The attacks on Churches and the clashes (Dec 24, 2007) in Phulbai and other areas of Orissa are a matter of grave concern. The communal activities in the area have been intensified over a period of years on the ground that Christian missionaries are doing conversions by force and fraud. Dara Singh of Bajrang Dal used this propaganda, to instigate local people and burnt Pastor Graham Stewart Stains. The Wadhawa Commission which was appointed by the NDA Govt in the wake of this brutal killing concluded, neither was Pastor Stains doing any conversion work nor has the percentage of Christians in the area gone up. Incidentally the all India percentage of Christian population is on the constant decline as per the census figures of last four decades.

From last over a decade the RSS affiliated organizations have been doing the indoctrinating work and doing the hate propaganda against Christian missionaries in Adivasi regions. Many a citizens inquiry commissions have brought out this fact. It is worth mentioning here that a Citizens Tribunal, led by Justice K.K.Usha (Retired) of Kerala High court studied the issue in Orisa (Communalism in
Orissa, India Peoples Tribunal, 2006) and pointed out that VHP and other RSS affiliates are doing the aggressive Ghar Vapasi (bringing Adivasis into the fold of Hinduism) and creating a situation due to which the communal conflagrations are taking place. In Tribal areas of MP and Gujarat also similar incidents have taken place in the past in and around Christmas time. It is a part of well though out political strategy to divide the society. The nation should take note of this and curb the activities of these groups sowing dissentions in Adivasi area.

Modi’s victory in Gujarat is the final wake call for those struggling to keep secular values alive. The post Godhra-Gujarat polarization seems to be complete. Modis clever use of regional pride, development is the top of the iceberg. The basic communalization of society due to the socio political changes and the RSS combine propaganda has gone too far to result in such a situation. It may also have adverse impact all over the country. The condition of minorities, the status of liberal values and democratic ethos is worsening and the need to bring back the agenda of poor and struggling people has been put on the backburner due to the high pitched propaganda laced in communal around the emotive issue.

It is overdue that the left and progressive groups put their efforts in a supplementary way to ensure that democracy survives.

Events

Peace and Democracy Festival in Pune

The democracy festival is being organised in Pune from Jan 26 to Jan 30 by a conglomeration of activist groups and NGOs of Pune. We work with a group called LOKAYAT, which has also started a cultural group called AAGHAZ, and we are one of the prime organisers of this festival. We are an activist group, not an NGO, and we work to raise awareness and mobilise people especially youth on various social issues, from anti-globalisation issues, to women's issues and caste issues to the issue of communalism.

The democracy festival is basically an attempt to reach out to people across communities, and try and establish a dialogue with them on various issues using various forms. We are organising it not just as an event, as then there was no use. We want to use it as a means to reach out to ordinary Muslims and Hindus, especially youth, and try and build a credibility amongst them that we must come together and fight injustice in society.

The program schedule is not yet finalized, following is the tentative one

Probable Program

Jan 26: Morning: 10 AM TO 1 PM: Flag hoisting followed by MARCH FOR DEMOCRACY.
Jan 26: Evening: 4 to 8 pm : Documentary film screenings,
Jan 27: SUNDAY : Film festival.
Jan 28: **Morning**: Inter college competition, e.g. poetry. Seminar, i
Jan 28: **Evening**: cultural program, in which Jaysi to perform her KATHAK program on DEMOCRACY.

Jan 29: **Morning**: Inter college competition, probably ELOCUTION CONTEST,
Jan 29: **Evening**: Cultural program.

Jan 30: **Morning**: Inter college competition, e.g. Street play competition
Jan 30: **Evening**: Closing program - Mallika Sarabhai to perform.

(contact: Neeraj Jain, neeraji61@gmail.com)

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**News**

**JOHN DAYAL & FACT FINDING TEAM EXPELLED FROM PHULBANI**

I report with deep sorrow and anguish that I and a five member Fact Finding Team that had gone to the Phulbani area of Kandhamal district on Saturday, 29th December 2007, was forcibly expelled by Inspector General of Police Pradeep Kapoor who ordered the Phulbani Town Police Inspector to ensure that I left the district that night. The Town Police Inspector then made us follow an armed police escort for a one and a half hour drive through the night darkness till we reached the border of Ganjam district, where he left us. We could return to Bhubaneswar by 4 am today, 30th December 2007, deeply distressed and feeling very frustrated with the experience.

The fact finding team was set up at a meeting of activists in the Swasti Hotel in Bhubaneswar on 28th December 2007 to get an authentic first hand account of the developments and the violence in the Kandhamal district because rumours, absence of authentic media reports and often inaccurate government accounts of the casualties, had left the people confused. There were also fears that lack of authentic information would impact on the confidence building measures and the peace process. I was requested to lead the Fact Finding Team in view of my experience in Gujarat, Nandigram, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan the Northeast.

As a matter of abundant precaution, I wrote to the Director General of Police, Orissa, on 28th December 2007. I, inter alia, said “I am a Member of the National Integration Council, Government of India, and the National President of the All India Catholic Union. I am part of a Fact Finding team set up by Civil society and Human Rights groups to assess the situation in the violence affected areas of Orissa for us to be able to formulate People’s initiative for confidence building and peace. The team, consisting of six persons including me, intends to leave Bhubaneswar on the morning of 29th December 2007 and return in the evening of 31 December 2007. We will have a night halt in Phulbani. We will appreciate any assistance and facilitation we can get from the Orissa Police and in particular from the Police forces of the District. I am sure your office will take the necessary steps, and inform the District Police of the area.”

We drove to Phulbani on 29th December; reaching safely and without any problems, by about 5 p.m. En route we were able to assess the damage done to the NISWAS School of Social Work set up by Dr. R K Nayak, IAS retired and currently a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. We also saw the damage done to the Carmelite Convent and the Carmel English School. Nuns we interviewed told us how attempts were made to set the convent on fire even as the Nuns were cowering in a room where they had locked
themselves in. Two sisters who could escape injured themselves in the process.

Later, we went to the Offices of the Police Superintendent to discuss with them our onward journey to Balliguda that evening or early next morning, and to see if here was need for Curfew Passes, which are normally given to Media and other groups.

The Inspector General of Police, Mr Kapoor, the Divisional Commissioner and the Deputy Inspector General of Police were present in the room. I was questioned in some detail, always very politely, by Mr Kapoor who wanted to know about my membership of the NIC, my credentials as a journalist and the books I had authored. He also photographed my colleagues and me with his Mobile Telephone camera. I gave a patent reply to every single question. I also pointed out that this was not a government enquiry, but that I would prepare a report I would submit to the authorities and which would also help facilitate the National Minority Commission members who are scheduled to visit the spot on 6th January 2008. I reminded the police were a peaceful group, and our team included an Advocate, apart from interpreters and with expertise in ethnic studies.

Mr Kapoor was ever polite, but remained adamant. My colleagues felt they were being interrogated in a police station. Mr Kapoor said he would not allow me to proceed, or even to remain in Phulbani. He said it would not be safe for me, or for the persons with whom I would stay. He said the Rapid Action Force had been deployed in Phulbani town and I had to draw my inference from this fact about the situation and tension in the place. I told him there was no way we would be crashing police barriers. It was not for fear of our lives but in deference to the rule of law that we would go. He was apparently not satisfied. He called the Phulbani police officers and ordered them to escort me out.

The Kandhamal region needs not just media coverage and government relief operations. The rescue, relief and rehabilitation programme has to be done in a transparent manner. Already there have been too many complaints of police and administrative apathy, complicity and even aggressive force against one community, the victim community. Independent fact finding teams and the information they give help in maintaining transparency and positively contribute to the peace process.

I hope we will be able to visit and record the situation in every affected village as an important part of building long term peace, harmony and in ensuring relief, compensation and rehabilitation.

John Dayal

**Protests**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

BHUBANESWAR, December 28, 2007

Christians appeal for peace in Orissa

Where is the rule of law, Christian leaders ask Shivraj Patil, Naveen Pattnaik, as toll rises to Fifty Churches and institutions destroyed / desecrated

Call for CBI probe, arrest of guilty, restoration of peace Full compensation to all victims Patil says Centre is ready to airlift police to villages if state seeks help

Christian leaders met the Union Home Minister, Mr Shivraj Patil in New Delhi, and Orissa Chief Minister Mr Naveen Pattnaik in Bhubaneswar on 27th December 2007 as church groups and human rights activists held protest rallies in the National Capital and
Mumbai condemning Christmas day violence on the community.

There is deep apprehension that the State government and the police, despite their lip-service to restore peace and remove the fears of the people, have not shown the alacrity and diligence required in the face of the spreading hate campaign against Christians, coercive and threatening speeches and the violence.

It is strange that both the Central and State governments are pleading that police forces cannot enter the deep forest areas because hoodlums have cut trees to block roads. Surely the police have the manpower and machinery to remove such roadblocks and restore the rule of law.

The Christian delegations have demanded:

1. An immediate unbiased enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigations
2. Adequate and immediate deployment of Central paramilitary Forces
3. Immediate compensation to the inured and the survivors of the dead as paid top victims of violence in Gujarat and other states.
4. Fact finding team to assess the damage to property, and immediate announcement of comprehensive compensation.

A national delegation of Christian leaders, including Delhi Archbishop Vincent Concessao, National Integration Council member Dr John Dayal, Bishop Karam Masih and Dr Richard Howell, sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister and President and were requested to meet Mr. Shivraj Patil in the Union Home Ministry.

Patil said he was in touch with the State authorities. He pleaded that the situation had been complicated because of simultaneous agitations on the tribal status for some groups, and the entry of militant groups. He said the government was determined to restore peace. CRPF rapid action force and other paramilitary troops could be airlifted if the state government felt so, he said. He also assured that there would be full compensation paid to affected persons. The Union Home Minister however could give no assurance on punishing the guilty who continue to mount a hate campaign against the Christian community, openly announcing that “Those who become Christians become enemies. We will not allow this.”

In Bhubaneswar, a Christian delegation led by Archbishop Raphael Cheenath, Bishop Saratchandra Nayak, Bp Samson Das and Rev. P.R Parichha were finally able to meet the Chief Minister after two days. Speaking for the delegation, Archbishop Cheenath told Mr. Naveen Patnaik of the state of anarchy and asked him where was the rule of law and the Constitutional assurances of live and dignity. The Christians had been trapped between violent fanatical mobs, a partisan police and total government inaction. The Archbishop narrated the sequence of events since Christmas Eve, and list of affected parishes, churches and institutions to the extent we had been able to get.

The following are excerpts of the memorandum submitted to the Home Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Orissa:

"It is with a heavy heart that we also bring to you our apprehension and fear that the current atrocities against Christians in the tribal area of Phoolbani in the State of Orissa is fast exploding into the type of violence we saw in the Dangs district of Gujarat during Christmas 1998. The official apathy, the police indifference and the freedom allowed to marauding bands of fanatics and armed thugs in Gujarat has been repeated in Orissa in what is a planned conspiracy against the Church and our faith.

Spokesman of communal groups are coming on television and in the Print media to announce they will not tolerate the presence of Christians in the trial areas of Orissa. The threat of continuing and escalating violence, the targeting of Church leaders and the concerted attack on institution prove that the conspiracy has been planned over a period of time, with meticulous mobilisation. This would not have been possible without the complicity of the official machinery, and the backing of powerful political groups.

Unless immediate and urgent action is taken, we fear that the situation in Orissa will deteriorate and will lead to much suffering for our people, as also for the common men, women and children of the tribal areas, the poorest of the poor.

The main aggression is from the Kui Janakalyan Samiti. This organization had declared bandh on 25th and 26th December 2007 in order to press for their demands. But
Christians feel that it was only a ploy used against Christians in order to:

a) Disturb their Christmas celebration, the important feast of Christians; it is even a National holiday.
b) Instead of conducting bandh they have unleashed a reign of terror, destroying institutions, intimidating Christians and forcing them to go out of their homes.
c) Their entire attention is on driving away Christians from the region.

We narrate for you, in brief, the course of events and the volume of violence:

MANY INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN ATTACKED SO FAR

CSSS Activities

December 2007

Workshop with police.
Venue: Dombivali, Savitribai Natyagruh
Topic: Communal Harmony,
Date: 18th Dec 07.

Workshop and lecture with college students.
  a) Venue: St Xavier’s college,
     Date: 11th Dec 2007
     Topic: Sufism and Peace.
  b) Venue: Garware College of commerce, Pune,
     Date: 12th Dec 2007
     Topic: “Students role in promoting communal harmony and national integration”.

Lecture in Nasik Jail for Prisoners to bring about peace and communal harmony.
Venue: Nasik Jail, Topic – “Communal Harmony”
Date: 17th Dec 2007

Workshop on Integrated Personality Development program for Nasik school children.
Venue: Bishops House, Nasik
Date: 17th and 18th Dec 2007

Topic: Integrated personality development program.

Street play on Communal harmony by College students.
Venue: Behrampada, Bandra (East) Mumbai, Topic “Janta Ek Khilona”
Date: 20th Dec 2007.

Students of both Mithibai and National College tried to explain the reason of communal riots through their play.

Workshop on Peace and Conflict resolution Program
Venue: Indore Catholic Dharma Prant, Indore,
Topic: “Communal Harmony”,
Date: 7th to 9th Dec 2007

Training programme for Muslim Women
Venue: Biomedical Ethic Centre, St Pius College, Goregaon
Topic: “Rights of women in Quran”,
Date: 24th to 26th Dec 2007
In the Indore PCR history of communal violence, causes and measures to stop them was discussed where as in the second PCR rights of women in “Quran” topics discussed were rights of women in Islam, Position of women in Shari’a, supreme court judgment in favor of Muslim women etc.

Resources

Rakesh Sharma releases 2 films as a follow-up to Final Solution

Internationally-acclaimed film-maker-Rakesh Sharma today released his latest films for previews in Gujarat. The two new films Khedu Mora Re and Chet'ta Rejo have been researched over the last couple of years and shot during the last 8 months. Speaking about his new films, Rakesh Sharma said – "Ever since I started showing Final Solution around, many people urged me to do follow-up films as well. I wanted to go beyond highlighting the events of 2002 and the State and Sangh Parivar's complicity, which by now has been well-documented, especially after the Tehelka expose. These films are also in the nature of my response to Mr. Modi and his propaganda as a member of civil society."

Film 1. Khedu Mora Re (62 minutes) specifically deals with the myth of Vibrant Gujarat. The film graphically documents the phenomenon of farmer suicides in Gujarat. It also deals with farmers' opposition to SEZs as well as widespread anger against the Modi government and its lopsided policies which many farmers in the film claim are lopsided, tailored to suit corporates and industries. The much hyped Sujalam Sufalam scheme is probed at ground level, especially during the recent floods in Saurashtra -where farmers squarely blame this scheme for their misfortune. Says a farmer in the film, "Till a couple of years ago, there was never a flood in Gokharwada (distt Surendranagar) but ever since this sujalam sufalam, our village and lands get submerged every year due to these new check dams, with faulty planning and construction. Modi keeps announcing packages worth hundreds of crores, but the reality is that people are yet to receive even 5 rupees out of the post-flood package announced for 2005! And now this flood in 2007 – it has destroyed us totally."

A strand that runs through is a specific RTI (Right to Information) campaign designed by the film-maker. Filed through activist Bharat Jhala, the information nails government lies and exposes its attempts to suppress the truly horrifying scale of farmer suicides in Gujarat. Says Rakesh Sharma, "Modi has been trying to reinvent himself as Vikaspurush, hoping that glitzy films and investor summits will whitewash his image as the butcher of Gujarat. I felt it was critical to examine the true story behind the hype, but also realized that the film is liable to be attacked and its credibility challenged. That's why I chose the RTI route to use the government's own figures to bring out the true story. Modi claimed in a TV interview to NDTV on March 14, 2007 that no farmer commits suicide in Gujarat. A month later, he admitted to 148 suicides on the floor of the assembly. Official data that we finally got in Oct 10, 2007, 5 months after we filed queries, confirms 498 suicides formally. However, even this list is partial as it does not feature several suicide stories painstakingly documented in the film! As many suicides are passed off as accidents, we...
also filed RTI queries seeking details of all accidental deaths - of the 6,695 farmers who died in "accidents", over 4000 have not been paid any Kisan Vima Yojana money (we've informally learnt that insurance companies have denied many such "accident" claims as many of these are suicides)! Amazingly, on Oct 10 itself, the day the Gujarat gave us RTI data confirming 498 suicides, an official ad released on ETV categorically stated that there are no suicides in Gujarat and people should not believe false propaganda. The ad itself seems to be done in response to the coverage in end Sept and October to our press conferences and the film excerpts we showed!"

The film features several suicide stories done as very personal, intimate portraits. Opposition to land acquisition for SEZs in Bhavnagar district as also havoc unleashed by private companies in Kathivadar are intercut with these stories. The film itself reports 10-12 suicides in Amreli, Surendranagar, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Bharuch and Surat. The RTI data reveals shocking district-wise figures – Rajkot (63 suicides), Junagad (85), Amreli (34), Mehsana(48), Nadiad (44), Jamnagar (55), Narmada (30) and even in Gandhinagar (13), right under the Chief Minister’s nose! For RTI data details, contact Bharatbhai on 9979099881. About the film, contact Rakesh Sharma on 9909918575 or rakeshfilm@gmail.com

The film is in Gujarati (with no English subtitles). For VCDs of the film, please contact Dakxin on 99099 11474. More information about the film-maker is on www.rakeshfilm.com. Photographs and publicity pictures can be downloaded from http://download.yousendit.com/B4DA6A0E72463BCF

Film 2: Chet'ta Rejo (72 minutes):

The back cover of the CD itself contextualizes the film – the saffronisation of the Dalit-OBC population and its consequent plight! The film looks specifically at the patterns of arrests and litigation since 2002. A majority of those charged with rioting, arson, murder etc are either tribals or Dalits and OBCs. An analysis of those arrested from 32 police stations in Ahmedabad suggests that of the 1577 detainees, only 30-odd were upper caste! Are these foot soldiers victims too? Cynically recruited, then discarded, left to rot in jails, what do the 'perpetrators of the violence feel today about the VHP and the BJP?

The film has several personal portraits and conversations. Among the points that emerge:

1. 6-8 families of S-6 passengers who died speak of how they were told people were going for a picnic tour, certainly not any karseva, that the VHP-BJP exploited their tragedy for electoral gains in 2002, how ever since then no one has come to help, how monies raised in their name never reached them...and how some of them who spoke in public about it have been threatened by the VHP!

2. VHP made tall promises to help the detained and the injured Hindutva cadre, but barring some rations and monetary help in the first month or two, not much came. The VHP/BJP combine simply vanished. A telling story is Kanti and Deepak's account from Gomtipur - both shot by the police, both appealed to the BJP for help (incl the CM) but got nothing. When they went to Togadia's own Dhanvantri hospital for operations/ treatment, they were turned away, asked to bring a deposit of Rs.50,000/- first!

3. Cops don't arrest the upper castes. They come and take away Dalits/OBCs - any men they can find in the area. The men are normally told to come along for haziri but then booked formally. Women in such families speak of the subsequent harassment and hardships.
4. Dalits ask why violence is engineered in their areas, and not in the posh upper caste areas? They ask a series of searching, probing questions and offer their own analyses throughout the film.

5. Dalit elders speak of how the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya doesn't mean much to them, as they can not even enter the mandir in their own villages - upper castes prevent them from doing so till today!

6. An OBC Hindu boy and a Muslim boy, both friends, used to play cricket together in Behrampura. During the riots, both lost their right hands to bombs during the riots! The film ends with both of them appealing to the youth not to join such parties or get involved in such violence as no one lifts a finger to help while it is them and their families who will suffer forever.

The overall message that emerges through a range of voices - violence and politics of hate destroys the Dalit-OBC-Muslim communities; it is best to stay away from parties that preach hate.

The two films are in the nature of a follow-up to the critically-acclaimed film Final Solution that dealt with the 2002 carnage and its aftermath, the Gaurav Yatra, BJP's subsequent electoral victory in a sharply polarized state in 2002. In October 2007, Final Solution finally got recognition in its own country when the President of India gave it the National Film Award. Earlier, the film was screened at over 80 international film festivals and picked over 20 awards (at Berlin, HongKong, Zanzibar, France, Argentina, USA, Bangkok, Spain, Kathmandu etc). It also got the Best Film award at the prestigious Index on Censorship awards (UK); ironically the film was banned by the Indian Censor Board for a few months in 2004, but following widespread protests by civil society, the film was cleared without a single cut.

Rakesh Sharma began his film/TV career in 1986 as an assistant director on Shyam Benegal's Discovery of India. His broadcast industry experience includes the set up/ launch of 3 broadcast channels in India: Channel [V], Star Plus and Vijay TV as well as several production consultancy assignments. He returned to independent documentary film-making in 2001. His first independent film Aftershocks: The Rough Guide to Democracy has been screened at over 100 international film festivals and has 10 awards {including the prestigious Robert Flaherty prize}. 

Editor: Ram Puniyani, ram.puniyani@gmail.com, www.pluralindia.com
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1. often contents Something contained, as in a receptacle: the contents of my desk drawer; the contents of an aerosol can. 2. often contents. a. The individual items or topics that are dealt with in a publication or document: a table of contents. b. The material, including text and images, that constitutes a publication or document. 3. Noun. 1. contents - a list of divisions (chapters or articles) and the pages on which they start. table of contents. list, listing - a database containing an ordered array of items (names or topics).