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Jagdish Tytler is a well known man. Too well known. So is Sajjan Kumar. So were a bunch of other worthies, the HKL Bhagats, the Kamal Nath, the Dharmanand Shastris. Each of these names was involved in the anti-Sikh genocide of 1984. Politicians who led killer mobs with voter lists in hand – chasing, hunting down innocent Sikhs, raping women, maiming children and burning men alive. Street after street, gully after koocha, mohalla after colony, house to house, door to door, tinsed to tinsed, tarpaulin covered shelters to rickshaw pullers' nightsheds. These mobs went around, setting right what they saw as a wrong of contemporary history. A history that was only hours old at that time.

Before they could cremate Indira Gandhi, they ensured that hundreds of Sikh families could not cremate their dead ones. Sikhs were burnt alive on the roads of the capital of this country. Merely a few kilometers from the embassies of scores of countries, and in the same city, members of a brave community were running to save their lives. Among them was a General of the Indian Army called Jagjit Singh Arora. Among them were many Sikh army men, travelling in trains on call of duty. Among them were little children returning home.

Surely, the operation to trace, track, hunt, beat, kill, maim, burn more than 3,000 Sikhs in a limited number of three or four days needed more people than just the ones we have come to know over the years. It needed mobs of hundreds, of thousands. It needed men ready to kill perfect strangers who meant no one any harm. It needed men ready to burn innocents using burning cycle tyres.

Where are these hundreds, thousands of people today?

It is possible for men like Tytler, Sajjan Kumar, HKL Bhagat to be thick skinned, not to have nightmares like an ordinary murderer, and get a good night's sleep. Just as Maya Kodnani slept tight every single night. She is a strong hearted woman, a doctor, a gynaecologist trained to save lives and bring new ones into the world, but one who knows the matters of the heart are meant for the weak hearted. She led mobs to shed blood that tasted different than the one the Tytler mobs had shed a few years earlier. Tytler was after Sikh blood; Maya was shedding Muslim blood.

Both did not lose any sleep. Both are strong hearted people.

But where are the simple, ordinary, next door neighbour, petty criminal looters and killers who were out there on the roads of Delhi in 1984 and in the streets of Naroda Pataya in 2002? Where are these hundreds, thousands of people today?

The police in 1984 Delhi was a mere bystander; Modi's police in 2002 Gujarat was a bit of an active participant, when not a bystander. Those cops, those lower and middle level officers were merely either following orders or saving their jobs by remaining passive. But did they lose any sleep?

Ever watched a sparrow shot down by a slingshot of a wayward Tom Sawyer? It is difficult to sleep after watching the feathery beauty gasp to death. Far lesser mortals have cried over the death of a pet just as many grown ups did. If you hit and run a school going little kid in the morning on your mobike, you may escape the law and the consequences but heavy questions keep nagging, keep tugging at your conscience. Did I hurt him too much? Might he have broken a limb? Hope he was not too poor? Should I have stopped? May be the passersby would not have beaten me, may be I could have been of help.

So what happened to the hundreds, thousands who were moving with voter lists in hand, tyres in great supply, and sloganeering for a dead mother keeping up the spirits? Did they sleep tight? Did they face questions tugging at the edges of their conscience?

Where are all those people?

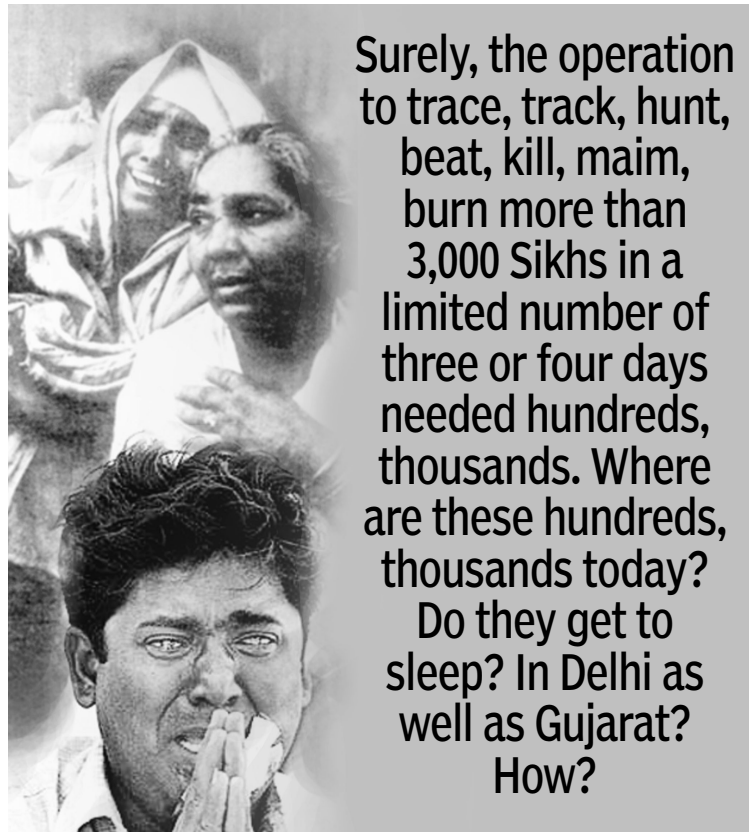
Too bad, law is so slow. Kodnani gets entangled in an FIR when her government is in power and she a minister. Tytler gets into trouble when his party is ruling in India and he is about to fight a Lok Sabha election.

This is too much.

Men like Tytler and Sajjan Kumar had ensured that rioters and killers who followed their orders stay risk-assured. If they would not have done that, who the hell will next time instigate, lead and participate in riots? But even all the Tytlers put together cannot vouchsafe that these hundreds, thousands will not have questions tugging at their inner self.

The stuff that Babu Bajrangis are made of comes in short supply. Criminals often brag about their crimes, killers about their cold bloodedness. But taking hundreds of real lives in hand to hand combats of one versus a mob and then burning people alive without much previous experience is not pulp fiction. On top of it, there was not even a religious crusade attached to it that has sometimes made it easier to take away lives, extinguish hope of humanity and turn the barbaric into acceptable. Heretics were not being burnt on the stakes; fellow citizens, neighbourhood shopkeepers, well acquainted good men were being burnt alive on the roads with garlands of burning tyres around their neck.

The pieces of human flesh, the stench of half burnt bodies, the heat from the fires set to their shops, the shrieks of their widows were not helping carry out this business in any orderly manner. And all of this was not their idea of a picture postcard memory recall of important assignments that decide the course of history. How, then, do they recall what they did after 25 years? The 19-year-olds who burnt men with flowing beards by pouring kerosene would have turned 44 now. The 30 year old would have become 55. And forgetting is not an



Surely, the operation to trace, track, hunt, beat, kill, maim, burn more than 3,000 Sikhs in a limited number of three or four days needed hundreds, thousands. Where are these hundreds, thousands today? Do they get to sleep? In Delhi as well as Gujarat? How?

easy job, not when the fellow being burnt was making it difficult to put the burning tyre around his neck. He was repeatedly trying to run away, and some were even trying to create confusion by cutting their hair quickly with borrowed scissors. Just as some in Gujarat were trying to say Har Har Mahadev when their lingo was clearly Urdu.

These hundreds, thousands did their job pretty well. They certainly were promised punitive immunity, and knew there will be no consequences. Unfortunately, a few good men and women have created problems for the likes of Tytler and Sajjan Kumars but largely the Indian society has well absorbed the hundreds, thousands.

But where are they? And as we

asked earlier, are they able to sleep tight? In Delhi and Gujarat, both?

Why was it so easy for them to burn the Sikhs alive? To kill the Muslims in Gujarat? And why has it been easy for them to sleep tight after all this? Not a single case of someone wrestling with his conscience for years and coming out in the open? Not a single case of someone buckling under the burden of the gravity of what he did and trying to commit suicide?

What do such mob killers survive on? Where do they come from? And how do they survive it all? This soul thing, the conscience thing?

It is this that we must engage with. It is this that gives the Tytlers the hundreds, thousands needed to

carry out genocidal killings. It is this that a Modi needs to become a hero of the communalists.

These hordes are being brought up in an ideology of brahminism to which both major parties of India subscribe. Congress goes for the soft variety, the BJP for the hardcore one. For exceptionally inspired students, there are choices ranging from Sanatan schools, Shishu Mandirs, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Del, Shiv Sena, Sri Ram Sena, Abhinav Bharat, Sadhvi Pragma, Lt Col Purohit.

For Sikhs, bring on the vengeance argument. Avenging the death of a woman by her bodyguards. And avenging the killings of many in Punjab. For Muslim, avenging the burning of Kar Sewaks in a train bogie, and avenging the partition of the country and every other terrorist incident that ever took place.

"Will you send your daughter with this taxi driver to school?" shrieked the punch line of full page advertisements run by Congress in India's most respected national newspapers. The taxi driver was a Sikh. There was a snake also in the picture to add some added dollop of sinister imagery. "Barre khatarnaak naam hote hain inn ke...rahmatullah...karimullah," this was Varun Gandhi.

Distrust is a key weapon. Make people distrust the Sikhs, make them distrust the Muslims. The RSS shakhas all across the country do little else but this. When was the last time you saw a TV reporter bringing you what the Shakha teaches? Five year olds sing songs about raising a Ram Temple at Ayodhya with their fists clenched. In any Godhra situation, they will come in handy as 19-year-olds. Such malnourishment of the soul hardens it, makes it possible for them to not face that tugging at the conscience after you come home putting a good many burning tyres to use.

This ultra national akhand India Hindutva, anti-Khalistani, anti-Pakistani, Mera Desh Mahaan, Bhagwa Jhanda hamara hai, garv Se kaho Hum Hindu Hain, Jo Hindu Hit Ki Baat Karega, Wohi Hum Par Raaj Karega ideology works wonders. It creates a thick buffer against guilt. It gives the soul an ideological cover for murder several years after the fun and games in the shakhas are over.

It creates Babu Bajrangis.

Social engineering in the neighbourhood maidaan. A new concept of committed citizen who avenges the death of his perceived mother Indira by using burning cycle tyres. So brutality comes easy, in fact seems desirable. How else will the Muslims remember that Hindustan Mein Rehna Hoga to Hindu Rashtra Kehna Hoga? "Bhejo In Ko Pakistan".

What about the ones who straddle the middle ground? "Na tala khulta, na masjid girti." Congress opened the locks, so BJP demolished the mosque. "Hindus would never have killed Sikhs. It was all because of Bhindranwala." Distrust as prime weapon. And nurseries of hate continue.

Many of the killers of the Jews were merely following orders. But many were doing what their inner core was driving them to do. Same here. That inner core is being constructed for years and years. By the Congress as well as the BJP. No wonder Maya Kodnani's father was an RSS pracharak.

That inner core makes sure that the hundreds, thousands do not have something tugging at their conscience. They are around, all the time, even as we ask where are they?

But why ask? We don't even have the energy or shoes enough to throw at each and everyone.