concept of Hindutva marked by incontestable logic and clarity, struck the chord of Doctorji's (Hedgewar's) heart'. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the second chief of the RSS after the death of Hedgewar, regarded Savarkar's *Hindutva* as a great scientific book that fulfilled the need for a textbook on Hindu nationalism.

Two other books by Golwalkar, titled *We or Our Nationhood Defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts*, complete the ideological trishul of

the Hindutva forces. This shows the deep convergence of the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha from their inception.

It must first be clearly understood that Hindutva and Hinduism are different entities. Hinduism is a religion. Hindutva is clearly a political project to establish a 'Hindu Rashtra' based on hate and exclusion, and with basic allegiance to the *Manusmriti*.

Corporate-Manuwadi Hindutva, as represented by the RSS-BJP, which is today in power at the Centre and in several states, is certainly the biggest danger before India, and for its democracy, secularism, sovereignty, federalism and socio-economic justice, all of which are the basic features of our Constitution. It poses a grave threat to the lives and livelihood of crores of our working people. It is unashamedly pro-corporate, pro-landlord, pro-imperialist and fascistic in its class character. It is an assault on the very 'Idea of India', which comprises our syncretic history and culture. Most importantly, it tries to splinter the very class unity that Communists strive for in order to bring about a radical social transformation on the basis of a worker-peasant alliance.

The communal drive of the RSS becomes crystal clear from the three immediate aims that it had announced many years ago: first, build the Ram temple at Ayodhya on the site of the Babri Masjid; two, scrap Article 370 of the Constitution giving special status to Jammu & Kashmir; and three, enact a Uniform Civil Code. It has already achieved the first two aims and is trying its best for the third. To Ayodhya now, it has added razing the mosques at Mathura and Kashi and building temples there. After intensifying communal polarisation through all such campaigns, its eventual aim is to change the Constitution of India itself and officially proclaim India as a Hindu Rashtra.

That is why the Political Line in the *Political Resolution* of the 23rd Congress of the CPI(M), held at Kannur in April 2022, begins with these words, "The nearly eight years of the BJP government have seen the consolidation of the communal corporate nexus mounting authoritarian attacks. Since returning to government in 2019, it

has been aggressively furthering the Hindu Rashtra agenda of the fascistic RSS. This is accompanied by an equally aggressive pursuit of neo-liberal policies and growing authoritarian governance. The RSS-driven Hindutva Rashtra agenda is perniciously eroding the Constitutional framework and destroying the secular democratic character of the Indian Republic. Thus, the main task is to isolate and defeat the BJP'. (Para 2.171, 1 and 2)

MANUVAD

Hindutva and Manuvad cannot be separated. The *Manusmriti* is a 2000-year-old text written by the so-called law-giver Manu. It forms one of the cornerstones of Hinduism. It is completely Brahminical and does not treat shudras (the toiling masses) and women as human beings. We know the stories of social injustice heaped on Shambuka, Ekalavya, and Sita herself in the Ramayan and the Mahabharat. It must be remembered here that Dalits, as per the *Manusmriti* tradition, are not even shudras; they are even lower and entirely outside the Chaturvarnya system. The great radical social reformer Mahatma Jotirao Phule referred to them as the atishudras. The numerous passages in the *Manusmriti* that deal with the treatment that is to be meted out to shudras and women are enough to make any sensitive person's blood boil with rage.

The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha have always staunchly defended the *Manusmriti* and Brahminism. V.D. Savarkar wrote, '*Manusmriti* is that scripture which is most worship-able after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on *Manusmriti*. Today *Manusmriti* is Hindu law'. ('Women in Manusmriti', *Savarkar Samagar*, Volume IV.)

M.S. Golwalkar acclaimed Manu as the, 'first and greatest law

giver of the world' who 'lays down in his code, directing all the peoples of the world to go to Hindusthan to learn their duties at the holy feet of "eldest born" Brahmins of this land'.

Golwalkar further wrote, 'The Hindu People, they said, is the Virat Purusha, the Almighty manifesting Himself. Though they did not use the word Hindu, it is clear from the following description in the Purusha Sukta wherein it is stated that the sun and moon are His eyes, the stars and the skies are created from His nabhi (navel), and *Brahmin is the head, Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the thighs and Shudra the feet.* This means that the people who have this four-fold arrangement, i.e. the Hindu People, is our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of "nation" and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage.' (Italics in original text.) (Both the above quotes are from *We or Our Nationhood Defined.*)

That is precisely why Dr B.R. Ambedkar, in a truly historic event, publicly burnt the *Manusmriti* on 25 December 1927 at Mahad in the Raigad district of Maharashtra. He also declared in 1938 at a conference of railway workers at Manmad in Nashik district of Maharashtra, 'There are, in my view, two enemies which the workers of this country have to deal with. The two enemies are Brahminism and Capitalism.'

It is precisely because of the extremely oppressive age-old varna and caste system that Dr B.R. Ambedkar declared in a public meeting at Yeola in Nashik district in 1935, 'Though I was born a Hindu, I solemnly assure you that I will not die as a Hindu'. In October 1956, he kept his word and converted to Buddhism along with lakhs of his followers. In his book, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, he wrote, 'If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country...It is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account, it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost'.

THE MODI DECADE:
THE VISCIOUS HINDUTVA COMMUNAL ONSLAUGHT

The rightward shift in Indian politics had brought the RSS-BJP under the Vajpayee-Advani duo to power from 1998 to 2004. The intensified rightward shift brought the RSS-BJP under the Modi-Shah duo to power in 2014. The main instrument that the RSS-BJP used to bring about this rightward shift was the worst form of identity politics, primarily based on religion but also on caste, with the 'other' as the target. The rightward shift due to divisive identity politics was not limited to India alone. It was most glaringly seen in the recent election of Donald Trump as US President in 2024.

The fundamental material basis used by the RSS-BJP combine for expanding its political influence was the deepening economic crisis of the capitalist path since independence. This crisis was further aggravated by the neo-liberal policies inaugurated in 1991 by the central government of Congress. As a result, unemployment, inflation, poverty, hunger and disease intensified on the one hand, hitting a huge section of the people, even as the income and wealth of the small upper crust of corporates and the urban and rural rich increased by leaps and bounds. Again, this obscenely growing inequality was not limited to India alone; it was the global phenomenon of world capitalism.

Karl Marx had clearly analysed the beginning of the same characteristic of capitalism in his time in his 1867 magnum opus, *Capital*, in the following immortal words, 'The accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital'.

We shall now see the communal onslaught of the Modi regime in the last decade.

SYSTEMATIC LYNCHING DRIVE

It has been proved without a shadow of a doubt by reputed analysts that it was under the Modi regime from 2014 that the extremely cruel drive of systematic mass lynching of minorities began, and it continues unabated today 10 years later. Such cases before 2014 were few and far between. The lynching drive shows that Modi's Hindutva-based regime has brought out the worst possible aspects of human nature. The entire communal atmosphere that has pervaded the country since 2014 has made it possible.

This is hardly surprising, considering Modi's key role in the 2002 horrendous Gujarat communal carnage, which killed over 2,000 Muslims, raped hundreds of women, and even burnt scores of children alive. It was, without doubt, the worst single communal inferno in India after the Partition holocaust. The BBC documentary *India: The Modi Question* was promptly banned in India. However, thousands of students across University campuses in the country defied the ban and screened the documentary nonetheless.

The main 'reasons' given for lynching are cow slaughter, carrying beef, cattle and goat theft, love jihad, and so on. Almost always, the reasons given have been proven to be false. The lynching drive spreads terror in the minorities, gives a perverted sense of power to the goon gangs in the majority, serves to incite an atmosphere of hate and fear in society, and sharpens communal polarisation, thus helping the BJP-RSS politically.

It began exactly a week after the first swearing-in of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister on 26 May 2014. On 2 June, Mohsin Shaikh, a young IT professional hailing from Solapur but working in Pune in Maharashtra, was brutally lynched in Pune while returning from prayers. Nine years later, in 2023, a Pune court acquitted all the members of the Hindu Rashtra Sena who had been accused of lynching Mohsin Shaikh.

After this first lynching, there have been innumerable such

cruel instances in the last 10 years. They have occurred in states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka.

Some of the cruel and atrocious lynching cases from different states across a large part of the country are as follows:

- 2015: Mohammad Akhlaq (Dadri, Uttar Pradesh), Zahid Rasool Bhat (Jammu, J & K), Mohammed Hasmat Ali (Imphal, Manipur),
- 2016: Mohammad Ayyub (Ahmedabad, Gujarat), Mustain Abbas (Kurukshetra, Haryana), Imtiyaz Khan (Latehar, Jharkhand),
- 2017: Pehlu Khan (Alwar, Rajasthan), Junaid Khan (Ballabgarh, Haryana), Alimuddin Asgar Ali Ansari (Ramgarh, Uttar Pradesh),
- 2018: Farnaz Saiyed (Gandhinagar, Gujarat), Hussain Baba (Udupi, Karnataka), Zakir Hussain (Darrang, Assam),
- 2019: Tabrez Ansari (Saraikela, Jharkhand), Mohd Jamal (Katihar, Bihar), Mohd Qasim (Hapur, Uttar Pradesh),
- 2020: Subhan Ansari (Dumka, Jharkhand), Mohd Siddiqui (Araria, Bihar), Babu (Chittorgarh, Rajasthan),
- 2021: Asif Khan (Mewat, Haryana), Shera (Mathura, Uttar Pradesh), Aijaz Ahmad Dar (Rajouri, J & K), Sheikh Ghishu (Malda, West Bengal),
- 2022: Muhammad Saleem (Beawar, Rajasthan), Mohd Mustaqim (Begusarai, Bihar), Nazir Ahmed (Narmadapur, Madhya Pradesh),
- 2023: Saddam Hussain (Morigaon, Assam), Junaid and Nasir (Bharatpur, Rajasthan), Wajid Ansari (Ranchi, Jharkhand), Hifzur Rahman (Hojai, Assam), 2024: Tehsim Qureshi, Chand Mian, Saddam Qureshi (Raipur, Chhattisgarh).

This list can be multiplied manifold. But just a list of these names can never convey the sheer inhuman cruelty behind each lynching. As the first victim, Mohsin Shaikh's case shows, the perpetrators of most of these ghastly crimes are rarely arrested, and if, at all, they are arrested, they are quickly released on bail and then mostly acquitted. It is this surety which encourages these criminals to lynch innocents with impunity.

COMMUNAL RIOTS AND CALLS FOR GENOCIDE

The BJP government claims that riots have not taken place in its regime. The truth is very different. The Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, told the Rajya Sabha on 7 December 2022 that between 2017 and 2022, there were 2,900 incidents of communal violence in India. The Delhi riots were among them. NCRB records show that the first three years of the Modi regime, 2014 to 2016, saw 2,885 incidents of communal violence.

The Sangh Parivar has systematically used Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti across the country to intensify attacks on minorities. These processions are being regularly utilised to provoke communal violence against Muslims. In BJP-ruled states, such clashes become the pretext for the police arresting and jailing Muslims. In 2022 and 2023, during Ram Navami, such violence occurred in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and other states.

The notorious Dharam Sansad at Haridwar in December 2021 gave an open call for the genocide of Muslims. Swami Prabodhanand Giri, president of the Hindu Raksha Sena, said in his speech, 'You have seen this at the Delhi border; they killed Hindus and hung them. There is no more time; the case now is that either you prepare to die now or get ready to kill; there's no other way. This is why, like in Myanmar, the police here, the politicians here, the army and every Hindu must pick up weapons, and we

will have to conduct this cleanliness drive (*safai abhiyan*). There is no solution apart from this.’

In the same event, Sadhvi Annapurna, aka Pooja Shakun Pandey, general secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, said, ‘Nothing is possible without weapons. If you want to eliminate their population, then kill them. Be ready to kill and be ready to go to jail. Even if 100 of us are ready to kill 20 lakhs of them (Muslims), then we will be victorious and go to jail. ... Like (Nathuram) Godse, I am ready to be maligned, but I will pick up arms to defend my Hindutva from every demon who is a threat to my religion.’ In January 2019, the same Pooja Pandey made national headlines when she shot at an effigy of Mahatma Gandhi and raised slogans in favour of Nathuram Godse. She later set the effigy on fire.

No police action was taken against any of these so-called sadhus and sadhvis. The reason: all of them were close to, and regularly interacted with, the top RSS-BJP brass.

Statistics of hate speech and other acts to promote enmity between groups on the grounds of religion, race and place of birth registered under IPC section 153 A by the NCRB showed that there were 993 such cases in 2021, which rose to 1,444 in 2022 — up by 44 per cent.

BULLDOZER JUSTICE, ATTACKS ON MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

In BJP-ruled states, especially Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and others, bulldozing the houses of Muslims accused of alleged crimes has become a regular occurrence. Uttar Pradesh under Yogi Adityanath has become notorious as the hotbed of the ‘Bulldozer Raj’. Around 1,208 structures were demolished at Nuh in Haryana. Several structures were demolished at Jahangirpuri in Delhi. Hundreds of innocent Muslim families lost all they had due to the demolitions, with no compensation whatsoever.

The Supreme Court belatedly ruled in November 2024 against

'bulldozer justice' and set out guidelines for demolitions. Whether these guidelines will be adhered to and whether the victims will get any compensation for the demolition of their homes and shops is far from certain. This is a clear case of justice, which is too little and too late.

We know of the bravery of the rat miners in rescuing the 41 trapped miners in Uttarakhand. Instead of felicitating them for their valuable help in saving the lives of the miners, one of the rat miners was targeted because he belonged to the minority community. The house of rat miner Vakil Hasan's house was demolished by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in March 2024. There are thousands of houses in this kutchha colony, but action was taken to demolish only one house. All progressive forces condemned the anti-Muslim stance of the DDA.

The hearing of the case regarding the demolition of a madrasa and masjid was posted on 14 February 2024 in the Uttarakhand High Court. The administration did not wait for this hearing and in a thoughtless and provocative manner, went with bulldozers to raze the madrasa and masjid on 8 February. The holy books kept in the madrasa and masjid were removed only after the demolition started. This led to rumours that the holy books were damaged, inflaming passions. This led to violence, police firing, and loss of lives and livelihood.

Vigilantes also target the means of livelihood of Muslims — cattle trade and meat shops. The laws passed in BJP-ruled states are then invoked to ban the cattle and meat trade. Muslim vendors are attacked, so they are forced to abandon their means of livelihood.

MULTIFARIOUS ATTACKS ON MINORITIES

Another shocking instance is the mayhem of murder and rape in Manipur which began in May 2023. The Meitei-Kuki conflict has been erupting regularly since then. The Meiteis are the non-tribal Hindu majority, while the Kukis are the tribal Christian minority

in Manipur. Hence, the BJP has tried to give the conflict communal overtones. The criminal acts of omission and commission by the BJP state and central government and the deafening silence on Manipur by Prime Minister Narendra Modi have aggravated matters.

The offensive remarks against Prophet Mohammad by BJP leaders Nupur Sharma and Naveen Jindal had their ghastly fallout at Udaipur in Rajasthan. A tailor, Kanhaiya Lal Teli, allegedly shared a social media post in support of Nupur Sharma. On 28 June 2022, two men, Muhammad Riyaz Attari and Muhammad Ghaus entered Kanhaiya Lal's shop and beheaded him with butcher knives, and videos of the murder were posted on the internet. This created tremendous communal tension and a riot-like situation. In a 2020 Facebook post, a prominent local BJP-RSS leader described Muhammad Riyaz Attari as a 'dedicated worker of the BJP'.

The RSS-BJP raked up the Hijab issue in Karnataka and the Halal issue in Uttar Pradesh, and they were used to target minorities in both the states on the eve of the Vidhan Sabha and the Lok Sabha elections, respectively.

Student leaders Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, and others have been in jail without trial under the draconian UAPA for over four years on the ridiculous trumped-up charges of inciting the Delhi communal riots of February 2020 and other issues. JNU student Najeeb Ahmed has been missing for over eight years since 15 October 2016, following an assault on him by ABVP goons the previous night. There is no news of him. Alt News co-editor Mohammed Zubair was arrested because of his courage in exposing the conspiracies of the Hindutva forces. Journalist Siddiqui Kappan spent nearly two and a half years in jail just because he was on his way to cover the ghastly Hathras gang rape and murder case of a Dalit woman. Such examples can be multiplied ad infinitum.

The communal attacks are not restricted to Muslims alone. They extend to Christians as well. According to the United Christian Forum (UCF), in 2023, there were 720 attacks on

churches and pastors. In 2022, there were 509 such attacks. This is compared to 147 such attacks in 2014. The wrongful arrest and institutional murder by the Modi regime of 84-year-old Father Stan Swamy, who was suffering from Parkinson's disease, tells its own story. He was one of the 16 Bhima Koregaon detenus and was working for tribal rights.

The Pew Research Centre has placed India in the 'Very High' category along with Pakistan in its Social Hostilities Index and has noted a trend of constant deterioration.

CAA-NPR-NRC: LINKING CITIZENSHIP WITH RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

After the smashing second victory of the Modi regime in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, in which it rode to power on the public hysteria created by it around the Pulwama attack by Pakistani terrorists, which killed 40 Indian soldiers, and the so-called Balakot counter-attack, it took several major steps to bolster up the Hindutva narrative. Regarding the Pulwama attack and the Balakot counterattack, the facts stated by Satyapal Malik, the then Governor of J&K, are an eye-opener and must be seriously noted.

On 1 August 2019, the triple talaq law came into force. On 5 August, the state of Jammu & Kashmir was downgraded and divided into two union territories, and Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution giving special status to J&K were abrogated. On 31 August, the BJP government of Assam released its final National Register of Citizens (NRC). On 9 November, the Supreme Court passed its Babri Masjid judgement, which ordered that the property the mosque had stood on in Ayodhya would be handed over to a trust to build the Ram temple. On 11 December, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was passed.

The CAA is an Act which violates the secular concept of citizenship by linking citizenship to religious identity. People who have migrated from neighbouring countries without legal documentation will be provided citizenship if they belong to

the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or Christian religions but not those belonging to Islam. The rules under this Act were notified in March 2024, just before the Lok Sabha election.

Along with the CAA, the Modi government aims to update the National Population Register (NPR) and create a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in which powers are given to officials to verify the antecedents of citizens, where again, minorities will be targeted.

The BJP first tried out this exercise in Assam, which had disastrous results. The CAA met with large-scale and violent protests in that state. A team of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) visited two detention camps in Assam in 2018, where those who could not prove their citizenship were held, mainly Muslims. The team found 'a situation of grave and extensive human distress and suffering'. However, due to government inaction on this report, Harsh Mander, a member of the team, resigned as NHRC's special monitor. The Assam NRC was released in 2019, and it left out as many as 19 lakh individuals. They were roughly equally divided between Bengali Hindus, Bengali Muslims, and other Hindus from all parts of India. Their future is completely uncertain and bleak. The Supreme Court later ruled that the CAA cannot be implemented in Assam.

MASSIVE COUNTRYWIDE PROTESTS AGAINST CAA;
DELHI COMMUNAL RIOTS

Implementing the CAA all over India will be an even more hazardous enterprise. As soon as the CAA was passed in Parliament on 11 December 2019, massive protests against it erupted all over the country. On 15 December, the Delhi police, which is directly under Union Home Minister Amit Shah, savagely cracked down on students protesting against the CAA in Jamia Millia University. The videos of police brutality unleashed on students, both girls and boys, on the university campus itself must be seen to be believed.

Thousands of women began the renowned Shaheen Bagh protest in Delhi on the same night of 15 December 2019 to denounce this brutal crackdown. It continued for 101 days and nights until 24 March 2020, when the nationwide COVID-19 curfew was imposed. It continued despite the RSS-BJP-engineered North East Delhi riots from 23-27 February 2020, which were incited by the calls to communal violence by BJP leaders Anurag Thakur, Kapil Mishra and Parvesh Verma. Union Minister Anurag Thakur's call given in a public meeting in Delhi just before the riots began was notorious, '*Desh ke Gaddaaron ko, Jute Maaro Saalon ko!*' ('*Hurl Shoes at the Betrayers of the Nation!*')

A total of 53 people were killed in these riots, hundreds were injured, and property worth crores of rupees was destroyed. But instead of putting these BJP leaders behind bars, the Delhi Police arrested several anti-CAA student activists from JNU and Jamia Millia and jailed them under the draconian UAPA, accusing them of inciting the Delhi riots.

This was an exact repeat performance of the actions of the Modi regime in the Bhima Koregaon case! Instead of arresting Sambhaji Bhide and Milind Ekbote, the real ringleaders of the attacks on Dalits at Bhima Koregaon in Pune district of Maharashtra on New Year's Day 2018, the government jailed 16 activists and intellectuals under the UAPA. Eight of them are still behind bars without trial for four years after they were arrested.

Similar Shaheen Baghs sprung up in scores of cities and towns nationwide. They mobilised lakhs of people, with many secular non-Muslims also taking part. The defiant slogan in these protests, along with the famous 'Azaadi' one coined by the earlier JNU student struggle, was, '*Hum kaghaz nahin Dikhayenge!*' ('*We will not show you our papers!*').

Every such anti-CAA struggle site across the country invariably flew the 'tiranga', the national flag. Every site also had large photo cut-outs of Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Savitribai Phule, Fatima Shaikh, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekar

Azad, and Ashfaqullah Khan. Many of these same features, with the significant addition of anti-corporate slogans and cartoons directed against Adani and Ambani, were also seen in the iconic year-long SKM-led farmers' struggle in Delhi in 2020-21, which spread all across the country and achieved victory in getting the three hated Farm Laws of the Modi regime repealed. The magnificent Shaheen Bagh struggle for justice, mainly by the women of India, succeeded upto now in stalling the implementation of the CAA-NPR-NRC.

In January 2020, the LDF government of Kerala challenged the constitutionality of the CAA in the Supreme Court. Several such petitions against the CAA have been pending for a long time, for which the honourable Supreme Court has yet to find the time.

HUMILIATING THE PEOPLE OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

Jammu & Kashmir is the only state in India in which Muslims form a majority of the population. For precisely this reason, it has always been a target on the RSS-BJP radar.

Following the Partition Plan in May 1947, the J&K Praja Parishad of the RSS fully supported Maharaja Hari Singh in his original stand of joining neither India nor Pakistan but maintaining the state as an independent country. When the Pakistani raiders attacked Kashmir with arms, Hari Singh was forced to change his stand. But it was Shaikh Abdullah and the Muslim youth of his National Conference who fought back the Pakistanis. Then, after the accession of J&K to India, the Indian Army stepped in.

As mentioned above, on 5 August 2019, the Modi regime downgraded and divided the state of Jammu & Kashmir into two union territories and abrogated Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution, giving special status to J&K. The savage crackdown and state repression unleashed in J&K for several months after that will always remain one of the blackest chapters in India's democracy. The main political leaders in Kashmir were placed under house arrest, hundreds of activists were thrown behind

bars, some were killed, the internet was closed down, and most forms of communication were disrupted.

Under cover of this repression, the delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies was carried out by the Modi regime. In the new assembly, six new seats were added to the Jammu division, and only one new seat was added to the Kashmir division, making it 43 for Jammu and 47 for Kashmir, a total of 90 seats.

In any case, in the state assembly elections held in October 2024, the INDIA bloc comprising the National Conference (NC), the Congress, and the CPI(M) won 49 seats, defeating the BJP-NDA. Omar Abdullah was elected the new chief minister. The tally of seats won was NC: 42, Congress: 6, CPI(M): 1, BJP: 29, PDP: 3, People's Conference: 1, AAP: 1, Independents: 7. Restoring statehood to J&K remains a burning issue.

INAUGURATION OF THE RAM TEMPLE AT AYODHYA

On 9 November 2019, the Supreme Court passed its Babri Masjid judgement, which ordered that the property the mosque had stood on in Ayodhya would be handed over to a trust to build the Ram temple.

On 5 August 2020, to mark the first anniversary of the dismemberment of J&K, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya.

On 22 January 2024, the inauguration of the Ram temple was carried out at Ayodhya by Narendra Modi in the presence of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath, and UP governor Anandiben Patel. The State-sponsored ceremony with the prime minister acting as the high priest symbolised the merger of the State and religion.

It is significant that among the main special invitees for the Ram temple inauguration were business tycoons Gautam Adani,

Mukesh Ambani, Ratan Tata, and others; several Bollywood stars, cricketers, spiritual leaders, and selected political leaders were present.

However, the construction of the new Ram Mandir and the new Parliament building was so poor that both started leaking heavily during the last monsoons in 2024.

The Cabinet resolution followed by the Parliament resolution on the consecration of the Ram temple has sought to make the temple a 'symbol of national consciousness' and an 'unforgettable moment in the development journey of the country'. Thus, a religious place of worship has been made a symbol of 'India's vision, philosophy and path'.

However, the inauguration of the Ram temple at Ayodhya could not stop the big electoral setbacks that the BJP received in Uttar Pradesh in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The SP won 37 seats, and the Congress won 6, making it 43 seats out of 80. On the other hand, the BJP won 33 seats, the RLD won 2, the AD (S) won 1, making a total of 36. The Azad Samaj Party won 1. This was a sea change from the position in 2019.

That is precisely why, to intensify communal polarisation, the Hindutva forces have now started working overtime to convert the Gyanvapi mosque in Kashi and the Idgah in Mathura into temples. This is being undertaken with administrative and judicial connivance and by violating the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991. Controversies over the Qutub Minar and the Taj Mahal are also being raised.

PLIANT JUDICIARY, SERVILE MEDIA

Throwing to the winds the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991, which prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on 15 August 1947, courts are

entertaining pleas to change the status quo of these places. This can lead to communal violence on a large scale, like after the Babri Masjid demolition on 6 December 1992.

The same judiciary that is entertaining such pleas has been silent even at the highest level on long-standing and crucial constitutional petitions against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the draconian clauses in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). The role of the Supreme Court and many High Courts in recent years has been extremely disturbing on many counts, to say the least.

The Babri Masjid judgement was one of the most controversial judgements by the Supreme Court in recent times. Even former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud, who wrote that judgement, was forced to make the astounding claim that it was God who guided him in writing that judgement. The same God must have prompted him to invite Narendra Modi to his home to celebrate the Ganesh festival with him and his family publicly! He was only following the lead given by some of his predecessors.

In sharp contrast was the deplorable Supreme Court verdict in the Zakia Jafri case (Zakia is the wife of ex-MP Ehsan Jafri, who was brutally killed by a communal mob in the Gujarat inferno of 2002). Following unnecessary and uncalled-for comments by the Court, the government immediately arrested the fighting journalist and human rights activist Teesta Setalvad and former police officer R.B. Sreekumar, and yet another case was lodged against the already incarcerated former police officer Sanjiv Bhatt.

The less said about large sections of the thoroughly servile electronic and print media, the better. In the last ten years of the Modi regime, when asked to bend, many of them have crawled. Sycophancy has grown to sickening levels. But even worse than that, poisonous communal venom is being spewed day and night by influential sections of the media, which is greatly helping the Hindutva cause by intensifying communal polarisation.

The Modi regime, especially with an increased majority in its second term, has bulldozed a large number of reactionary laws through Parliament. Most of them are authoritarian and/or communal. Some of them are Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015; Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017; The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019; Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019; The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019; The Muslim Women (Protection) of Rights on Marriage Act, 2019; The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019; Industrial Relations Code, 2020; Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020; The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021; The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021. Space does not permit a detailed account of each.

Various BJP state governments have passed laws which target the minorities. Among them are anti-cow slaughter laws and laws against forced religious conversions, as well as so-called love jihad. Some of these state laws are The Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime Act, 2015; Maharashtra Animal Preservation (Amendment) Act, 2015; The Haryana Gauvansh Sanrakshan and Gausamvardhan Act, 2015; The Gujarat Animal Preservation (Amendment) Act, 2017; Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018; Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2019; The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2020; Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Act, 2020; Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020; Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Ordinance, 2020; Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021; Bihar Special Armed Police Act, 2021. The names of many of these Acts are the exact opposite of what they contain.

Uttarakhand has adopted a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which is majoritarian and neither uniform nor civil. The BJP plans to get such codes adopted in other BJP-ruled states.

TOWARDS A COMMUNAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2024, which is an extension of NEP 2020, is clearly aimed at achieving the commercialisation, centralisation and communalisation of education in our country. Systematic efforts are being made to rewrite history textbooks for schools both at the central and state government levels. Under the guise of the NEP, saffronisation of education is sought to be achieved by introducing religious values and Hindutva ideology into the curriculum and syllabus.

Just a few innumerable examples of this will suffice to make the point. In 2023, the NCERT omitted the whole of Mughal history and chapters on Central Islamic Lands and Clash of Cultures from the Class 12 syllabus. It also wiped out references to Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and the resultant ban on the RSS, the ghastly Gujarat riots after Godhra, and Hindu extremism from text books, calling it 'syllabus rationalisation'. The BJP government in Karnataka, in the section on India's freedom struggle, removed the part on the immortal martyr Bhagat Singh and replaced it with RSS founder Hedgewar. In 2022, the Maulana Azad National Fellowship for minority students was stopped.

DALITS AND ADIVASIS AS TARGETS

The basic allegiance of the RSS to the *Manusmriti* is manifested in the sharply increased attacks on Dalits, Adivasis, and women during the last 10 years of the Modi regime. The NCRB data shows that from 2013 to 2022, crimes against Dalits increased by 46.11 per cent, and crimes against Adivasis increased by 48.15 per cent. The states that showed the largest incidence of such crimes were

BJP-ruled or former BJP-ruled states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh.

In this period, we have seen many shocking instances of atrocities on Dalits, particularly the public flogging of four Dalit youth at Una in Gujarat, gang rape and murder of a Dalit woman at Hathras in Uttar Pradesh, and also the tragic case of the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula in the Hyderabad Central University (HCU).

The RSS-BJP allegiance to the *Manusmriti* was clearly shown in the case of the foundation stone laying and inauguration ceremony of the new Parliament building in Delhi on 10 December 2020 and 28 May 2023, respectively. 10 December is International Human Rights Day. Human rights is what the Modi regime has trampled over with impunity. 28 May, significantly, is the birth anniversary of V.D. Savarkar, one of the icons of Hindutva.

Although the President of India is the highest constitutional authority in the land, both successive Presidents of India were kept out of these two major functions — first Ramnath Kovind, a Dalit, and then Draupadi Murmu, an Adivasi woman. It was Modi and Modi alone who conducted both these ceremonies himself, with a host of saffron-clad sadhus, seers and mahants in tow. How could the *Manusmriti*-worshippers in the RSS-BJP allow a Dalit and an Adivasi, that too a woman, to lay the foundation stone for or inaugurate so prestigious a building as the new Parliament of India?

The implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) is being undermined in several states. Adivasis are being driven out of their forest lands to help the corporate lobby acquire their land for mining and other purposes. The recent changes in the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) of 1980 and the dilution of the PESA Act are meant precisely for this purpose.

The BJP central government's determined opposition for several years to a caste census for the accurate enumeration of OBCs is yet another example of its Manuwadi mindset. As a result

of public pressure, although it is reported that the RSS has recently given the green signal for a caste census, it is far from clear what will eventually happen and how.

SHARP RISE IN ATROCITIES ON WOMEN

There is an exponential and very disturbing increase in incidents of horrific violence against women and children. Many of the cases include gang rape, rape and murder of the victims. More than 86 cases of rape happen daily, and at least 49 cases of crimes against women happen every hour in our country. Most of these incidents have taken place in BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Bihar. TMC-ruled West Bengal has also witnessed horrific crimes against women and minors.

Uttar Pradesh topped the list of crimes against women for six consecutive years from 2017 to 2022. Rajasthan was placed second for crimes against women from 2019 to 2022. Delhi and Haryana were among the states with a high crime rate against women in 2022.

The NCRB data has recorded a 94.47 per cent surge in sexual offences against children since 2017. Uttar Pradesh has recorded the highest crimes in this category as well, with 8,136 cases out of a total of 63,414 cases recorded in 2022. In 2017, 32,608 incidents under POCSO were registered, which rose to 63,414 in 2022, a 94 per cent increase. Of the total POCSO offenders, 96.8 per cent were acquainted with the victims.

There have been ghastly attacks on women under the BJP regime. The gang rapes and murders of women and their relatives in Hathras and Unnao in chief minister Yogi Adityanath's Uttar Pradesh shocked the nation. Many of these atrocities were perpetrated by BJP leaders themselves. BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted for the rape of the Unnao victim. The gang rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl at Kathua in J&K also stunned the country. Even more stunning was the fact that BJP-

led lawyers held a rally to demand the release of the rapists-cum murderers. In most cases, the rapists are never booked, or else there is no punishment meted out to them. The sexual atrocities to which women of Manipur were subjected stirred the conscience of the nation.

All laws giving protection to women against violence are being systematically diluted. The right to freedom of choice is being snatched away, and the growth of 'honour killings' remains a matter of grave concern. Anti-conversion laws and Freedom of Religion laws passed recently by BJP governments are a direct attack on the freedom of choice of women and seek to impose even more control on women.

SOME HORRIFYING RECENT CASES

One of the most shocking instances is that of the BJP-led Gujarat state government setting free 11 criminals convicted of killing 14 Muslims during the Gujarat inferno of 2002, gang-raping the then 21-year-old pregnant woman, Bilkis Bano, and killing her three-year-old baby daughter also. The release of these 11 criminals was timed with the 75th anniversary of India's freedom — 15 August 2022 — and on the eve of the Gujarat state assembly elections, clearly to sharpen communal polarisation. These 11 perpetrators of heinous crimes against humanity were garlanded and feted as 'sanskari brahmins' when they left jail as free men granted remission by the Gujarat government. It was this release that was challenged in the Supreme Court in a series of writ petitions, including those by Bilkis herself and by AIDWA. Finally, on 8 January 2024, Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuiyan delivered their judgment and ordered that the 11 rapists and murderers must surrender to jail authorities and be sent back to jail within 15 days.

The Prajwal Revanna case of sexual abuse of women in Karnataka was extremely shocking. The revelations made about the JDS-BJP candidate in the 2024 Lok Sabha election from

Hassan, Karnataka, were horrifying. The BJP was well aware of the misdeeds of Prajwal, yet it fully supported his candidature and did not say one word in condemnation of his criminal acts. This is in tune with the support that other sexual offenders in their Party have received from it. It is also extremely disturbing that the National Commission for Women has not intervened in this matter at all. Similarly, the Haryana BJP government has been regularly granting parole to Baba Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, who has been convicted of both rape and murder. This list is endless, with such brutalities happening every day in various parts of the country.

The most striking instance which rocked the country was the agitation by Olympic medallist women wrestlers against sexual harassment by the then president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, then a BJP MP. In spite of the wrestlers conducting an agitation for over a month in Delhi in 2023, which got mass support from the people, the accused BJP MP has still not been arrested; on the contrary, the wrestlers were manhandled and arrested on the very same day that Modi inaugurated the new Parliament building. When a Brij Bhushan crony was elected president of the WFI in his place, Sakshi Malik, one of the champion women wrestlers, announced that she was quitting the sport for ever. Brij Bhushan was denied a ticket for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, but his son was given the ticket, and he won.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING OF THE BJP

However, along with this, we must also take serious note of the efforts at social engineering of the RSS-BJP, the various ways in which they try to win over different caste groups, and their systematic attempts to reach out to even Dalits and Adivasis. For instance, the BJP, precisely in order to camouflage its anti-Dalit and anti-Adivasi policies, has installed Ramnath Kovind (a Dalit) and Draupadi Murmu (an Adivasi woman) as Presidents of India, one after the other. While the RSS has always been patriarchally

kept as an organization limited to men, they have long ago started the separate Rashtra Sevika Samiti and Durga Vahini, which work among women.

MODI'S THIRD TERM: COMMUNAL AGENDA INTENSIFIED

Despite the reversals suffered by the BJP and NDA in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, there is not an iota of introspection or remorse in the RSS-BJP camp. Modi struts about as if nothing at all has happened. On the contrary, the RSS-BJP efforts are directed towards further intensifying the assault on democracy and secularism and on the people's livelihood through the same old pro-corporate policies. The RSS-BJP know that sharpening communal polarisation is the main way by which they can retain power.

Rabidly Communal Hate Speeches in Election Campaigns

Prime Minister Narendra Modi resorted to a vitriolic campaign, and his 2024 Lok Sabha election speeches were filled with hatred for the minorities. The Ram temple and religion was made an election issue, and Modi, Shah and Yogi incited hatred and inflamed religious sentiments in a blatant violation of the model code of conduct. The obnoxious speeches of Modi, accusing the opposition of wanting to hand over the gold and other property of Hindus to 'infiltrators' and 'to those with more children,' were disgusting.

There were attacks on Muslims who were waiting to cast their votes outside polling centres by Sangh Parivar goons who were helped by groups of policemen in many Muslim-dominated villages and areas in Uttar Pradesh. They were not allowed to cast their votes.

The utterly communal speeches made by BJP leaders led by the prime minister and home minister in the 2024 Jharkhand election campaign were a clear violation of the model code of conduct as well as the guidelines issued by the EC to all political parties.

The chief minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma, and union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan too gave vicious hate speeches. The prime minister, in his speeches, directly targeted the Muslim community, vilifying its members as ‘*ghuspetias*’. He went so far in his communal and hate-filled speeches as to make the charge that ‘those people are taking away your bread and your daughters’. Similarly, in the Maharashtra assembly election campaign, the prime minister’s speeches reeked of communalism, and he gave the slogan ‘Ek hain toh safe hain’. UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath had given the slogan ‘Batenge toh katenge’.

While all this was happening, the Election Commission of India (ECI), which has been hand-picked by Modi, maintained a deafening silence. The Godi media has, of course, been egging on Modi and the BJP for the last ten years, and these elections were no exception.

In the last stage of the election campaign, Modi made the ridiculous claim that he was convinced that *Parmatma* (God) had sent him to serve the country. He made it clear that he is answerable to no one but God. He spent forty-eight hours meditating at the Vivekananda Rock in Kanyakumari during the last phase of polling with a huge camera team in place.

Attacks on Minorities Intensify

Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand: Just after the declaration of the Lok Sabha election results on 4 June, in the Kanwar Yatra of 2024, which is the annual pilgrimage of the devotees of Shiva to Haridwar, the BJP state governments of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand ordered that shop owners, hawkers and vendors must display their names and other personal details such as their religious and caste identity in front of their shops and stalls, obviously so that Muslims could be boycotted and targeted by the people. The Supreme Court stayed this order of both the BJP state governments in July 2024.

The Uttar Pradesh BJP government has brought the Unlawful

Conversion of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2024, clearly targeting inter-community marriages and increasing punishment from ten years to a life term in prison.

In Lucknow's Akbarnagar, a predominantly Muslim area, the homes of over 1,000 families were bulldozed for the construction of the river front.

On 13 October 2024, Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh saw communal violence between Hindus and Muslims following the murder of a Hindu man named Gopal Mishra after he climbed on to the roof of the house of Abdul Hameed, removed the green flag and replaced it with the saffron flag. The rioters burned many vehicles and properties following the murder of Mishra. A total of 87 arrests have been made, and two police officers have been suspended.

On 24 November, communal violence erupted at Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh during a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid, following claims that the mosque was constructed on the ruins of a Hindu temple allegedly demolished during the Mughal period. Protests against the court-ordered survey escalated into violent clashes between local residents and the police, who responded with tear gas and other measures. Five Muslims were killed, and over 30, including police, were injured. After the violence, 25 people were taken into custody, and seven cases were filed against 2,500 people. Those charged under the National Security Act (NSA) included some local leaders of the Samajwadi Party. Mandir-Masjid clashes are being multiplied recklessly by the RSS.

On 27 November, a local court in Rajasthan's Ajmer issued notices to the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs, the Archaeological Survey of India, and the Ajmer Sharif Dargha Committee over a petition seeking a survey of the renowned Ajmer Sharif Dargha. The petition claimed that there was a temple there, 'like in Kashi and Mathura'. This is sure to ignite another major communal conflagration.

Madhya Pradesh: In Mandala, Madhya Pradesh, 11 houses of

Muslims were demolished within 24 hours after alleged reports of 'beef' being recovered from their refrigerators. Muslims were threatened to leave the city of Jabalpur.

Bhainswahi village in the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh is predominantly inhabited by Adivasis, Dalits, and minority communities, who primarily depend on agriculture and construction work in urban areas for their livelihoods. On the night of 14 June, a large contingent of over 50 police officers raided the homes of minority families. The minorities were accused of involvement in cow slaughter. The police force, with officials from the revenue department, forced women in the houses to sign blank papers. Then, their homes were demolished by JCB machines and bulldozers without allowing them to retrieve their belongings, creating an atmosphere of terror. The stray animals near the minority locality were taken away by the police, who accused the residents of cattle smuggling and slaughter. Charges were filed against 11 minority families under the Madhya Pradesh Cow Slaughter Prohibition Act, 2004, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

Two days after this incident, attempts to intensify communal polarization by the BJP-RSS unfolded in the Seoni district. On 19 June, 28 cows were found dead in a forest near Garghatia village in Seoni district. Additionally, on 21 June, 22 bulls were found dead in the Pindari Bainganga River and eight near Kadve Thawari village. Incidentally, Bakri Eid fell on 17 June. The minority community in these areas became targets, fuelling a communal frenzy. Sangh Parivar organizations called for a Seoni bandh, which led to communal tensions. Only women and children remained in the village, as the men had fled.

Chhattisgarh: There was a spate of attacks on the Muslim community in various parts of the country immediately after the election results were announced on 4 June 2024. Just three days later, on 7 June, in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, three Muslim men, Tehsim Qureshi, Chand Mian and Saddam Qureshi, transporting

bullocks were branded as cow smugglers and killed by the cow vigilantes. All three originally hailed from Uttar Pradesh. Despite the identification of some of the killers by a victim who survived, a case of culpable homicide was registered against unknown attackers.

Himachal Pradesh: In Himachal Pradesh's Nahan, the shop of a Muslim was vandalised, and a case was registered against him after allegations that he had sacrificed a cow during Eid. All the other 16 Muslim shop-owners in the town were forced to flee following the incident. In recent months, communal tensions have again surfaced in the state. The Muslim population here is only 2.18 per cent, which previously limited the potential for unrest. Six of the state's 12 districts have a Muslim population of less than 1 per cent, and in Shimla, the Muslim population, according to the 2011 census, was just 1.45 per cent. Despite these small numbers, the situation has been made tense, primarily due to external efforts by the RSS-BJP to inflame communal sentiment. To strongly counter this, on 27 September, numerous democratic and progressive organisations and intellectuals in Shimla organised a 'Communal Harmony Peace March,' where hundreds of citizens sent a clear message to maintain peace and communal harmony. Building on this momentum, on 17 November, the 'Himachal for Peace and Harmony' front was formed in Shimla, and a large convention was held. The convention made it clear that any attempt to sow communal discord or hatred in the state would not be tolerated.

Other States: In Assam, a law is being considered to prevent land sales between Muslims and Hindus, terming this as 'land jihad'. The Assam BJP regime is also considering introducing life imprisonment as punishment for inter-community marriages.

The Maharashtra BJP-led government had introduced the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, which sought to criminalise all dissent in the name of curbing urban Naxalism, which was more draconian than the UAPA. Due to a public uproar, the government could not go ahead with this draconian bill.

In Vadodara, Gujarat, people from the Hindu community in the neighbourhood openly protested against the allotment of a flat to a Muslim woman in a low-income group housing complex under the Chief Minister's Housing Scheme. One man was killed in Chikhodra in Gujarat. A communal clash took place in Balasore in Odisha.

In Delhi's Sangam Vihar, there were reports of residents fleeing the area after provocative speeches made by Hindutva outfits after the recovery of a cow carcass near a temple.

Such sharpening of communal assaults following the setbacks suffered by the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections highlights the fact that the BJP and the Hindutva communal forces will intensify their attempts at communal polarisation with a renewed vengeance.

Population Policy Targeting Minorities Being Conceived

In her interim budget speech, the finance minister had curiously announced the setting up of a high-powered committee 'to study the challenges of fast population growth and demographic changes'. How can demographic changes be understood without a census? The RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had asked for a population control law that would be 'equally applicable to all'. He had warned of the dangers of 'religion-based population imbalance' and had concluded that, 'Along with population control, population balance on a religious basis is also a matter of importance which cannot be ignored'. The RSS constantly harps on the 'religious imbalance' created by infiltration from across the borders and forced conversions.

The creation of a new population control policy may probably be put into place in the third term of the Modi government. The religious imbalance which the RSS propagates and the fears arising from the Muslim population's high rate of growth are not based on any scientific data. The National Family Health Survey, 2019-21 found that the difference between Hindu (1.94 children

per woman) and Muslim (2.36 children per woman) fertility was only 0.42 children per woman. The Muslim fertility rate has been steadily falling. It was 3.39 as per the first National Family Health Survey (1990-92), and now it is 2.36. The trend in the last two decades has been that Hindu fertility has dropped by 30 per cent, as against 35 per cent in Muslims. In fact, the rate of decline in population growth in Muslims has been greater than in Hindus in the last twenty years.

CONCLUSION

This is the course Hindutva took in India in the last decade of the Modi regime. The RSS, BJP, and the Sangh Parivar are no doubt the backbone of Hindutva and the Modi government. The RSS has always attacked and opposed secularism, dubbing its proponents as 'pseudo-secularists'. There was and still is talk of changing the Constitution, and altering the character of India from a secular democratic republic to an authoritarian Manuvadi Hindu Rashtra. That was the real reason for Modi's slogan, '*Ab ki baar, 400 paar*'. It failed in 2024, but there is no reason whatsoever for complacency.

The results of the Haryana assembly elections in October, especially the Maharashtra elections in November, are extremely serious and worrisome for many reasons. They mark a big reversal of the results of the parliamentary elections held just five months ago. They deserve a much deeper analysis, which is beyond the scope of this piece.

To sum up, the continuance of the Modi government and the BJP in power will result in much more severe attacks on the poor and all sections of the working people. It will mean the still more massive fattening of its domestic and foreign crony corporates. It will mean even more unprecedented corruption scandals. It will mean an even more servile surrender to imperialism. Since the RSS is a fascistic organisation for whom Hitler and Mussolini

are the true role models, it will spell the end of democracy, secularism, sovereignty, federalism, socio-economic justice, and the Constitution of India itself.

The RSS, BJP, and Sangh Parivar must be stopped at all costs through a consolidation of the broad unity of all the secular forces who are opposed to them, through a rapid and sustained strengthening of the Left forces, and through constant, innovative, and powerful ideological, political, agitational, and organisational battles in the days ahead.