

1. FESTIVAL: HERATH: Bells tolled on February 20 in temples across Kashmir to mark Herath, the crown of festivals for Kashmiri Pandits, with religious fervor and enthusiasm.

The day has an importance for Hindus in general and for Kashmiri Pandits in particular. Throughout the day special prayers were held in all temples including Ganpatyar, Hanuman Mandir at Amira Kadal and Shankar Acharya Mandir followed by celebrations. Hundreds of devotees visited Khir Bawani temple at Tulmula in Ganderbal.

Maha Shivratri is a festival celebrated every year on the night between 13 and 14 of Phalgun Krishna Paksha. Devotees observe fast on this day and stay awake throughout the night. The hymns during Watak Pooja are recited in local Kashmiri language and all the Pooja ingredients are kept in a special plate.

HUNDREDS THROUG JAMMU TEMPLES: Shiva devotees across Jammu city on February 20 celebrated Maha Shivratri with religious fervor and enthusiasm. Chanting of bhajans, holding of havanas and special prayers in temples, besides religious feasts organized by the religious and trade organizations marked the celebrations.

2. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PoK AND NORTHERN AREAS: "There should be a nationwide movement to remind people that the only outstanding issue in Bharat-Pakistan relations is to get back the territories occupied by Pakistan in Jammu & Kashmir," said former Union External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha inaugurating an international conference on PoK and northern areas in New Delhi on February 22.

The conference was jointly organised by Centre for Security and Strategy (CSS) and India Foundation, New Delhi. Many eminent thinkers, intellectuals and experts including former High Commissioner to Pakistan G Parthasarathi, former DG of Punjab Police PC Dogra, Prof KN Pandita,

former Director of IB Ajit Doval, former Vice Chancellor of Islamic University Prof Siddiq, MP from Kargil Hasan Khan, former MP Thupston Chhewang, etc. also spoke on the occasion.

The conference was organised to remind the people of the country and the world about the unanimous resolution passed by the Bharatiya Parliament in February 1994 which categorically stated that Pakistan should vacate its illegal occupation of PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan and return these areas to India.

3. MILITARY EDUCATION NEED OF THE HOUR – MOHAN BHAGWAT: "Even 64 years after Independence, Bharat is being threatened by China and Pakistan...with rising concern over internal security, we should give top priority to military education to students to make Bharat strong," Shri Bhagwat said while addressing the platinum jubilee function of Bhonsala Military School in Nashik on February 20. "Current education system is business oriented...Foreigners have adopted our education system and our policy-makers are imitating theirs. This should be rectified," he added.

"The Bhonsala Military School was founded by Moonje in a view to protect the nation and has been acting as a feeder institute to fulfil backlog of military officials," the RSS chief said. Earlier, students from the Bhonsala Military School called ramdandis held a march to mark the occasion.

4. AAD-05 HITS BALLISTIC MISSILE, DESTROYS IT SUCCESSFULLY: DRDO's air defence missile AAD-05 successfully hit the ballistic missile and destroyed it at a height of 15 km, off the coast of Odisha near the Wheeler Island. A modified Prithvi missile, mimicking the ballistic missile, was launched at 10:10 hours on February 15 from ITR Chandipur. Radars located at different locations tracked the incoming ballistic missile.

Guidance computers continuously computed the trajectory of ballistic missile and launched AAD-05 interceptor missile at a precisely calculated time. With the target trajectory continuously updated by the radar, the on-board guidance computer guided the AAD-05 interceptor missile towards the target missile. The onboard radio frequency seeker identified the target missile, guided the AAD-05 interceptor missile close to the target missile, hit the target missile directly and destroyed it. Warhead also exploded and destroyed the target missile into pieces.

5. MAHASHIVRATRI CELEBRATED IN 900 YEAR OLD PAKISTANI TEMPLE: Kataraj temple was visited by a group of Bharatiya pilgrims on the occasion of Mahashivratri in Pakistan after a gap of six years. As many as 50 Hindus from Bharat marked the holy festival in the historic Kataraj temple in Chakwal of the Punjab province.

The place is considered sacred due to a pond which, according to Hindu mythology, was formed from Lord Shiva's tears. It is also said that the Pandava brothers stayed in the temple region for four out of the 14 years they spent in exile.

The Bharatiya delegation, which reached Lahore on February 18 through the Wagah border, was met by Evacuee Trust Property Board Pakistan chairman Asif Hashmi. The delegation returned to Bharat on February 23. The last delegation of Hindus visited Pakistan in 2006. In 2006-07, Pakistan decided to place idols of Hindu gods in the temples and restore them to their original state to attract Hindu visitors.

6. COMMUNAL VIOLENCE BILL WILL STRIKE AT THE ROOT OF NATIONAL INTEGRITY: H DATTATREYA: RSS Sah-sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosable has said that the Communal Violence Bill will strike at the root of nation's unity and will weaken the social fabric of the country. He further said that this bill will widen the gap between majority and minority communities and will endanger the integrity of our country. He was speaking at a discussion on the Bill organised by Trikuta Samvad Kendra in Jammu recently. He mentioned that the Bill will neither serve any purpose for the society nor for the country.

7. TIBETANS SHUN LOSAR CELEBRATIONS WITH DAY LONG SOLIDARITY FAST:

The Tibetan new year, Losar, began in Dharamshala on February 22 with Tsedhor, the official religious ceremony, attended by officials of the Central Tibetan Administration. The Dalai Lama presided over the religious ceremony on the rooftop of Tsuglha Khang, the main temple of Tibetans at McLeodganj.

After the religious ceremony, the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile began a day-long fast to express solidarity with those who committed self-immolation in Tibet.

According to tradition, the preparations for Losar start on the 29th day of the last month of the Tibetan year. The 29th day is called Nyi-shu-gu in the Tibetan language. On this day, all members of the family come together. They clean up the house, especially the kitchen. Thupa, traditional Tibetan food, is prepared for dinner. The food is cooked in a single utensil and served to all collectively.

People from Bhutan, Tibet, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh thronged Delhi's Indraprastha Park on February 25 as part of their New Year celebrations also called Lo Sar. A number of events were lined up, including traditional games from Bhutan like archery and tug-of-war, a production by the Japanese monk Reverend Terasawa and performances by troupes from Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and Darjeeling's Tamag tribe. This is the first time the community celebrated Lo-Sar in Delhi.

"Lo-Sar is more cultural than religious, and we wanted to promote interaction and integration among trans-Himalayan communities," said Sonam Agola, general secretary, Buddh-Jyoti Foundation, which organized the festival.

The Lo-Sar festival has a reach across the country's borders: Bhutanese, Himali, Nepalese, Tibetans, Mongolians, and trans-Siberians, all observe it with great zeal.

8. TRIBAL CULTURE MUST BE PROTECTED - Dr Pravin Togadia:

In a grand event organized by VHP in the jungles of Sundergadh in Odisha, over 658 tribal families, 3127 total people, 1513 men & 1614 women from 102 Tribal villages came back to Hinduism after

giving up forced christianity. Vishwa Hindu Parishad International President Dr Togadia on the occasion said, “Tribals are the roots of Bharat. They are the custodians of our age old rich traditions & culture. We all must do everything to protect them & their rights.”

Dr Togadia appealed to all to support activities that educate, empower & enable tribals to prosper and come up in life while protecting their glorious traditions.

VHP is already running over 40,000 schools, residential schools- colleges for tribal girls & boys in tribal areas all over Bharat & now many bright students studied there are doctors, top govt officers & successful scientists in Bharat & abroad. VHP also has over 1000 medical facilities including hospitals, ambulances, blood banks & primary health care centres for tribals in their own areas for quick medical help.

9. YUVA 2020: “Cultural Identity is the key to Bharat’s success in global canvass”, almost all the speakers told the 1200 strong student leaders gathered at Prashanti Kutiram, Bengaluru from all corners of the country for “YUVA 2020” youth convention on 25-26th February. YUVA 2020 is organised by Forum for Integrated National security (FINS) to mark Swami Vivekanand’s 150 birth anniversary.

The youth convention was attended by H.H. Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati Swamiji of Kanchi Kamkoti peetham, Subramanyam Swami, Lt. Gen. D. B. Shekatkar, Lt.Gen. Patil, Justice Rama Joice, Justice V.S. Kokaje, Formar Karnataka Chief Secretary Vijay Gore, Dr. P. N. Benjamin, RSS ideologue Indresh Kumar, FINS Gl. Secretary Adv. Balasaheb Desai & Vivekanand Yoga University’s Dr. H.R.Nagendra. People attended the YUVA 2020 seminar stressing the need for strong national attitude, Dr. Subramanyam Swami told the audience that the 1000 strong hoard of sheep cannot fight a lone lion or tiger because of the fear in the sheep’s mind. Similarly five lions together can’t fight a lone Ring Master in a circus.

Indresh Kumar also made an emotional appeal to the youth to give some time for the society & nation on daily basis, as well as yearly basis, to which the audience responded spontaneously.

10. THINK INDIA 2012: Eminent personalities enlightened students of IITs, IIMs and NLUs like premier institutes of Bharat at two-day Think India 2012 conference organized by Think India, at Satish Dhawan Auditorium, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore. This year’s edition titled ‘Vision for a Vibrant Nation’ organized by Think India, a forum for premier institute students, saw participation of over 200 student, researchers, alumni and faculty from 27 different institutes of Bharat, including topmost IITs, IIMs, NLUs and NITs.

Highlights of this two-day conference include seven thematic sessions where speakers like Prof V K Aatre, Former Director General DRDO, Mohandas Pai, Founder Director Infosys, Prof R Vaidyanathan, noted Black Money expert and IIMB faculty, Anand Kumar, Super 30, Dr Girish Kulkarni, eminent Social Activist, Prof Venkata Rao, VC NLSIU Bangalore, Prof Sandeep Sancheti, Director NIT Surathkal, Ram Madhav, Noted Thinker, Bal Aapte, Social Activist & Member of Parliament, Dr Tathagat Avatar Tulsi, iconic young scientist, Sunil Ambekar, student activist and National Organising Secretary ABVP, Y B Ramakrishna, Prof LS Ganesh, Dean Students IIT Madras and Prof G Ramesh, IIMB took the dais.

11. CRPF’S UNTOLD STORY OF BRAVERY IN CHINTALNAR: A host of Maoist documents seized by the security forces has revealed the untold story of the deadly attack by the Red brigade on a CRPF patrol on April 2010 at Chintalnar in Chhattisgarh. Contrary to the criticism that the 74 CRPF men were killed like sitting ducks in the encounter, the documents disclose that the trapped jawans put up a brave fight and killed eight Naxals and injured several others in the ambush on April 6 two years ago.

The literature seized by the Andhra Police was sent to the Intelligence Bureau which in turn forwarded it to the CRPF for fine-tuning operations.

12. NOW READ BHAGAVAD GITA FROM RIGHT TO LEFT!: Urdu translation of the hymn from Hindu mythology may raise many eyebrows. The translator S.T. Venkata Appala Chari, who achieved this task at 74 surprises many

more. Now 83, Shri Chari who retired as the Statistical Officer in the Education Department long ago, claims that his is the most authentic Urdu translation of the hymn.

“During Mughal period, the Bhagavad Gita was translated into Persian tongue. There have been a few recent Urdu translations too, but not very meaningful ones. I am satisfied that my translation is faithful to the original,” Mr. Chari says.

“I owe my penchant for and knowledge of Urdu to my high school teacher, Khadar Husain Khan, who would call me ‘111’ referring to my Vaishnavite symbols,” he recalled fondly.

13. HINDU HERITAGE CAMP KAUKAUNA, WI: The Camp held on February 18 from 10 a.m. to 12:00 noon was attended by 35 including 13 kids. Saraswati Vandana, Ganesh Vandana, geet, Surya Namaskar, pranayam, yoga, khel, charcha, stories, coloring and Hindu Exhibition were the main attractions of the camp. The camp ended with Vishva Prarthana and a resolve to start a weekly shakha on Saturdays. This was a great achievement for Wisconsin Vibhag in US.

14. BIHAR GLOBAL SUMMIT ADDRESSES STATE WOES: The three-day global summit on changing Bihar was not about 'attracting investment' but it dwelt at length highlighting core issues on the actual state of the State. The summit ended on Feb 19 with Bharatiya Inc honchos and intellectuals' brainstorming sessions.

While London-based industrialist of Bharatiya-origin Karan Bilmoria compared the leadership of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with the vision of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, former West Bengal Governor and intellectual Gopalkrishna Gandhi recalled the days political visions of late Jay Prakash Narayan and his current crop of political disciples like Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav.

15. 1,500-YR-OLD HINDU TEMPLE IN KARACHI BEING RENOVATED: The 1,500-year-old Shri Panchmukhi Hanuman Mandir, located at Soldier Bazaar in Karachi, is getting a facelift after its management battled land grabbers to regain partial control of its property.

"The temple was supposed to be renovated within two years. But a shortage of funds and the cases we have been fighting for the ownership of our

land have slowed down the process. Yet we won't give up," said Ram Nath Maharaj, the temple's caretaker. The temple holds special significance for Hindus as it is the only shrine in the world which has a "natural statue" of Hanuman that is not man-made, Maharaj said.

16. SURKOZY CLEANS GHAT TO SERVE GOD: Foreign tourists on February 19 cleaned the Koti Tirtha Lake and its surrounding areas in Gokarna town near Karwar in Karnataka. Most of them were from Russia. ‘We volunteered to do the work as a mark of respect to Lord Shiva the day before Shivaratri’, one of the tourists said.

A Russian tourist, who identified himself as Ramadas and later revealed his name as Surkozy, said he loves Bharat and Gokarna. He comes here every year to get peace. The Koti Tirtha lake is a sacred water body. I know one day is not enough to clean it. I am doing my service to Lord Mahabaleshwara (deity of Gokarna), he said.

17. RIWATCH INKS COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA: Research Institute of World’s Ancient Traditions Cultures and Heritage (RIWATCH) signed a memorandum of understanding with University of South Florida (USF). USF is a member institution of the State University System of Florida, which is one of the Florida state's three flagship universities for public research, and is located in Tampa, Florida, USA.

USF is classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a "very high research" institution. In its 2010 ranking, the Intellectual Property Owners Association placed USF 9th among all universities worldwide in the number of US patents granted.

18. BENGALURU WHIZKID SACHIN KUKKE WINS YOUTUBE SCIENCE CONTEST: "18 year old Sachin Kukke of BMS College of Engineering, Bengaluru, is the regional winner from Bharat in the 17-18 year-old category for his experiment, which aims to measure the thermal conductivity of ferrofluids in microgravity," the US-based YouTube, a subsidiary of global search engine Google has said. In honour of his achievement, Lenovo will present the Bangalore lad its Idea Pad Ultra book at the awards ceremony.

19. BHARATIYA MUSLIMS NEED TO BE

BHARATIYA: Rakesh Sinha: “Every religion needs critical evaluation. Hinduism went through several reforms over the centuries and allowed all extremes to co-exist in Bharat. There is a need of Bharatiyakaran of Muslims of Bharat and to rise above Fundamentalism” said noted political scientist Prof Rakesh Sinha in Bengaluru, delivering a talk on “Religious Sensitivity and Demographic Freedom” organised by Rashtrorhthana Research Foundation at Rashtrorhthana Parishat Bangalore on 26th Feb. The topic of the discussion was in the background of Salman Rushdie controversy at Jaipur Literature Festival held recently.

“Hinduism allowed all religious extremes to co-exist. However, there is a check and balance concept. Also there is an undeclared condition, wherein the critics should not over-hurt the sentiments of the people. Being a land of multiculturalism, Hinduism provides maximum religious freedom for an individual. The western countries which defines multiculturalism as co-existence of different religions, but In Bharat multiculturalism is co-existence of various ways of life”, Prof. Sinha Said.

“In Islam, the political consciousness is guided by religion. The Social reforms are unfortunately based on political and electoral strength. Secularism and Hinduism are never two separate entities, they are co-related.”, added Rakesh Sinha.

20. WOSY INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR:

Delegates from 33 countries participated in WOSY (World Organisation of Students and Youth) international seminar on "Role of Youth in Social Transformation" 18-19th February at Shimla.

While inaugurating the seminar, Prof. Prem Kumar Dhumal, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh said that the efforts being made by WOSY to strengthen world peace are commendable as only youth can bring a positive change in the ailing world.

Dr Rashmi Singh, chairperson, WOSY, said winds of change were sweeping the globe and a series of protests were being witnessed even in the Arab world over the issues pertaining to governance, corruption and economic disparities. The youth

were in the forefront of these movements for a change. Sunil Ambekar, organising secretary of ABVP and member of WOSY advisory board, said that Bharat always preached the principle of Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam and it is the only solution of the present crises of the world.

Prof ADN Bajpai, Vice Chancellor of Himachal Pradesh University said, “Transformation of self leads to social transformation. If you transform yourself, the whole world will be changed.”

21. BHARATIYA-AMERICAN WINS TOP ACHIEVERS AWARD:

A Bharatiya-American student has won Siemens Awards For Advanced Placement, America's top achievers honour for her achievements in science and mathematics. Ramya Rangan, along with another student Albert Wu, two seniors at The Harker School in San Jose, California, became the nation's top achiever in Advanced Placement science and mathematics courses when they were recognised as winners of the 2011 Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement, in Houston.

22. DEDICATE AN HOUR AND A RUPEE PER DAY FOR SOCIAL CAUSE — JAGADGURU SHANKARACHARYA:

Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Nishchalananda Saraswati of Puri has appealed to every Hindu family to offer at least one rupee and one hour for social causes like education, health, cultural awareness and service activities. He was addressing a congregation on the occasion of birth centenary celebration of Shrimat Gaurdas Brahmachari of Kalidham under Borokona of West Garo Hills in Meghalaya on February 15.

Shankaracharyaji advised the devotees to protect water, mother earth, sky, air and fire (pancha mahabhoot) and not to misuse them in the name of development.

23. 40 DALIT CHRISTIANS BECOME BRAHMINS IN UP:

40 Christian families in western UP reverted back to Vedic Hindu Dharma on 27th February, jettisoning fanatic belief that those who do not believe in some son of God would go to eternal hell. Of these 40 families, one member from each family will receive training as Purohit from Agniveer so that they become respected Brahmins and are able to conduct religious and social rituals.

24. ROAD IN PAKISTAN NAMED AFTER

BHARATIYA: In a gesture that will go a long way in strengthening Bharat-Pak relations, Member of Provincial Assembly in Pakistan Shazia Ashfaq Mattu has named a road after a Sikh landlord, Pritam Singh Bhinder. This is the first time post-partition that a road in Pakistan has been named after a Bharatiya. Former Pakistan MPA Peer Ghulam Farid, who is MPA Shazia's father, is in Ludhiana nowadays on a visit and presented a photograph of the inauguration stone of the road to the Bhinder family in the city. The Road is 6-km-long, 14-ft-wide and starts from Aroop village and ends in Gujranwala city. It was inaugurated in a grand function organised by the MPA on February 19. Before Partition, the Bhinder family owned 750 acres in Gujranwala district.

25. SHRI VISHWA NIKETAN: Pravas: Shri Saumitra Gokhale, samyojak Vishwa Vibhag will return from Sri Lanka. Dr. Ram Vaidya, sah samyojak is in Bharat for ABPS meeting.

Visitors: Dr. Yashwant Pathak, Ramdevrai Sood - USA, Ashutosh Jha - Canada.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: You may speak of scriptures, of philosophy, of Vedanta; but you will not find God in any of these. You will never succeed in realising God unless your soul becomes restless for him. – *Ramkrishna Paramhansa.*

JAI SHREE RAM

KRISHNA TAUGHT ONENESS OF RELIGION

There is one religion, and there are many sects. The moment you give it a name, individualise it and separate it from the rest, it is a sect, no more a religion.

A sect proclaims its own truth and declares that there is no truth anywhere else. Religion believes that there has been, and still is, one religion in the world. There never were two religions. It is the same religion presenting different aspects in different places. The task is to conceive the proper understanding of the goal and scope of humanity.

This was the great work of Lord Krishna: To clear our eyes and make us look with broader vision upon humanity in its march upward and onward.

His was the first heart that was large enough to see truth in all, his the first lips that uttered beautiful words for each and all. Krishna preceded Gautam Buddha by some thousand years. A great many people do not believe that he ever existed. Some believe that the worship of Krishna grew out of the old Sun worship. There seem to be several Krishnas: One was mentioned in the Upanishads, another was king, another a general. All have been lumped into one Krishna. It does not matter much. The fact is some individual comes who is unique in spirituality. Then all sorts of legends are invented around him.

In Krishna we find two ideas supreme in his message: The first is the harmony of different ideas; the second is non-attachment. A man can attain perfection, the highest goal, sitting on a throne, commanding armies, working out big plans for nations. In fact, Krishna's great sermon was preached on the battlefield. He saw plainly through the vanity of all the mummeries, mockeries, and ceremonials of the old priests; and, yet he saw some good in them.

For Krishna, the ceremonials, worship of gods, and myths, are all right. Why? Because they all lead to the same goal. Ceremonies, books and forms — all these are links in the chain. If you are sincere and have really got hold of one link, do not let go; the rest is bound to come. But people do not get hold. They spend the time quarrelling and determining what they should get hold of, and do not get hold of anything. We are always after truth, but never want to get it. We have a lot of energy and spend it that way. That is why Krishna says: Get hold of any one of these chains that are stretched out from the common centre. No one step is greater than another. Blame no view of religion so far as it is sincere. Hold on to one of these links, and it will pull you to the centre. Your heart itself will teach all the rest. The teacher within will teach all the creeds, all the philosophies.

Krishna talks of himself as God, as Jesus Christ does. He sees the deity in himself. And he says, "None can go a day out of my path. All have to come to me. Whosoever wants to worship in whatsoever form, I give him faith in that form, and through that I meet him."

Krishna lays stress on worship. Worship God. The highest worship is that of the man who loves God for God's sake. The other types of worship are lower ones; but Krishna has no condemnation for anything. It is better to do something than to stand still. The man who begins to worship God will grow by degrees and begin to love God for love's sake.

It is our own mental attitude which makes the world what it is for us. Our thoughts make things beautiful, our thoughts make things ugly. The whole world is in our own minds. Learn to see things in the proper light. First, believe in this world — that there is meaning behind everything. Everything in the world is good, holy and beautiful. If you see something evil, think that you are not understanding it in the right light.

Work! Be unattached! That is the whole secret. If you get attached, you become miserable. Attach yourselves to the God and to nothing else, because everything else is unreal. Attachment to the unreal will bring misery. But unattached love will not hurt you. Do anything — marry, have children, do anything you like — nothing will hurt you. Do nothing with the idea of “mine”. Duty for duty's sake; work for work's sake. What is that to you? You stand aside.

When we come to that non-attachment, then we can understand the mystery of the universe; how it is intense activity and vibration, and at the same time, intense peace and calm; how it is work every moment and rest every moment. That is the mystery of the universe — the impersonal and personal in one, the infinite and finite in one. Then we shall find the secret. “He who finds in the midst of intense activity the greatest rest, and in the midst of the greatest rest intense activity, he has become a yogi.” He alone is a real worker, none else.

How hard it is to arrive at this sort of non-attachment? Krishna shows us the lower ways and methods. The easiest way for everyone is to do his or her work and not take the results. It is our desire that binds us. If you are strong, take up the Vedanta philosophy and be independent. If you cannot do that, worship God; if not, worship some image.

If you lack strength even to do that, do some good works without the idea of gain. Offer everything you have unto the service of the lord. If you cannot do anything, not a single good work, then take refuge in the lord.

Excerpts from Swami Vivekananda's speech delivered in California on April 1, 1900— (The Pioneer Saturday, 25 February 2012)

KINDNESS AMID KILLINGS

Ahemdabad Scores of Common People Across Gujarat Risked Their Lives To Save Muslims During The 2002 Post-Godhra Riots

A total of 4,552 cases of murder, arson, violence, and rioting were filed at different police stations in the wake of the 2002 communal mayhem, and are being pursued in courts all over Gujarat.

Of these, 182 cases are being handled by Nyaygruh, a voluntary institution that provides legal assistance to riot victims. While recording statements of witnesses about the gruesome violence inflicted on Muslim families, Nyaygruh stumbled upon instances of courageous humanity amid all the horror. In over 50% of cases, Muslim families and people testified that they were bailed out by Hindus who were either their neighbours or village heads.

“Police may or may not have come to their rescue when they needed help. But a big number of Muslims recounted how they were helped by their neighbours, fellow villagers, and village heads who risked their lives by guarding lives,” says Preeta Jha, the co-ordinator of Nyaygruh in Gujarat. “Some were influential people with weapons, while others were simple villagers with a conscience which told them that what was happening was wrong.”

Zubeida Bibi of Akalpura village, Kheda, says: “Phoolabhai is like God for us.” Phoolabhai had the courage to open his house to 95 people from Bilol village hiding in the fields, and offered them safety, food and moral support for 45-odd days.

Rajendra Singh Bhati, a Rajput from Bhiloda, Sabarkantha, acted like a true village elder when he vowed that he would not allow any Muslim to be killed in his village. “He went around the village rescuing Muslims, some not even known to

him, and offered them shelter in his haveli,” says Usman Sheikh, a legal coordinator.

Muslim women witnesses have told Siddhartha Nyaygruh of cases in which Hindu women threw open their wardrobes and gave them sarees so that they could camouflage their Muslim identities. There are also reports of dalits buying new vessels for Muslims while they stayed in their homes, so that they could cook for themselves.

Jha says the testimonies prompted Nyaygruh to document the stories of humanity. “The secases proved that humanity is alive among the most ordinary people. There is hope,” Jha says. The experience has made Nyaygruh seek similar examples of kindness from communal flare-ups in Nellie (1983), Delhi (1984), Bhagalpur (1989), and Kandhamal (2007-08).

The saviours of Gujarat have also spurred Nyaygruh to hold a session titled ‘Insaaniyat’ where a dialogue will be facilitated with men and women who saved lives in 2002. It will be a part of the memorial programme to be held on March 6 to mark the 10th anniversary of the riots and the struggle for justice.

For the first time, survivors of communal rioting from other parts of the country — like Delhi, Kandhamal, Nellie, and Bhagalpur — will come to Gujarat and share their stories of fear, resilience and journey for justice.

Saviours: Ajit Shaankar Inderkar, Kubernagar, Ahemdabad - The roof-top terrace of Ajit Indekar’s house holds sacred importance for the family. This was the place where a brother honoured his commitment to protect his sister in times of crises. Indekar, a resident of Fee Colony in Kubernagar – who used to drive a taxi – had a rakhio sister, Zareen Bano in Naroda Patia. Since His house was just two-and-a-half km away, the brother and sister would meet often, sharing the joys and sorrows of life.

Then the Naroda Patia massacre happened in 2002. Indekar was home when he received a missive from Zareen – “They are killing people here, please rescue me”. Indekar says: “I went there and brought her family home”. When some people questioned him, Inderkar said she was a Hindu residing among Muslims. “There were lot of families in trouble and I could not say no when

Zareen asked me if I would offer shelter to her neighbours”, he says. “Eventually, I ended up bringing 70-odd Muslims home. I offered them shelter on my terrace, the door to which I locked”.

It was a grave risk and an extremely challenging task to keep such a large number of people hidden in a house at a time when murderous mobs were prowling the neighbourhood. “People from right-wing organizations frequented my place”, Indekar says. “I even allowed them to carry out a search of my house to prevent them from thinking I was hiding Muslims. The lock on the terrace worked”.

After the massacre, Indekar remembers going to Naroda Patia alone to fetch jewellery buried in the compound outside Zareen’s house. Indekar would also take sick children to doctors, giving them Hindu names. Later, he also paid for some of the riot victims’ travel to Hyderabad, their hometown.

“My wife used to store rations for a year”, Indekar says. “These foodgrains came to the rescue and we were able to feed people”. Today, he is fighting a lonely battle after his two sons died of illness. “But I feel I have done something good in this life”, he says.

Phoola Singh, Aklapura, Kheda - Nearly 650 Muslims from Bilol and other neighbouring villages found shelter in Phoola Singh’s house during the 2002 pogrom. It began with Phoolabhai inviting 95 People from Bilol who were hiding in his fields. Gradually the word spread: “There is shelter in Akalpura”. Every day more people seeking refuge began to arrive at Phoolabhai’s doorstep. They were all welcomed. Phoolabhai’s brother Raojibhai too joined in. Risking his own life, he went to Mahuda, a Muslim-dominated village to get additional food supplied for the families hiding in Akalpura. The young boys of the family – Ranjit, Vijay, Gopal and Vikram – kept guard. Women from the family shared food and warmth. Despite threats from neighbouring villages, this continued for 45 days. “We may lose our lives but we will protect the lives of people who have come to seek protection. We will not let them down”, says Phoolabhai. “There are many religions in the world, but the religion of humanity is supreme”.

(By Radha Sharma, *The Times of India* 23 February, Ahamedabad)